

## **INTERLANGUAGE VARIABILITY IN THE USE OF FRENCH AUXILIARY VERBS BY LOW-PROFICIENCY LEARNERS OF FRENCH IN KENYA**

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This paper set out to identify the variants of the rules governing the choice of the auxiliary (whether *avoir*, ‘to have’ or *être*, ‘to be’) in the *passé composé* tense in the French of low-proficiency learners in Kenya. Data were collected from twenty-three compositions written by students from three different levels (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year) of proficiency in French as a foreign language in Kenya. A frequency analysis approach was used to establish which variant of the rule the learners used to select, or to avoid selecting, either *avoir* or *être* as the appropriate auxiliary. The key observations made by the paper are the following: the learners from the lowest level of proficiency (i.e. the Form-2 students) virtually only used, and “correctly”, the auxiliary *avoir*. However, their apparent correct uses of this auxiliary can in fact be best analysed as being merely formulaic sequences memorised from earlier lessons. On the other hand, in the majority of cases their higher-level counterparts (the Form-3 and Form-4 students) avoided the use of an auxiliary altogether, while in the minority of cases where they did use one, this tended to be *être*, which in most cases was wrongly used for *avoir*. Overall, these observations point to a picture of the U-shaped learning that has been reported in language acquisition.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In his seminal paper on the significance of second language learners’ errors, Corder (1967), after distinguishing between “mistakes” and “errors”, and “reserving the term *error* to refer to the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date, i.e. his *transitional competence*”, goes on to unequivocally state the following: “A learner’s errors [...] provide

evidence of the system that he is using (i.e. has learned) at a particular point in the course (and it must be repeated that he is using some system, although it is not yet the right system)” (p. 167). What Corder called “transitional competence” was later referred to by other terms, the best known of which is “interlanguage”, coined by Selinker (1972).<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written about interlanguage since then. This phenomenon has been characterized by several adjectives. For instance, Ellis (1985, Chap. 3) discusses interlanguage in terms of it being *systematic*, *permeable*, and *variable*. Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005: 54), while outlining the “premises” underlying the construct of interlanguage, state the following four (they point out eight of them in total; see pp. 54-55):

[i] A learner’s interlanguage knowledge constitutes a system in the same sense that a native speaker’s grammar is a system. The system accounts for the regularities that are apparent in the learner’s use of the L2.

[ii] A learner’s interlanguage is permeable (i.e. because it is incomplete and unstable, it is easily penetrated by new linguistic forms derived both externally from input and internally through such processes as over-generalization).

[iii] A learner’s interlanguage is transitional. The learner restructures his/her interlanguage grammar over time. Thus the development involves the learner passing through a series of stages.

[iv] A learner’s interlanguage is variable. At any one stage of development the learner will employ different forms for the same grammatical structure. This variability may be random in part (i.e. there is “free variation”) but is largely systematic [...] in the sense that it is possible to identify the probabilities with which the different forms will occur in accordance with such factors as the addressee and the availability of time to plan utterances.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellis (2008), who first refers to Selinker’s (1972) meaning of *interlanguage* as “the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both [the] learner’s L1 and the target language”, informs us that “The term has come to be used with [three] different but related meanings [...]” (p. 968). But in this paper it will be used to refer to Selinker’s (original) definition.

We can already recognize the idea of “system” and that of interlanguage being “transitional” from the passage earlier quoted from Corder (1967). And, indeed, if we analyse the illustrative extracts below taken from compositions written by secondary school students in their second year (commonly referred to locally as Form 2) of studies (and also their second of learning French as a foreign language), a pattern and, hence, “evidence” of a system, clearly emerges. For the purposes of this paper, the pattern under consideration concerns only the use of auxiliary verbs in the formation of the French *passé composé* tense (which can be translated into English either as simple past or as present perfect).<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the two extracts illustrate opposite patterns.

**Extract 1: Subject S1/F2's composition (on *Le weekend passé* ‘Last weekend’)**

*Le weekend il y a deux journée : samedi et dimanche. Samedi ;  
Je **reveill**é sept heures et **douch**er. Je **travaill**é à farm et à midi je  
**précipité** vers l'arrêt d'auto bus.  
Je **s'arrête** et **installe** dans le bus. Je **visite** le sinema. Onze heure  
trente minute je **commence** ma trajet.  
Dimanche je **veille** Dounze heures et je **douche**. Je **sortir** car  
church. Huit heure Je **repos**.*

Translation (with events translated in past tense, even if they appear in the present, simply to be consistent with the topic):

‘There are two days in a weekend: Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday, I woke up at 7a.m. and took a shower. I worked on the farm and at noon I hurried to the bus stop. I stopped and got on the bus. I visited the cinema. At 11.30, I started my journey. On Sunday I woke up at 12 noon and took a shower. I went out because of church. At 8 p.m., I took a rest’.

In the extract above, there is total absence of the required auxiliary: each one of the twelve verbs in bold type required an auxiliary, either *avoir*

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<sup>2</sup> All the other errors will be ignored here.

(‘to have’) or *être* (‘to be’). Three verbs *travailler* (‘to work’), *visiter* (‘to visit’), and *commencer* (‘to begin/start/commence’) required the auxiliary *avoir*; all the other nine verbs required *être*.<sup>3</sup> (Eight of the latter nine were to be used in their pronominal form; the only exception is *sortir*, ‘to get/go out’)

**Extract 2: Subject S9/F2’s composition (on *Le weekend passé* ‘Last weekend’)**

*Je m’appellé Robinson Ngei. Je suis étudiant à l’école secondaire de Kaumoni. Je suis en form deux. J’ai 15 ans.*

*Le week-end passé, J’ai passé mes examens de mi-trimestre. Je n’ai obtenu de bonnes notes. Le Samedi dernier, J’ai joué au foot, au tennis et au basket. Mon école participé aux compétitions regionales le Samedi dernier.*

*Le dimanche dernier, J’ai mangé des frites et du poisson au diner. Au petit déjeuner, j’ai bois du café et j’ai mangé du fromage. Au déjeuner, j’ai mangé des gâteaux et des bombons.*

*Le dimanche, J’ai acheté un pantalon noir. J’ai regardé au cinéma et au théâtre. J’ai [ ??? ] de mi-trimestre cet homme. Le week-end passé, j’ai vais bien merci.*

**Translation:**

‘My name is Robinson Ngei. I am a student at the Kaumoni High School.  
I am in Form 2. I am 15 years old.

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<sup>3</sup> A succinct summary of the complex rules governing the choice of the auxiliary verb in French is given at the bottom of pages 36 and 37 of *Bescherelle 1* (1990). To paraphrase the summary in question, the auxiliary *avoir* is used for all transitive verbs, both “direct transitive” (e.g. *lire* ‘read’, as in *j’ai lu un livre* ‘I read/have read a book’) and “indirect transitive” (e.g. *parler* ‘speak’, as in *j’ai parlé à Jean* ‘I spoke/have spoken to John’). *Être* is used (1) for all the verbs in the passive, (2) for all the intransitive verbs, (3) for all the pronominal verbs (e.g. *se laver* ‘to wash oneself’), and (4) for all the reciprocal verbs (e.g. *se parler* ‘to talk to each other’). However, to compound matters, there are verbs which, though they mostly take *avoir*, can, when they express the result of an action, be used with *être*. *Grevisse* (1973: 225) lists 55 of them and illustrates with the following contrast: [a] *Les prix ONT augmenté l’an dernier* (‘Prices increased last year’) vs. [b] *Les prix SONT augmentés maintenant* (‘Prices are now increased: have now been increased’). The form *ont* is the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. plur. pres. tense of the auxiliary verb *avoir*, while *sont* is its counterpart from the auxiliary *être*.

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Last weekend, I did my mid-term exams. I did not get good marks.

Last Saturday, I played football, tennis and basketball. My school participated in the regional competitions last Saturday.

Last Sunday, I ate French fries and fish for dinner. For breakfast, I took coffee and ate cheese. For lunch, I ate cakes and sweets.

On Sunday, I bought a pair of black trousers. I watched a film and went to the theatre. I had [??] mid-term this man. Last weekend, things went well for me, thanks'.

In Extract 2, in 9 out of 10 cases (i.e. 90%), the verbs in bold type were given the correct auxiliaries; the only exception is *participé* ('participated'), which was given no auxiliary at all.

