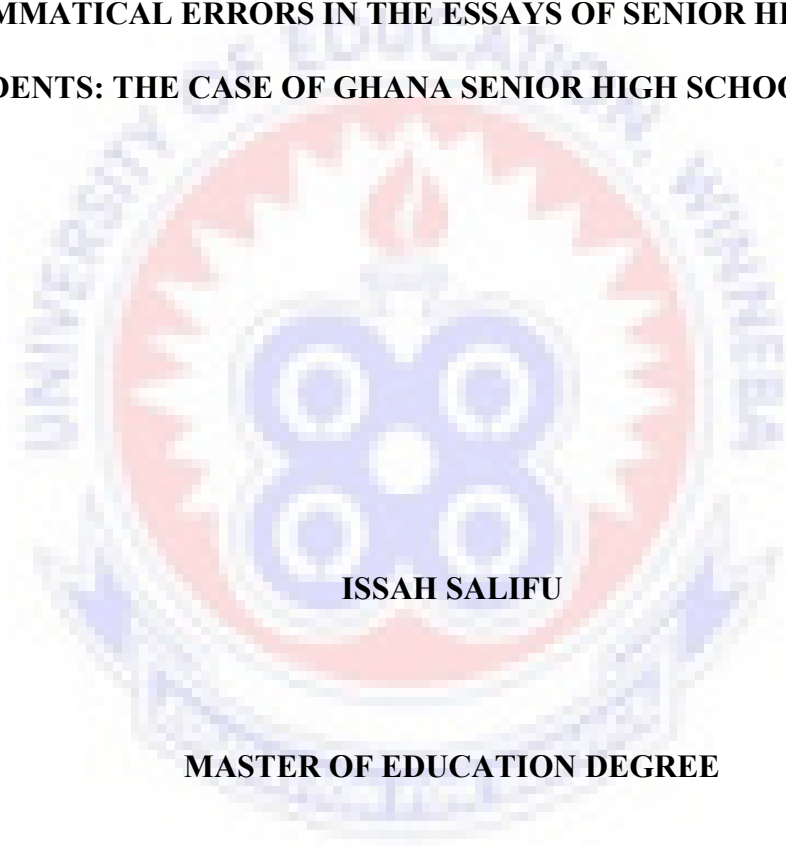


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THE ESSAYS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS: THE CASE OF GHANA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, TAMALE**



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STUDENT: THE CASE OF GHANA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, TAMALE**

**ISSAH SALIFU**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign  
Language Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate  
Studies in partial fulfillment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Education  
(Teaching English as a Second Language)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**SEPTEMBER, 2019**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Issah Salifu, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Charlotte Fofu Lomotey

Signature:.....

Date:.....

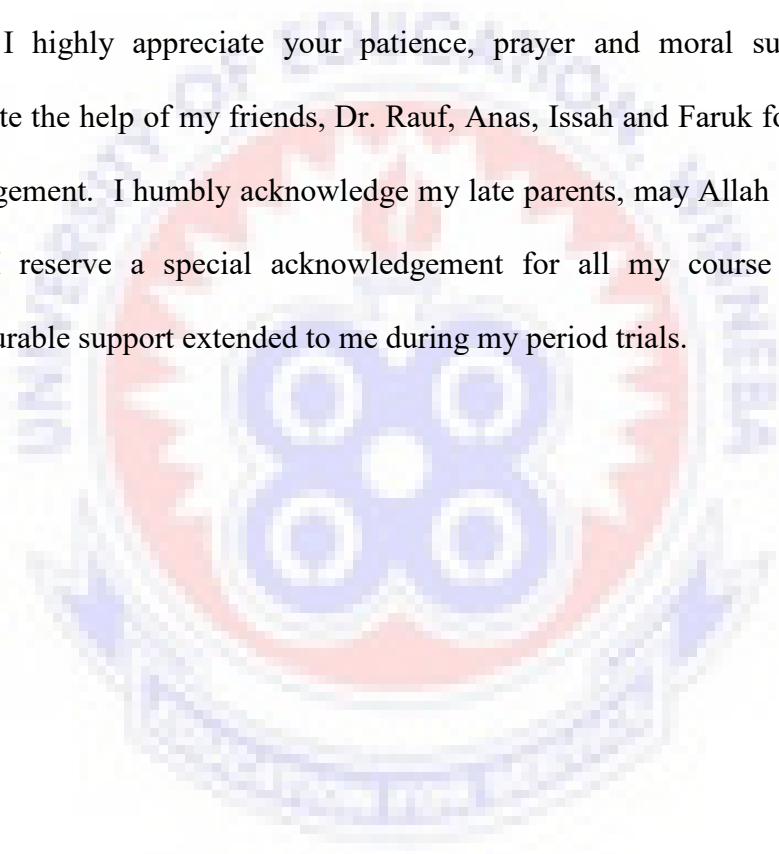
## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late mother; M ma Damata and father; Alhaji Salifu Shiribadu affectionately called BLACK MAN.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the name of Allah, the beneficial, most merciful, Lord of universe, you alone deserve to be worshipped. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisor and mother; Doctor Charlotte Fofu Lomotey for her motherly touch and guidance. My indebtedness also goes to all the lecturers in the Department of Applied Linguistics for their contributions in my academic pursuit. My profound gratitude goes to my wife and the children for your sacrifices during long absence in pursuit of academic laurels. I highly appreciate your patience, prayer and moral support. I equally appreciate the help of my friends, Dr. Rauf, Anas, Issah and Faruk for the insight and encouragement. I humbly acknowledge my late parents, may Allah grant you eternal peace. I reserve a special acknowledgement for all my course mates for their immeasurable support extended to me during my period trials.



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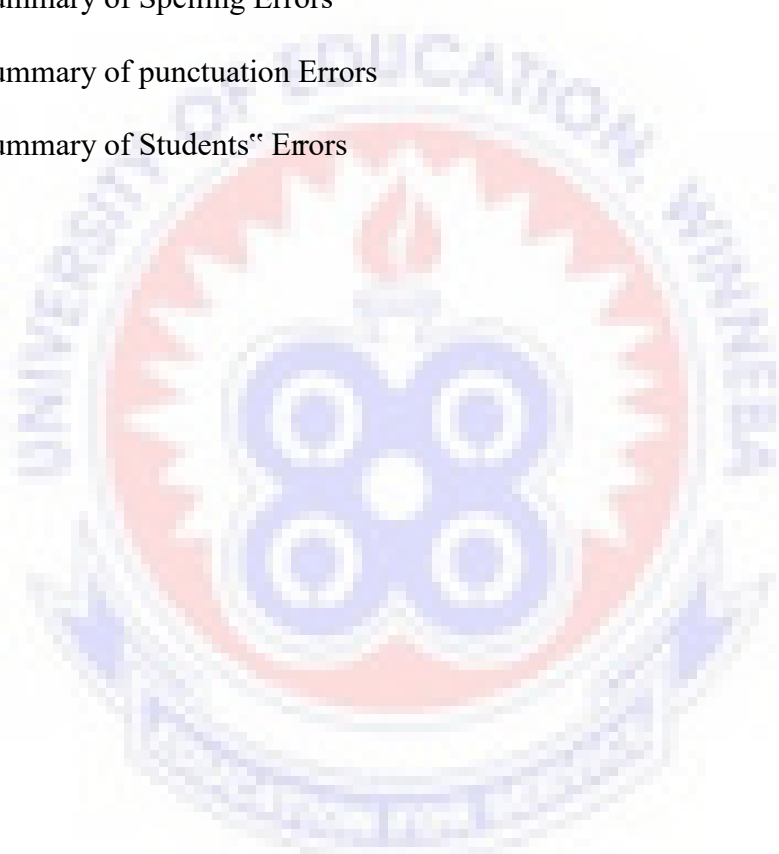
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## ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study aimed at investigating the grammatical errors students of Ghana Senior High School, Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana commit in their essay writing. The study sought to identify grammatical errors and examine the causes of the errors. To achieve these objectives, essays from 201 students randomly selected from across the three streams were collected and analyzed. In all, 2864 errors were identified; verb related errors, concord, prepositional, adverbial, number, article and sentence fragments, spelling, and punctuation errors. The findings of the study indicate that causes of errors in learners' writing include incomplete learning of rules, ignorance of rule restrictions, overgeneralization of concepts and rules, context of instruction as well as L1 interference. Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers should make conscious attempts at understanding the L1 of their students. Finally and most importantly, teachers should adopt the communicative teaching method in order to minimize errors.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

English language is spoken globally, in Europe, Asia, America and Africa. It is a Lingua Franca for many countries, including Ghana. It is taught in Ghanaian schools as a second language due to the existence of many languages and occupies an important place in the lives of the citizenry. In spite of many successes chalked in teaching and learning of the language, the trend has taken a downward surge, especially, at the second cycle schools. Wornyo (2015) argues that although the language is learnt for over ten years at the basic level before being enrolled into the high school, many students still do not exhibit the required competence, especially in essay writing. Good writing competence is recognized as an important skill in language learning. It is worthy to state that poor display of grammar in writing by Ghanaian students at the secondary school level remain the biggest obstacle to academic progression to the tertiary level in Ghana. English grammar is taught at every level for students to be able to communicate effectively; especially in written English. This is because all other subjects are taught in English and answers to questions are written in English. In effect, the general apprehension regarding the level of decline in academic standards is attributable to poor understanding of English language. Consequently, Harynato (2007) argues that ungrammaticality in written corpus of English language shows defect in the language acquisition. This shows that teaching and learning of English language is fraught with challenges and learners are at the receiving end.

