

A Sociolinguistic Study of Home Language Influence on English Language Proficiency in Mende and Kàthemné Regions

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Abstract: Sierra Leone is a multilingual nation with English serving as the official language of instruction and administration. Despite this, indigenous languages like Mende (Southern and Eastern provinces) and Kàthemné (Northern Province) exert notable influence on students' spoken English. This study investigates the comparative influence of phonological interference from Mende and Kàthemné, two major indigenous languages of Sierra Leone on English pronunciation among senior secondary school pupils. Using a qualitative dominant mixed-methods design, it analyzes how vowel shifts, consonant substitution, syllable structure, and intonation patterns impede English proficiency. Data from 640 pupils and 60 teachers in Bo and Mile 91 were gathered through oral reading tasks, recorded speech samples, questionnaires and structured interviews. Findings reveal distinct interference patterns corresponding to each language, with implications for intelligibility, fluency, and academic performance. It concludes that the interaction between L1 and L2, particularly phonological interference, complicates second language acquisition. This research explores the extent, nature, and educational implications of these interferences. Recommendations include phonologically informed pedagogy and contrastive phonetics integration into the curriculum.

Keywords: Vowel Shift, Syllable/ Structure Influence, Element Transfer, and Lexical Borrowing.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone like any other West African Countries with the exception of (Cape Verde) is multilingual with 18 indigenous languages existing side by side (Stevens and Sheriff, 2025). As in many other African Countries, each ethnic group has its own peculiar cultural and linguistic manifestation. However, four of the Sierra Leonean Languages; Mende, Limba, Krio and Kàthemné are currently used in Sierra Leone's educational system as languages of instruction in Primary Education and as subject of study in secondary and tertiary institutions based on their regional uses and dominance (Stevens, Challay and Thulla, 2025). Limba and Kàthemné are widely spoken in the Northern Province, Mende in the East and Southern Provinces and Krio in the Western Area (Freetown); Krio is also the language of intra-and interethnic communication. What remains to be seen is the introduction of other languages, the "minor"

languages of instruction and subject of study into the educational system.

In countries where English is the native language such as the UK, USA, or Canada, children acquire English naturally as their first language through interaction with parents and the surrounding community (Stevens et al., 2023). This exposure facilitates early and intuitive language development. In contrast, speakers of English as a foreign language typically learn it in formal educational settings while living in countries where English is not commonly used in daily life, such as Norway, Spain, or Brazil (Kaimapo, 1984; Langa, & Setati, 2006). These learners are not usually exposed to English at home or in their communities, limiting their practical use of the language. On the other hand, speakers of English as a second language live in countries where English, though not native, plays a vital societal role. It functions as a lingua franca across diverse linguistic groups and is frequently used in education, commerce, governance,

and the media. In such contexts, including many African and South Asian nations, children are often exposed to English from a young age through media and public life (Stevens and Sheriff 2025). Consequently, they learn English both formally in school and informally outside the classroom. Unlike foreign language learners, second language users engage with English in both academic and everyday environments (Stevens and Sheriff 2025).

Language is a method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of arbitrarily produced symbols for physiological as well as psychological survival. In a multilingual Sierra Leone Society, where English act as a second language, the aim of teaching English in schools is not to develop British or American accent but to help the learners overcome regional accent, wrong pronunciation and gradually train them in proper articulation (Stevens, Challay and Thulla, 2023: Oluwole, 2008: Vuzo 2010: Mohammad 2002). Even though the above scholars have maintained that the typical African country lacks a common indigenous language for nationwide communication, the Sierra Leonean linguistics situation presents a different picture with Krio, which to a large extent is available at the individual's knowledge. L1 probably has some influence on the learning of the second language, which is English for the case. The second language is a language learnt by a person in addition to the L1 (mother tongue).

Furthermore, the issue of L1 and English is a Global concern, a study conducted in Boyo District of Cameroon, indicates that, students learning in their mother tongue L1 (Kom), perform better than their peers learning in English, from classes one to three (1-3) (MacCarthy, 1972: Mohammad, 2002), In Colombia, class three student taught in Mother Tongue perform higher at Mathematics test than their counterparts taught in English (MacCarthy, 1972). English is considered to be a foreign language in Cape Verde, not normally used as a means of Communication in everyday life and thought as an optional subject at secondary level (Mohammad, 2002)

In Sierra Leone, English is the official language of Administration and Commerce (Stevens, Sheriff and Sandy Jr., 2025). It is a major language of science. However, one of the current educational problems of public interest is that of poor level of achievement especially in public examinations (Stevens et al 2023). This problem of underachievement amongst school children has persisted in many subject areas such as Math, English and science. This poor level of achievement may be due to poor foundation in English Language at the primary school level. There are also several research reports, which support the view that Language inefficiency invariably leads to poor academic performance (Stevens et al 2025: Kaimapo, 1984: Langa, & Setati, 2006). That is why English is considered as one of the Core subjects that students are to pass in all Secondary Schools before gaining admission in any Higher Educational Institution in Sierra Leone. In recognition of the importance of English Language, for enhancing educational attainment as well as improving Communication ability of citizens, the

government had made the subject core (Stevens et al., 2025: Stevens and Sheriff 2025: Langa, & Setati, 2006).

Learning English as a second language poses significant challenges for native Mende and Kàthemne speakers, despite potential similarities between their first language (L1) and ESL (Stevens et al. 2023). These learners often face persistent difficulties that hinder their ability to achieve native-like proficiency, primarily due to negative transfer from their mother tongue (Langa, and Setati, 2006). Common issues include incorrect use of English stress, rhythm, and intonation; inconsistent spelling; grammatical and lexical interference; and entrenched habits formed during early language learning stages (Oluwole, 2008: Vuzo 2010: MacCarthy, 1972) Motivation also plays a critical role in language acquisition. A key problem is inter-lingual interference where elements of a speaker's L1 influence the phonology, grammar, and vocabulary of L2 (Stevens and Sheriff 2025). This often leads to syntactic and semantic errors, such as a Mende speaker saying "my stomach is sweet" to mean "I am very happy," which reflects direct translation from native languages. These interferences vary among different language groups, such as Mende, Kàthemne, and Limba. The phenomenon of mother-tongue interference is rooted in the natural language acquisition process, where children biologically acquire language but are also shaped by environmental and linguistic factors. As a result, learners often transfer structural features of their native language into English, complicating the path to mastering it as a second language (Stevens and Sheriff 2025: Vuzo 2010: Quist, 2000: Nyamubi, 2003: UNESCO 2000). The main concern of this study was to give a comparative Study of Phonological Interference from Mende and Kàthemne to English Pronunciation among Secondary School Pupils.

