

Anaphoric Expressions of EFL Speakers in Cameroon

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Abstract

This paper examines how francophone learners of English in Cameroon use and interpret anaphoric expressions [with regard to the theoretical framework of Chomsky (1981) which characterises the behaviour of anaphors, pronouns and referential expressions in terms of the Binding Theory]. In order to investigate this, three production tasks were designed - the sentence translation task (STT), the multiple choice task (MCT) and the gap test task (GTT) - to elicit specific answers in the respondents' use and interpretation of these expressions. A total of 73 respondents performed all the tasks. The findings reveal that respondents do not deploy purely English feature specifications in their use and interpretation of anaphoric expressions, as in a considerable number of instances they do not adopt the feature of structural dependency in the processing of co-reference. The phenomenon of language transfer and or influence apparently plays a significant role in this milieu.

Keywords: Anaphoric expression, EFL, Binding theory, Anaphor, Pronominal, Co-reference, Cameroon English

1. Introduction

The linguistic map of Cameroon, in terms of her official languages, has been largely influenced by its political history. The division of the country into two dominant linguistic zones (French & English) is a consequence of this historical situation. While serving as an official language, French is seen as an L2 to the French speaking part of the country and English as an L2 in the English sector. However, both languages are studied in the school system. For Francophone Cameroon, English is taught as a foreign language and for Anglophone Cameroon, French is a foreign language. Like in any other foreign language situation, Francophone learners of English in Cameroon often face difficulties in learning English with the result that their performance in English is influenced largely by French. This linguistic conflict breed what may be termed ‘linguistic interference’. In such a situation, Lado (1957) underscores that individuals tend to transfer the forms and the meanings of their native (and/or second) language(s) and culture(s) to the foreign language and culture when attempting to grasp and understand the language as practised by the natives. This view is echoed by Biloa (1999). He upholds that, in such a context, either the manner of speaking respects the rules of the grammar of the target language or deforms them. In this wise, most Francophone speakers of English in Cameroon try, in varying degrees, to adopt the interpretation of anaphoric expressions in such a manner that succinctly express their world view. These varied interpretations exhibit interesting differences compared to Binding Principle A and B of the Binding Theory (see Chomsky 1981) respectively.

2. Binding Theory and Anaphoric Expressions

The domain of grammar that studies the distance of anaphoric expressions from their heads within the sentence has been theorized in the literature (Chomsky 1981, 1986, 1993 and 1995) into what has been called Binding Theory. Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981) specifies the conditions under which different nominal expressions establish reference. These conditions are known as the binding principles.

Principle A: An anaphor must be bound in its minimal domain.

Principle B: A pronoun must be free in its minimal domain.

Principle C: A referring expression must be free.

In Principle A, anaphors are bound within a specific syntactic domain (their governing category). That is, they have an antecedent which c-command them within their governing category. This principle, therefore, accounts for the grammaticality of (1a) and also for the ungrammaticality of (1b) and (1c) in terms of (i) the way the minimal domain (governing category) for the reflexive is calculated and (ii) also in terms of assessing whether the reflexive is bound within this minimal domain or not.

1a) Catherine_i hurts herself_i.

1b) *Catherine_i thinks [that the students overwork herself_i].

1c) *Philip_i thinks that Jacob_j is buying himself_i a picture.

The sentence in (1a) presents the minimal domain for the reflexive (*herself*) because it includes the reflexive (*herself*) itself, the governor of the reflexive (the verb *hurt*) and an accessible SUBJECT (*Catherine*). The antecedent NP *Catherine* binds the reflexive NP *herself* within this minimal governing category and the result is a grammatical sentence. In (1b), the reflexive NP *herself* has as its minimal governing category the bracketed clause (i.e. the nominal clause which functions as the object of the verb *thinks*). It also has a governor (the verb *overwork*) and an accessible SUBJECT (*students*) but lacks an appropriate antecedent. The lack of an appropriate antecedent is due to the number mismatch between the accessible SUBJECT NP *students* and the reflexive NP *herself*. Consequently, *herself* cannot be co-indexed with *Students*. Furthermore, although the NP *Catherine* c-commands the reflexive *herself*, it cannot be co-indexed with the latter because *Catherine* is outside the minimal governing category of *herself*. In (1c), violation of Principle A is noticed where there is intended co-reference between *Philip* and *himself*. *Philip* cannot be co-indexed with the reflexive *himself* because the former is outside the minimal governing category of the latter.

