
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Analysis of Question Formation in English and Bukavu Swahili

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| ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comparative syntactic analysis of question formation in English and Bukavu Swahili within the framework of Theoretical Generative Grammar. Focusing on yes-or-no questions and wh-questions, the study examines how interrogative structures are derived in both languages through phrase structure rules, movement operations, and morphological strategies. English is shown to rely on obligatory syntactic movement, notably subject-auxiliary inversion and wh-movement to the specifier of CP, to encode interrogativity. In contrast, Bukavu Swahili, a regional variety of Swahili spoken in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, employs a more flexible system in which interrogative meaning is frequently expressed through verbal morphology, question particles, and intonation, with wh-movement remaining optional. Adopting a qualitative-descriptive methodology based on library research, elicited sentences, and natural speech data, the study highlights key typological differences between the two languages and evaluates their implications for Universal Grammar and parameterization of movement. The findings further demonstrate how structural differences in question formation may lead to negative transfer among native speakers of Bukavu Swahili learning English as a foreign language. The paper therefore underscores the importance of contrastive and form-focused instruction in English language teaching in the Bukavu context and contributes to broader discussions in comparative syntax and applied linguistics.

| KEYWORDS

Bukavu Swahili, English, Theoretical Generative Grammar, Question formation.

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1. Introduction

Language is regarded as a pivotal medium for effective communication. Information flow from one person to another is greatly influenced by how language is used for communication (Udoeyo et al., 2018). The same information is semantically categorized and structurally organized in the field of linguistics, according to the meanings they communicate. This information's structural organization makes it possible to distinguish questions from other linguistic constructs. The present paper focuses on question formation as a fundamental element for understanding the grammar of natural languages (Al-Mekhlafi, 2013).

The context in Bukavu suggests that language transfer is a common strategy used by English language learners in secondary schools and foreign language learning facilities to aid in the acquisition of their target language. Teachers must therefore understand the operational dynamics of both the target language and the native language of their students (Reynolds-Case, 2012, p. 523) to better guide them through their learning process. Furthermore, interrogative constructions, as a fundamental element of syntax, offer a rich domain for the comparison of cross-linguistic structures and the evaluation of theoretical claims concerning universal grammar. English, a Germanic language characterized by fixed subject-auxiliary inversion and a distinct wh-

fronting pattern (Chen, 2013, p. 1), stands in contrast to Bukavu Swahili, a Bantu language marked by intricate verb morphology and adaptable wh-word strategies (Wilt, 1988).

The present study therefore falls within the field of structural linguistics, which examines language from a structural perspective; as it focuses on how language is formed, constructed, and understood structurally (Juanda, 2024, p. 226). The goal is to systematically compare how questions are formed in both languages (English and Bukavu Swahili) using the framework of the Theoretical Generative Grammar (Chomsky 1981, 1995; Kayne 2005). Analyses will be done from the perspective of syntactic transformations required, encoding of phrase markers (also known as tree diagrams), and variations in movement.

2. State of research

Questions are defined as interrogative sentences, denoting the act of posing an inquiry to the addressee, which necessitates a response (Kamil & Hazim, 2019). In contrast to mere repetition or passive understanding, the ability to formulate questions is indicative of a more profound comprehension of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics within a language. The acquisition of foreign language skills is an integral component of language education, yet it frequently poses significant challenges to learners. As demonstrated by Mukattash (1981), as cited in Al-Mekhlafi (2013), the disparities in question formation between Arabic and English are recognised as a significant challenge confronting Arab students of English (p. 59). This phenomenon is not exclusive to Arab learners of English but is also observed among numerous other groups, including those hailing from Bukavu. Therefore, given that questioning is not merely a tool for learning but a definitive measure of functional communicative ability, the present section of this paper reviews existing literature on question formation in Bukavu Swahili and in English. It discusses Theoretical Generative Grammar (TGG), Question Formation in TGG, and the Linguistic Profile of the Bukavu Swahili.