➤ *English Language Teaching and Learning*

English holds a critical role in Sierra Leone as the official and second language, serving as a unifying medium among the country's diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups (Stevens et al., 2023: Stevens and Sheriff 2025). Its significance is most evident in education, where a credit pass in English is a mandatory requirement for admission into universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. English proficiency is also essential for employment opportunities, making it a gateway to socio-economic advancement (Stevens, Sheriff and Sandy Jr. 2025). According to Mohammad (2002), at least six credit passes including English are required for university admission, while Norich (1983), as cited by Oluwole (2008), emphasized that language, like religion, is a powerful unifying force. Thus, English in Sierra Leone functions not only as a tool for academic and professional access but also as a cohesive element in society. A study exploring the challenges faced by students in learning English is therefore essential to understand and address the factors hindering their performance.

➤ *Language Teaching and Learning Goals*

It is important for teachers and learners to understand the goal of language teaching and learning as well as how to

achieve it. It is pointed out that the goal of language teaching is to develop learners' communicative competence (Liu 2003; Rivers 1978). As advised in Rivers (1978), when selecting learning activities, we must always remember that our goal is for the students to be able to interact freely with others: to understand what others wish to Communicate in the broadest sense, and to be able to convey to others what they themselves wish to share" (Rivers, 1978, pp. 3-4). Following this point, Liu (2003) believes that the ultimate goal of language instruction is to equip learners with the ability to use the language for their communication. This reasonably explains why the four-macro language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) fall into the two categories: vocal and written communication. Listening and speaking are the most important forms of vocal communication, whereas reading and writing are the most important forms of written communication.

Understanding the major methods of language teaching is essential to grasp current practices, their dominance, and the challenges faced by teachers and learners. The grammar-translation method emphasizes detailed analysis of grammar rules, followed by translation exercises. It focuses on reading and writing, while speaking and listening are neglected. Vocabulary is taught through bilingual word lists, grammar is taught deductively, and the native language is used as the medium of instruction (Richards, 2001). In contrast, the direct method advocates for natural language acquisition, similar to how children learn their first language or acquire a second language when immersed in a new environment. It discourages translation and the use of the learner's native language. Instead, it promotes learning through demonstration, action, and inductive grammar instruction, with an emphasis on speaking and listening in small, intensive classes (Stevens and Sheriff 2025; Rivers, 1968; Richards, 2001).

The audio-lingual method, developed from U.S. military language programs, focuses on listening and speaking. New material is introduced through dialogues; grammar is taught inductively; vocabulary is limited and learned in context. Structural patterns are practiced through repetition, with extensive use of tapes, language labs, and visual aids. Use of the mother tongue is minimal (Brown, 2007a, p. 111). Communicative language teaching aims to develop the learner's communicative competence. As pointed out by Richards (2001), in communicative language teaching classes, tasks and activities are designed to enable learners to achieve communicative objectives by participating in communicative processes such as exchanging information, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. In communicative language teaching, learner-centered learning is emphasized.

The objectives are to assess the impact of first language (L1) interference and to evaluate the extent of phonological interference from both Mende and Kàthemne languages on the teaching and learning of English.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Second Language can be acquired either formal or informal. Schools and language courses are the formal ways to acquire L2 and through walking on the streets and the community is where to acquire the informal way of L2 (Stevens and Sheriff 2025; Baker, 2011). People know or learn more different language and culture every day because the world is now globalized. Acquiring the second or third language is important because it increases the opportunities in employment (Baker, 2011). In view of this, it is therefore very essential to be aware of bilingualism and its contribution to people's educational development in general.

According to Stevens et al., (2025) English learning is influenced by several factors, including abilities to acquire the knowledge of English, motivation to learn, age, career goals, time to use English, and English for pleasure. Intelligible and comprehensible factors of English are influenced by basic language skills, including the mother tongue. Mother tongue with different grammar from that of English causes difficulties in learning English. Many errors found in English learners whose native language has a grammar that is much different from English grammar are traceable to the grammar factor in mother tongue. This imbalanced mastery of such two languages will lead to distortion. This is known as interference symptoms.

Language is a signal of communication and expression among humans incorporated with different techniques (Blakeley, 2021). Since English is known as the lingua franca; dominating other languages; it has a significant influence in various aspects in terms of objective, duration of the language, age and inspiration of acquiring. Knowing that English strongly influences the mother tongue, it is difficult to have a standardized language. The component which is quite visible when there is mother tongue interference is grammar. Improper proficiency in language will cause the entire language to be distorted (Noviyenty et al., 2020). This is apparent in reading, speaking and writing. A direct translation can also be one of the contributing factors. According to past studies, an individual learns the parent language from birth. It is difficult to get rid of the influence of the mother tongue. Students also feel inferior because of their mother tongue influence. Non-native speakers are not capable of communicating efficiently and effectively. Second language learners tend to transfer everything from their mother tongue to the second language. The learners translate the target language into their mother tongue and speak only in the parent language.

III. METHODOLOGY

Sierra Leone has been inhabited by indigenous African peoples for over 2,500 years. Its dense rainforest provided isolation and refuge from regional conflicts. Portuguese explorer Pedro de Sintra named the region in 1462, and its natural harbour at the Freetown estuary attracted trade interest. In the mid-16th century, the Mane people invaded, militarized the region, and blended with local populations.

Continuous internal conflict led to the capture and sale of people to European slave traders, making Sierra Leone deeply involved in the Atlantic slave trade during the 17th and 18th centuries. After the trade was abolished in 1807, Freetown became a center for anti-slavery efforts and a settlement for freed slaves and Black Loyalists, forming the Creole (Krio) population.

Bo, the second largest city in Sierra Leone and capital of Bo District, has a population of around 306,000. Located about 160 miles from Freetown, it is a major educational and commercial hub. Bo hosts Njala University and the prestigious Bo School, known for producing top students. The city also features Bo Stadium, the second largest in the country, mainly used for football.

The study was conducted in Mile 91, a town in Yoni Chiefdom, Tonkolili District, Northern Sierra Leone. Located along the Freetown-Bo highway, it is 91 miles from Freetown and 69 miles from Bo. The town originated when an herbalist, Ya Adama Kargbo, settled there due to the abundance of useful herbs and fertile land. It later developed into a village in the 1950s during the construction of the Masiaka-Bo highway and was initially called Masorie. The early settlers were the Koroma, Turay, and Sankoh families, who remain prominent landowners and tribal heads.