These challenges have been reported in the Chief Examiner's Report every year. The report has always pointed out that the failure and inability to present convincing

write-ups stems from errors regarding content deficiencies, poorly organized works, inappropriate expression usages and grammatical errors. The grammatical errors appear to be their Waterloo because improper use of grammar constitutes a drain on their performances. Wornyo (2016) is of the opinion that a good script in any subject area should not be inundated with grammatical errors and that learners have difficulty in producing scripts with minimal grammatical errors. The poor knowledge of English grammar impacts on academic achievements. The grammatical errors the students usually include wrong tense, concord errors, prepositional errors, sentence fragments and wrong amalgamation of words. This is evident in numerous editions of the Chief Examiners report states categorically that "...many of the students used wrong tense, faulty constructions and wrong verbs to match subjects in English language". It is against this background this work seeks to identify the grammatical and mechanical errors students commit and see how to remedy the situations.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The performance of students in the English language paper in public examinations over the years has taken a nose dive. The downward trend in the performance has caused stakeholders of education to be concerned that the standard is on the decline. Many strategies to stem this tide have been adopted by the stakeholders including a forum dubbed National Forum on the falling standards of English in 2008. More so, the Chief Examiners' Reports on English over the years repeatedly point to a disappointing downward trend. The story is not different at Ghana Senior High School. The students share similar characteristics as those of all other second cycle schools in the country. They commit similar grammatical errors that drain their effort at excelling in their write-ups in the English language paper which ultimately results in poor performance.

Often, composition writing lessons are reduced learning in abstraction instead of practical ones. Large size of classes has made it extremely difficult for teacher of English language to pay attention to composition exercises effectively. Students barely practiced essays unless during examination, which defeat the adage; „practice makes perfect.“ Also, limited library space, limited contact times on the timetable, terrible relationship between the school and the community and students lukewarm attitudes to the subject and learning in general account for declining output. Based on these challenges, students written scripts are fraught with a lot of grammatical errors such as tense errors, concord errors, number and article errors as well as some mechanical errors which the West Africa Examinations Council are using to determine students“ progression to the next academic ladder.

Although errors are part and parcel of the learning process, it is also important for teachers to realize that if errors are not properly dealt with, they fester to become incurable academic challenge learners (Khan, 2005). It is a common knowledge that learning a target language is a gradual process, during which errors are made in all levels of learning. Therefore, Error Analysis which involves error taxonomies, error detection and error correction can help in effectively handling learning process. Presada and Badea (2014) assert that Error Analysis (EA) could reduce the number of errors in their students“ works. Errors play an important role in learning a second language and on this basis, teachers can determine the level of mastery of language among their students and discover what they still have to learn, unlearn, or relearn. It is important for teachers to recognize the errors their students commit, because they would have the opportunity to understand the different processes through which these errors are caused. These include borrowing patterns from the mother tongue,

extending patterns from the target language, and expressing meanings using words and grammar which are already known (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

In order to better analyze the errors students commit, teachers and researchers examine the types of errors that learners make and identify the frequency at which these errors appear in the writings of the students. According to Corder (1974) systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching. Although errors are seen as a part of the teaching and learning process, it is also significant for teachers to realize that if the errors are not identified and remedied, they may pose a challenge to the learner in future. Several factors can be identified as contributing to students failing English, and errors have been found to contribute significantly. Where errors appear to overtake one's writing, reading becomes somewhat difficult for the examiner and this will eventually lead to failure of the student. In view of this, the present study focuses on analyzing the grammatical errors the students of Ghana Senior High School commit in their English writings, the causes of these errors and their implications in the teaching of English language in the school since knowing the causes of learners' errors is an effective way to help reduce them.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the grammatical and mechanical errors in the write-ups of students of Ghana Senior High School, Tamale in the northern region of Ghana. It is to identify the grammatical errors, state causes of errors and their implications on the findings. It also to make necessary suggestions to educational stakeholders to help solve the problem identified.



#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are

- i. to identify grammatical errors found in students' essays
- ii. to examine the causes of the grammatical errors

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the errors found in the writings of students of Ghana Senior High School?
2. What are the causes of these errors?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This work is beneficial to students through teachers of the language and language policy makers for several reasons. Firstly, it draws language teachers' attention about the kinds of errors students in the second cycle schools make and the causes of these errors. Also, it points to language teachers the role errors play in the process of language acquisition. Additionally, the study highlights to language teachers, aspects of the subject that require particular emphasis so as to devise the appropriate remediation strategies. The results also help students to identify and correct their own errors with time. For policy and curriculum designers, the findings of the study provide insight as to what to include the curriculum of second cycle schools. Finally the results serve as a source of reference and add to knowledge on errors to people of interest.

### **1.7 Limitation**

The work focuses on students of Ghana senior high school with a population of more than 2500. With this kind of population, it is difficult to peruse the essays of every student identify grammar and mechanical errors they commit. As a measure, the researcher has reduced the population to a sample size of two hundred one (201) with representations from all the streams; SHS 1 to SHS 3.

### **1.8 Delimitation**

The study seeks to find out grammatical errors students commit in their essays that derail their academic effort, the rate of occurrence of such errors and recommendations for improving the essays students. The researcher has limited himself to errors such as concord errors, verb errors, prepositional errors, number errors, article errors, adverb errors and sentence fragments as well as mechanical errors. Other errors such as ambiguities, amalgamation of sentences, adjective errors, the use pidgin and others have been captured in the work. Therefore, other researchers may or can investigate other aspects that are not captured this research in future.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 reviews related literature. It focuses on what other authorities and researchers have written or said about the topic; grammatical errors in the essay of second cycle schools. It focuses on their standpoints and the researcher's compliments or disagreement about them. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology adopted that was for the study. The study adopted a qualitative research design and used random sampling technique in selecting the participants of the study as well as validity and reliability. Chapter 4 focuses on the analysis of and findings. The outcomes of the collected data were analyzed and

interpreted according to the research questions. Chapter 5 comprises the summary of study, recommendation and conclusion. The summary entailed what the researcher had done throughout the work. The recommendation made suggestions to stakeholders such as policy makers, teacher of English language, authors of language text, educationist and students as well. The chapter was concluded with the summary of the findings.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides theoretical frameworks to the research. The focus of the chapter is to discuss the concept of error which entails an in-depth discussion on Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis and Interlanguage. It would also the distinction between errors and mistakes, types of errors, causes of errors, importance of learners' errors and review of related literature.

#### **2.1 The Concept of Errors**

According to Hasyim, (2002), errors in foreign language teaching especially in English are the cases which are difficult to avoid. For the many experts belonging to different schools of thought is responsible for the variety of definitions to be presented. Basically, those definitions contain the same meaning while the difference lies only on the ways they formulate them. According to Brown (1994), errors are noticeable deviations from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. For Norrish and Cunningworth (1987), errors are systematic deviations from the norms of the language being learnt, when learners have not learnt something and consistently get it wrong. The definitions put forward show that errors are inevitably systematic and consistent phenomenon learners usually exhibit in the process of learning a second language. Dulay. al (1982) mention that the term error refers to systematic deviations from selected norms or sets of norms. Error analysis is useful in second language learning because this will reveal to us- teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers and the problem areas. It can used to design remedial exercises and focus more attention on the trouble spots.