Pronouns, possessive adjectives, pro-forms (Principle B) are not bound within the minimal governing categories; they can be bound only by elements outside of the minimal governing category as shown below.

2a) John_i is a teacher. He_i teaches Mathematics.

2b) *Jonathan_i congratulates him_i.

In (2a), the pronoun *he* and the antecedent NP (*John*) are not found in the same minimal governing category. Thus, the pronoun *he* is free in its minimal governing category and is therefore bound outside this domain by the antecedent NP (*John*) in the preceding clause. In (2b), the whole sentence counts as the minimal governing category for the pronoun *him*; and *him* is bound within this domain by the antecedent NP (*Jonathan*). This violates Principle B of the Binding Theory.

All other NPs (Principle C) are always free in their minimal governing category as illustrated below.

3a) John_i is a teacher and Mary_j a medical doctor.

3b) *He_i thinks that Jacob_i is buying Philip_j a car.

In (3a), the NPs (*John* and *Mary*) are not co-indexed with any other NPs within their minimal governing category or outside this category. Consequently, each of them is free in its minimal governing category. In (3b), violation of Principle C is noticed where there is co-reference between *he* and *Jacob*.

For this study, both principles A and B are taken into consideration. Principle A is relevant to this study because it is the principle that affects reflexives and reciprocals. A reflexive is a noun phrase (NP) which is not interpreted semantically in its own right but instead makes reference to a determiner phrase (henceforth DP) for its interpretation. The dependency relation of a reflexive to a DP is known as binding and the DP with the fixed meaning is the antecedent that binds the reflexive as shown below.

(3) Suzy hurt herself.

In this example *herself* is a reflexive and *Suzy* the DP. Consequently, the reflexive *herself* is a lexical item which has no fixed meaning but instead makes reference to *Suzy* for its interpretation. The dependency relation of the reflexive *herself* to the DP *Suzy* is known as binding and the DP *Suzy* with the fixed meaning is the antecedent that binds the reflexive. This shows that the antecedent and the reflexive point to the same entity. This situation whereby the reference expression (reflexive) and the referent (antecedent) point to the same entity is known in the literature as co-reference.

Not every DP is a potential binder of a reflexive. As a result of this, Chomsky (1981) stipulates that a reflexive must be bound within its minimal domain; where minimal domain is understood to mean the smallest clause containing the reflexive and its antecedent as illustrated in the following example.

(4) Peter_i told John_j to defend *himself*_j

In this example, the reflexive *himself* and the antecedent *John* are in the same clause (clause-mate). Thus, the NP *John* (and not *Peter*) antecedes the reflexive *himself* in the above sentence. Consequently, Wexler and Manzini (1987) defined Governing Category pertaining to English language as follows: *y* is a Governing Category of *a*, iff *y* is the minimal category which contains *a* and has a subject. This definition is illustrated in the example below.

(5) Mary says that [John hurts himself].

In this example, the Governing Category (*y*) of the reflexive (*himself*) is the bracketed clause. It contains the reflexive NP (*himself*) and the subject NP (*John*). In the same vein, Bennett & Progovac (1998) moved a step further by examining the role of morphological differences between reflexives in their account of the Binding Theory. They brought in the notion of relativisation of subject and reflexives as a complement to the parameterization of the Governing Category of Wexler and Manzini (1987). This notion underscores the fact that reflexives can get involved in long distance binding provided the antecedent NP and the reflexive NP are related. This view is welcomed by Huang (2000), who upholds that the distribution of English reflexives and reciprocals follows binding Principle A but claims that reflexives in English can occasionally be bound outside the local domain, as in the example below.

(6) Paul_i told Mary_j [to behave *herself*_j].

In this example, the reflexive (*herself*) and the antecedent NP (*Mary*) are not found within the same minimal governing category, yet the latter is co-indexed with the former and thus bound by it.