Mile 91 covers about four-square kilometers and is predominantly Muslim. Its main ethnic groups include the Kàthemne, Fullahs, Limbas, Mendes, and Mandingos. The town's economy is largely based on farming and trading. Educational opportunities are expanding, with five preschools, fifteen primary schools, fourteen junior secondary schools, five senior secondary schools, and three colleges: the College of Professional Studies (CPS), Canadian College of Modern Technology (CCMT), and College of Management and Administration (COMA).

➤ *Research Design*

A descriptive research design was used to examine the influence of Mende and Kàthemne as mother tongues on the acquisition of English as a second language. The study involves eight senior secondary schools, four in Bo City (Mende speakers) and four in Mile 91 (Kàthemne speakers). The researcher used data collection and analysis, result reporting, and observation to assess language interference in English learning.

➤ *Population*

The study focused on Senior Secondary School students from Bo City and Mile 91, specifically targeting native Mende and Kàthemne learners of English in SSS2 and SSS3. In Bo City, the population of native Mende students selected for the study was 2,200. From this population, a total of 320 questionnaires were administered. That is, 80 per school, with 40 from each class level (SSS2 and SSS3). The population of English Language teachers for these levels across the four schools was 40, out of which 36 were selected as the sample. Similarly, in Mile 91, Tonkolili District, the

population of native Kàthemne students selected was also 2,200. Again, 320 questionnaires were administered using the same class-level distribution. For the English Language teachers in the four Mile 91 schools, 24 out of 25 were sampled. The sample sizes for both students and teachers in Bo and Mile 91 were determined using the method outlined by Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan for determining sample size in research activities.

➤ *Sampling and Sample Size*

The sample was drawn from four senior secondary schools in Bo City, Southern Sierra Leone, and four schools in Mile 91, Tonkolili District in Northern Sierra Leone. Using a simple random sampling technique, 320 students were selected from a population of 2,200 in Bo City and 36 teachers from 40 English Language teachers. In Mile 91, 320 out of 2,180 students and 24 out of 25 teachers were selected. For both locations, the student selection involved assigning numbers to each student, mixing the ballots thoroughly in a box, and drawing them one by one until the required number was reached. This method ensured that all individuals had an equal chance of being included in the study.

➤ *Research Instruments*

Various research tools were employed in this study. Information was gathered from reference materials such as textbooks, pamphlets, dissertations, and lecture notes. Personal observation played a key role, as the researcher directly observed phonemic and syntactical differences between English, Mende, and Kàthemne. Data collection also involved structured questionnaires administered to both teachers and students, along with informal, face-to-face interviews and classroom observations.

➤ *Validity and Reliability of the Study*

The development of research instruments (questionnaires, interview guide questions, and personal observation, formal and informal discussions) was done by examining the research objectives, hypotheses, and the related literature. Reading through the study instruments and confirming proper coverage of all the objectives established content validity of the instruments. Supervisor and other research experts from the various departments of School of Education, Njala University were contacted to further establish the validity of the study instruments. A pilot study was conducted to assess the clarity and the reliability of the instruments. The pilot study was done using forty students and eight teachers from the study area and was carried out in a period of two weeks. Reliability was acceptable since the items yield a reliable coefficient (Frankel and Wallen, 2000). In this case, both instruments considered reliable.

➤ *Data Analysis*

The researcher ensured that all questionnaires were duly completed by the respondents. Data were organized for analysis. The researcher used quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data using SPSS. Data were summarized and presented as part of the research findings using frequency distribution tables.

IV. RESULT**Table 1 Students Responses on Prevalence of use of Mother Tongue**

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
How often do you discuss in English?				
During English Lessons	112	35	92	28.7
In class when the teacher is present	54	16.9	62	19.4
In School	52	16.3	76	23.7
At home	4	1.3	4	1.3
In School and at home	96	30	82	25.6
Other (Neither Yes/No)	2	0.5	4	1.3
Total	320	100	320	100
What type of mistakes do you make in reading passage or text in English?				
Phonological	98	30.6	150	46.9
Syntactic	48	15	28	8.7
Word Structure	154	48.1	132	41.3
Other (Neither Yes/No)	20	6.3	10	3.1
Total	320	100	320	100

The table above shows students in Bo how often they discuss in English, 35% indicated that they discuss in English during English lessons, 16.9% discuss in English in class when the teacher is present, 16.3% discuss in English in School, 1.3% at home while 30% discuss in English in School and at home. Also in Mile 91, 28.7% indicated that they discuss in English during English lessons, 16.4% discuss in English in class when the teacher is present, 23.7% discuss in

English in School, 1.3% at home while 25.6% discuss in English in School and at home. The table also shows students in Bo the type of mistakes students makes in reading passage or text in English, 30.6% indicated Phonological, 15% Syntactic while 48.1% Word Structure. Also in Mile 91, 46.9% indicated Phonological, 8.7% Syntactic while 41.3% Word Structure.

Table 2 Students Responses on Prevalence of use of Mother Tongue

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Can you distinguish between Mende/Kàthemne sounds and English sounds?				
Yes	232	72.5	228	71.3
No	82	25.6	90	28.1
Other (Neither Yes/No)	6	1.9	2	0.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Will you be convenient to engage in a discussion in English without using Mende/Kàthemne in Substitution?				
Yes	240	75	210	65.6
No	74	23.1	106	33.1
Other (Neither Yes/No)	6	1.8	4	1.3
Total	320	100	320	100

The table above shows students in Bo, 72.5% indicated that they can distinguish between Mende sounds and English sounds while 25.6% admitted that they can't distinguish between Mende sounds and English sounds. Also in Mile 91, 71.3% indicated that they can distinguish between Kàthemne sounds and English sounds while 28.1% admitted that they can't distinguish between Kàthemne sounds and English sounds. The table also shows students in Bo, 75% indicated that they will be convenient to engage in a discussion in

English without using Mende in Substitution while 23.1% admitted that they will not be convenient to engage in a discussion in English without using Mende in Substitution. Also in Mile 91, 65.6% indicated that they will be convenient to engage in a discussion in English without using Kàthemne in Substitution while 33.1% admitted that they will not be convenient to engage in a discussion in English without using Kàthemne in Substitution.

Table 3 Perception of Students on the Interference of Mother Tongue on Performance of English Learners.