2.1 Theoretical Generative Grammar (TGG)

The Theoretical Generative Grammar is a linguistic framework concerned with modelling the implicit knowledge that enables speakers to produce and interpret an infinite number of sentences. It focuses on the innate linguistic capabilities of humans, with the aim of describing the implicit knowledge that allows speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences (Helmi et al., 2025). TGG's theoretical framework posits that grammatical competence is governed by a finite set of formal rules and principles that generate well-formed structures. Since its emergence, pioneered by Avram Noam Chomsky in the mid-20th century (Susiwati, 2019), Generative Grammar has provided the theoretical basis for subsequent models of syntax, including Transformational Generative Grammar and the Principles and Parameters framework. The fundamental principles of this theory are as follows:

- **Universal Grammar (UG)**

Universal Grammar is a linguistic theory that posits the existence of a set of inherent principles shared by all human languages (Helmi et al., 2025). The overarching objective of this theory is to provide a comprehensive explanation for the observed similarities in the process of language acquisition across a multitude of linguistic systems, transcending the limitations imposed by specific languages. In the 1950s, the renowned linguist Noam Chomsky advanced the hypothesis that all languages are underpinned by a shared universal grammatical structure, premised on the notion that humans possess the capacity to acquire any language. For instance, there are a number of linguistic characteristics that are shared by all languages. These include: (1) verbs that indicate states, actions or processes that do not fall under the category of attributes; (2) transitive verbs, which inherently require the presence of a subject; (3) intransitive verbs, which do not need additional complements because their meaning is self-contained; (4) adjectives, which modify nouns or pronouns, indicating their quantity and quality; (5) pronouns, which serve as alternatives to nouns or noun phrases; and (6) adverbs, which modify verbs, adjectives, numerals, and even entire sentences (Helmi et al., 2025).

According to the Universal Grammar theory, a set of grammatical elements and principles is innate in all human languages, thus enabling children to structure language in specific ways.

- **Transformations**

Transformations are a process proposed by Zelig Harris (2002) in which the order of the constituents of a sentence can be changed, deleted, substituted, or added in order to consider the way a language was constructed. In essence, transformations can be defined as operations in which a language speaker combines and modifies simple sentences, thereby producing a finite set of rules that result in more complex sentences. The speaker acquires a finite set of basic sentence patterns in conjunction

with a finite set of transformational rules. Consequently, in accordance with these principles, it is possible for him to construct an infinite number of sentences (Wasow, 2003). The following example illustrates the process of transformation: the rule for conjoining two sentences of similar constituents, as illustrated in:

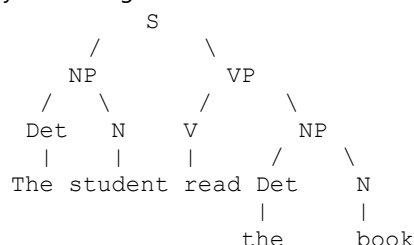
- (a) The smartest boy will be rewarded, and
- (b) The best girl will be rewarded, which results in
- (c) The smartest boy and the best girl will be rewarded.

Transformations in TGG are thus defined as rules that map deep structures (abstract underlying forms) to surface structures (observable expressions).

- **Phrase Structure Rules:**

The Phrase Structure Rules generate the basic hierarchical organisation of sentences through phrase markers (trees). The analysis of utterances is conducted in terms of their syntactic constituents (Fukui, 2006). In addition to delineating the manner in which categories such as noun and verb phrases are systematically integrated, they encompass fundamental sentence patterns. These rules function as a part of the grammar's basic component, creating intricate structures that encapsulate fundamental grammatical relationships (Jensen, 2013).

A rudimentary set of phrase structure rules may comprise $S \rightarrow NP VP$, $NP \rightarrow Det N$, and $VP \rightarrow V NP$. The application of these principles gives rise to the fundamental structure of the sentence "The student read the book." The noun phrase "the student" is formed by combining a determiner and a noun, while the verb phrase consists of a verb followed by a noun phrase.