To relate the notion of variability to the two extracts, in Extract 1 the "system" seems to be clearly that of "no use of auxiliary" at all. So, in the same extract, the notion of variability is totally masked by the learner's avoidance of auxiliaries altogether. In Extract 2, on the other hand, while the notion of variability is equally not apparent on the surface, it can easily be unearthed: all the verbs used (including *participé*, for which no auxiliary was used) indeed required the very auxiliary, *avoir*, that was put before them. This means that, for some reason, the subject avoided using those that would have required the auxiliary *être*. This enables us first to envisage the probability that the same subject would have made errors had he used the verbs that require *être*, and then to go ahead and posit a variable IL system (in that learner's mind), whereby *avoir* is used while *être* is not.

It should be noted, though, that in any set of learner data such seemingly clear-cut cases as extracts 1 and 2 will be a small minority. Typically, as Keck & Kim (2014: 137) point out, "[e]ven within one individual learner, we can see signs of a system and deviations from that system". For instance, in the present study involving data collected from twenty-three subjects (see Table 1 below), only two other cases do not seem to present variation within the same learner (first, the case of S7/F2, which, like S1/F2 above, has not used not a single auxiliary verb;

second, that of S3/F3, which is a case of one auxiliary, *être*, having been systematically wrongly used for another, *avoir*). Otherwise, in the vast majority of cases for the same rule the same learner will use at least two variants. These could be the target form (i.e. the correct form in the language being learnt) and one non-target-like form, or one target form and two (or more) non-target-like ones. (One variant of these latter could simply be the avoidance of the target form.) All the variants could also be non-target-like forms.

To follow Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005: 94), “[t]o describe the variability inherent in learner language [...] it is necessary to identify the *variants* that learners employ in the performance of a linguistic variable”. The authors add that “[t]o study the nature of variability in learner language and, in particular, the relationship between horizontal and vertical variability, it is necessary to perform a frequency analysis”<sup>4</sup> (p. 94). (“Horizontal” variability is that which is “in accordance with the linguistic context”, while “vertical” variability is that which is “in accordance with the [learners’] level of development”, p. 94.) The present study will therefore carry out a frequency analysis aimed at identifying the variants of the rule governing the choice of either *avoir* (‘to have’) or *être* (‘to be’), as the auxiliaries required for the *passé composé* tense in French.

## 2. SOURCE OF DATA

The 23 subjects used in this study were selected from 40 students in three secondary school classes of French at the Kaumoni Secondary School in the county of Makueni in Kenya. The first class, Form 2 (which was also their second year of learning French as a foreign language) had a total of 23 students; the second class, Form 3, had 7; the third class, Form 4, had 10. The twenty-three compositions were selected more or less on a purely

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<sup>4</sup> Frequency analysis, as part of which “the analyst computes the frequency with which each [various] devices [are] used by individual learners [to perform a specific grammatical feature],” is one the approaches used to analyse learner language as an alternative to the traditional error analysis. There is an excellent discussion of it in Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005: 93-109).

convenience basis to the extent that I chose those that I could read relatively easily from their original, handwritten versions. However, some balance was still to be struck in terms of sample representativeness: 10 out of 23 were selected from Form 2, 5 out of 7 were from Form 3, and 8 out of 10 were from Form 4. All the compositions were originally collected for Mativo's (2015), an MA thesis for the University of Nairobi. The researcher (Mativo) was also the French teacher for all three classes from which the compositions were elicited. Since the secondary schools which offer French in Kenya do so at the rate of 2 to 3 hours a week, and since the school year comprises about 30 weeks of effective teaching (which makes it about 90 hours of French per school year), the subjects' proficiency in French in the present study is more or less that of a beginner's level (for the Form-2 learners) and of a pre-intermediate level (for the Form-3 and Form-4 ones). (It should be borne in mind that the totally foreign language setting for French in Kenya offers the learners no opportunities to practise the language beyond the classroom).

The compositions were written on the following topics, chosen by the teacher-cum-researcher, but already suggested in the students' books recommended by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD): *Le weekend passé* (Last weekend), *Ce matin* ('This morning'), *Une lettre à un ami [lui racontant] comment vous avez participé à une cérémonie de mariage* ('A letter to a friend narrating how you attended a wedding ceremony'), and *Un voyage que vous avez fait avec vos camarades* ('A trip you made with your classmates'). The Form-2 students wrote their compositions only on *Le weekend passé*, while the Form-3 and Form-4 students wrote theirs on all the four topics.

### **3. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 Data presentation**

The data are reported in three tables: Table 1 for the Form-2, Table 2 for the Form-3, and Table 3 for the Form-4 subjects. All three report on the

use of auxiliary verbs where the *passé composé* tense was expected. In each table the correct use of the required auxiliaries is differentiated first from the wrong use of them and then from the non-use of them at all. In relation to the wrong use of auxiliaries, there are two possibilities: the wrong use of the auxiliary *avoir* ('to have') for the auxiliary *être* ('to be') and the wrong use of the auxiliary *être* for *avoir*. The verbs involved in each case and for each individual subject are listed in the table as well.



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**Table 1: Use of auxiliary verbs where the *passé composé* was expected in Form-2 subjects' compositions**

Subject	Correct use of auxiliaries	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>avoir</i> for <i>être</i>	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>être</i> for <i>avoir</i>	No auxiliary used at all
1. S1/F2	0/12: 0%	0	0	12 <i>travailler, visiter, commencer, se réveiller (2x), se doucher (2x), se précipiter, s'arrêter, s'installer, sortir, se reposer</i>
2. S2/F2	8/9 : 88.9% <i>manger (2x), regarder (2x), boire (2x), arriver, visiter, faire</i>	1 <i>aller</i>	0	0
3. S3/F2	4/8 : 50% <i>manger, jouer, gagner, regarder</i>	0	1 <i>visiter</i>	3 <i>participer, aller, lire</i>
4. S4/F2	4/12 : 33.3% <i>regarder (3x), participer</i>	6 <i>aller (4x), rester, se préparer</i>	0	2 <i>regarder, boire</i>
5. S5/F2	11/15 : 73.3% <i>manger (3x), visiter (2x), regarder, écouter, prendre,</i>	3 <i>rester (2x), aller</i>	0	1 <i>voir</i>

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<i>boire, lire</i>					
6.	S6/F2	14/20: 70%	4	0	2
		<i>boire (5x), manger (4x), attendre (2x), écouter (2x), regarder</i>	<i>aller, se reposer, se coucher, se promener</i>		<i>acheter, coucher</i>
7.	S7/F2	0/11: 0%	0	0	11
					<i>préférer (4x), être (2x), observer (2x), préparer, prier, se préparer, se reposer</i>
8.	S8/F2	3/7: 43%	0	0	4
		<i>visiter, boire, voir</i>			<i>acheter, préparer, boire, manger</i>
9.	S9/F2	9/10: 90%	0	0	1
		<i>manger (3x), passer, obtenir, jouer, boire, acheter, regarder</i>			<i>participer</i>
10.	S10/F2	9/12: 75%	3	0	0
		<i>boire (3x), manger (2x), écouter, travailler, visiter, regarder</i>	<i>se promener (2x), sortir</i>		
<b>F2 Total</b>		<b>62/116: 53.4%</b>	<b>17/116: 14.7%</b>	<b>1/116: 0.9%</b>	<b>36/116: 31%</b>

**Table 2: Use of auxiliary verbs where the *passé composé* was expected in Form-3 subjects' compositions**

	Subject	Correct use of auxiliaries	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>avoir</i> for <i>être</i>	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>être</i> for <i>avoir</i>	No auxiliary used at all
11.	S1/F3	2/13 : 15% <i>se lever, se laver</i>	0	1 <i>lire</i>	10/13 : 76.9% <i>venir</i> (but used for <i>aller</i> ) (2x), <i>prendre</i> (2x), <i>se brosser (les dents)</i> , <i>s'habiller, prier, commencer,</i> <i>revenir, manger</i>
12.	S2/F3	5/18: 27.8% <i>aller (4x), regarder</i>	0	3 <i>marcher, finir,</i> <i>prendre</i>	10/18: 55.6% <i>aller, commencer (2x), regarder</i> <i>(2x), quitter, prendre, décider,</i> <i>arriver, trouver</i>
13.	S3/F3	0/6: 0%	0	6 <i>donner (2x),</i> <i>aimer, écrire,</i> <i>accepter,</i> <i>téléphoner</i>	0
14.	S4/F3	3/11: 25%	2	5	1