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Does mother tongue affect your composition?				
Yes	232	72.5	227	70.9
No	72	22.5	82	25.6

Other (Neither Yes/No)	16	5	11	3.4
Total	320	100	320	100
Does mother tongue hinder respondent's interest in English Language as a subject?				
Yes	257	80.3	246	76.9
No	38	11.9	67	20.9
Other (Neither Yes/No)	25	7.8	7	2.2
Total	320	100	320	100

The table above shows students in Bo, 72.5% indicated that mother tongue affects their composition while 22.5% admitted that mother tongue does not affect their composition. Also in Mile 91, 70.9% indicated that mother tongue affects their composition while 25.6% admitted that mother tongue does not affect their composition. The table also shows that, 80.3% indicated that mother tongue hinders

their interest in English Language as a subject while 11.9% admitted mother tongue does not hinder their interest in English Language as a subject. While in Mile 91, 76.9% indicated that mother tongue hinders their interest in English Language as a subject while 20.9% admitted mother tongue does not hinder their interest in English Language as a subject.

Table 4 Perception of Students on the Interference of Mother Tongue on Performance of English Learners

Bo			Mile 91	
Responses	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Does the language use by teachers when interacting with students influence performance of students when learning English?				
Yes	223	69.7	213	66.6
No	82	25.6	101	31.6
Other (Neither Yes/No)	15	4.7	6	1.9
Total	320	100	320	100
In your own opinion, do you believe that the use of mother tongue interferes in the performance of learners in English?				
Yes	220	68.8	219	68.4
No	82	25.6	88	27.5
Other (Neither Yes/No)	18	5.6	13	4.1
Total	320	100	320	100

The table above shows that 69.7% respondents indicated that the language use by teachers when interacting influence their performance in English language learning, while 25.6% respondents indicated that the language use by teachers when interacting did not influence their performance in English language learning. While in Mile 91, 66.6% respondents indicated that the language use by teachers when interacting influence their performance in English language learning, while 31.6% respondents indicated that the language use by teachers when interacting did not influence their performance in English language learning. These

findings show that language used by teachers influenced students' performance in English.

The table also shows that in Bo, 68.8% of respondents are of the opinion that the use of mother tongue interferes in the performance of learners in English, while 25.6% respondents were of the contrary opinion. While in Mile 91, 68.4% of respondents are of the opinion that the use of mother tongue interferes in the performance of learners in English, while 27.5% respondents were of the contrary opinion.

Table 5 Perception of Students on the Interference of Mother Tongue on Performance of English Learners

Bo			Mile 91	
Responses	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Teachers' use of mother tongue affects students' performance in English.				
Strongly disagree	4	1.3	9	2.8
Disagree	31	9.7	35	10.9
Neutral	17	5.3	16	5
Agree	230	71.8	217	67.8
Strongly agree	32	10	39	12.2
Other (Neither Yes/No)	6	1.9	4	1.3
Total	320	100	320	100
Teachers who use English in conversation with students influence their performance in English.				
Strongly disagree	2	0.6	1	0.3
Disagree	35	10.9	31	9.7
Neutral	31	9.7	33	10.3
Agree	220	67.8	216	67.5

Strongly agree	28	8.8	35	10.9
Other (Neither Yes/No)	4	1.3	4	1.3
Total	320	100	320	100

The table above shows that in Bo, 71.8% respondents agree that their teachers use of mother tongue affects students' performance in English, 9.7% Disagree, 10% Strongly agree, while 5.3% were Neutral. While in Mile 91, 67.8% respondents agree that their teachers use of mother tongue affects students' performance in English, 10.9% Disagree, 12.2% Strongly agree, while 5% were Neutral.

The table also shows that 67.8% of respondents agree that their teachers who use English in conversation with students influence their performance in English, 10.9% Disagree, 8.8% Strongly agree, 0.6% Strongly disagree, while 9.7% Neutral. While in Mile 91, 67.5% of respondents agree that their teachers who use English in conversation with students influence their performance in English, 9.7% Disagree, 10.9% Strongly agree, 0.3% Strongly disagree, while 10.3% Neutral.

Table 6 Perception of Students on the Interference of Mother Tongue on Performance of English Learners

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Teacher always Discourage students to Converse in mother tongue.				
Strongly disagree	12	3.8	12	3.8
Disagree	34	10.6	26	8.1
Neutral	19	5.9	17	5.3
Agree	216	67.5	220	68.8
Strongly agree	32	10	40	12.4
Other (Neither Yes/No)	7	2.2	5	1.6
Total	320	100	320	100
Switching of languages in classroom help in understanding Concepts.				
Strongly disagree	26	8.1	25	7.8
Disagree	107	33.4	101	31.6
Neutral	11	3.4	14	4.4
Agree	138	43.1	130	40.6
Strongly agree	32	10	44	13.7
Other (Neither Yes/No)	6	1.9	6	1.9
Total	320	100	320	100

The table above shows that in Bo, 67.5% respondents agree that their teachers always discourage students to converse in mother tongue, 10.6% Disagree, 10% Strongly agree, 3.8% Strongly disagree while 5.9% were Neutral. While in Mile 91, 68.8% respondents agree that their teachers use of mother tongue affects students' performance in English, 8.1% Disagree, 12.4% Strongly agree, 3.8% Strongly disagree while 5.3% were Neutral.

It was also observed that 43.1% of the students agreed, 8.1% of the students Strongly disagree, 33.4% of the students

Disagree, Neutral 3.4%, 8.1% Strongly disagree, and 10% Strongly agree that they code switched in classroom in understanding Concepts. While in Mile 91, 40.6% of the students agreed, 7.8% of the students Strongly disagree, 31.6% of the students Disagree, Neutral 4.4%, Strongly disagree, and 13.7% Strongly agree. This indicates a high prevalence of code switching by English teachers. The switching of language by the teachers means that they shift to a language that is more familiar to the students that is, mother tongue.

Table 7 Prevalence of use of Mother Tongue

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Teachers who use mother tongue in conversation with students influences their academic Performance in English negatively?				
Strongly disagree	5	13.9	1	4.2
Disagree	-	-	4	16.7
Agree	19	52.8	16	66.7
Strongly agree	9	25	2	8.3
Other (Neither Yes/No)	3	8.3	1	4.2
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows the prevalence of use of Mother Tongue in Bo, 52.8% respondents agree that teachers who use

mother tongue in conversation with students influences their academic Performance in English negatively, 25% Strongly

agree, 13.9% Strongly disagree. While in Mile 91, 66.7% respondents agree that teachers who use mother tongue in conversation with students influences their academic

Performance in English negatively, 16.7% Disagree, 4.2% Strongly agree while 4.2% Strongly disagree.