The primary limitations of phrase structure rules are that, although they can characterise the overt syntactic structures of the majority of utterances, they are unable to explicitly state the rules that underlie sentence construction or arrange the rules in a way that results in well-formed sentences (Adetuyi & Fidelis, 2015, p. 4).

- **Movement:**

In syntax, movement is the phenomenon of a constituent (such as a word, phrase, or clause) appearing in one position in a sentence and then migrating to a different position within the same sentence or to a related sentence (Nory, 2023). The systematic links between surface word order and underlying grammatical structure are captured by this idea. Movement is used to explain patterns like topicalization, passivization and question formation. In the same perspective, movement structure is a kind of linguistic structure where a syntactic unit appears in a different place from its expected "base" or "logical" place (Li & Wang, 2018). This displaced element is interpreted as if it were still in its original position, creating a dependency. This allows linguists to distinguish between surface structure and underlying structure. Several classifications of movement have been made, reflecting different theoretical and empirical considerations, but Chomsky (1995) suggests that the most significant classification is the one between head and phrasal movement. The latter is further subdivided into A-movement and A-bar movement (Nory, 2023). These classifications are crucial for understanding how different syntactic operations affect interpretation and grammatical relations.

An example of phrasal movement is:

- (1) John saw the dog that chased the cat.

In the above sentence the wh-phrase "the dog that chased the cat" can be moved to form the question:

- (2) What did John see?

And an example of head movement is:

- (1) Someone has read the article.

- (2) Has someone ___ read the article? - Head movement of the auxiliary verb "has"

2.2 Question Formation in TGG

In Theoretical Generative Grammar (TGG), interrogative sentences are derived from an underlying deep structure by applying syntactic transformations. Two main mechanisms are involved in forming interrogatives:

1. **Wh-movement**, which involves the displacement of interrogative expressions such as 'who', 'what', 'which', 'where' and 'why' from their original argument positions to the specifier position of the complementiser phrase (Spec-CP) (Kit, 2009). This movement marks the clause as interrogative and satisfies syntactic requirements related to feature checking. For instance, in the sentence 'What did John buy?', the interrogative word 'what' originally functions as the object of 'buy', but is moved to Spec-CP, leaving a copy or trace behind in its original position.

2. **Subject-auxiliary inversion**

The defining syntactic property of yes-or-no questions in English is the inversion of the auxiliary verb and the subject compared to their order in declarative clauses ((Kit, 2009; Adha, 2022). In a declarative sentence, the subject comes before the auxiliary verb (e.g. 'She is coming'). This order is reversed in the matching yes-or-no question, creating an auxiliary-subject order (e.g. Is she coming?). This inversion addresses the clause's highest auxiliary element rather than the primary lexical verb.

Auxiliary inversion involves moving the auxiliary verb from its base position in the tense phrase (T) to the complementizer position (C). As a result of this movement, the auxiliary verb precedes the subject (Adha, 2022).

In TGG, these mechanisms are viewed as rule-governed transformations that apply to a base phrase structure in order to generate the surface form of interrogative sentences. The theory thus accounts for the systematic relationship between declarative and interrogative clauses by positing abstract syntactic representations and well-defined movement operations that produce the observed word order differences (Adha, 2022).

3. Bukavu Swahili: Linguistic Profile

Bukavu Swahili is a regional variety of Swahili spoken in and around the city of Bukavu in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Goyvaerts, 2007). In Malcolm Guthrie's classification of Bantu languages, Swahili (not just that of Bukavu) is assigned to Zone G, group G40, and often designated as G42 (Guthrie, 1967–1971). Bukavu is a thriving city on the southern bank of Lake Kivu, close to the Rwandan border. A commercial and cultural hub of South Kivu, it is well-known for its rocky terrain and bustling markets. It is a town with a rapidly growing population. The African Cities Research Consortium estimates its population at over one million in 2020, making it one of the largest cities in eastern DRC (Nyenyezi Bisoka et al., 2021). The city is ethnically diverse, with the Bashi (Shi) people forming the largest local group, alongside many others drawn by internal displacement, migration, and trade. The city's language has developed through daily contact between Swahili and local languages such as Mashi and Kilega, as well as under the strong influence of French due to its colonial history and education system (Bose, 2019).