		<i>retourner, finir, recouvrer</i>	<i>retourner, tomber</i>	<i>assister (2x), voyager (2x), visiter</i>	<i>Informer</i>
15.	S5/F3	5/19: 26.3% <i>aller (2x), décider, expliquer, ouïr</i>	4 <i>entrer, aller, arriver, retourner</i>	3 <i>dormir, assister, traverser</i>	7 <i>être (2x), terminer, ouvrir, dormir, continuer, arriver</i>
	<b>F3 Total</b>	<b>15/67: 22.4%</b>	<b>6/67: 8.9%</b>	<b>18/67: 26.9%</b>	<b>28/67: 41.8%</b>

**Table 3: Use of auxiliary verbs where the *passé composé* was expected in Form-4 subjects' compositions**

Subject	Correct use of auxiliaries	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>avoir</i> for <i>être</i>	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>être</i> for <i>avoir</i>	No auxiliary used at all
16.	S1/F4 9/12: 75% <i>aller (3), se réveiller, se lever, se doucher, s'habiller, retourner, nager</i>	0	2 <i>commencer (2x)</i>	1 <i>entrer</i>
17.	S2/F4 1/19: 5% <i>participer</i>	1 <i>entrer</i>	0	17 <i>arriver (3x), aller (2x), faire (2x),</i>

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					<i>bouger (2x), voyager, prendre, retourner, s'habiller (2x), se lever, se brosser, se doucher</i>
18.	S3/F4	2/16: 12%	0	1	13
		<i>se lever (Note: but only partially correct), tomber</i>		<i>utiliser</i>	<i>décider (4x), crier (2x), écouter, dormir, continuer, applaudir, promettre, s'évader</i>
19.	S4/F4	12/19: 63%	0	0	7
		<i>décider (2x), entrer, jeter, aller, acheter, partir, dormir, fatiguer, réveiller, aider, regarder</i>			<i>chercher (2x), ouvrir, se lever, se doucher, se brosser, s'habiller</i>
20.	S5/F4	4/15: 27%	1	3	7
		<i>aller, prendre (2x), arriver</i>	<i>se lever</i>	<i>commencer (3x)</i>	<i>aller (2x), baigner, arriver, participer, préparer, s'habiller</i>
21.	S6/F4	0/10: 0%	0	4	6
				<i>assister (2x), jouer (2)</i>	<i>gagner (2x), jouer (2x), chanter, assister</i>
22.	S7/F4	4/9: 44.4%	0	0	5
		<i>aller (3x), prendre</i>			<i>être (2x), étudier, apporter,</i>

23.	S8/F4	12/19: 63%	0	0	<i>terminer, commencer, se réveiller</i>
		<i>se réveiller, se lever, se laver, s'habiller, s'amuser, boire, retourner, aller (5x)</i>			<i>arriver (2x), faire (2x), prier, commencer</i>
	<b>F4 Total</b>	<b>44/119: 37%</b>	<b>2/119: 1.7%</b>	<b>10/119: 8.4%</b>	<b>63/119: 52.9%</b>

**Table 4: Use of auxiliary verbs where the *passé composé* was expected in all the 23 subjects' compositions**

	Correct use of auxiliaries	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>avoir</i> for <i>être</i>	Wrong use of the auxiliary <i>être</i> for <i>avoir</i>	No auxiliary used
All the 23 subjects	<b>121/302: 40.1%</b>	<b>25/302: 8.3%</b>	<b>29/302: 9.6%</b>	<b>127/302: 42%</b>

## 3.2 Data analysis

The data will be analysed in terms of the amount of variation there occurred in the subjects' production and of whether the variation observed was systematic or free.

### 3.2.1 *The amount of variation in the subjects' production*

Three key observations can be made in relation to amount of variation: (i) the Form-2 subjects produced fewer errors than their higher-level counterparts; (ii) in the F2 compositions, the most frequent variant (53.4%) was the correct use of auxiliaries, while in both the F3 and the F4 compositions, it was the no-auxiliary-used-at-all variant - with a rate of 41.8% for the F3's and of 52.9% for the F4's; (iii) the F2 compositions were marked by a greater use of the auxiliary *avoir* ('to have') than that of *être* ('to be'), while the F3 and F4 compositions were marked by a greater use of *être* than that of *avoir*.

To return to the F2 subjects having produced fewer errors (46.6%) than the F3 subjects (77.6%) and the F4 ones (63%), these percentages reflect the following absolute figures: an average of 5.4 errors (i.e. 54 errors/10) per F2 subject against 10.4 errors (52 errors/5) per/F3 subject and 9.4 errors (75 errors/8) per F4 subject. One plausible explanation for the lower rate of errors for the F2 subjects is that they wrote much shorter compositions (107.1 words on average) than the F3 subjects (150.2 words on average) and the F4 ones (193.3 words on average). But an even more plausible explanation is that the seemingly correct uses of the auxiliaries by the F2 subjects are no more than formulaic sequences which must have been memorised from earlier lessons. This can be well illustrated with the "correct" uses of the auxiliary *avoir* by subject S9/F2, the very one who recorded the fewest auxiliary-related errors (only 1 in 10 uses) in the F2 sub-sample. Consider, for example, the following passage taken from Extract 2 above, and which involves the verb *manger* ('to eat'), which occurred in 3 of the 10 instances where the auxiliary *avoir* was required:

*Le dimanche dernier, J'ai mangé des frites et du poisson au diner. Au petit déjeuner, j'ai bois du café et j'ai mangé du fromage. Au déjeuner, j'ai mangé des gâteaux et des bombons.*

'Last Sunday, I ate French fries and fish for dinner. For breakfast, I took coffee and ate cheese. For lunch, I ate cakes and sweets'.

Clearly, the author of this passage attached the auxiliary to verbs that denote things that are not likely to have happened that week-end. The implausibility of students at this rural school in Kenya to offer the kind of food mentioned (including cheese!), coupled with the illogical sequence of meals (from dinner downwards to breakfast to lunch), can only suggest that the student in question was not describing what had really happened, but was trying to piece together phrases and sentences which he must have encountered in previous lessons, and which he must have picked up simply as formulaic sequences. In relation to such formulaic sequences potentially being pragmatically inappropriate, Myles, Hooper & Mitchell (1998), quoted in Ellis (2015: 81), pointed out, as one of the criteria they "proposed [...] for determining whether an utterance is formulaic", the fact that they are "possibly inappropriate (syntactically, semantically, or pragmatically or otherwise idiosyncratic)".

The same inconsistencies can be observed in S2/F2's composition, the only other one in which only one auxiliary-related error was made. For instance, when the subject writes "*Le weekend, j'ai mangé du riz, des gâteaux et du poisson. J'ai bu du jus, de la bière et je n'ai pas bu du chocolat*" ('At the weekend, I ate rice, cakes and fish. I drank juice, beer and I did not drink chocolate'), he is talking about things which cannot have happened: for one thing, no beer could have been served at the school, and no chocolate either. So, there was no point in him saying that he did not drink chocolate. In fact, if we compare the compositions produced by S2/F2 and by S9/S2 (the "best" two students from the F2 sub-sample) with that written by S1/F2 (the "worst" in the sub-sample), we realise that although the latter did not get a single auxiliary right (for having avoided them altogether), his composition is actually logically sequenced and, hence, sounds more of an



authentic production than a mere incongruous juxtaposition of just remembered phrases and sentences.

The same reliance on formulaically learnt phrases and sentences can also partly explain why there was a greater use of the auxiliary *avoir* in the F2 compositions than in the F3 and F4 ones: it seems as if the first verbs the students were taught are those that require the auxiliary *avoir* indeed: out of the 37 (or so) different verbs that required auxiliaries in the compositions of all the ten F2 subjects, only 13 (i.e. about one third) of them required *être* as an auxiliary; all the others required *avoir*. In this connection, one illuminating fact is that only 3 (i.e. 4%) of the 37 verbs were used 40 times (17 times for *manger*, 13 for *boire*, and 10 for *regarder*), which corresponds to 34% of all the uses. And since these 3 verbs all require the auxiliary *avoir*, it is easy to see why *avoir* was more frequently used than *être*. It is equally worth pointing out that 7 (i.e. 54%) of the 13 verbs that required *être* were used by just one subject, S1/F2, who avoided the use of auxiliaries altogether. It could further be claimed that the prevalence of *avoir* influenced even the number and type of errors made to the extent that the F2 subjects made significantly more errors consisting in using *avoir* for *être* than those consisting in using *être* for *avoir*: just 1 error was made (by S3/F2) involving *être* for *avoir*.