Table 8 Prevalence of use of Mother Tongue

Bo			Mile 91	
Responses	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Do you speak in mother tongue in class?				
Yes	28	77.8	18	75
No	8	22.2	4	16.7
Other (Neither Yes/No)	-	-	2	8.3
Total	36	100	24	100
If yes, how often do you speak in mother tongue in class?				
Very often	-	-	2	8.3
Often	28	77.8	16	66.7
Rarely	4	11.1	4	16.7
Not at all	4	11.1	2	8.3
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows the prevalence of use of Mother Tongue in Bo, 77.8% respondents indicated that they speak in mother tongue in class, 22.2% respondents agreed that they do not speak in mother tongue in class. While in Mile 91, 75% respondents indicated that they speak in mother tongue in class, 16.7% respondents agreed that they do not speak in mother tongue in class.

that they Often speak in mother tongue, 11.1% respondents agreed that they do not speak in mother tongue at all, similar Percentage (11.1%) rarely speak in mother tongue in class. While in Mile 91, 66.7% respondents indicated that they Often speak in mother tongue, 8.3% respondents agreed that they do not speak in mother tongue at all, 16.7% rarely speak in mother tongue while 8.3% very often speak in mother tongue in class.

The table also shows how often teachers speak in mother tongue in class in Bo, 77.8% respondents indicated

Table 9 Prevalence of use of Mother Tongue

Bo			Mile 91	
Responses	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Do you switch language during the teaching learning process?				
Yes	30	83.3	19	79.2
No	6	16.7	5	20.8
Total	36	100	24	100
If yes, how often do you switch language during the teaching learning process?				
Very often	-	-	2	8.3
Often	29	80.6	15	62.5
Rarely	5	13.9	2	8.3
Not at all	2	5.6	5	20.8
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows that 83.3% of the teachers agreed that English they code-switched languages in the process of teaching while 16.7% responded by indicating that they do not code-switch. While in Mile 91, 79.2% of the teachers agreed that English they code-switch languages in the process of teaching while 20.8% responded by indicating that they do not code-switch. This indicates a high prevalence of code switching by English teachers. The table also shows

that 80.6% of the teachers often code-switched languages in the process of teaching, 5.6% do not code-switched while 13.9% responded by indicating that they rarely code-switch. While in Mile 91, 62.5% of the teachers often code-switch languages in the process of teaching, 20.8% do not code-switched while 8.3% responded by indicating that they rarely code-switch and 8.3% very often code-switched.

Table 10 Prevalence of use of Mother Tongue

Bo			Mile 91	
Responses	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Do students speak in mother tongue in your school?				
Yes	28	77.8	13	54.2
No	8	22.2	9	37.5

Other (Neither Yes/No)	-	-	3	8.3
Total	36	100	36	100
If yes, how often do students speak in mother tongue in your school?				
Very often	1	2.8	-	-
Often	26	72.2	18	75
Rarely	7	19.4	4	16.7
Not at all	2	5.6	1	4.2
Other (Neither Yes/No)	-	-	1	4.2
Total	36	100	24	100

Table above shows that most students in Bo, 77.8% indicated that they speak in mother tongue in school while 22.2% admitted that they do not speak in mother tongue in their school. Also in Mile 91, 54.2% indicated that they speak in mother tongue in school while 37.5% admitted that they do not speak in mother tongue in school. Table also shows that most students in Bo, 72.2% indicated that they do not speak in mother tongue in school, 19.4% rarely speak in mother

tongue, 5.6% Often and 2.8% very often speak in mother tongue. Also in Mile 91, 66.7% indicated that they do not speak in mother tongue in school, 22.2% rarely speak in mother tongue, and 5.6% very often speak in mother tongue.

➤ *Perception of Teachers on the Influence of Mother Tongue and Performance of English Learners*

Table 11 Perception of Teachers on the Influence of Mother Tongue and the Performance of English Learners

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Is the teacher's key person in teaching English Language?				
Disagree	-	-	3	12.5
Agree	10	27.8	15	62.5
Strongly agree	26	72.2	6	25
Total	36	100	24	100
Does Teacher's preparedness in Teaching English Language affect quality of products?				
Disagree	9	25	5	20.8
Agree	15	41.7	12	50
Strongly disagree	3	8.3	2	8.3
Strongly agree	9	25	5	20.8
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows in Bo, 72.2% respondents Strongly agree that the teacher is a key person in teaching English Language, 27.8% respondents agreed that the teacher is a key person in teaching English Language, While in Mile 91, 62.5% respondents agree that the teacher is a key person in teaching English Language, 25% respondents Strongly agreed that the teacher is a key person in teaching English Language while 12.5% disagreed. The table also shows in Bo,

41.7% respondents agreed that Teacher's preparedness in Teaching English Language affect quality of products, 25% respondents strongly agreed, 25% disagreed and 8.3% strongly disagreed While in Mile 91, 50% respondents agreed that Teacher's preparedness in Teaching English Language affect quality of products, 20.8% respondents strongly agreed, 20.8% disagreed and 8.3% strongly disagreed.

Table 12 Perception of Teachers on the Influence of Mother Tongue and the Performance of English Learners

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Which of the following categories of teachers perform better?				
Teachers who had not been capacity built in English	3	8.3	7	29.2
Teachers who have had many capacity building in English	33	91.7	17	70.8
Total	36	100	24	100
What are some of the reasons why teacher and students use mother tongue in the classroom?				
Explaining and checking Meaning	14	38.9	9	37.5
Explaining and teaching grammar	6	16.7	8	33.3
To help them feel more confident	9	25	2	8.3
Maintaining contact with the students	4	11.1	4	16.7
Other (Neither Yes/No)	3	8.3	1	4.2
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows the categories of teachers who perform better in teaching of English, 8.3% are teachers who had not been capacity built in English while 91.7% are teachers who have had many capacity building in English, While in Mile 91, 29.2% are teachers who had not been capacity built in English while 70.8% are teachers who have had many capacity building in English. The table also shows some of the reasons why teacher and students use mother

tongue in the classroom, 38.9% explaining and checking meaning, 16.7% explaining and teaching grammar, 25% to help them feel more confident, 11.1% Maintaining contact with the students, While in Mile 91, 37.5% explaining and checking meaning, 33.3% explaining and teaching grammar, 8.3% to help them feel more confident, 16.7% Maintaining contact with the students.

Table 13 Perception of Teachers on the Influence of Mother Tongue and the Performance of English Learners

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
In your own opinion, does the use of mother tongue influence English learners performance?				
Yes	28	77.8	17	70.8
No	8	22.2	6	25
Other (Neither Yes/No)	-	-	1	4.2
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows in Bo, 77.8% of respondents are of the opinion that, the use of mother tongue influence English learners' performance, 22.2% respondents do not agree that mother tongue influence English learners'

performance. While in Mile 91, 70.8% of respondents are of the opinion that, the use of mother tongue influence English learners performance, 25% respondents do not agree that mother tongue influence English learners performance.