## 2.2 Errors and Mistakes

According to Brown (2000), mistakes are learners' failure to utilize a known system correctly, while errors are noticeable deviations from the adult grammar of a native speaker. It reflects the interlanguage competence of the learner. Karra (2006) suggests that mistakes refer to unsystematic errors whereas systematic deviations. Unsystematic errors occur in one's native language and are not significant to the process of language learning. Al-Khresheh (2016), states the distinguishing features between an error and a mistake. The first one involves checking the consistency of the L2 learners' performances. If learners use certain structure or rule correctly and later uses it wrongly, it is considered a mistake which can be self-corrected. However, if learners always use a structure or a rule wrongly, this is considered an error. The second way involves asking L2 learners to correct their deviant utterances; if they are unable to, the deviation is an error but where the learners are successful, the deviation is regarded a mistakes.

Corder (1981) has provided a model for identifying errors in the utterances of L2 learners. The model states that every sentence is to be regarded as idiosyncratic until it is shown to be otherwise. It provides a distinction between what is regarded as 'overt' and 'covert' errors. If sentences are ill-formed in terms of target language rules, they are regarded as 'overtly idiosyncratic'. Where sentences are superficially well-formed but does not mean what the learners intend, they are regarded as 'covertly idiosyncratic'. So, to identify the presence and nature of errors, interpretations of the learners' utterances are necessary (Corder, 1978). The model shows that literal translation can be a probable indicator of the foreign language learners' errors which might be attributed to interference from their own mother tongue.

### 2.3 Types of Errors

In error classification, different models have been adopted by many authorities in the field. Brown (2000) basically views it as global or local errors of which the global errors are those that hinder communication and affect the structure of the sentence such as a missing essential part of the sentence subject or verb. Global errors affect understanding of sentence. The local errors do not hinder understanding because violation is insignificant segment of a sentence that allows the hearer to deduce the intended meaning. The limitedness of Brown (2000) prepared the grounds for Dulay et.al (1982) to propose four types of errors. Their categorization includes;

- i. Errors in linguistic taxonomy
- ii. Errors in surface strategy taxonomy
- iii. Errors in comparative taxonomy
- iv. Errors in communicative taxonomy

Linguistic taxonomy of errors is concerned with classification of errors on the basis of whether the language components; phonology, grammar, semantic and lexicon, discourse and the linguistic constituents are affected. Constituent on the other hand includes language elements that comprise each language component. For example, if an error occurs in a sentence, the question to ask is whether it occurs in the main or subordinate clause and which constituent is affected; noun, and verb preposition. For the surface strategy taxonomy, emphasis is placed on ways surface structures are affected. Supporters of this surface strategy believe that cognitive process plays important roles in the learner's reconstruction of the new language.

Surface strategy taxonomy highlights the ways surface structures are altered. Analyzing errors from a surface strategy perspective makes us aware that learners' errors are based on some logic. They are not the result of laziness or sloppy thinking

but of the learners' use of interim principles to produce a new language (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). This taxonomy classifies errors as

- Omission,
- Addition,
- Misformation
- Misordering.

An omission is a type of error which has to do with the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. In the process of writing or speaking speakers sometimes omit constituents such as verb, noun, adjective etc. This usually happens in the early stages of second language acquisition. Addition errors happen in situations when there is the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al. 1982). Errors usually occur in the later stages of L2 learning, when the learner has already acquired some target language rules. This happens when the learners overuse certain grammatical rules of the target language.

1. We must to see the doctor.
2. He worked hard to earn a living with.

In these two sentences, the inclusion of „to“ and „with“ makes the sentence ungrammatical.

It must be indicated that addition errors are further categorized as.

- Double Marking
- Regularization
- Simple Addition

Misformation errors occur when learners use wrong morphemes or structures in situations the learner supplies items which are incorrect. For example,

1. The children goed to the market.
2. She cutted the trees

In these sentences, the learner uses goed and cutted instead of went and cut to express past tense. In misformation, the learner supplies items which do not conform to the accepted norm. There are three sub-types of misformation errors. They are further grouped as follows:

- Regularization,
- Archi-forms,
- Alternating forms

Finally Dulay et.al (1982) state that misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. They usually occur consistently in both L1 and L2 learners' constructions that have already been acquired. For example, in *I don't know what is that*, the learner intends to construct *I don't know what that is*. Therefore there is wrong placement of linguistic items. On comparative taxonomy errors classification, attention is focused on comparison between the structure of language learner errors and certain other types of construction. The types of errors that fall under this include;

- Intralingual or developmental errors
- Interlingual errors
- Ambiguous errors
- Unique errors

Intralingual or developmental errors illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the



classroom of textbook which reflects the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. For the Interlingual errors, it is often referred to as mother-tongue interference or negative transfer. It reflects native language structure regardless of the internal process or external conditions that spawned them. Ambiguous errors are those that can be classified as developmental or interlingual. It is caused when the errors reflect the learner's native language structures and the types found in written works or speech of children acquiring a first language. Unique errors are not similar to those children make during first language development, they must be unique to second language learners and since they are not interlingual, some must be unique reflections of creative construction.

Communicative effect taxonomy deals with errors from the perspective of their effect on the listener or reader. It focuses on distinguishing between errors that seem to cause miscommunication. This taxonomy classifies errors into global and local errors. Global errors are the misuse of structure and thus damage or breakdown communication. For example conjunction errors, which involve the overall meaning of the sentence and major constituent classes of the sentence or transformations, will seriously influence comprehension of sentences. Local errors are referring to error which will not damage communication. Such as lexical errors, noun errors, and adverbs do not usually cause major problems.

## **2.5 Causes of Errors**

There are mainly two major sources of errors in second language learning. The first source is interference from the native language while the second source can be attributed to intralingual and developmental factors. The native language of learners plays a significant role in learning a second language. Errors due to the influence of

the native language are called interlingual errors. Interlingual errors are also called transfer or interference errors. The view that the native language plays a mostly negative role was emphasized as early as the forties and the fifties by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957). Although, recently researchers tend to minimize interlingual errors and emphasize intralingual and developmental errors (cf. Dulay & Burt, 1974), negative transfer or interference is still acknowledged as an important factor in second language learning (Jordens, 1977; Kellerman, 1979; Touchie, 1983). Intralingual and developmental errors are due to the difficulty of the second/target language. Intralingual and developmental factors include the following:

- i. Simplification: Learners often choose simple forms and constructions instead of more complex ones. An example of simplification might involve the use of simple present instead of the present perfect continuous.
- ii. Overgeneralization: This is the use of one form or construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. Examples of overgeneralization include the use of *corne* and *goed* as the past tense forms of *corne* and *go* and the omission of the third person singular *s* under the heavy pressure of all other endless forms as in *I,e go*. It should be noted that simplification and overgeneralization are used by learners in order to reduce their linguistic burden.
- iii. Hypercorrection: Sometimes the zealous efforts of teachers in correcting their students' errors induce the students to make errors in otherwise correct forms. Stenson (1978) calls this type of error "induced errors." For example, the teacher's insistence that Arab ESL learners produce the phoneme *IpI* correctly prompts them to always produce *IpI* where the phoneme *Ibl* is required. Thus Arab ESL learners say *piTd* and *pattie* instead of *bird* and *battle*.

- iv. Faulty teaching: Sometimes it happens that learners' errors are teacher-induced ones, i.e., caused by the teacher, teaching materials, or the order of presentation. This factor is closely related to hypercorrection above. Also, it is interesting to note that some teachers are even influenced by their pupils' errors in the course of long teaching.
- v. Fossilization: Some errors, especially errors in pronunciation, persist for long periods and become quite difficult to get rid of. Examples of fossilized errors in Arab ESL learners are the lack of distinction between /p/ and /b/ in English and the insertion of the resumptive pronoun in English relative clauses produced by these learners.
- vi. Avoidance: Some syntactic structures are difficult to produce by some learners. Consequently, these learners
- vii. Second Language Learning Errors avoid these structures and use instead simpler structures.
- viii. Arab ESL learners avoid the passive voice while Japanese learners avoid relativization in English.
- ix. Inadequate learning: This is mainly caused by ignorance of rule restrictions or under differentiation and incomplete learning. An example is omission of the third person singular.
- x. False concepts hypothesized: Many learners' errors can be attributed to wrong hypotheses formed by these learners about the target language. For example, some learners think that *is* is the marker of the present tense. So, they produce: *He is talk to the teacher*. Similarly, they think that *was* is the past tense marker. Hence they say: *It was happened last night*.

## **2.6 Approaches to Error Analysis**

Latiff and Bakar (2007), report that approaches to L1 interference in L2 learning are contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH), Error Analysis (EA); the contemporary approach and Interlanguage Analysis (IA). This section would focus on the Error Analysis approach and Interlanguage.