Compared to standard Swahili, Bukavu Swahili has a distinct pronunciation and simplified grammar in some contexts. It also has a rich mix of borrowed vocabulary, particularly from French and neighbouring languages (Goyvaerts, 2007). It functions mainly as an urban lingua franca and is widely used in markets, churches, music and informal communication. It also plays an important role in expressing local identity and culture in South Kivu.

Bose (2019) suggests that the main linguistic characteristics of the Bukavu Swahili include that:

- It maintains a **rich subject-verb agreement (SVA) system**, where verbs are clearly marked to agree with the subject through prefixes.
 - (a) *Ni-na-enda sokoni.*
"I am going to the market."
→ *ni-* (1st person singular) agrees with the subject "I" on the verb *enda*.
→ *na:* verbal prefix expressing the continuous form/aspect of the verb tense in this sentence.
- In questions, Bukavu Swahili often shows **optional wh-fronting**, meaning wh-words can either appear at the beginning of the sentence or remain in situ without changing meaning.
 - (a) *Wewe una-enda wapi?*
"You, you are going where?" → "Where are you going?"
→ The wh-word *wapi* ("where") stays in its original position.
 - (b) *Wapi una-enda?*
"Where are you going?"

→ The same question with wh-fronting; both are acceptable and correct in Bukavu Swahili.

Interrogativity is frequently conveyed through intonation patterns and question particles, rather than strict word order, giving the variety a flexible and discourse-driven structure in everyday speech. For example: *Uko muzuri ?* → *Are you okay ?* Explanation: "Uko" meaning "You are" from the verb "Kuwa or kukuwa" remains "Uko ?" in the interrogative form where the question mark simply indicates rising intonation. So, unlike in English, this form does not accept any the Subject-Auxiliary form in question formulation.

3. Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach, underpinned by a library research design. This approach was selected for the investigation of question-formation in both Bukavu Swahili and English by means of a critical analysis of primary and secondary materials pertaining to the Bukavu Swahili linguistic profile, the English Theoretical Generative Grammar (TGG), and the question formation process in TGG. This approach was used with the objective of facilitating positive language transfer for teachers and students of English as a foreign language in Bukavu (i.e. native speakers of Bukavu Swahili) in their foreign language teaching and learning process. To this end, the present approach aims to systematically describe the theory of question formation in both Bukavu Swahili and English.

The data collection process was organised in two ways. On the one hand, it encompassed two primary methods: documentation and an extensive literature study (Bowen, 2009). For this study, data was collected from a range of written documents, including scholarly papers, linguistic reference books, and written sources containing discourse on English Theoretical Generative Grammar (TGG) and the Bukavu Swahili linguistic profile. The researcher identified key concepts in the texts and analysed each data point critically and contextually to uncover relationships between concepts. On the other hand, a number of other data were collected from natural speech samples and elicited sentences. The elicited sentences focused on yes-or-no questions and wh-questions.

The analysis was conducted qualitatively, through the following stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, 1994). The reduction of data was achieved by the selection of essential information from the supporting literature. The data display was presented in the form of analytical narrative and presentation through phrase-markers (tree diagrams) to represent derivations and illustrate some theories of TGG and the Bukavu Swahili. The conclusion drawing focused on the placement of the observed factors within the theoretical and applied linguistic studies.

Despite being a library-based study, this study is nonetheless pertinent to academic activities in Bukavu's secondary and higher education, especially with regard to the development of theoretical linguistics teaching materials. The study's significance lies in its contribution to the elucidation of question-formation theories in Bukavu Swahili and English. It serves as a foundational instrument for syntactic analysis and language learning among students.

5. English Question Formation

Question formation in English is done in two major ways: Yes-or-No questions and Wh-questions (Dąbrowska, 2000, p. 3). These two types of questions are used to obtain different kinds of information. Yes-or-No questions are formed to receive a simple affirmative or negative response, while Wh-questions are used when more specific information is required. Understanding how these questions are structured is essential for effective communication in English.