While there was a “preference” for *avoir* to the detriment of *être* for the F2 subjects, the preference was in the opposite direction for the F3 and F4 subjects: they made significantly more errors involving the use of *être* for *avoir* than those involving the use of *avoir* for *être*. For instance, the F3 students made only 1 error involving *avoir* for *être*; see S1/F3. It is not clear why they tended to use *être* for *avoir*. In fact, on the face of it, this observation is counterintuitive if we consider the fact that, as Bescherelle (2009) informs us, “As an auxiliary the verb *avoir* is more frequently used than the verb *être*” (p. 11).

What is evident, though, is the greater tendency on the part of the F3 and F4 subjects (than on the F2 ones) to simply avoid using the required auxiliaries. In fact, the higher the subjects’ proficiency level, the greater their rate of avoidance of auxiliaries was. At first sight this might seem

contradictory to a finding that emerged from four studies on avoidance that are summarised in Ellis (2008: 372) and which suggests that “avoidance reduces as learners gain in proficiency [...]”.<sup>5</sup> However, it could be argued (or else hypothesised) that this reduction will occur if the learners’ level is relatively advanced (or at least intermediate), which was the case in 3 of the 4 studies Ellis (2008) refers to, but not the case in the present study, where the learners can only be considered low-proficiency ones.

Ellis (2008: 371) also informs us that “[those four] studies provide clear evidence that the learner’s L1 affects avoidance behaviour”. Schachter (1974) was the first researcher to have brought to light the fact that not all learner errors were actually realised as errors; some were realised through the learners’ deliberately avoiding using the target structure because it was deemed too complicated. In the present study, the avoidance of auxiliaries in the French *passé composé* can indeed be easily attributed to the learners’ first language, Kikamba, which (like the other Kenyan language the learners had a good knowledge of, namely Swahili) has no auxiliary verbs (i.e. the kind of just functional elements meant to mark tense and aspect). But the same avoidance could also be partly attributed to English, the language of instruction in Kenya, through which such low-proficiency learners must have been taught French. This is because the French *passé composé* can be translated using both the English present perfect, which requires the use of an auxiliary, and the simple past tense, which does not. So, it would not be unreasonable to assume that part of the avoidance was related to the English simple past.

### **3.2.2 Systematic and free variation**

As already noted earlier, systematic variation is explained with reference to the context, whether a situational context or a linguistic one. In the present case, only the linguistic context can be relevant since both the situational and the psycholinguistic context were the same for all the subjects, at least for

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<sup>5</sup> Note, though, that the studies were about a different topic, “the avoidance of phrasal verbs in English” (p. 371).

those from the same class: they all wrote their compositions on the same topic and under the same conditions of time, space, etc. To focus on the linguistic context, to say that “the linguistic context also plays a role [in the choice of a linguistic variant]” is to say that “the variant a speaker chooses is dependent in part on the words that precede and follow the [structure] being investigated” (Ellis 2015, p. 99). In the present study, though, the definition of linguistic context has to be extended to cover the notion of “type of lexical verb” that required the auxiliary. That is, it cannot be limited to the words preceding and those following the auxiliary, since in some of the instances that are analysed below the auxiliary was simply absent. Evidence of variation will be sought where the same subject used two or more variants for the same verb, one possible variant being the non-use of the auxiliary at all. This happened only in 7 (i.e. about one third) of the 23 compositions under analysis: in three F2 compositions, two F3 ones and two F4 ones.

The three F2 compositions were written by the subjects S4/F2, S6/F2 and S8/F2. In the first of the three, the learner concerned used the correct auxiliary (*avoir*) before the verb *regarder* (‘to watch/see’), and he did so three times. But he dropped the same auxiliary from another occurrence of *regarder* (in the position marked [∅]). The four instances are reproduced in Extract 3 below.

**Extract 3: The correct use and the non-use of the auxiliary before the verb *regarder* (‘to watch/see’) by S4/F2:**

[1] *Le weekend n’est pas trop loin. J’ai regardé la télévision et écouté de la musique.*

‘Last week-end is not too far away. I watched television and listened to music’.

[2] *J’ai vais au cinéma et j’ai regardé le interrassa films desamericains.*

‘I went to the cinema and watched interesting American films’.

[3] *J’ai vais à la Wote stade et j’ai regardé de la Makueni septs rugby.*

‘I went to the Wote Stadium and watched the Makueni Rugby Sevens’.

[4] *En le quatrième jour j'ai resté à la maison avec mon enfants, nous [∅]*

*regardé la télé [...]*

'The 4<sup>th</sup> day I remained at home and watched the telly with my children

[...]'

The kind of linguistic context that may have contributed to the dropping of the article in the 4<sup>th</sup> instance above seems to be the change in the number of the first person, from the singular *je* ('I') in the first three instances, to the plural *nous* ('we') in the fourth one. The learner ought to have written *nous avons regardé* ('we watched'), but it seems that the plural form *avons* had not stuck yet in his mental lexicon. The first person singular form *ai* was readily available most likely as just part of the formulaic sequence *j'ai regardé* ('I watched') acquired through rote learning from so many sentences encountered in previous lessons.

**Extract 4: The correct use and the non-use of the auxiliary before *coucher* ('to go to bed') by S6/F2**

[1] *J'ai bois du soda et en 21:00 je [∅] couche.*

'I took soda and at 21.00 I went to bed'.

[2] *En 13: 00hr j'ai mangé du riz et le poulet. En 21: 00 j'ai couché.*

'At 13.00 I ate rice and chicken. At 21.00 I went to bed'.

In [1] the learner avoided using the auxiliary, while in [2] he used it, but the wrong one. (He should have written *je me suis couché* 'I went to bed'.) Unlike in Extract 3, it is hard to find an aspect of linguistic context that might have led to the two variants. In this case, it would be reasonable to invoke free variation as the explanation.

**Extract 5: The correct use and the non-use of the auxiliary before *boire* ('to drink') by S8/F2**

[1] *Il y a visité a National Park au Tsavo. [...] Il y a boire du soda et mangé des frites.*

‘He visited the Tsavo National Park. [...] There, he took soda and ate French fries’.

[2] *Malheureusement la pied [∅] bois et frapper au siège at nuit.*

Literally: ‘Unfortunately the foot [∅] drink and hit the seat at night’<sup>6</sup>

As in the case of F6/S2, the learner used the auxiliary (and the correct one, i.e. *avoir*) in one instance, [1], but dropped it in the other, [2]. However, in the present case (of S8/F2), it would make more sense to attribute the variation to linguistic context because in [1] the verb *boire* (‘drink’) has a plausible subject, namely *il* (‘he’) and is followed by a direct object, *du soda* (‘some soda’), while in [2] the noun *pied* (‘foot’) cannot be a plausible subject for *boire*, and this verb does not have a direct object. But this attempt at explanation must remain highly speculative since it is hard (if not impossible) to tell what exactly the learner meant in the sentence in [2].

The F3 compositions that feature variation are those by S2/F3, S4/F3, and S5/F3.

#### **Extract 6: The correct use and the non-use of the auxiliary before *aller* (‘to go’) and *regarder* (‘to watch/see’) by S2/F3**

[1] *Nous sommes allés au lac et puis nous commençons nager là. [...] Nous sommes pris une heure là. Nous sommes allés à la rivière aussi. Dans la rivière, nous [∅] regardions les poissons. Il y étaient beaucoup. Nous sommes allés dans notre classe et pris notre livres et [∅] allé à notre homes.*

‘We went to the lake and once there we started to swim. We spent an hour there. We also went to the river. In the river, we saw fish. There were many of them. We went to our classroom, took our books and went to our homes’.

[2] *En train de marcher, nous [∅] regardions une grande labre qui était beaucoup de fruits. L’adjoit était la seulement. Il n’a pas regardé mon ami et moi. Nous sommes allés dans notre classe [...]*

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<sup>6</sup> It is not clear at all what the learner meant to say.

‘While walking we saw a big tree which had a lot of fruit on it. Only the deputy was there. He did not look at my friend and me. We went to our classroom [...].’