### **2.6.1 Error analysis**

Error analysis is an activity to reveal the learning outcomes achieved by learners in developing interlanguage system in writing and speaking which consist of comparison between the errors made in target language and that target language itself. Taylor (1997:3) states that „error analysis is the study and evaluation of uncertainty in measurement“. It implies that error has a positive role in language learning since it is the sign that language learners do not learn the rules of the target language effectively. Khansir (2012) views it as the type of linguistic probe which focuses on the errors learners in second language make which is achieved through comparison between the errors made in a source language and the target language itself. It encompasses all the sources of errors; a step ahead of Contrastive Analysis (Ciesielkiewicz, 2015). Many learners“ errors are usually as a result of making faulty inferences about the rules of the target language which do not reflect the entirety of the sources of errors in the process of language development and usage.

These notions were motivated by the classification of sources of errors into two types as interlingual and intralingual errors (Richards, 1971). Interlingual errors result from learners“ attempt to use the system of the native language in acquiring the target language leading to faulty inferences. On the other hand intralingual errors affect learners“ competence at a particular stage. It illustrates the rule of learning, such as overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn the conditions

under which the rules apply. It has also emphasized that the cause and origin of errors are found within the structure of English language itself; through reference to the strategy by which a second language is acquired and taught. Such errors are not mere lapses or memory failure but as indication of transitional competence.

In terms of the significance of this approach, Kotsyuk (2015) and Selinker (1969) view the significance of the analysis of errors in L2 learning at three different levels; the teacher, researcher and learner. For the teacher, understanding of the concept exposes to him or her areas of learning difficulties and where and how they emanate. According to (Sharma, (1980), Error Analysis provides a strong support to remedial teaching, error detection, error correction and value of errors. As far as the researcher is concerned, it provides him with information about the process of language learning and acquisition, the methods or strategies the students are using in the process to learn a language. To the learner, making of errors serves a device he or she uses in order to learn. If students understand what is hard to learn, they will pay attention to their areas of difficulties. Khansir (2012), suggests that Error Analysis provides a strong support to remedial teaching and reveals both the successes and the failures for learning of second language learning.

For the weaknesses of Error Analysis, Zaki (2015), asserts that Error Analysis approach exhibits some defects in application. The first is to do with the difficulty identifying the errors. It is not always that easy since many of them require awareness of the learners' intentions. Moreover, distinguishing between errors of competence and that of performance is very difficult due to the fact that they can be consecutive. The second challenge is classifying the errors; since many errors can be relevant to more than one level or included in another error. Finding the psycholinguistic reasons

behind errors is very challenging as well because the same error can occur due to L1 transfer, and communication strategies or the Interlanguage subsystem.

However, the criticisms of Error Analysis fall under two main categories; weakness in methodology and limitation in scope. In terms of methodology, there are practical difficulties to identify what an „error“ or „mistake“ is. George (1972) states emphatically that whereas learners errors are generally viewed as unwanted forms children“s errors are seen as transitional forms and adult native speakers“ errors are regarded as slips of the tongue.” This is the difficulty in identifying errors and also who makes an error or a mistake. Another criticism leveled against Error Analysis approach is that the focus is on written materials such as students“ essays, class test and other exercises and not on speech. However, research has proved that errors that learners make can be influenced by a variety of factors, for example, they make errors in speaking but not in writing as a result of the different processing conditions involved.

As far as limitation in scope as a criticism leveled against EA is concerned, it must be stated that EA has failed to provide a complete picture of the learners“ language. Error Analysis is only interested in what the learner does wrongly and not what he/she does correctly. In analyzing the learners“ language it is very important to examine the totality of the learners“ production and output. Again, EA is limited because most of the studies conducted are cross-sectional in nature thus providing a static view of L2 acquisition. Language learning is developmental and EA does not help us to understand how learners develop knowledge of the L2 over time. (Ellis, 1985).

### ***2.6.2 Interlanguage***

Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second language or foreign language learners in the process of learning a target language (Latiff&Bakar, 2007).

The term „Interlanguage“ was first introduced by Selinker in 1969 in reference to the „interim grammars constructed by second language learners on their way to the target language“ (Mclaughlin, 1987, p. 60). According to Mclaughlin, Interlanguage can mean two things: the learner’s system at a single point in time or the range of interlocking systems that characterizes the development of learners over time. Ellis (1990) indicates that interlanguage theory can provide an explanation for how both children and adults acquire a second language. According to Tarone et al (1976), interlanguage productions have the following characteristics:

- Second Language speakers rarely conform to what one expects native speakers of the target language to produce,
- Interlanguage Productions are not an exact translation of native language utterances (i.e., first language interference does not play the primary role in the information of interlanguages)
- Utterances in the second language are not randomly produced, and Interlanguages are spoken either by adults or by children when second language acquisition is not simultaneous with that of the first language.

Selinker (1972) used the term fossilization to refer to the tendency of many learners stop developing their interlanguage grammar in the direction of the target language. He argued that interlanguage is a separate linguistic system resulting from the learners’ attempted production of the target language norm; he identified five fossilization processes as follows:

- i. Language Transfer: sometimes rules and subsystems of the interlanguage may result from transfer from the first language.
- ii. Transfer of Training: some elements of the interlanguage may result from specific features of the training process used to teach the second language.

- iii. Strategies of Second Language Learning: some elements of the interlanguage may result from a specific approach to the material to be learned.
- iv. Strategies of Second Language Communication: some elements of the interlanguage may result from specific ways people learn to communicate with native speakers of the target language.
- v. Overgeneralization of the Target Language Linguistic Materials: some elements of the interlanguage may be the product of overgeneralization of the rules and semantic features of the target language.

## **2.7 The Importance of Learners' Errors**

The most important and innovatory feature of EA is that it is quite error-friendly, meaning that errors are not seen as something negative or pathological anymore, but as Corder claims, learners' errors are significant in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language" (Corder, 1967). At the very beginning of errors in language learning and use, it stresses the uniqueness of human errors: "Error is likewise unique to humans, who are not only sapiens and loquens, but also homo errans". He supports the idea of the importance of learners' errors by claiming that the learners' errors are a register of their current perspective on the TL. James (1998, p. 12) gives Corder's five crucial points, originally published in Corder's seminar paper titled „The significance of learners' errors“:

- L1 acquisition and L2 learning are parallel processes, they are ruled by the same mechanisms, procedures and strategies. Learning a L2 is probably facilitated by the knowledge of the L1.



- Errors reflect the learners' inbuilt syllabus or what they have taken in, but not what the teachers have put into them. So there is a difference between „input“ and „intake“.
- Errors show that both learners of L1 and L2 develop an independent language system - a „transitional competence“.
- The terms „error“ and „mistake“ shouldn't be used interchangeably.
- Errors are important because they (a) tell the teacher what he or she should teach, (b) are a source of information for the researcher about how the learning proceeds, and (c) allow the learners to test their L2 hypotheses.

## **2.8 Related Studies**

Yankson (1994) analyses the errors in the use of English by students of the University of Cape Coast and University of Nigeria, Nsuka campus. In this study, the researcher identified common errors made by these students which include: concord errors and errors involving complex noun phrases. However, he went further to trace the plausible sources of these errors as “intralingual” and “developmental”. According to Yankson (1994, p. 2) “developmental errors” refer to errors that are typical of all second language learners while “intralingual errors” are those committed as a result of the learner's partial knowledge of the data of the target language”. Kim (1998) in a study to investigate errors in English verbs with reference to tense, mood, and voice found that mood were the most frequently committed errors followed by errors in tense. This study was conducted among Korean EFL students who were asked to translate Korean sentences to English. Kim noted that the errors originated from overgeneralization which occurred most while L1 transfer and simplification had the least occurrence. According to Xu (2004), such errors provide evidence for a much more complex view of the learning process, in which the learner is considered as an

active participant in the formation of and revision of hypotheses regarding the rules of the target language. As indicated earlier, some of the errors second language learners commit come from the L2.

Additionally, Anyidoho (2002) focused on the writings of final year University students of University of Ghana, Legon. According to Anyidoho (2002), in order to avoid the problems of relying on the results of external examinations in evaluating the proficiency level of students in English, a long term research project involving the collections and analysis of samples of students writing over a number of years was embarked upon. The study identifies concord errors, word choice, omission, preposition, punctuation and spelling errors. Students were given the opportunity to correct their own deviant sentences when the scripts were given to them. The purpose of this was to distinguish between errors and mistakes in the essays of the students. Based on the discussion, it can be inferred that there are peculiar challenges inhibiting effective writing of second language learners. The causes can emanate from ignorance and inappropriate use of L2 rules as well as the difference between the L1 and the L2 systems. Sarfaz (2011) argues that though students are taught grammatical rules of target language, they lack practice and positive feedback. Due to this, L2 writers employ their own systems, eventually leading to errors in their writing.