5.1 Yes-or-No Questions in English

Yes-or-No questions are a type of interrogative structure that elicits a response limited primarily to an affirmation or negation, such as yes or no. White et al. (1991) posit the theory that English yes-or-no questions are characterised by subject-auxiliary inversion (cited in Darani & Afghari, 2013, p. 1665). It is important to note that auxiliary verbs are among the grammatical elements that play a crucial role in the construction of grammatical units, particularly clauses and sentences. The presence of lexical verbs is sometimes required by auxiliaries when functioning within verbal groups; however, this does not detract from their significance as grammatical sentence elements. In the English language, a distinction is made between main auxiliaries (be, have, and do) and modal auxiliaries, which do not have untensed (non-finite) forms, including can, will, shall and may in the present, and could, would, should and might in the past (Jovanovska et al., 2024).

In sentences with no auxiliary, the do-support or do-insertion as Cowan (2008) calls it, is inserted.

Subject-auxiliary are therefore as in the following examples:

(1)

a. *She is reading the book.* (declarative)

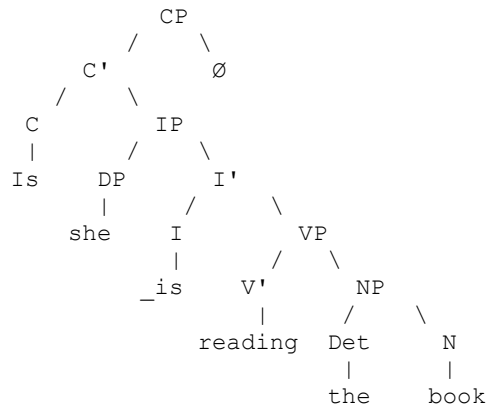
b. *Is she reading the book?* (interrogative)

(2)

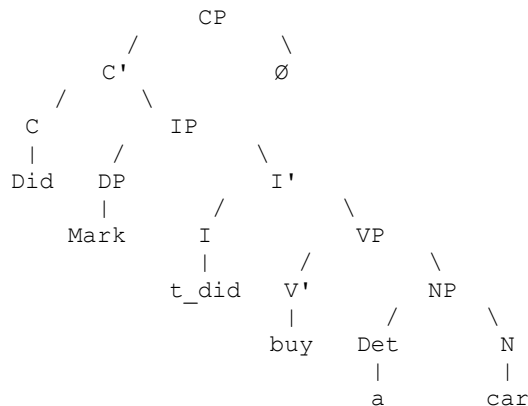
a. *Mark bought a new car* (declarative)

b. *Did Mark buy a new car* (interrogative)

In example (1) the auxiliary “**is**” moves to a higher position, preceding the subject.



In example (2), **do-support** inserts “**did**”, which then moves to C; and the main verb loses its tense marking and appears in the base form.



In both these examples, the auxiliary moves from I to C to satisfy interrogative features.

5.2 Wh-Questions in English

In the field of English language studies, “WH questions” are defined as a specific category of interrogative questions, characterised by the utilisation of words comprising the letters “wh”, such as “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, “why”, “which”, and “how” (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 854). In contrast to yes-or-no questions, which, as discussed in the preceding section, necessitate a straightforward ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, WH questions are employed to solicit specific information (Swan, 2005). For example, who asks about a person, what asks about things or ideas, when asks about time, where asks about place, and why asks about reasons (Yule, 2017). WH questions help speakers and writers gather detailed information, clarify meaning, and encourage more complete responses in communication.