Table 14 Measures Taken to Curb the use of Mother Tongue

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Do you teach oral English?				
Yes	26	72.2	18	75
No	6	16.7	5	20.8
Other (Neither Yes/No)	4	11.1	1	4.2
Total	36	100	24	100
If you teach Oral English do pupils (Native Mende/Kàthemne) find difficulty in producing any sound?				
Yes	30	83.3	18	75
No	4	11.1	5	20.8
Other (Neither Yes/No)	2	5.6	1	4.2
Total	36	100	24	100
Are there available instructional media/materials and facilities for teaching English Language				
Yes	28	77.8	16	66.7
No	8	22.2	7	29.2
Other (Neither Yes/No)	-	-	1	2.8
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows in Bo, 72.2% of teachers indicated that they teach oral English, 16.7% teachers indicated that they do not teach oral English. While in Mile 91, 75% of teachers indicated that they teach oral English, 20.8% teachers indicated that they do not teach oral English. The table also shows in Bo, 83.3% of teachers indicated that they teach oral English and pupils (Native Mende) find difficulty in producing some sounds, 11.1% teachers indicated that pupils (Native Mende) do not find difficulty in producing any sound. While in Mile 91, 75% of teachers indicated that they teach oral English and pupils (Native Kàthemne) find difficulty in producing some sounds, 20.8% teachers indicated that pupils (Native Kàthemne) do not find difficulty in producing any sound.

The table also shows in Bo, 77.8% of teachers indicated that there are available instructional media/materials and facilities for teaching English Language, 22.2% teachers indicated that there are no available instructional media/materials and facilities for teaching English Language. While in Mile 91, 66.7% of teachers indicated that there are available instructional media/materials and facilities for teaching English Language, 29.2% teachers indicated that there are no available instructional media/materials and facilities for teaching English Language.

Table 15 Measures Taken to Curb the use of Mother Tongue

Responses	Bo		Mile 91	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Class participation during English lessons is normally?				
Excellent	4	11.1	2	8.3
Good	27	75	17	70.8
Fair	5	13.9	5	20.8
Total	36	100	24	100

The table above shows in Bo, 75% indicated that Class participation during English lessons is good, 11.1% excellent, 13.9% fair, While in Mile 91, 70.8% indicated that Class participation during English lessons is good, 8.3% excellent, 20.8% fair.

➤ *Kàthemne Diphthongs*

In Themne, a diphthong according to Westernan et al. (1990), is a combination of a vowel and the palatal approximant or semi-vowel /y/. The glide begins at the point of the vowel and proceeds to the palatal region. He suggests six (6) diphthongs in Kàthemne.

• *These are:*

- ✓ /ay/ as in: /fay/ ("to buy") /Way/ ("to buy")
- ✓ /äy/ as in: /gbây/ ("to broke") /pây/ ("to jump")
- ✓ /ey/ as in: /fey/ ("to burn/hot") /bey/ ("to belch")
- ✓ /Oy/ as in: boy/ ("succulent") /boysà/ ("to swell-up")
- ✓ /oy/ as in: /noy/ ("to take from") /soy/ ("stealthily")
- ✓ /uy/ as in: /thuy/ ("to crouch") /fuy/ ("to increase") (p.46)

Westerman et al. (1990), states that there are sequences of a vowel and palatal semi-vowel in Kàthemne that do not glide. Examples of these are outlined as follows Waya ("to buy for") Boya ("to donate") Keya ("to steal") Muyu ("to endure").

• *English Diphthongs:*

These are divided into three (3) just like the monophthongs. The division is front closing. Centring and back closing diphthongs.

• *Phonetic Description of the Diphthong*

The following phonetic descriptions of diphthongs are as follow:

• *Front Closing Diphthongs as follows:*

- ✓ /aɪ/ is a front closing diphthongs as in: Light /laɪt/, sight/ saɪt/
- ✓ /ɔɪ/ is a front closing diphthong as in: Toy/tɔɪ/, soil/sɔɪ/
- ✓ /eɪ/ is a front closing diphthong as in: Day /deɪ/, may /meɪ/

• *Centering Diphthongs*

- ✓ /və/ is a central diphthong as in: Poor /pvə/, boor/ bvəl/
- ✓ /lə/ is a central diphthong as in: near/ nlə/, rear/rlə
- ✓ /eə/ is a central diphthong as in: Care /keə. rare/ reə/

• *Back Closing Diphthongs.*

- ✓ /aʊ/ is a back closing diphthong as in: Out/avt/, house/havt/
- ✓ /əʊ/ is a back closing diphthong as in: Go/gəʊ/, told/təʊld/.

• *Triphthongs*

- ✓ There are five (5) English triphthongs. They are:

- ✓ /aɪə/ as in: Lire /laɪə/, fine/ faɪə/
- ✓ /aʊə/ as in: Hour /aʊə/, shower/ saʊə/
- ✓ /ɔɪə/ as in: Soya /sɔɪə/, coyer /Kɔɪə/
- ✓ /eɪə/ as in: Prayer /preɪə/, player /pleɪə/
- ✓ /əʊə/ as in: Lower /ləʊə/, goer/gəʊə/

Roach (1991) notes that the occurrence of a voiced consonant in Kàthemne does not necessarily imply the occurrence of a voiceless counterpart, for instance, the voiced labio -velar plosive (gb) has no voiceless counterpart.

The consonants /b/, /p/, /d/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /h/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/ /ʃ/, /w /, and /y/ are equivalent to that of English orthography.

The voiced labio -velar plosive (gb) is co-articulated and hence has no equivalent in English.

The Kàthemne velar nasal (ŋ) is not part of the English orthography. However, its quality is similar to the velar nasal in the phonetically transcribed English words/ sing/ (si:ŋ).

The Kàthemne consonant (th) according to Roach (1991), is pronounced very differently from the English voiceless dental fricative (θ) in the phonetically transcribed English word /θɪk/ (thick). The Kàthemne (th) Roach (1991) points Out, is an apico-dental plosive that is to say. it is pronounced with the tip of the tongue firmly pressed against the upper teeth.