Huang (2006) also presents an analysis of 34 Taiwanese English majors writing errors based on web-based writing programme. They included categories of grammar, mechanics, style and usage. He then concluded that the most EFL students' errors were not due to insufficient command of linguistic complexity. On the contrary, the students made basic errors such as subject-verb-agreement or incomplete sentences indicating intralingual errors. Of the three elements of writing; content, organization and language, it is reasonable to say that language has been considered the most

difficult for L2 writers due to their limited language proficiency or limited linguistic knowledge. Nimako (2008) also reveals in his book “Mind your Language” analyzes a number of errors identified in some articles that have been published in newspapers and magazines. The study is to make the reader sensitive to good English. The revelation in the book illustrates the lapses in both written and spoken English of the educated Ghanaian. Nimako states that we cannot do away with mother tongue interference since local idioms have been developed and loan words and phrases have been introduced. This explains why teachers should have some knowledge in the L1 of their students to assist them when the need arises.

Mireku-Gyimah (2014) has stated that research work has been undertaken in the area of Error Analysis. These researches have delved much into errors recurring in the written essays of second language users. While most of the researchers in Ghana have focused on the errors made by undergraduates, a few of them have also examined the pattern of errors of Ghanaian students in Senior High Schools. The researchers do agree that error analysis is a necessary tool for better proficiency in language acquisition. Another revealing work on the subject relates to the work of Lessia (2015) which examined the first steps in the process of error analysis of the corpus of Ukrainian students’ essays written in English. The results indicate that error analysis is a complicated process consisting of several stages. Data collection is the primary step in this process and presupposes the collection of essays, error identification and classification into its types. As the result, 217 essays were collected, grammar checked and errors were grouped into spelling, grammar, punctuation, structure, and style types. Each type in the paper was exemplified with sentences from students’ works. The findings will be useful for the teachers of English in Ukraine in compiling teaching materials, students of English in the process of learning, researchers and

developers of automated grammar checkers. Future research will deal with deep analysis of the sources of errors, their context interpretation and their dependence on learner proficiency level and native language.

Finally, Ciesielkiewicz (2015) also reports that her objective was to identify the main features of the interlanguage and to classify the errors produced by Spanish students of Bachillerato in ESL. Regarding the most frequent grammar-syntax errors, the incorrect use of prepositions was the cause of most of the errors. This result also coincides with other reviewed Error Analysis studies. For instance, Abushibab (2009) identified 179 grammatical errors and 50 of them were caused by the wrong use of prepositions. Zawahreh (2012) also found many errors in the wrong use of prepositions in English. Other types of errors which also coincide with the ones obtained in other studies are: the wrong use of articles, incorrect adverbial placement and lack of agreement between the subject and the main verb. The lexical errors have also been pointed out in other studies such as the inappropriate selection of vocabulary and the items used incorrectly in the place of others.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the concept of error, distinction between errors and mistakes, types of error, the causes of errors. Attention was given to approaches to error analysis which entailed Error Analysis, and Interlanguage and concluded the review of related literature.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

The discussion in this chapter of the research would highlight the methodology employed in carrying out the research and it would focus attention on research design, data collection strategy, the research sites, population of the study, sampling and sampling techniques, method of data analysis, ethical issues, validity and reliability.

#### 3.1 Research Design

Akhtar (2016) considers a research design as the structure of research that holds all of the elements in a research project together and that it is the plan of the proposed research work. Jackson (2008) also views research design as a framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various research components in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently handled. It provides insights about how to conduct research in a particular methodology. Examples of research designs captured in a handout of university of California library (2016) include (1) action research design, (2) case study design, (3) casual design, (4) cohort design, (5) cross-sectional design, (6) longitudinal design, (7) descriptive design, (8) experimental design, (9) exploratory design, (10) historical design, (11) observational design and (12) meta-analysis design.

The researcher adopted a qualitative research design using the descriptive approach to understand and describe the poor performance of students in English language among students of Ghana Senior High School, Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana. Jackson (2008) indicates that qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings, and the data are typically analyzed without the use of statistics. Qualitative research always takes place in the field or wherever the

participants normally conduct their activities. It is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied. Dornye (2011), also states that it works with a wide range of data including recorded interviews, various types of texts such as field notes, journal and diary entries, and documents and usually takes place in the natural setting, without any attempts to manipulate the situation under study. The essence of this design as posited by Tharernou (2009) feels that it provides detail, process, richness and sensitivity to the context and appropriate if the aim is to understand meaning and build a theoretical explanation from participants understanding.

On the basis of these expositions, the researcher deems it as an appropriate research design for the research topic under study with the objectives as follows:

- ❖ Identify the types of grammatical errors that occur in the English essay writings of students of Ghana Senior High School.
- ❖ Examine the rate of occurrence of errors in the essay writings of students in Ghana Senior High School.
- ❖ Examine the implications of these errors in the teaching of English Language in Ghana Senior High School.

The case study approach as explained by Creswell (1998) is an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. The qualitative case study is therefore an intensive, holistic analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Jackson (2008) considers a case study as one of the oldest research methods that takes an in-depth study of one or more individuals in the hope of revealing things that are true of all of us. For example, Freud's theory of personality development was based

on a small number of case studies. Piaget, whose research was used as an example of observational methods, began studying cognitive development by completing case studies on his own three children.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The primary instrument of data collection in this study was documents of students' essays. A number of essay questions were provided for the randomly sampled students. The expected length of essay was to be between 300 to 450 words on one of the topics. The questions were:

Write a letter to a friend in another school telling him or her plans you adopt to pass your impending examinations.

Your brother or sister has been offered admission to pursue a particular programme but he/she is not interested in that programme. Write a letter convincing him or her to accept the programme.

Write a story to illustrate the saying that: people who live in glass houses do not throw stones.

You are the main speaker in a debate on the motion: social media has done more harm than good to the youth of Ghana. Write your argument for/against the motion.

There has been an increase in a number of open defecation cases in your locality. Write a letter to the district chief executive of area, outlining measures to stop the incidence.

Write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper on the causes of lawlessness among the youth in Ghana and suggest ways to curb it.

In all, 201 essays were collected and analyzed. Content analysis approach was used to evaluate the students' essays. The marking of the essays was done by the researcher and another teacher of English language who regularly participated in marking West

Africa Examination Council's English Language paper. The marked scripts were reconciled to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research. The grammatical errors identified were presented simple in percentages and on bar charts. In the process of the work, the researchers considered systematic errors students committed, especially, when they occurred more than once. In addition, all participating students were given ample time to edit their work to make sure all errors were corrected by participants before submission. Therefore, their inability to correct deviant structures during the reading over period constituted errors of the students committed.

### **3.3 Research Site and Students**

The research site refers to the place where the data are collected. Ghana Senior High school; the selected school for the study is located Tamale metropolis in northern region of Ghana. Senior high schools in Ghana are categorized based on available of academic facilities of the school and their geographical location. The school falls under the Category „A“; a first class prestigious school in the region. It is located in urban area, well-endowed in terms of academic infrastructure and other facilitates. It is properly structured administratively and has more well-trained qualified teachers for all the courses the school runs. The school is always over-subscribed by applicants“; meaning that the school’s management are expected to admits students with excellent and very good grade of Basic Education Certificate Examination, and are expected to go further to perform well in their final year.

The performance of the students in English language is far from being impressive for several reasons. Firstly, the school is closely located by a community that makes disciplining students very difficult. Members of the community have been opposed to building of fence wall around the school. Secondly they provide information for recalcitrant students to evade discipline and also dodge class attendance. It makes



keeping discipline daunting and near impossible. The selected students were drawn across the three streams in the school. The selection was done for comparative purposes from SHS 1 to SHS 3. The first year students were recently admitted and had not completed a full semester and the second students had a complete academic year cycle. The final years were also selected to find out if they could be improvement in performance. So identifying errors would assist the teacher to conduct remedial exercises for them to improve students' performances. The students, at this level, have been introduced to the study of English as a subject from Primary their four, a core subject at Junior School level which signifies that they have studied English for at least eight years.