Starting with the verb *aller* (‘to go’), it was given the correct auxiliary, *sommes* (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> pers. plur of *être*) in four instances and was not in only one. The dropping of it is most likely attributable to linguistic context: where the auxiliary was used, it was directly preceded by the subject pronoun *nous* (‘we’); it was dropped where the subject was not used, in a later, and conjoined, clause, where it ought to have been used as well. Regarding the verb *regarder* (‘to watch’), which in the present case was used by the learner for *voir* (‘to see’), in the two instances where the form *avons* (1<sup>st</sup> pers. plur.) of the required auxiliary *avoir* was avoided, the learner used the inappropriate imperfect tense *regardions* (‘we were watching’), instead. Where it was used (and used correctly), the learner used the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing., the subject of which is *il* (‘he’). It would therefore be reasonable to invoke contextual variation in this case, by speculating that the learner had difficulty using the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. plur. form *avons*.

**Extract 7: The wrong and the correct use of the auxiliary before the verb *retourner* (‘to return’) by S4/F3**

*Je suis assisté le cérémonie en mercredi. Un moment j’ai retourné à notre maison, j’ai tombé malade. Je suis visitera un hopital. Le docteur donné mois les medicines. Vendredi je suis retourné à l’hopital pour apotre medicament.*

‘I attended a ceremony on Wednesday. A short time after I had returned home I fell ill. I went to the hospital. The doctor gave me medicines. Friday I went back to the hospital for other medicines’.

The learner first used the wrong auxiliary *ai* (1<sup>st</sup> pers sing of *avoir*) before *retourner* (‘to return’) and then used the correct one *suis* (1<sup>st</sup> pers sing of *être*) before the same verb. Yet the linguistic context was exactly the same in both cases: it consisted in the use of the first pers. singular, the use of a

temporal expression before the subject (*un moment*, ‘a short moment’, and *vendredi* ‘Friday’), and the use of a locative prepositional phrase after the main verb (*à notre maison* ‘to our home’ and *à l’hôpital* ‘to the hospital’). Therefore, it would be reasonable to conclude that the variation in the use of the auxiliary in this case was of the free type.

**Extract 8: The correct and the wrong use of the auxiliary before *aller* (‘to go’), the wrong and the non-use of the aux. before *dormir* (‘to sleep’), and the use of three variants for *arriver* (‘to arrive’) by S5/F3**

[1] *Moi, je suis dormi très tard parce que je suis allé au théâtre à la ville. Le théâtre terminé à neuf heures, je suis allé à la maison.*

‘I slept very late because I went to watch a play in town. After the play at 9, I went home’.

[2] *Le bruit continué de plus en plus. Aussi, je suis très en rade. « J’ai aller en scène et je n’aller pas. »*

‘The noise grew louder and louder. As a result, I was confused [about what to do]: “To go to the scene or not to go’.

[3] *Un moment j’ai arrivé pour la scène il y a grand foule près de à Matatu.*

‘A moment later I arrived at the scene [;] there was a big crowd next to the *matatu* [minibus]’

[4] *La police être arrivé pour la scène. [...] L’ambulance [Ø] arrivé pour la scène et être assisté personne très blessée. [...] Cet nuit je ne [Ø] dormis pas.*

‘The police arrived at the scene. [...] The ambulance arrived at the scene and attended to the people who were seriously injured. [...] That night I could not sleep’.

In [1], the learner made the correct use of the auxiliary *être* (in his use of *suis*, the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. of *être*) with the verb *aller* (‘to go’). However, in [2], and still with the verb *aller*, he first made the wrong choice of the auxiliary *avoir* (in his use of *ai*, i.e. the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. of *avoir*), and then he failed to use any auxiliary at all in the subsequent occurrence of *aller*. It is hard to see

why he produced *j'ai aller en scène* (instead of *je suis allé*, 'I went') and *je n'aller pas* (instead of *je ne suis pas allé*, 'I did not go'). Notice that the learner had simply meant to say "*aller [...] ou ne pas aller*" ('to go [...] or not to go'), in which *aller* is a simple infinitive form, which did not require an auxiliary in the first place, and not a *passé composé* form, which would have required one. It would therefore be more reasonable to attribute this type of confusion to contextual rather than to free variation.

Turning to the verb *dormir* ('to sleep'), in [1] it was given the wrong auxiliary in *je suis dormi* (instead of *j'ai dormi*, 'I slept'), while in [4] it was given no auxiliary at all in *je ne dormis pas* (instead of *je n'ai pas dormi*, 'I did not sleep'). Since the latter construction is a negative one, it would make sense to argue that it is the very linguistic context that led to the learner's inability to select any auxiliary. This is all the more plausible because inserting an auxiliary, *ai* (1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. of *avoir*) in this case would have involved a different word order, whereby the second element of the negation structure, *pas*, would have to be moved to before the main verb, *dormir*, so as to produce *je n'ai pas dormi* ('I did not sleep').

Finally, regarding the verb *arriver* ('to arrive'), the learner first chose the wrong auxiliary for it in *j'ai arrivé* ('I arrived') in [3], then, in [4], he made the correct choice in *la police être arrivée* ('the police arrived'), even though he used the wrong form, *être* (instead of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. *est*), before deciding not to choose any auxiliary at all in *l'ambulance arrivé* ('the ambulance arrived'). While in *j'ai arrivé* the subject is a pronoun in the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing., in both *la police être arrivée* and *l'ambulance arrivé*, it is a noun (*la police* and *l'ambulance*, respectively). In relation to *j'ai arrivé* vs. *la police être arrivé*, the use of a different word-category subject might make one think of contextual variability. But in the case of *la police être arrivée* vs. *l'ambulance arrivé*, the linguistic context is virtually identical (except for the very use of different nouns, *police* vs. *ambulance*), which makes it more plausible to invoke free variation.

Extract 8 is a good illustration of the learner choosing, in the same composition, all the three possible variants of the same structure, possibly as



a strategy for checking, with the teacher, about which one of those rules the correct one is.

The only F4 composition that features variation is that by Subject S5/F4, from which Extract 9 was taken.

**Extract 9: The correct use and the non-use of the auxiliary before *aller* ('to go') and *arriver* ('to arrive') by S5/F4**

[1] *Ce matin, j'ai levé à six heures exactement. Je suis allé à la sale de bains est baignés.*

'This morning, I woke up at 6 exactly. I went to the bathroom and had a bath'.

[2] *À sept heure j'ai pris un bus pour aller à l'école. À l'école, je suis arrivé à sept heure trente.*

'At 7 I took a bus to go to school. I arrived at the school at 7.30'.

[3] *Moi est mes amis [∅] allé à la classe.*

'I and my friends went to class'.

[4] *Monsieur Kembo [∅] arrivé à la classe, à Sept heure quarante [...]*

'Mr Kembo [the teacher] arrived in class at 7.40 [...]'

[5] *Moi est mes amis [∅] allé à la clase français.*

'I and my friends went for the French class'.

In the two instances, *suis allé* ('I went') in [1] and *suis arrivé* ('I arrived') in [2], where the learner used the correct auxiliary, namely *suis* (1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. of *être*), the grammatical subject is just the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. pronoun *je* ('I'). On the other hand, in [3] and [5] it is composed of two elements (*moi*, 'I', and *mes amis*, 'my friends')<sup>7</sup>, which automatically calls for a plural verb form of the auxiliary, in this case *sommes* (in the expected correct form *sommes allés* 'we went'). So, the anticipated change from the singular to the plural is, in this case, the linguistic context that can plausibly be invoked to account for the variation. The change in the subject of the verb could be said to have led to the non-use of the auxiliary in *Monsieur Kembo arrivé* ('Mr Kembo

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<sup>7</sup> Note that in *moi est mes amis, est* (which has the form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. of *être*, 'to be') is just a misspelling for the conjunction *et* ('and').

arrived’) in [4], where the subject changed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. However, to complicate the analysis somewhat, it should be pointed out that in the same composition the same learner used an auxiliary in at least three other instances after a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. subject, including one that is correct (namely *M. Kembo il a donné beacoup exercice* ‘Mr Kembo gave many exercises’).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to analyse the amount and the nature of variation there was in the written use of French auxiliaries *avoir* (‘to have’) and *être* (‘to be’) required for the *passé composé* tense. To this end, a frequency analysis approach was applied to data collected from twenty-three compositions written by learners from three different levels of interlanguage (IL) development: Form 2, Form 3, and Form 4 students from one secondary school in Kenya.