The consonant /ch/ and /ʊ/, /ʃh/ and /s/ and /w/ and /y/ and /r/ and d according to Dalby (1964), are used as free variants among Kàthemne speakers as indicated in the Examples below:

- ✓ /chim/ ("to fight") and /tim/ ("to fight")
- ✓ /lchep/ (to plant) and /tep/ (to plant)
- ✓ /shel/ ("to laugh") and /sel/ (to laugh)
- ✓ /shel/ (to tie) and /sek/ ("to tie")
- ✓ /wek/ ("to squeeze") and /yək/ ("to squeeze")
- ✓ /Wetha/ ("to squeeze") and /yetha/ ("to squeeze")
- ✓ /ro/ ("there") and /do/ ("there")

✓ /ru/ ("to plait") and /ru/ ("to plate")

The illustration above indicates that Kàthemne has a different phonological system and so, some English

consonant are not attested in the Kàthemne orthography. Thus Kàthemne speakers who are illiterate in English substitute such consonants with those of their language. These issues discussed above are crucial to the study.

Table 16 Kàthemne Sounds Often Substituted into the Learning of English

NO	ENGLISH ARTICULATION	THEMNE ARTICULATION
1	Voice	Boyis
2	Victor	biktə
3	Victory	Bikətri
4	Victoria	Biktoriya
5	Vote	Bot

Table 17 The Sound /z/ Substituted to /s/

NO	ENGLISH ARTICULATION	THEMNE ARTICULATION
1	Zero	Siro
2	Zip	Sip
3	Zainab	Saynab
4	Zebra	Sibra
5	Zinc	Sik

Table 18 The Sound /j/ Substituted to /y/

NO	ENGLISH ARTICULATION	THEMNE ARTICULATION
1	Jet	Yət
2	Jump	Yəmp
3	Junction	Yəkashan
4	James	Yemas
5	Just	Yəs

Table 19 The Sound /g/ Substituted to /k/

NO	ENGLISH ARTICULATION	THEMNE ARTICULATION
1	Go	Ko
2	Give	Kif
3	Goat	Kot
4	Grass	Kras
5	Glass	Klas

➤ Areas of Interference of Kàthemne into the Learning of English

• Examples of Areas:

yən for John, ánkən for gun, yəkəshən for Junction.

• Phonetic Substitution:

/ch/ sounds for /t/ for words such as chela-tela, cher-ter, ect. From the list of words above, it is clearly evident that the sounds /v id y and /g/ are missing in the Themne sounds. Therefore, a Themne La learner who may attempts to sound the above words, tend to replace them with /b/, /s/, /l/ and /k/ respectively.

In a summary therefore, the impact of interference of Kàthemne in the teaching and learning of English may cause both positive and negative impact. In the positive impact, the Themne speaker learning English may feel comfortable in sounding the substituted words when communicating. Whereas, on the other hand the negative impact is that the English speaker articulating this sounds may feel funny in the pronunciation of words in the teaching and learning process.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of mother tongue (L1) interference specifically Mende and Kàthemne languages on the learning and teaching of English (L2) among Senior Secondary School students in Sierra Leone. It was found that L1 interference significantly hampers both students' comprehension and teachers' instructional effectiveness in English language education. The research established that deeply ingrained linguistic and cognitive habits formed in the learners' native languages are often transferred into English usage, leading to semantic, syntactic, and phonological errors.

The study employed a comparative analysis approach, targeting four schools in Bo City, Southern Sierra Leone (Bo Government Secondary School, Ahmadiyya Senior Secondary School Bo, Bo Commercial Secondary School, and Christ the King College), and four in Mile 91, Northern Sierra Leone (Bishop Conforti Senior Secondary School, Sierra Leone Muslim Brotherhood Senior Secondary School, Ansural Islamic Senior Secondary School, and Rainbow

Senior Secondary School). These locations were chosen for their significant populations of Mende and Kàthemne speakers.

In Chapter One, the research presented the study's background, including the historical and linguistic development of literacy in Sierra Leone's mother tongues. It discussed the phonological structures of Mende, Kàthemne, and English, focusing on consonantal systems, as well as defining the research problem, questions, hypotheses, scope, limitations, and relevant terminologies.

Chapter Two reviewed relevant literature on language interference in second language acquisition. It highlighted inconsistencies in previous studies, particularly in differentiating L1 acquisition from L2 learning, and noted a gap in understanding the extent to which mother tongue interference affects pedagogical outcomes.

Chapter Three detailed the research methodology. A mixed-method approach was adopted, incorporating questionnaires, interview guides, and both formal and informal discussions. Data reliability was ensured through a pilot study, and ethical considerations were adhered to throughout. The study sample consisted of pupils and teachers selected via stratified random sampling, allowing a fair representation of the two language groups and the regions of interest.

Chapter Four presented and analyzed the findings. A recurring theme was that students perceive English as a challenging subject due to its structural complexity and the socio-academic pressures tied to passing it at a credit or distinction level. This perception is intensified by the limited exposure to English outside the classroom, as it is not the language of daily communication in most students' homes or communities.

Mother tongue interference was evident in several areas, including vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and pronunciation. For example, expressions such as "I was dancing very good and people were gumming money on my front head" reflect direct L1 to L2 translation, resulting in syntactic and semantic inaccuracies. These types of errors were prevalent among respondents and demonstrated the depth of L1 influence on L2 performance. Additionally, the study revealed that English is often preferred over Kàthemne by students particularly those in science and commercial streams mainly because English is a core subject and a prerequisite for higher education. However, preference did not equate to proficiency, due to factors such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and inadequately trained teachers.

The influence of parental background was also significant. Many parents lack proficiency in English, limiting their ability to support their children's learning. This generational language barrier exacerbates the challenges faced by students, especially in low literacy households. Nonetheless, findings showed that students exposed to

English-speaking peers tended to perform better, suggesting that language immersion and social interaction in English can positively impact L2 acquisition. Interestingly, a majority of respondents did not support the idea of translating English lessons into the mother tongue, perceiving such methods as unhelpful due to their weak foundational understanding of English.

In conclusion, the study found that the primary causes of English language learning difficulties among Mende and Kàthemne speakers stem from linguistic interference rooted in L1 phonological and grammatical systems. These issues result in lexical substitution and miscommunication, impeding comprehension and expression in English. Effective English language acquisition requires pedagogical reforms, including smaller class sizes, more interactive and student-centered teaching methods, and increased exposure to English both in and outside the classroom. Addressing these issues holistically can bridge the L1-L2 gap and enhance overall academic achievement in English language education across Sierra Leone.

➤ *Impact of the Interference of Mende and Kàthemne in the Teaching and Learning of English*

The result from the list of words shown by the researcher clearly states that, language interference occurs as a result of certain sounds that are missing within a language. This is evident of Odlin (1989) in 2.3 above. Though there are notable disagreement among language researchers like Corder (1973) Quirk and Smith (1958) etc, on the other hand the problem in learning a second language is the interference from the learners mother tongue. The impact of interference of Mende and Kàthemne in the teaching and learning of English may cause both positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer are the elements of the learner's first language (L1) that he/she transfers second language (L2) and help in facilitating the learning process, whilst the negative transfer are elements of the learner of first language (L1) that are transferred to the second language (L2) that cause constraints in the learning of the target language.