Following the ongoing discussion, Haegeman (2001), postulates that the governing category of anaphor is the minimal domain which contains it, its governor and accessible SUBJECT as the example below shows.

(7) Paul_i believes [John's_j description of *himself*_j].

As seen in this example, although the NP (*Paul*) c-commands the reflexive (*himself*), it cannot be co-indexed with the latter because *Paul* is outside the governing category of *himself*. Consequently, *John* is the accessible SUBJECT; *of* is the governor¹ and *himself* the anaphor.

Cognizance of all these, Hawkins (2001), reviews the syntactic conditions that determine the interpretation of anaphors in English as follows:

a) A subject or object dependent phrase or both can bind anaphors in tensed clauses.

(8a) Paul_i hurt himself_i.

(8b) Peter_i talked to Suzy_j about herself_j.

(8c) Mabel_i talked to Mirabel_j about herself_{ij}.

In (a) the anaphor (*himself*) is bound by the subject (*Paul*); in (b) *herself* is bound by a prepositional object (*Suzy*), and in (c) *herself* is bound by either a subject (*Mabel*) or object (*Mirabel*).

b) The subject of the embedded clause in non-finite clause is usually null. In this respect, Hawkins upholds that the subject is represented by the icon PRO and the anaphor can be bound by PRO or by an object and not by NP outside the non-finite clause.

(9) Paul_i coerced Mary_j [_{PRO_j} to talk about herself_j].

In the above example, the antecedent of the anaphor (*herself*) in the lower clause is PRO. Since PRO is controlled from outside the lower clause by *Mary*, the anaphor (*herself*) is bound by *Mary*, the object of the sentence.

c) Antecedents outside the DP can bind anaphors when they occur inside complex NPs. Hawkins clearly pointed out here that, this can only be possible when there is no intervening specifier.

(10) Mabel_i showed Paul_j a Portrait of herself_j.

Hawkins survey of the syntactic conditions that determine the interpretation of anaphors in English is a significant contribution to the Binding Theory.

Principle B of the Binding Theory affects pronominal. It states that pronouns must be free within their minimal domain. This insinuates the fact that an anaphoric pronominal is free in its Governing category (GC) but must be co-indexed with the noun phrase (NP) outside that domain.

(11) When John_i saw Eveline_j he_i waved.

In this sentence, the pronoun *he* has taken the place of the noun phrase *John* to avoid awkward repetition. Thus, the pronoun *he* is an anaphoric expression that points back to *John*, the antecedent. The anaphoric expression (*he*) and the antecedent (*John*) are not found within

¹ The term governor is the verb or preposition through which a reflexive and its antecedent are related.

the same minimal domain (i.e. they are not clause-mate). Like anaphors, pronouns must agree with the antecedents in person, number, and gender as the examples below show.

12a) *Ann* realised *she* couldn't win.

b) *Paul* said that *he* would be back soon.

c) When *a dog* sees a ghost, *it* barks.

d) *Paul and Mirabel* are getting married on Saturday. After the wedding *they* will fly to the USA for their honey moon.

Furthermore, pronouns are grouped into personal pronouns, demonstratives, and relatives as the following examples illustrate.

13) The young man_i waved when he_i saw Eveline_j.

14) There is a glass pane_i in the front door, and through this_i the thief could see into the house.

15) The visitor_i, whom_i Lopez was expecting, has arrived.

Another lexical item affected by Principle B of the Binding Theory is the pro-form. Pro-forms are linguistic elements which refer primarily to nominal antecedents. They represent other elements by referring to them regressively (anaphora). They reflect various aspects of their antecedent depending on their categorial function: person, number, gender, and case are expressed to various degrees by pronominal, while pronominal adverbs refer to semantic aspects such as location (there), temporality (then), causality (for that reason), and modality (like, thus) (see Bussmann, 1998:950). Thus, a pro-form is broadly construed as a lexical item that substitutes another construction in discourse. It acts as anaphoric expression in reduced noun phrase or stands for a clause in complement function as shown below.

16a) I asked for a key_i but John gave me the wrong one_i.

16b) Mabel thought *she was wrong* but was too polite to say *so*.