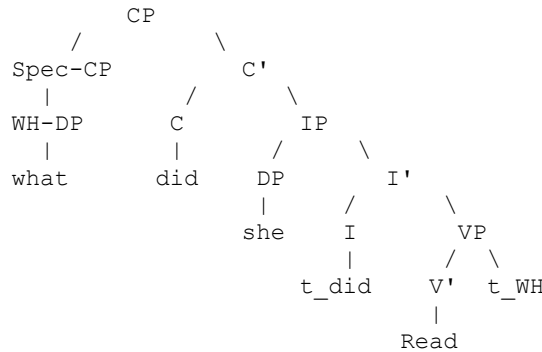
For question-formation, Wh-questions involve **wh-movement** to the **specifier of CP**:

(1) *What did she read?*

Basically:

- Deep structure: *She did read what*
- Wh-item moves to Spec,CP

- Auxiliary "did" moves to C



This shows that in English, WH-question formation is not merely a matter of word order on the surface, but is **fundamentally driven by underlying structural rules**, specifically WH-movement and auxiliary inversion.

6. Bukavu Swahili Question Formation

This section examines **question formation in Bukavu Swahili**, with particular attention to the grammatical strategies used to construct interrogative sentences. It provides an overview of how questions are formed in this variety of Swahili by focusing on two main types: **yes-or-no questions** and **WH questions**. By analysing these structures, this section shows how Bukavu Swahili employs systematic morphological and syntactic mechanisms to encode interrogative meaning and how these patterns contribute to our broader understanding of question formation in other languages.

6.1 Morphology-Driven Yes-or-No Questions

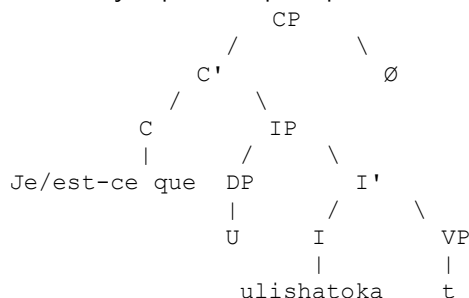
In Bukavu Swahili, yes-or-no questions are primarily driven by morphological factors and do not involve subject–verb inversion. This distinguishes it from English, but aligns it with standard Swahili interrogative strategies (Nurse & Hinnebusch, 1993). Typically, interrogativity is marked through the use of question particles, such as *je*, *ama*, and sometimes their French equivalent, "est-ce que", which may occur at the start of a clause or in interactional contexts (Goyvaerts, 1988). However, it is important to note that these question particles are occasionally omitted, and in such cases, interrogativity is only marked by intonation. Intonation plays a crucial role in this regard, as declarative sentences may function as yes/no questions when pronounced with a rising pitch, even in the absence of an interrogative particle (Mohamed, 2001). It is important to note that the verbal morphology remains canonical, preserving the standard subject–verb–object order and tense-aspect marking. This indicates that interrogative force in Bukavu Swahili is encoded through morphological and prosodic means rather than syntactic reordering. This finding lends further support to the hypothesis that, as in numerous other Bantu languages, the formation of yes-or-no questions in Bukavu Swahili is contingent on non-syntactic mechanisms.

(1)

a. *Ulishatoka*. (You have left / You have abandoned.)

b. *Je/est-ce que, ulishatoka?* (Have you left/abandoned?)

Notice no inversion: subject prefix keeps its position.

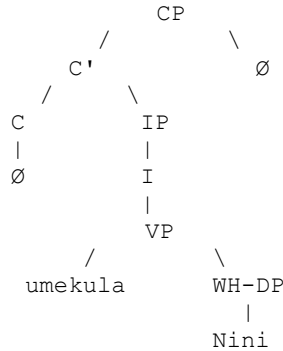


6.2 Wh-Questions in Bukavu Swahili

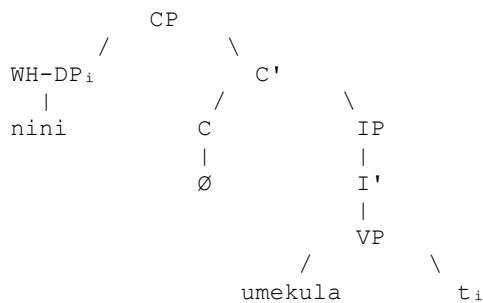
In Bukavu Swahili, WH-questions are formed through a set of interrogative words not necessarily starting with WH, interrogative suffixes, and modifications of declarative statements. Core question words include *nani* 'who', *nini* 'what', *lini* 'when', *wapi* 'where', *vipi* 'how', and *gani* 'which/what kind' (Almasi et al., 2014, p. 161). Note that 'lini' meaning when can often be replaced by *siku/wakati gani* which means which day/time. Most of these items are syntactically flexible and may appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. An important exception is *gani*, which never appears at the beginning and instead follows the noun it modifies (Almasi et al., 2014, p. 161).