The paper made quite revealing observations in relation to both “horizontal” (i.e. according to linguistic context) and “vertical variability” (i.e. according to level of IL development”: in terms of the latter type of variability the learners from the lowest level (i.e. the Form-2 students) virtually used *only* the auxiliary *avoir*, while the higher-level learners (from Form 3 and Form 4) by and large avoided the use of auxiliaries. However, on the one hand the paper argued that the Form-2 students’ apparent “correct” uses of the auxiliary *avoir* were most likely derived formulaic sequences rather than structures generated using the rules governing the auxiliary in question. On the other hand, it attributed the higher-level learners’ avoidance of auxiliaries to their realisation of how difficult it was to creatively apply the rules governing the two auxiliaries.

An analysis of “horizontal variability” in the present study is meaningful particularly in the production of the Form-3 and Form-4 students’, since it is these who produced a significant number of errors. Where they did not avoid the use of auxiliaries altogether, they made much more mistakes consisting in the use of the auxiliary *être* for *avoir* than the other way round. This is intriguing, particularly in view of the fact that, as pointed out earlier, the

auxiliary *avoir* is more frequent in French than *être*. In terms of systematic vs. free variation, the paper found, as was predictable from the literature, that there was more of the former (i.e. that due to context) than the latter (i.e. that which is random). But in some cases the linguistic context was to be extended to the narrowest aspects of the target structure, e.g. to whether the subject of the verb which required the auxiliary was in the singular or in the plural.

The observation that the lowest-level learners in this study produced fewer errors than their higher-level counterparts makes one think of the U-shaped acquisition of language, whereby the learners seem to “first succeed” (to borrow words from Kellerman 1983) before entering a stage of language development where they make more mistakes as they start applying the rules creatively, a stage which in turn is followed by one where they use the correct, target forms again. However, invoking the U-shaped learning would only be a solid conclusion if the present study had been longitudinal, which it was not; it was a “pseudo-longitudinal” study, that is one in which “samples of learner language are collected from groups of different proficiency levels at a single point in time” (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005, p. 97). A longitudinal study of low-proficiency learners of French as a foreign language in Kenya is therefore recommended as the best-suited one to indicate the stages of their IL development.

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## APPENDIX: THE SUBJECTS' COMPOSITIONS<sup>8</sup>

### 1. S1/F2

*Le weekend il y a deux journée : samedi et dimanche. Samedi ; Je reveillé sept heures et **doucher**. Je travaillé à farm et à midi je précipité vers l'arrêt d'auto bus.*

*Je s'arrête et **installe** dans le bus. Je **visite** le sinema. Onze heure trente minute je **commence** ma trajet.*

*Dimorche je **reveille** Dounze heures et je **douche**. Je **sortir** car church. Huit heure Je **repos**. [67 words]*

### 2. S2/F2

*Moi je suis Mwendwa. Le weekend, **j'ai mangé** du riz, des gâteaux et du poisson. **J'ai bu** du jus, de la bière et je n'ai pas bu du chocolat.*

*Hier, **j'ai regardé** la télévision à 8h10. Chaque mon activities sont un bon. Dimanche, **j'ai va** à l'église avec mon parents et mon amie. À 12h50 nous **avons mangé** dans un grand restaurant. Il **situé** dans une grande ville. Nous **sommes arrivés** à la maison à 3h15.*

*Hier, lundi **j'ai regardé** la télévision et **j'ai fait** la marché dans un grand supermarche. **J'ai visité** mon grand parents tous les weekend. [99 words]*

### 3. S3/F2

*Je m'appelle Alex. Je suis étudiant à l'école secondaire de Kaumoni. Il es 15 ans et il est un peu garçon.*

*Le week-end passé : le vendredi dernier, **j'ai mangé** des fruits de la viande et de chocolat. Je **suis visité** le parc en animaux sauvages. Les crocodile, les léopard et la lion.*

*Le samedi dernier **j'ai joué** au foot et le basket. Mon école **participé** aux compétitions régionales. Notre equipe de foot ball **a gagné** tous ses matchs.*

*Le dimanche passé, **j'aller** à l'église avec mes parents, après-midi **j'ai regardé** au cinéma et au théâtre et **lire** le journaux et les romans.*

*Le week-end passe pret interassant. [108 words]*

### 4. S4/F2

*Le weekend n'est pas trop loin. **J'ai regardé** la télévision et **écouté** de la musique.*

***J'ai vais** au cinéma et **j'ai regardé** le interrassa films desamericains. J'aime le comédie movies.*

***J'ai vais** au restaurant avec mon enfants et nous **boit** du café et mangé french fries et des soda.*

***J'ai vais** à la Wote stade et **j'ai regardé** de la Makueni septs rugby.*

***J'ai vais** à l'église et **j'ai participé** tras bien. En le quatrième jour **j'ai resté** à la maison avec mon enfants, nous **regardé** la télé et **j'ai préparé** revenu à l'école.*

***J'ai** un intéarrassant weekend. Il est fantastique. [101 words]*

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<sup>8</sup> All the F2 subjects wrote their compositions on the topic "Le weekend passé" (Last Weekend)

5. S5/F2

*Le weekend passé est très intéressant. Nous allons allé mid trimestre récréation. En Vendredi le matin j'ai mangé du pain and bu du thé. La midi, j'ai visité du parc National de Tsavo Ouest. Il y a des lions, des léopards, des zèbres et des éléphants. Il a faits chaud à Tsavo. L'après-midi, j'ai prend mon déjeuner. J'ai mangé l'ougali et des légumes. J'ai resté à la maison et j'ai regardé la film.*

*En Samedi j'ai visité du lac Bogoria pour voir les Sources Schaud. L'après midi, à la piscine, voir un spectacle et écouter la musique traditionnelle.*

*Dimanche, j'ai allé à l'église avec mon parents qui se trouve à dix kilomètres de l'hôtel. L'après midi, j'ai visité mon ami Mutuku et nous avons écouté la musique.*

*En Lundi le matin le petit déjeuner j'ai bu du café et j'ai mangé trop de gâteau. La midi il a très froid et j'ai resté à la maison et j'ai lisé le roman. [161 words]*

6. S6/F2

*Le 11 juillet 2015*

*Mon tri-mestre Il est interesse. En Samedi j'ai bois du cafe, j'ai mange trop du riz, j'ai écouté la musique, mon père acheté bicyclette.*

*En dimanche, j'ai bois du café, j'ai attendre l'église, en 15 :00h j'ai attendre le piscine. En 17 :00h j'ai reposé. En 19 :00 j'ai mangé beaucoup de poisson et le chapati. J'ai bois du soda et en 21 :00 je couche.*

*En lundi J'ai aller à la peche, J'ai bois du cafe et j'ai mangé le chapati, J'ai regardé le télévision. J'ai écouté la musique. En 13 :00hr j'ai mangé du riz et le poulet. En 21 :00 j'ai couché.*

*En Mardi 8 :00hr j'ai bois du café and et 9 :00hr j'ai promene to Kaumoni. [125 words]*

7. S7/F2

*Le 11 juillet 2015*

*Mon père, Ma mère et moi, et une visite au national parc au Tsavo parc. Dedans au parc et Observez les lions, le zebra, le buffalo, le girrafe et les monkeys. Malheureusement autour au parc observez les Crocodiles et les hippopotamus. Ma mère préparé et à délicieux repas pleine de assez aliments.*

*Mon père préfere des frites et des soda. Ma frère prefer le poulet/des poissons, et moi prefere des frites et limonade. Ma mère est non appétit le mange. Ma mère préféré aller à piscine seule. Mon père et moi observez chouette [ ?] il y a pleine de biens. Environs et bien depuis tout le monde tranquillement se reposer ensuite prier. [117 words]*

8. S8/F2

*Le weekend passé il y a intresté. Il y a visité a National Park au Tsavo. Il y a scie le lion, l'éléphant, le zebra.*

*Il y a boire du soda et mangé des frites. Ma mère acheter trois pantalons car ma frère. Il préférer des gateux et du chocolat.*

*Malheureusement la pied bois et frapper au siège at nuit. Il fait chaud. Il mange assez aliments. [67 words]*