Another anaphoric expression, which is taken care of by Principle B of the Binding Theory, is the third person demonstrative adjective.

17) *Paul and Mirabel* are getting married on Saturday. After the wedding they will fly to the USA for *their* honey moon

The present investigation of the anaphoric expressions of EFL speakers in Cameroon is to identify feature specifications that characterize their English in terms of establishing binding relations and syntactic order.

3. Data and Methodology

The respondents for this study are 73 EFL speakers in Cameroon who have at least a Baccalaureate (the equivalent of the GCE Advanced Level). They come from different ethnic background and they speak different indigenous languages and all of them speak French as a

second language. They are chosen because they have been exposed to and taught the English language for at least seven years. In order to elicit data from them, a production test was deployed to test their analysis and interpretation of anaphoric expressions. The test, which contained thirty (30) questions, consisted three tasks - the sentence translation task (STT), the multiple choice task (MCT), and the gap test task (GTT). The various tasks were structured to meet the exigencies of the binding of anaphoric expressions in English. In the STT, respondents were asked to translate the sentences, given in French, into the English language. These sentences embody anaphoric expressions and were conceived to find out if their L2 has an influence in their interpretation of anaphoric expressions in L3. In the MCT, respondents were asked to choose the correct anaphor or pronominal among the list given in the brackets so that the sentence is meaningful. This test was conceived to find out if respondents know that an anaphoric expression and the antecedent must co-refer in terms of gender, person and number. In each of these cases, three options were given in the brackets. In the GTT, the respondents were asked to fill in the blanks by identifying the antecedent of the pro-form underlined in each sentence. This was done to find out if respondents can identify what a pro-form stands for and its function in a sentence. The data collected was analysed using a scoring scheme wherein any response that was correct got a point and any other response was null. The scores were tallied to come up with frequencies and percentage scores in varied situations. Furthermore, feature specifications, in the data provided, were identified and categorized.

4. Test Results

In the interpretation of anaphoric expressions, respondents were expected to interpret them taking into consideration the class of nominal, the syntactic domain within which binding takes place and the nominal features of the syntactic relation between the bindee and the binder. The results below present the percentage score and the number of instances in which the respondents got the anaphoric expressions well bound (i.e. respecting the English parameter settings), used other parameters to interpret these expressions, and were blank, in the different tasks.

Table 1. Interpretation of Anaphoric Expressions

	CORRECT BINDING	OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	BLANKS	TOTAL
	score	score	score	
Anaphors	205 (40.20%)	237 (46.47%)	68 (13.33%)	510
Pronominal	831 (50.18%)	667 (40.28%)	158 (09.54%)	1656
TOTAL	1036 (47.83%)	904 (41.74%)	226 (10.43%)	2166

The table above shows that the respondents produced 1036 (47.83%) instances wherein they interpreted the anaphoric expressions taking into consideration the class of nominal, the syntactic domain within which binding must take place, and the syntactic relation between

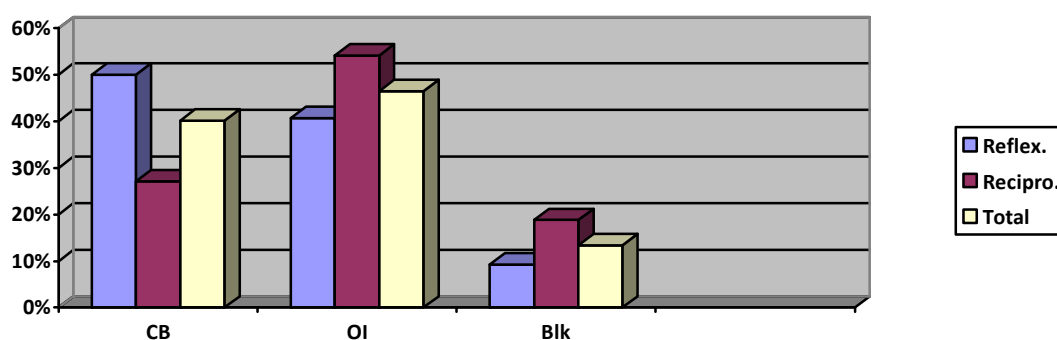
the binder and the bindee in terms of the nominal features of gender, number and person. They also produced 904 (41.74%) instances wherein they used parameter settings other than those stipulated by Principles A and B of the Binding Theory respectively. We noticed that they did not express their views in 226 (10.43%) instances.