### **3.4 Population of the Study**

Polit and Hungler (1999) define a population as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher and to whom the research results can be generalized. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define population as any set of items, individuals that share some common and observable characteristics and from which a sample can be taken. Creswell (2013) similarly views it as group individuals with vested interest to research work and exhibit certain characteristics the researcher considers appropriate in the sampling criteria; the group to which the results of the study to be generalized. Some of the qualities expected by the researcher had to do with level of education, academic experience at the second cycle and gender.

The targeted population for the research was to include all the three category of students of Ghana Senior High School. The total school population was about two thousand, eight hundred and ninety four (2,894) students. Out of this, about eight hundred and six (799) students comprising five hundred and twenty eight (527) boys

and two hundred and seventy eight (272) girls made up the entire population of the form three students. The second year students comprise 528 boys and 278 girls making up a total of 806 students. The SHS 1 students' population was about 1289 with 838 being boy and 451 being girls. This number was drawn from the five programmes the school runs. They include General Arts, Home Economics, General Science, Agric Science and Business.

The sample population of the study comprised 201 students across the three streams; SHS 1, SHS 2 and SHS 3. These students were sampled from thirty nine classes, across four programme areas the school runs. The subjects used were further grouped into classes and gender. The choice of the population of the study was suitable because there was complete mixture of students from SHS 1 to SHS 3. A good knowledge of English language remains an asset for the students and a necessary requirement for admission into the school and it should be expected students of the school exhibit features of Category „A“ school. The first students had been introduced to the concepts at the basic level of education and remain similar or bit varied. The SHS 2 were mid-way through their secondary education and might have mustered appreciable academic year experience and stood the chance of exhibiting the expected characteristics. Consequently, remediation was possible for the for first and second year students before they sat for the final year examinations respectively. The final year students should be „masters“ of the subject per their expected level of appreciation.

### **3.5 Sampling and Sampling Technique**

A sample in this study is a smaller group of participants drawn from an accessible population of students of Ghana Senior High School. Therefore, Omair (2014) opines that it is important to select a representative sample in research in order to be able to

generalize the results to the target population. The sample should be of the required sample size and must be selected using an appropriate probability sampling technique. Important factors to consider for estimating the sample size include the size of the study population, confidence level, and expected proportion of the outcome variables. The results of a poorly selected sample that is different from the target population cannot be applied to the general population. A smaller than required sample size may not have the appropriate power to identify significant differences or associations that may be present in the target population.

The researcher employed purposive sampling technique to determine the population of the study. According to (Freedman *et al.*, 2007), this method, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, sample members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject. The sample members who were selected had special relationship with the phenomenon under investigation. In this case they are comprised of students of senior high school; SHS 1 to SHS 3 who share similar academic prospects and challenges. The streams for the study comprised thirty nine classes; each stream made up thirteen classes and each of 13 classes had an average roll of not less than sixty students.

For fair distribution of the subjects of the study, a minimum of sixty seven (67) subjects were selected from each of the streams in the school. Finally, a total of two and one (201) students were randomly selected and used for the investigation. Different essay questions were provided for them; especially the final year students when the researcher had to rely on the mock examination scripts for analysis. The first and second students chose questions from two different questions. Cohen *et al* (2000), states that sample size is also determined to some extent by the style of the research. For example, a survey style usually requires a large sample, particularly if inferential

statistics are to be calculated. In a qualitative style of research it is more likely that the sample size will be small. Sample size might also be constrained by cost; in terms of time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources.

### **3.6 Research Instrument**

Parahoo (1997) explains a research instrument as systematically prepared document designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data. Data collection instruments refer to devices used to collect data such as questionnaires, tests, structured interview schedules and checklists (Seaman 1991). In line with these explanations, the instrument used in this study was the test type; essay questions for the subjects. The test was conducted by the researcher under examination conditions which lasted for one hour. The need to test competence informed the choice of the researcher as testing instrument which was made in a manner that the students were pinned down to write the test. Therefore, the answers provided in write-ups would give reliable information of the students' knowledge of concept under investigation.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The researcher adopted content analysis approach to analyze the data gathered from test conducted for students of Ghana Senior High School, Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana. According to Langos (2014), this is the type of research whereby data gathered is categorized in themes and sub-themes, so as to be able to be comparable. A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps in data collected being reduced and simplified, while at the same time producing results that may then be measured using quantitative techniques. Moreover, content analysis gives the ability to researchers to structure the qualitative data collected in a way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives. However, human error is highly involved

in content analysis, since there is the risk for researchers to misinterpret the data gathered, thereby generating false and unreliable conclusions (Krippendorff & Bock, 2008).

The data analysis and the discussion of the findings is based theme of the research questions. The analysis broadly categorized the errors into grammatical errors as agreement errors, tense errors, number errors, prepositional errors, articles errors, and conjunction errors. The frequencies of errors were converted into percentages and bar graphs. The discussion of the research question was based on what grammatical errors do SHS students in the selected school make in their essay writing. On the basis of the identification and description of errors in the literature, the study categorized the errors based on the data collected which indicated grammatical errors were categorized into agreement errors, tense errors, singular-plural errors, prepositional errors, article errors, and conjunctions errors.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues**

Jackson (2009) makes it clear that in conducting research with human participants, the researcher is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the participants. Thus, the researcher is responsible for protecting the participants from harm that participants are likely to suffer. Special considerations arise in research studies that use children as participants. Informed consent must be obtained from the parents or legal guardians for all persons under the age of 18. However, with children who are old enough to understand language, the researcher should also try to inform them of the nature of the study, explain what they will be asked to do during the study, and tell them that they do not have to participate and can request to end their participation at any time. The question remains, however, whether children really understand this information and whether they would feel comfortable exercising these rights. Thus, when doing

research with children, the researcher must be especially careful to use good judgment when deciding whether to continue collecting data from an individual or whether to use a particular child in the research project.

As part of ethics of research the researcher had initial discussion with the head of the school and submitted a written permission to the management to notify her of the research and the streams and expected number of participants. The researcher assured management of conducting it following the ethical guidelines of research. The head of languages department in addition to other members of the department was also notified about the work. The researcher briefed them on objective of the research and its consequential benefits to the department and the students. The sampled students for the study were also briefed on the objectives and how they stand to benefit from it. Issue of the confidentiality was also stressed to assuage their fears and apprehensions. The students fully co-operated. Before conducting the test, the researcher designed a test sheet on which the subjects would indicate class, hometown and tribe. Conspicuously, name of subject was left out for purposes of confidentiality; the researcher used code numbers for the individual participants.

### **3.9 Validity**

According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2001), validity is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring. Validity is an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. Validity is thus a requirement for quantitative and qualitative as well as naturalistic research. Validity can further be grouped as external and internal validity. Cohen et.al (2000), further elaborates that in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and

scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher.

Cohen et al (2000) explain that internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data. This concerns accuracy of the research. The findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched. External validity on the other hand refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations. Burns and Grove (1999) describe external validity as the extent to which the results can be generalized beyond the sample used in the study. This usually depends on the degree to which the sample represents the population.

### **3.10 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency or accuracy with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure (Polit & Hungler, 1997). If a study and its results are reliable, it means that the same results would be obtained if the study were to be replicated by other researchers using the same method. It refers to the degree of consistency or accuracy with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure (Polit & Hungler, 1997). Joppe (2001) indicates that if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the instrument is considered to be reliable. It is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is concerned with precision and accuracy (Cohen et al 2000). In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the researcher employed the services of a seasoned examiner of English language to bring to bear the needed assistance. The researcher marked scripts; identified errors contained in every script and forwarded

them to the examiner to vet and further provide some insights. The identified errors were subsequently grouped in grammatical and mechanical errors; the results of which are inputted in to SPSS for analyses of errors committed by the participants.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The chapter has provided insights into the methodology adopted by the researcher. It has considered areas such as research design, population of the study, sampling techniques, data collection strategy. Other areas include research site and ethical issues.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the research findings are presented. The findings were based on essays of students of Ghana Senior High School, Tamale. The aim of the research was to analyze the grammatical errors in the written essays of students. The errors are categorized into verb related errors, concord, preposition, adverbial, article, number and sentence fragment errors. Based on the findings, several factors were realized to be the causes of errors in the students' writings. On verb related errors, learners failed to use appropriate tense and aspect, misapplication of the principle of the co-occurrence of auxiliary verb and lexical verbs, omission of verb elements and engaged in wrong substitution of verbs.