By comparison and contrast of both Mende and Kàthemne languages in terms of phonological interference in the teaching and learning of English, the research concludes that Kàthemne has high-level of phonological interference in the teaching and learning of English than Mende in the selected schools.

➤ *Teachers Skills in Teaching of English Language Skills in the SSS*

This study found out that over 33.3% of the teachers of English had Higher Teachers Certificate level of education from teacher training colleges. This was basic academic requirement for entry in the teaching profession but there was need for the employer to re- assesses the quality of the grades to ensure that only people with good grades at English a recruited to teach English. Teacher competencies are enhanced by quality academic grades and professional training of the teacher. Kembo, (1992) looked at the academic standards of the teacher as one of the reasons for the poor

teaching of English and performance in languages in schools. Brindlev (1995) argues that a good teacher of English language has to know about the subject content. Teachers who possessed skills and knowledge in English raised the quality of teaching/learning of English in schools (Stevens et al., 2025). Most teachers, that is, 46.6% of had just completed the senior secondary school but allowed to teach in the JSS which has contributed to the poor performance of students in the study area. Although, 28.5% had professional training in teacher education and training, these experiences did not add value to the quality of teaching/learning in class. This study learned that students in the JSS of the selected schools were not able to communicate in English and get quality grades.

One of the findings was that the competence of teachers was inadequate. This might be the main cause of the learners' failures to master English language and acquire quality grades in English in schools.

Lack of capacity building of teachers on methodologies of teaching could be impacting on teaching of English in schools. American Speech Hearing Association (2014) cautions that if you cannot use language well, you should not teach it. Kohli (1992) adds that English is a skill subject in whom all learners can only be successful in learning English if they are made to actively participate in the teaching/learning process, in this study about 40% of the teachers said they had not received any in - Service courses. However, this was quite contradictory to 60% of the respondents who had admitted they had been capacity built in the areas of English language. Teachers not have adequate time to scheme and prepare lesson plan notes, 80% of teachers did not prepare and used lesson plan notes which also is another factor that contributed the low performance in English studies.

Stevens and Sheriff (2025) suggested that lack of resource materials, mother tongue interference, inadequacy of f teachers, and poor attitude among teachers toward English, lack of in-service training were some of the factors affecting learning of English in schools.

➤ *Methods in Teaching of English Language in the SSS in the Study Area*

The findings established 100% of the teachers in the schools teach English without proper instructional media/materials. Therefore, such teachers cannot handle the subject matter properly to bring about effective performances among students in English language.

This study disclosed that 60% of the teachers used teacher centred method as opposed to 40% who used learner centred method of teaching English. Teachers needed to re-evaluate teaching/learning strategies to enhance learning in their students. Teachers who used learner centred methods of teaching involved learners in the teaching/learning process; this improved learner proficiency in English language. It was also initiated that there are no qualified teachers who can handle effective teaching of English language without the use of mother tongue in the teaching and learning process which

affects the performance of students in the subject matter. Effective use of English in the teaching and learning process can enhance language development in students.

From the investigation of this piece of work, it is apparently concluded that, the influence of Mother-Tongue on the study of English Language poses a considerable problem for both the learners and the teachers in the learning situation. Saying that the learner of English Language as a subject or a target Language (L2) has the problem of interference of their L1 or Mother tongue in the learning process concludes it. All the pupils (native Mende and Kàthemne speakers) investigated in the selected schools have mother-tongue and in their mother-tongue deep-rooted habits have been formed. It is these habits that interfere with the learning of the target language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the teaching and learning of English as a second language, the following recommendations are proposed for teachers, learners, and school administrators. These suggestions are grounded in phonological principles, second language acquisition theories, and learner centred pedagogy.

➤ *Phonological Awareness and Instruction*

English vowel and consonant sounds should be taught using articulatory charts, diagrams, and visual aids that depict the articulators involved in sound production.

Phonological instruction should be integrated with grammatical structures, enabling learners to grasp both sound systems and syntactic patterns simultaneously. Also, teachers should adopt phonologically informed teaching strategies and receive specialized training in second language phonetics and phonology.

➤ *Contrastive Analysis and Error Management*

A contrastive analysis approach should be embedded in curriculum planning to identify and anticipate learners' difficulties arising from differences between their first language and English.

Teachers should use this analysis to give focused attention to structures most prone to negative transfer or interference. Remedial lessons should be provided when recurring errors are observed, particularly those that significantly affect intelligibility or communicative competence.

➤ *Practice and Usage beyond the Classroom*

Learners should be encouraged to practice English outside the formal learning environment, as frequent and meaningful use reinforces phonological and grammatical competence.

Activities such as speaking in front of a mirror, engaging in literary debates, listening to English-language media, and reading extensively should be promoted. Teachers should discourage the use of the mother tongue during

English instruction and instead foster immersive English usage both in and out of the classroom.

➤ *Pedagogical Practices and Learner Engagement*

Teachers should adopt child centred, communicative teaching methods, provide regular oral drills, and administer valid and reliable assessments to monitor progress. Strategies to build learner motivation, such as counselling, goal setting, and positive reinforcement, should be incorporated, particularly for pupils showing low interest or engagement.

➤ *Institutional Support and Resource Provision*

School administrators should monitor and support English language teachers through regular evaluations and professional development opportunities. Establish adequate instructional materials and the establishment of a language laboratory are essential to support pronunciation practice and listening comprehension.

Efforts should be made to reduce class sizes, ensuring more individualized attention and effective feedback. Teachers should be motivated through incentives to sustain high-quality instruction and continuing professional commitment.

➤ *Government and Institutional Support*

To ensure effective English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and learner success, collaborative efforts are required from government bodies, school administrators, and parents. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) should provide adequate instructional materials and resources to support ESL teaching and learning. It should also recruit and deploy trained, qualified English Language teachers, and ensures professional standards in instruction. Principals and school leaders should actively promote English usage across the curriculum and ensure consistent implementation of ESL teaching strategies.

➤ *Parental Involvement and Learner Exposure*

Parents play a vital role in learners' academic achievement and should provide both moral and educational support to encourage regular English usage at home. Learners should be exposed to Standard English input outside the classroom through reading materials and listening to credible English language media, such as BBC broadcasts, which promote Received Pronunciation (RP) and standard usage.

The home environment should complement the school setting by offering opportunities for learners to practice English regularly, thereby reducing negative first-language interference and enhancing proficiency.

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