In the interpretation of anaphors, the respondents were supposed to bind them following the parameters of Principle A of the Binding Theory. That is, they were expected to bind them locally, respecting the nominal features of number, person and gender. However, we noticed here that respondents did not fully adhere to the terms of this condition. Consequently, they used both the English parameter settings and other parameter settings in the process of their interpretation. As a result, they produced 205 (40.20%) instances that respected English parameter settings and 237 (46.47%) instances wherein other parameter settings were employed. Considering a sentence like, [Grand Mum told Mary to bathe herself], respondents bind the reflexive *herself* to Mary, the object NP which controls the local antecedent, PRO at 63.01%. Meanwhile they give other interpretations of the reflexive at 36.99%. The data further reveals that respondents left 68 (13.33%) instances blank. Statistical information, in table 2 below, presents detailed results of their performance.

Table 2. Interpretation of Anaphors

	CORRECT BINDING	OTHER INTERPRETATIONS	BLANKS	TOTAL
	score	score	score	
Reflexives	146 (50%)	119 (40.75%)	27 (09.25%)	292
Reciprocals	59 (27.06%)	118 (54.13%)	41 (18.81%)	218
TOTAL	205 (40.20%)	237 (46.47%)	68 (13.33%)	510

Given that English allows the binding of anaphors to the local antecedent, we expected that respondents will bind reflexives and reciprocals locally at the same rate. In the interpretation of reflexives, they used the English parameter settings in 146 (50%) instances and other parameter settings in 119 (40.75%) instances. They did not interpret 27 (09.25%) instances. As regards reciprocals, they adopted the English parameter settings in 59 (27.06%) instances; used other parameter settings in 118 (54.13%) instances and did not express their views in 41 (18.81%) instances. The above results are presented in a mean percentage graph below to make it feasible.



Graph 1. Mean percentage interpretation of anaphors

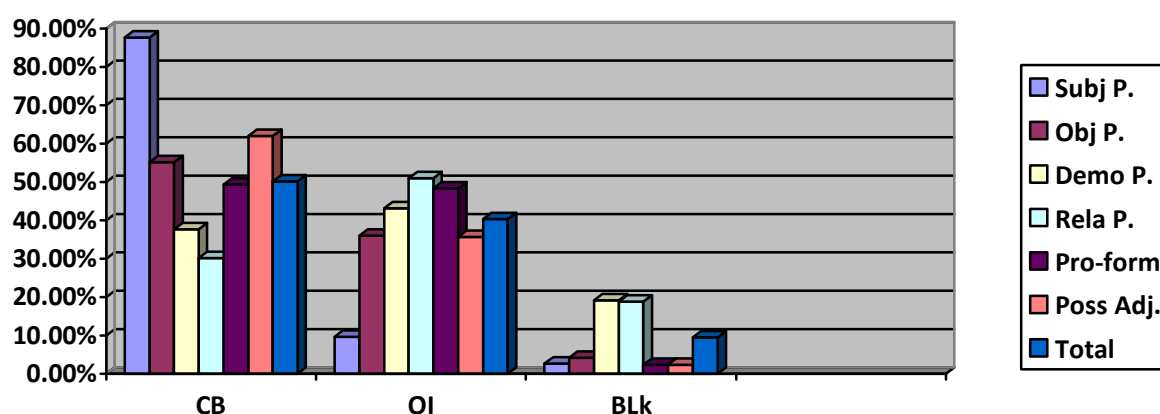
In the interpretation of pronominal, respondents were expected to go by the terms of Principle B of the Binding Theory. The responses provided show that they did not fully adopt the parameter settings of this condition with respect to this class of nominal. They produced 831 (50.18%) instances wherein the terms of Binding Principle B were respected to the letter as shown by the following response [He thanked him for carrying *his* valise]. They also produced 667 (40.28%) instances wherein other parameter settings were employed as illustrated by these examples [If you see Nadege, please tell she that I am in town]; [Some Cameroonians think that *them* country is the most corrupt]. In the same light, they provided 158 (09.54%) instances in which they were blank. Statistical information, in table 3 below, presents the detailed results of their performance.