(1)

a. *Umekula nini?* (You have eaten what?), with the 'wh' *nini* in situ



b. *Nini umeikula?* (What have you eaten?), with the 'wh' fronted



In addition to independent question words, Swahili employs interrogative suffixes that agree with noun class morphology. The suffix *-pi* ('which/where') combines with interrogative prefixes corresponding to noun classes (e.g. *mtu yupi* 'which person', *maneno yapi* 'which words'). The suffix *-ngapi* ('how many') is used to ask about quantity and combines with plural nominal prefixes (Almasi et al., 2014), reflecting Swahili's noun class agreement system.

Alternative expressions for 'how', such as *kwa vipi* and *kwa namna gani*, occur only sentence-finally. Overall, Swahili WH-questions are characterized by rich morphological agreement, flexible word order, and a clear interaction between interrogatives and the noun class system, making them a central feature of Swahili syntax and information structure.

7. Comparative Analysis

This section compares the question formation processes in English and Bukavu Swahili, drawing upon the descriptive and theoretical discussions that have been previously outlined. The analysis demonstrates both common interrogative functions and notable structural distinctions by examining how both languages create yes-or-no and WH-questions. The comparison demonstrates the use of diverse tactics by Bukavu Swahili, which exhibit a lesser reliance on overt movement, in contrast to the more rigid adherence to classical notions of syntactic movement and feature checking within the confines of a Transformational Generative Grammar framework characteristic of English.

7.1 Transformational Differences

Basing on insights provided in the preceding sections, this section delves into the salient distinctions between Bukavu Swahili and English in the formation of interrogative structures, with a particular focus on movement operations and wh-placement. In English, both yes-or-no questions and WH-questions rely on overt syntactic movement. In order to align with the interrogative parameters, yes-or-no questions necessitate subject-auxiliary inversion, whereby the auxiliary is moved to C. Conversely, wh-questions require wh-movement to the specifier of CP, which is often accompanied by auxiliary inversion. These patterns demonstrate a stringent implementation of transformational grammar principles, wherein grammaticality is contingent on C-position occupancy and feature checking. In contrast, Bukavu Swahili employs a more flexible system. Yes-or-no questions utilise question particles or intonation rather than inversion, and wh-elements can either remain in place or be fronted, indicating that movement is not strictly necessary. The following table summarises:

Feature	English	Bukavu Swahili
Yes/No question	Auxiliary inversion	Question particle/no inversion
Wh-movement	Obligatory	Optional
Wh in situ	Generally prohibited	Allowed
Movement operations	Overt and required	Variable
Intonation	Not grammaticalized for interrogativity; plays a pragmatic or interpretive role	Often rising in questions; contributes to interrogative interpretation

These differences demonstrate that two distinct methods can be employed in the formulation of questions. English grammar adheres to classical transformational grammar principles, whereby words and sentences invariably exhibit consistent patterns of alteration. Bukavu Swahili (Bantu languages grammar), however, demonstrates that the expression of meaning in a question can be achieved through morphology, particles, and prosody, with movement being non-obligatory. This prompts further consideration of claims pertaining to universal WH-movement, and suggests that transformational operations may be parameterized across languages rather than uniformly applied.