9. S9/F2

*Je m'appellé Robinson Ngei. Je suis étudiant à l'école secondaire de Kaumoni. Je suis en form deux. J'ai 15 ans.*

*Le week-end passé, J'ai passé mes examens de mi-trimestre. Je n'ai obtenu de bonnes notes. Le Samedi dernier, J'ai joué au foot, au tennis et au basket. Mon école participé aux compétitions regionales le Samedi dernier.*

*Le dimanche dernier, J'ai mangé des frites et du poisson au diner. Au petit déjeuner, j'ai bois du café et j'ai mangé du fromage. Au déjeuner, j'ai mangé des gâteaux et des bombons.*

*Le dimanche, J'ai acheté un pantalon noir. J'ai regardé au cinéma et au théâtre. J'ai [ ??? ] de mi-trimestre cet homme. Le week-end passé, j'ai vais bien merci. [117 words]*

10. S10/F2

*Le weekend passé, j'ai travaillé en Mombasa. J'ai pique-niques. D'abord, j'ai visité le Animal Orphanage à 10h00. J'ai boire du soda et un gâteau. L'après midi, j'ai regardé au cinéma et moive au DJ AFRO. J'ai mangé du riz et des frites. J'ai ecouté la musique au Rose Muhando. Le samedi au coucher du soleil, j'ai se promené en hotél hilton. J'ai mangé de poisson, le poulet, des frites et de légume. J'ai boire du soda. J'ai boire du limonade.*

*Le dimanche, au lever du soleil, J'ai se promené se piscine près mes la maison. Au 10h00, j'ai sortie est trajet en mes résidence. J'ai épuiser préférer se reposé. [109 words]*

11. S1/F3

CE MATIN

*Je me suis levé à 9h00. Je me suis [ ? ] à la salle du bain. Je me suis lavé depuis dix minutes. Je me brossé les dents. Après avoir mon petit déjeuner. Je m'habille mon pantalon noir, chemise blanche et pullover noir. Le petit déjeuner est du thé avec du pain.*

*Je vient à l'église. Nous prions. Après va à l'église Je viens à la salle de classe. Les cours commencé à 8h00. Je me prendre physique qui est le premier cou pour le jour. A 8h40, je prendre l'anglais Puis je me suis lire l'histoir de Jomo Kenyatta.*

*A 9h20 il y a de Kiswahili. Le professeur de Kiswahili n'est pas là. Je viens à la bibliothèque pour lire les livres différents pour Kiswahili. J'aime Kiswahili beaucoup.*

*A 10h00 nous nous mangeons de ngumu avec du thé depuis vingt minutes.*

*Je me reviens à la salle de classe. Le Professeur de Français est en classe. J'adore mon professeur de français mais il est très sympa. Mon matin était très mémorable. [172 words]*

12. S2/F3

QUEL JOUR!

*Mon école est située près d'une grande montagne et une grande rivière. Ce n'est pas tout ; il y a un lac dans la forêt à côté de l'école. Vendredi dernier, au moment où je quittais lécole [...] avec mon ami Brian, nous allés la. Nous quittions à l'école à ce matin pendant les autres étudiants étaient en récle.*

Nous **sommes marché** pour trente minutes et finalement nous arrivions à la grande montagne. Nous étions en notre vêtements pour l'école. La montagne était très froide pare ce qu'il était le mois de juin. En train de marcher, nous **regardions** une grande labre qui était beaucoup de fruits. Mon ami et moi **commencions** de prendre des fruits immédiatement.

Nous **sommes allés** au lac et puis nous **commencions** nager la. L'activité était très intéressant. Nous **sommes pris** une heure là. Nous **sommes allés** à la rivière aussi. Dans la rivière, nous **regardions** les poissons. Il y étaient beaucoup.

Quand nous **sommes fini** notre excursion, nous **décidions** d'aller à l'école. Il était quinze heures. Quand nous **arrivions** à l'école, nous **trouvions** il y n'a pas personne.

L'adjoint était la seulement. Il n'a pas regardé mon ami et moi. Nous **sommes allés** dans notre classe et **pris** notre livres et **allé** à notre hommes. Les autres étudiants étaient connaisons où nous étions nous ils ne **dit** pas les professeurs.

Quel jour ! [228 words]

13. S3/F3

LA VISITE [À] L'AMBOSELI

En Février Samedi, mon classe **est donné** un idée pour allé le vistie Amboseli. Tout le monde a la classe **est tres** heureuse la idee. Les professeur en Français **est aimé** l'idée tout. Les étudiants **est ecrite** une lettre pour donner le députe directeur à l'école.

Le directeur **est accépté** le idée **est donné** votre classe permission pour visité l'amboseli. Le mois prochain tout le monde a la classe **est téléphoné** les parents est demanderais les dargent pour utilisé en la visite Amboseli. En Mercredi tout le monde et etait pre pour allé a l'amboseli. [95 words]

14. S4/F3

[UNE LETTRE À UN AMI ...]

Cher Monsieur,

Premierment, j'**ai desole** parceque j'**ai absent** la semaine et je n'**informé** jamais vous. Je **suis assisté** mon sœur cérémonie de mariage. Je **suis voyangé** à Mombasa avec mes parents pour acheté mon jupe et chaussure et shirt pour le cérémonie.

Je **suis aussi voyangé** à Nakuru avec mes parents pour visité mon sœur et elles homme. Je **suis assisté** le cérémonie en mercredi. Un moment j'**ai retourné** à notre maison, j'**ai tombé** malade. Je **suis visitera** un hopital. Le docteur **donné** mois les medicines. Vendredi je **suis retourné** à l'hopital pour apotre medicament. Maintenant j'**ai finir** mon medicament et j'**ai recouvrir**. [103 words]

Brian

15. S5/F3

NUIT MAUVAISE [UNE MAUVAISE NUIT]

Moi, je **suis dormi** très tard parce que je **suis allé** au théâtre à la ville. Le théâtre **terminé** à neuf heures, je **suis allé** à la maison. Un moment j'**ai entré** ma chambre. J'**ai ouïé** a bruit près de la rue. Le bruit **continué** de plus en plus. Aussi, je suis très en rade. « J'**ai aller** en scène et je n'**aller** pas. »



*Après cinq minutes j'ai décidé pour aller. Je ouvrir la porte et je suis travassé la rue. Un moment j'ai arrivé pour la scène il y a grand foule près de à Matatu.*

*Le matatu être un accident avec à l'autobus. La police être arrivé pour la scène. Cinq personnes être mourir, dix personnes et très blessée. L'ambulance arrivé pour la scène et être assisté personne très blessée. J'ai retourné pour ma maison. Cet nuit je ne dormis pas. Cet matin j'ai expliqué la situation pour mes amis. [153 words]*

16. S1/F4

CE MATIN

*Mercredi dernière, vous vous êtes réveillé tard. Je me suis levé et je suis allé à la salle de bains. Je me suis douché pour quinze minutes et je suis retourné au dortoir. Je me suis habille ma chemise blanche, un pantalon noir et pullover noir. Je suis allé à la salle de manger.*

*J'ai mangé à la petite déjeuner. La petite déjeuner était délicieux. Après avoir je suis allé à l'église. Après la prière à l'église je suis retourné à la salle de classe et je suis commencé mon études. Le première leçon, il est était maths. Monsieur Hesabu entré de la classe et il est commence le leçon. J'aime les maths parce que c'est très difficile. Aussi j'aime monsieur Hesabu parce que' il est explique bien et il est très sympa.*

*Le deuxième leçon, il était français. Le française était mon mateur favori parce que le matière était beaucoup d'avantage. Le première d'avantage c'est je voyage beaucoup. Le deuxième c'est je travaille le guide touristique. Aussi j'aime beaucoup professeur de française. Il est gentil et il est très sympa. Aussi, il est explique bien. Vive le matin ! [189 words]*

17. S2/F4

QUEL JOUR

*Je levé a 4h ce matin. Je douché et je brossé les dents. Je s'habille le pantalon noir, le chemise bleu, une veste rouge et le cravate noir.*

*Après notre pique-nique le weekend passé, nous sommes éntres dans le bus pour rentrer. En route j'ai jeté des ordres par la fenêtres. J'ai décidé passer mon pique-nique à Masomo. Le jour de départ faisait beau et chaud. Je suis allé à la gare pour prendre le bus. J'ai acheté un billet de aller-retour à Masomo. A 7h sur la dotte, le bus et parti de la gare.*

*J'avais un petit sac. Dans mon sac il y mes vêtements, mes livres, mon portable, mes stylos et mon soda et biscuits. J'ai étaient mon petit sac a coté de mon siege.*

*Après dix minutes en voyage en bus, j'ai dormi parce que je suis fatigué. Jusqu'à Madongo je me suis revéillé par ce que je fait soif et faim. J'ai décidé de bois du soda et mange des biscuits.*

*Je cherché mon sac qui étaient un soda et les biscuits . Quel surprise ! Mon sac n'était pas là. Je cherche partout sans succès.*

*Les passegers m'ont aidé moi a cherché mon sac. Le conductrice ouvert le fenêtre. J'ai regardant la rue ... [212 words]*

18. S3/F4

LES EXPÉRIENCES HORRIBLE

Mon école est située près d'une grande montagne et une grande rivière. Ce n'est pas tout ; il y a un lac dans la forêt à côté de l'école. Vendredi dernière, au moment où je **quittais** l'école, auparavant **jécouté** les voies et clients avec les gens convulsés après nous étudions **décidé** rechercher surtout dans la forêt pour les gens.