Table 3. Interpretation of pronominal

PRONOMINAL	CORRECT BINDING	OTHER INTERPRETATION	BLANKS	TOTAL
	score	score	Score	
Subject Pronouns	128 (87.67%)	14 (09.59%)	04 (02.74%)	146
Object Pronouns	161(55.14%)	105 (35.96%)	03 (04.11%)	269
Demonstrative Pronouns	165 (37.67%)	189 (43.15%)	84 (19.18%)	438
Relative Pronouns	88 (30.14%)	149 (51.03%)	55 (18.83%)	292
Pro-forms	108 (49.32%)	106 (48.40%)	05 (02.28%)	219
Possessive Adjectives	181 (61.98%)	104 (35.62%)	07 (02.40%)	292
TOTAL	831 (50.18%)	667 (40.28%)	158 (09.54%)	1656

English allows the binding of subject pronouns to the antecedents outside their local domain

when they are subjects of their respective clauses. In this respect, the respondents provided 128 (87.67%) instances wherein they respected the parameter setting constraints stipulated by Binding Principle B. They also produced 14 (9.59%) instances in which they used other parameter setting constraints and 04 (02.74%) instances in which they were blank. With regard to object pronouns, respondents were expected to bind them to the antecedents outside their local domains when they are objects of a verb or preposition of their respective clauses. The performance shows that they provided 161 (55.14%) instances in which the interpretation of object pronouns fully respected the English parameter constraints of this class of nominal. Furthermore, they provided 105 (35.96%) instances which were not in conformity with the demands of Binding Principle B. The data also contained 03 (04.11%) instances which were blank. In short, the interpretation of the different pronominal exhibit instances where in English and non-English parameter settings are employed (see table 3 above). The mean percentage graph below graphically presents the results.



Graph 2. Mean percentage interpretation of pronominal

5. Discussion of Data

According to the data provided for this study, we have noticed that respondents have adopted varied feature specifications in their analysis and interpretation of anaphoric expressions. In their interpretation of reflexives, they have adopted both the English feature specifications that enabled them to bind reflexives locally (respecting the nominal features of number, gender and person); and non-English feature specifications that enabled them to give other interpretations to reflexives. This indicates that these respondents do not fully adhere to the principle of structural dependency in their processing of co-reference. As such, the interpretations they give show signs of “incomprehensible grammars” as they do not tie solely with the parameter settings of the English language.

The data further indicate that respondents interpret reciprocals like reflexives. In the STT, for instance, responses such as (i) [Belie and Elema hate *themselves*] and (ii) [Akame, Ateba and Mbida don't know *themselves*] could be found. It would have been perfectly grammatical, in terms of Binding Principle A, to have sentences, such as (i) above, which express mutual relationship involving only two persons, with the reciprocal *each other*. In (i), it would also

be perfectly grammatical to have such sentences, which express mutual relationship with more than two people involved, with the reciprocal *one another*.

It is also noticed in the data that respondents bind reciprocals without taking into consideration the number of persons involved. In the MCT, for example, responses such as [Cynthia and Joseph love *one another*] could be found. This is a phenomenon of language transfer from the respondents L2 to the target language. This is evidenced by the fact that anaphors are generally rendered in French discourse by the reflexive “se” without any distinction to number and gender (e.g. *Cynthia et Joseph s’aiment*. [Cynthia and Joseph love each other]; Akame, Ateba et Mbida ne se connaissent pas. [Akame, Ateba and Mbida don’t know one another]).

In the respondents’ interpretation of relatives, the responses provided in the data show that they bind the relative *who* to things and *which* to persons. In the MCT, for example, responses such as [I have two brothers *which* go to school at Obala] and in STT [He has taken the bag *who* was on the table] could be found. This is not surprising as these relatives are rendered in French discourse by the lexeme, ‘qui’ without any distinction to person, thing or animal.