8. Discussion

The present study has explored question formation processes in English and Bukavu Swahili. The results of the study reveal systematic structural differences that have important implications for English language learning among native speakers of Bukavu Swahili. While both languages use interrogative constructions to request information, they do so by means of different grammatical strategies. English is characterised by a strong reliance on obligatory syntactic movement, exemplified by subject-auxiliary inversion in yes-or-no questions and wh-movement in specific questions (Kit, 2009; Chen, 2013; Adha, 2022). In contrast, Bukavu Swahili employs morphological markers, interrogative particles, and intonation, with syntactic movement occurring optionally (Goyvaerts, 1988; Nurse & Hinnebusch, 1993; Mohamed, 2001). These differences have practical implications for the learning of English as a foreign language in the Bukavu context.

The flexibility of Bukavu Swahili question formulation has the potential to result in negative transfer when learning English interrogative frameworks. In the context of Bukavu Swahili, subject-verb inversion does not exist and is not a requirement for yes-or-no questions. This can result in learners creating English questions that maintain declarative word order, such as "You are coming?", and employing just intonation to indicate interrogativity. A parallel can be drawn here to Bukavu Swahili's optional wh-fronting, which has been observed to result in the formation of non-target-like English wh-questions that retain wh-elements, such as "You are going where?" (Almasi et al., 2014). The observed patterns thus demonstrate the influence of the learners' first language grammar, rather than a lack of understanding of English vocabulary or communicative intent.

The obligatory nature of movement in English poses a significant learning challenge for speakers of Bukavu Swahili. In the English language, the grammatical encoding of interrogative meaning is achieved through the use of specific syntactic configurations (Kit, 2009; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). The failure to use these configurations consistently leads to the production of ungrammatical statements. It is imperative that learners acquire not only new forms, but also a new grammatical principle. It is evident that interrogativity in English is structurally limited and cannot be communicated purely through prosody

or particles (Adha, 2022). This contrast highlights the significance of explicit education, as the necessary rules cannot be readily deduced from the learners' native linguistic system.

The findings underscore the pivotal role of contrastive and form-focused instructional methodologies for English educators in Bukavu. It is incumbent upon instructors to elucidate the distinctions between Bukavu Swahili and English question construction to students, including the necessity for subject-auxiliary inversion and required wh-movement in English (Chen, 2013; Kit, 2009). It is possible to make learners aware of areas where transfer is likely to take place by using comparative examples from both languages (Reynolds-Case, 2012). The syntactic needs of English inquiries can also be reinforced by organised practice that separates interrogative patterns. For example, drills can be utilised to concentrate on auxiliary placement and wh-fronting. Simplified tree diagrams and sentence transformation activities are examples of visual aids that might facilitate students' better internalisation of the fundamental structure of English interrogatives (Adha, 2022).

It should therefore be noted from this analysis that the variations in question formation between Bukavu Swahili and English demonstrate the influence of grammatical methods unique to a language on the process of learning a foreign language. The transition from a flexible, morphology- and intonation-driven interrogative system to a movement-based English system offers both learning possibilities and obstacles for native speakers of Bukavu Swahili. It is evident that a pedagogic approach that incorporates contrastive analysis and explicit syntactic instruction can facilitate enhanced comprehension and grammatical precision in English interrogative expressions among students.

9. Conclusion

The present study has investigated question-formation in Bukavu Swahili and English, and demonstrated that in both of these languages, question formation is governed by distinct grammatical mechanisms, reflecting broader typological variation in how languages encode interrogativity. English is characterised by a reliance on obligatory syntactic movement, incorporating features such as subject-auxiliary inversion and wh-movement. In contrast, Bukavu Swahili operates within a more flexible framework underpinned by morphological principles, interrogative particles and intonation, with syntactic movement remaining optional. These differences have significant implications for English language learning among native speakers of Bukavu Swahili, as they may lead to negative transfer and persistent non-target-like interrogative structures. The study emphasises the significance of explicit, contrastive, and form-focused instruction in the teaching of English interrogatives in the Bukavu context. The findings of this study ultimately contribute to the field of comparative syntax by illustrating how universal communicative functions may be realised through language-specific grammatical strategies. In addition to this, the study offers practical insights for the improvement of foreign language pedagogy.

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