On concord, the analysis showed that learners could not apply the principle of subject verb concord, verb-verb concord, relative pronoun and antecedent concord, and determiner-noun concord errors. On prepositional errors, learners used wrong preposition, redundant prepositions and missing preposition. For article errors, they committed redundant error, wrong use of article and missing article. On punctuation errors, punctuation marks were wrongly used and some were even omitted. This was due to ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete learning of rules as well as L1 interference. Spelling errors were due to incomplete learning of rules which led learners to add incorrect elements, omitted needed elements and in other cases substituted letters in words. This situation could also be attributed to context of learning problems.

## **4.1 Categorization of Learners' Errors**

The analysis of the results puts the findings into two broad categories; grammatical and mechanical errors discovered in the essays of students. On grammatical errors, constituents of grammar that violated the rules were discovered in the course of their presentations. They include concord, tense, preposition, article, number, adverb and sentence fragments.

### ***4.1.1 Verb Errors***

Downing and Locke (2015) consider tense as a grammatical expression of the location of events in time and that tense relates to time and must be expressed in sentence construction to reflect the concept of time. Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) observe that tense makes the reader aware of the action expressed in the sentence; in the past, the present, or the future. The data revealed that most students violated the rules of grammar in relation to tense. The most obvious errors discovered under this category could be categorized as wrong co-occurrence of verbs, omission of auxiliary verbs, and inappropriate use of tense.

#### ***4.1.1.1 Wrong Co-occurrence of Auxiliary and Lexical Verb***

The instances of wrong co-occurrence of auxiliaries and lexical verbs extracted from the data revealed instances the respondents exhibited their incomplete or lack understanding of verbal group formation. For example, it is common knowledge in English that modal auxiliaries are cannot usually co-occur with inflected lexical verbs. It is ungrammatical to write expressions such as [can sings, can stopped, will danced, will eats etc]. Some of such errors captured in the data include the following

- i. I will stopped here by telling you. (willstop)
- ii. I have choseGhanasco with good intention. (have chosen)

- iii. Public toilet which was build many years ago.(was built)
- iv. We must learnt more than others. (must learn)
- v. They can easily sent you back home....(can easily send)

It was also observed that wrong forms of lexical verbs were chosen to co-occur with the verb „be“ such as [is, are, was, were and be], verb „have“ such as [has, have, had] and verb „do“ such as [do, does, did].

Verb groups may consist of a main verb only, or the main verbs may occur with auxiliary verbs. The main verb expresses what kind of meaning is being expressed but the auxiliary verbs express tense or the degree of obligation or certainty involved. It can be deduced that the commission of these errors could be attributed to developmental errors and incomplete appreciation of rules regarding the concept of co-occurrence of lexical and auxiliary verbs. They were not able stream the lexical and auxiliary verbs satisfactorily applying the co-occurrence rule as reflected in the extracted data.

#### ***4.1.1.2 Omission of Verb Element***

The data analysis also showed the omission of verb elements that violated grammatical principles regarding the verb tense. The omission of these verbs makes the sentences ungrammatical and also affects meaning as well. Sentences below show some instances of omission of verb.

- i. These sites can... convertedto playgrounds and can curb defecation. (can be converted)
- ii. ....you....saying you prefer Home Economics. (are saying)
- iii. I....yearning to have a bright future....(am yearning)
- iv. ....a few are going *to mentioned* below. (to be mentioned/ to mention)
- v. You have... concentrate on whatever you doing.(to concentrate)

It can be observed from these data that the omission errors might be committed due to negligence of students and incomplete application of the rules of grammar.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Wrongly Substituted Verbs***

The data also contained wrongly substituted verbs. This means that wrong verbs were used in the sentences they were not supposed to be used. Some of the errors are homophones and others are wrongly chosen verb. Examples of such errors include the following;

- i. After the taught, he came to the conclusion that. (thought)
- ii. If you agree to offer the programme school. (pursue)
- iii. ....only for the health hazard it post (it posed/poses)
- iv. ...In addition to been a teacher. (to being)

Some words have different spellings but have almost the same pronunciation. These errors might have come about as a result of poor pronunciation. The students could not pronounce such words to bring about the subtle differences that exist between them.

#### ***4.1.1.4 Wrong use of Tenses***

In the data there were outright violations tenses of using present tenses in place of past tense and otherwise. The respondents violated the co-occurrence of verbs to form verb groups to express tense and some of them failed to choose appropriate tenses in verb only situation as captured in the following sentences.

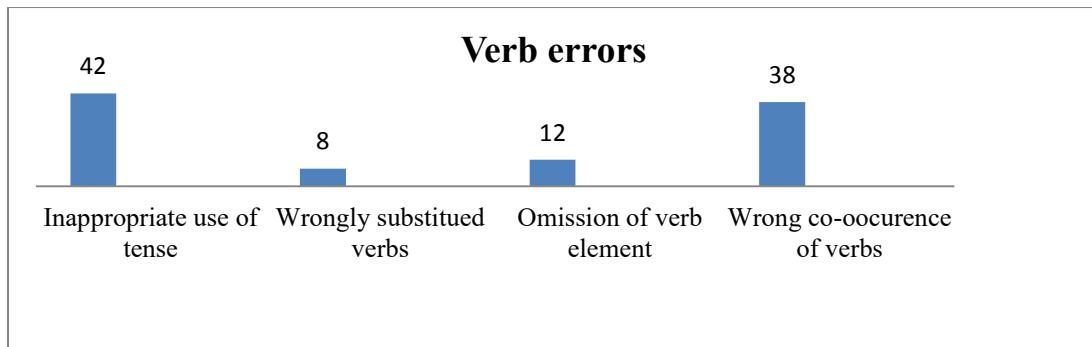
- i. So they did everything together, eat Silver's food and used his money.(ate)
- ii. Mr. Owusu's life began to change, his son receive the money....(received)
- iii. You would be able to find job after school. (will)
- iv. Meanwhile, I would stop my letter now for other matters that are important.

On verb related errors, the data revealed that the respondents had difficulty appreciating the concept tense and aspect and voice. Of total (565) errors extracted from the data in respect of grammatical errors, 175 errors representing 42% were related wrong use of tense. They inappropriately used past tense for present tense and present tense for past tense. The implication for committing these errors is dire for students in terms of scoring marks. Table 4.1.1 presents the various errors committed under the category of verb related errors as discussed.

**Table 4.1.1: Summary of Verb Errors**

<b>Types of Errors</b>	<b>Frequency of Errors</b>	<b>Percentage of Errors</b>
Wrong use of tense	237	42%
Wrong co-occurrence of verb elements	214	38%
Omission of verb element	68	12%
Wrongly substituted verbs	46	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4.1.1 has revealed that the respondents had difficulty appreciating the concept verb. They, inappropriately, used past tense for present tense and present tense for past tense. The implication for committing these errors is dire for students in terms of scoring marks. Figure 4.1.1 represents errors committed under verb errors categorization as captured in Table 4.1.1.



**Figure 4.1.1: Summary of Verb Errors**

The different types of verb tense errors from students show that they lack the basics of verb use in relation to other sentential element. The students made these errors because they lacked the basic understanding of sequences of tenses, use of aspect and voice. It can be inferred that the causes of the errors could overgeneralization of rule and ignorance of the rule restriction.

On the wrong use of tense, Amoakohene (2017) states that students in most situations were not able to select the right verb forms to match a particular time period that they made reference to. The students lack the basic understanding of the verb group relating to tense, aspect and voice. Swaran et al (2017) are also of the view that students presented major errors in this aspect as they were required to write a report based on stimuli. It is well understood that students with adequate understanding of grammar rules in writing will use the correct tenses to explain facts and other details of the stimuli. However, it is revealed based on this study that students failed to change the verbs into past tense forms, and omit some essential elements of the verbs

#### ***4.1.2 Concord Errors***

As noted in Chapter 2, concord is a type of grammatical relationship between two or among elements in a sentence, in which all elements show a particular feature. For example, a singular subject occurs with a singular verb, and a plural subject occurs with a plural verb. However, students produced structures which violate the rules of

concord, leading them to committing concord errors. Some of the concord errors committed include subject-verb concord, verb-verb concord, pronoun-noun concord and antecedent of relative clause concord.

#### **4.1.2.1 Subject-verb concord errors**

Subject-verb concord errors constituted the most frequent error in this category. This is an indication that the concept poses learning difficulty for students. The difficulty had to do with their inability to locate the head noun in a complex noun phrase, the misuse of the proximity concord errors and faulty appreciation of demonstrative and collective nouns. In the sentences, the expressions underlined are the subjects and the curly bracketed ones are verbs. The following are some selected examples of the errors from the data and the corrected in the brackets.