In the respondents’ interpretation of possessive adjectives, the data indicate that they bind them to the thing possessed rather than to the possessor. In the MCT, for example, sentences like [Every married man believes *her* wife is the most beautiful woman] could be found. This interpretation is influenced by French parameter settings wherein possessives are bound to the thing possessed rather than to the possessor.

Furthermore, respondents also violate the syntactic relation between pronouns and their potential binders. In the MCT, for example, we could find sentences like:

[If you see Nadege, please tell she that I am in town].

[Some Cameroonians think that them country is the most corrupt].

Finally, the data provided also indicate that the respondents have little or no knowledge of the reciprocal *each other*; the pro-form *to*, the demonstrative *the former* and *the latter* and the relative *whom*.

These findings reveal that EFL speakers in Cameroon are employing a rhetoric and a sequence of thought which violates the stipulations of binding Principles A and B respectively.

Feature Specifications

After a thorough perusal of the responses provided for the data, we noticed that respondents adopt feature specifications that do not tie with the binding principles stipulated for each of the class of nominal examined in the study. Some of these feature specifications are:

i) ‘Frenchification’ of anaphoric expressions

Some of the responses provided for the data have a number of contextual variables which can

be attributed to direct translation from the respondents L2 into L3. In the STT, for example, we have sentences such as *Belie and Elema hate themselves* which comes from the French expression [Belie et Elema se haissent] and which could be perfectly rendered in English as *Belie and Elema hate each other*. In the MCT, we have responses such as *Cynthia and Joseph love themselves* which comes from the French expression [Cynthia et Joseph s'aiment] and which could be perfectly rendered in English as *Cynthia and Joseph love each other*. Another example, recurrent in the data, is *Every married man believes her wife is the most beautiful woman*. This usage is caused by the fact that French language binds the possessive adjective to the thing possessed rather than to the possessor as stipulated by English language.

Other instances of 'frenchification' of anaphoric expressions are noticed in the interpretation of the relatives *who* and *which*. Sentences such as *He took the bag who was on the table* could be found in the STT, and sentences such as *I have two brothers which go to school at Obala* could be found in the MCT. Such responses come up as a result of the fact that the relatives *who* and *which* are interpreted in French discourse as "qui" without any distinction to person, thing or animal.

ii) Use of approximation to the target language

Another feature specification, that is recurrent in the data, is the use of approximation to the target language. In the STT, for example, sentences such as *Belie and Elema are hating* could be found. This sentence could be perfectly rendered in English as [Belie and Elema hate *each other*].

iii) Intra-lingual feature specification

These are features which occur within the language not as a result of the influence of other languages but come about as a result of over-generalisation of grammatical rules. In the STT we could find sentences such as *Akame, Ateba and Mbida don't know themselves* and *Belie and Elema hate themselves*. These sentences have different denotations from the ones intended by the respondents as shown in the following examples: *Akame, Ateba and Mbida don't know one another* and *Belie and Elema hate each other*. In the MCT, we could also find responses such as *Some Cameroonians believe that them country is the most corrupt* (Some Cameroonians believe that their country is the most corrupt); *If you see Nadege, tell she that I am in town* (If you see Nadege, tell her that I am in town).

These feature specifications insidiously bite into the interpretation of anaphoric expressions of EFL speakers in Cameroon.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored the interpretation of anaphoric expressions by EFL speakers in Cameroon within the principles of the Binding Theory (Chomsky (1981)). Three aspects were important in determining proper and improper binding relation: the class of nominal, the syntactic domain within which binding must hold or must not hold, and the syntactic relation between a nominal and its potential binder. The results indicate that, in the interpretation of English anaphoric expressions, the respondents use both English and non-English feature

specifications. This makes their analysis and interpretations look “English-like” but do not tie with the binding principles of the Binding Theory and English parameter constraints. Consequently, these interpretations show significant signs of “incomprehensible grammars” which are intelligible only among them. This is illustrated in a good number of instances, wherein respondents did not adopt the English nominal feature of structural dependency in their processing of co-reference. The failure to adopt purely English feature specifications is not accidental as it may be traced to the influence of other languages surrounding the acquisition of English in the Cameroonian setting. This raises important pedagogical questions as far as the teaching of English as a foreign language is concerned.

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