Rechercher, rechercher, rechercher avec succès. Nous **nous décidons** dormir sur les arbres. Ils **dormiraient** par vingt cinq minutes, le person **crient** à haute voix. Ils **sont lève** immédiatement. Il **été** le grand giants. Ils ne **parlait** pas avec les autres. Nous **décidons** la fiat jogging et évader la giant.

Ils **crient** pour l'aider ne pas succès. Ils **continuera** le jogging et nous mettre à guide la forêt. La guide **accepté** et sauvegarder leur pour sécurité. Il **est utilisé** la mutiré de militaire pour descendre la giant sous. La giant **est tomber** par terre avec à grand tremble. La giant n'est pas là. Il **été** évader. Nous **était** contenté ou nous offrés applaudisés. Il **decidé** nous accompagnons auparavant externe de la forêt. Nous **promisons** jamais visitons de la forêt. [187 words]

19. S4/F4

Jean Kamau  
B.P 17112  
Madungo

Le 4 Juin 2015

Chère Alice,

Bonjour Alice? Ca va? Je vais bien. Ma famille va bien. Ma soer et mon frère **allé** en promenade. Mon père et ma mère **allé** au cinéma.

Le week end-end passé j'**ai participé** a une cérémonie de mariage pour Monsieur Jean et Madame Cathérine. Je **me levé** à 4h ce matin. Je **douché** et je **me brossé** les dents. Je **pris** mon petit déjeuner. Je **retourner** à ma chambre. Je **s'habille** le pantalon noir, le chemise bleu, les chaussures noir, une veste rouge et le cravate rouge.

À 5h sur la dotte j'**arrive** à l'église. Je **fais** le ménage et **fais** l'environnement à l'église. Monsieur et Madame Jean **arrivé** à 8h ce matin. Il **est sympa** et **s'habille** très bien. Parce qu'il fait chaud, il ne **s'habille** pas un pullover.

Les hommes **bougé** avec Monsieur Jean **a entré** à l'église et les femmes **bougé** avec Madame Cathérine. Le pasteur **arriver** a 8h30 et il commence le mass. Après le cérémonie je **voyagé** à Mapito.

Je t'**embrasse**. [168 words]

Jean Kamau

20. S5/F4

CE MATIN

Ce matin, j'**ai levé** à six heures exactement. Je **suis allé** à la sale de bains est **baignés**. À six heures trente, je **prépare** mon petit déjeuner. J'**ai pris** mon petit déjeuner pour dix minutes est **habille** mon uniforme. Ma chemise bléu, mon pantalon noir, mon cravate rouge est mon poulovere blanch.

À sept heure j'**ai pris** un bus pour aller à l'école. À l'école, je **suis arrivé** à sept heure trente. Moi est mes amis **allé** à la classe. le Metière Mathématiques est

*commencer à huit heure. le professeur M. Kembo est notre professeur Mathématiques. Il est très strict, Il n'aime pas les étudiants paresseux.*

*Monsieur Kembo arrivé à la classe, à Sept heure quarante est commencés la nouveau chapitre 'le calculus'. Le chapitre est très interressent. M. Kembo il a donné beaucoup exercice pour faire à leçon prochain.*

*Le deuxième leçon est commencé à neuf heur le leçon français. Moi est mes amis allé à la clase français. Français est mon metière favoris ... Moi est mes amis participés poucoup pour la leçon. [175 words]*

## 21. S6/F4

### LES SPORTS

*Un sport est une activité qui aide une personne pour la santé et gagner bon form. Il y beaucoup type des sports pour exemple judo, karate, football, basket ball, natation, pingpong etc. Les sports est bon pour les gens. Dans mon école il y a beaucoup de sports qui nous jouer. J'aime le football pour moi parce que c'est facile pour jouer. J'aime regarder les sports dans un télévision. Dans les clubs internationau, J'aime et J'adore Neymar. Neymar est un footballeur dans un club Barcelona. J'aime comme jouer au football.*

*L'année dernier, nous sommes assisté un fonction où notré club de foot [X] joué contré autre clubs des foot. C'était drôle. Beacoup d'écoles est assisté le fonction. Cinq clubs des foot [X] assisté. Premièrement, nous sommes joué contré Jamuhuri club de foot. Nous [X] gagné victoire. Nous sommes joué contré tous les clubs de foots et nous [X] gagné victoire. Hurray! Nous [X] chanté. Je me rappeler une expérience de foot ball l'anné dernier. J'aime beaucoup de footbal et tout sports. [172 words]*

## 22. S7/F4

### CE MATIN

*Je me réveillé à 4 heures et je me suis allé à la classe pour une heure. Nous étidions le chemie avec Monsieur Maneno. Après les études á 6.00 heure j'étais alon bain ā la salle de bains rapidement. J'apportait mes uniformes ā dortoire et ā la salle de manger pour le petit déjeuner.*

*Après le petit déjeuner qui était le pourige, je suis allé ā l'église pour le mass. Le mass terminais ā 7.40 heures et moi avec les autres étudiants étaient le premier matière ā l'école. Pour le forme quatre, le premier matière était le biologie avec Madame Owino.*

*Le sécond matière était le matimatique avec Monsieur Mambo. J'aime Monsieur Mambo parce qu'il enseigne bien et aussi il connais bien le maths. Le troisième matière était l'anglais avec Monsieur Masomo. Il est grand et il est sympa aussi. Il enseigne bien aussi. Après l'anglais, nous étaient le reclé où nous sommes bu du thē avec du bain.*

*Le rēcle a pris vingt minutes seulement. Nous sommes allés à les classes et commençons étudier les autres matières. [177 words]*

23. S8/F4

CE MATIN

*Je me suis réveillé à 3h pile. Je me suis levé et je me suis allé à la salle du bain. Pour cinq minutes, je me suis lavé. Je me suis habillé un pantalon noir, une chemise blanc, une cravate rouge et une pullover noir. Comme d'habitude, je suis allé à la salle à manger. J'ai bu du porridge parce aujourd'hui il n'ya pas des pain. Quelle dommage !*

*Après avoir le petit déjeuner, je suis allé à l'église pour de masse de matin. Nous prions. Je suis retournée à la classe. Les cours commence à 8h pile. La premiere était le géographie. Monsieur Masomo n'était pas là. Nous faisons les révision ensemble dans la classe.*

*Les mathématic était le deuxième. Madame Cazenane était là. J'aime beaucoup les mathematics. Quand le prof arrivé, tout le monde et très heureux. La prof enseigne très vite mais très bien. Le troisième leçon était l'anglais. Monsieur Alon qui est le prof arrive à l'heure et nous comencions immédiatement. Il est très stricte. Il parle très bien et l'anglais standard. Les leçons durent quarante minutes. Sa leçons est très interessant. Il aime beacoup des l'histoires. Il dit a lui une histoire pour l'origin de Kamba. Il est très interressants.*

*À 10h pile je suis allé à la cantine pour acheté les ngumus. Après la recreation nous sommes allions au labo. Nous sommes au labo à 10h20 à 11h50. C'est très longe mais le prof n'était pas là. Nous faisons les expériences ensemble. Je me suis très amusé ce matin. Comme d'habitude je suis très occupé. Ce matin était très memorable.*

[266 words]