- i. The school[have] good academic achievements.(The school[has] good academic achievements).
- ii. This[help] to protect the school properties.(This[helps] to protect the school properties).
- iii. The study of English language in Ghanaian schools [help] the students improve. (The study of English language in Ghanaian schools [helps] the students improve).
- iv. The reason why English language is important Ghanaian schools [are] highly....(The reason why English language is important Ghanaian schools [is]highly....)
- v. The school authorities [makes] sure that many things are provided.(The school authorities [make] sure that many things are provided.)

Obi (2009) argues that the rule of subject-verb agreement allows the use of finite verbs in the present tense and to some extent the past forms of the verb *to be*,

especially, („was“ and „were“) and that students have difficulties in the selection of appropriate verbs to agree with the subjects of sentences, especially when the subjects are phrases and clauses. The errors are caused by the inability of the student to identify the headwords in the phrases. The analysis of students“ errors committed in respect of subject-verb concord errors amounted to (172); 41% of the total errors (416) committed under this category. The implication in face of the data on concord indicates the seriousness of the students“ misunderstanding of the concept and may not be able impress examiners assessing their works.

#### **4.1.2 .2 Verb-Verb Concord Errors**

Many of the respondents violated what Obi (2009) and Yankson (1994) intimate that the rules of concord in English which dictate that sentences must be the same in person, number, gender, voice and tense. This means that there must be agreement between or among verbs in compound and complex sentences. It was realized from the data that students violated the rules of verb-verb concord as shown in the following sentences.

- i. ... strange to hear that someone *killed* a minister and goes free. (killed...went)
- ii. You know that in this world, anything that *has* problems also have solutions.(has...has)
- iii. He told his father and he tells him to get ready. (told...told)
- iv. They *check* to see if the classrooms were *swept* or not.....(checked....swept)
- v. Again, I *intended* to prepare for extra classes and *inform* my parents about it. (informed)

Yankson (1994) posits that the rule of formation of the English verb-verb concord relates to systematic concord errors which presuppose that, two verbs in compound and complex sentences must agree. This means that singular verbs must agree, plural



verbs must also agree and the verbs must agree in tense as well. However, this is not the case in data analyzed; students misapplied the rule as shown in the sentences above.

#### **4.1.2.3 Relative clause and its antecedent concord errors**

Another concord error which was prevalent in data can be described as antecedent-verb concord errors. In relative clauses, the rule is that the antecedent of a relative pronoun agrees with the verb that comes after it. Usually, antecedent is a noun or pronoun which precedes the relative pronoun. The recurrence of the deviant structures like these in the data is an indication that such concord errors militate against the students. The following are examples of the errors from the data: The sentences below exemplify the verb-verb concord errors extracted from the data. The corrected forms are highlighted in the parenthesis.

- i. ...*scientist* who *pursue* the same programme. (*scientist* who *pursues*)
- ii. ...very fast *organisms* which *lives* near where open defecation is done. (*live*)
- iii. Science is a *Programme* that *have* job opportunities. (*a Programme* that *has*)
- iv. ...I have stopped using *some things* which *wastes* my time. (*waste*)
- v. ...and *dormitories* which *makes* learning more effective. (*make*)

The principle states that relative pronoun such as „which“, „that“, „who“, „whose“ and „whom“ when preceded by singular noun must be followed by singular verbs and otherwise as shown in the sentences above. If the antecedent of the relative pronoun is singular, the verb immediately must singular.

#### **4.1.2.4 Determiner-noun concord errors**

One of the errors relating to concord which featured conspicuously in the data is the noun-pronoun and noun-noun agreements. The principle is that there is a relationship between a pronoun and its antecedent in number, person, and gender. In the analysis,

however, it was discovered that, noun-noun concord and pronoun-noun concord errors featured. In the case of pronoun-noun concord errors, the pronouns act as determiners which co-occur with nouns in some instances to form noun phrase. The following sentences are some of them.

- i. These diseasecan lead to severe. (Thesediseases)
- ii. ...these people should know that these disease are only.
- iii. This epidemic diseases thrive and grow. (This epidemic disease)
- iv. ....toilet facilities is one of the major cause of open defecation...(causes)

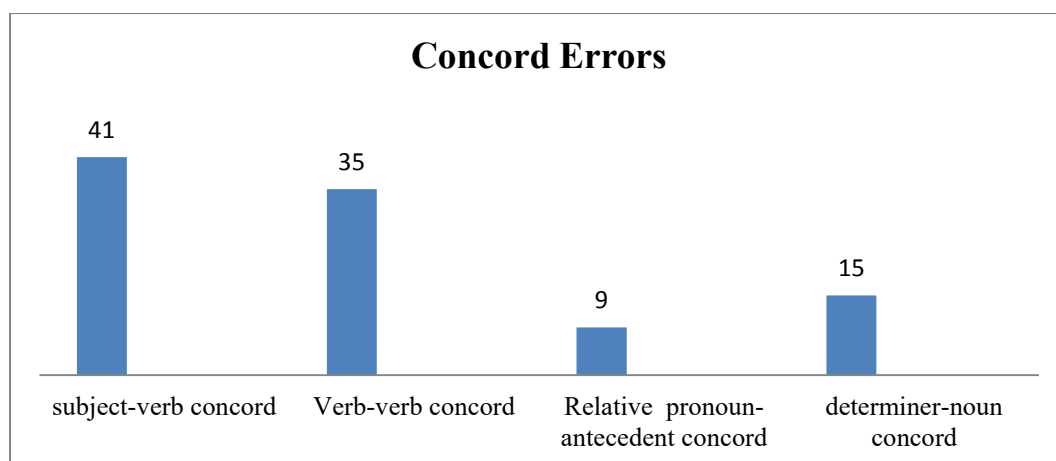
The sentences show violations of pronoun and noun agreements. Singular demonstratives co-occur with plural nouns to reflect the numerous instances pronoun-noun concord errors in the data. There were also recorded violations in respect of noun-noun concord which also relates to number. One of the dominant expressions from data that reflect this type of error is “one of...with singular noun head”. This means that within a noun phrase, the errors of concord occur.

The table below summarizes the concord errors. It reflected the order the errors were committed; subject-verb concord, verb-verb, determiner noun and relative pronoun and antecedent concord errors. A summary of errors found in this category is presented in Table 4.1.2.

**Table 4.1.2: Summary of Concord Errors**

<b>Types of Errors</b>	<b>Freq. of Errors</b>	<b>Percentage of Errors</b>
Subject-verb concord errors	172	41%
Verb-verb concord errors	146	35%
Relative pronoun and antecedent errors	37	9%
Determiner-noun concord errors	62	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows the variety concord errors committed by students in this study. The different types of concord-verbs concord errors identified is an indication of the difficulties of the respondents. The information in Table 4.1.2 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.2.



**Figure 4.1.2. Summary of Concord Errors**

The variety of concord errors identified in this category of study is difficult for the respondents, as it recorded the second highest of the frequency of errors committed among the element of ungrammaticality. As indicated in Figure 4.1.2, 416 errors were recorded representing 33% of the elements that constitute grammatical errors. The implication is that students lack the knowledge rules governing concord. In moments expressing themselves, the scripts produced would be littered with errors which would auger them academically and in life in general. Levin (2001) opines that learners of English have problems matching the subject and the predicate forms when there is a distance between them, just as the previous research has shown. They also have problems matching the subject and the predicate when they do not appear in the same clause. As mentioned already, distance between the subject and the verb makes people forget the number of the subject; it is difficult to keep track of the number of the subject when there is no immediate contact between principal parts of the sentence.

As far as Yankson (1994) is concerned, the rule of formation of the English subject-verb concord is related to various errors such as developmental errors, notional errors, proximity concord errors, memory limitation concord errors, plural inflectional concord errors and inability to identify concord errors.

#### ***4.1.3 Preposition errors***

A preposition is one of the minor word classes that introduce prepositional phrases in a sentence. In many cases, they occur as obligatory element to prepositional phrase. It must be noted that some constructions require preposition while others do not. Adopting Samatle's (2001) model, errors were categorized as missing preposition, wrong use of preposition, and redundant preposition.

##### ***4.1.3.1 Wrong use of prepositions***

Under this category, some particular prepositions were needed in the sentence but wrong ones were selected. Examples of the wrongly used prepositions by the students include the following.

- i. The reason of studying English is....(for)
- ii. ....you can concentrate in whatever you are doing. (on)
- iii. English language is the basis for education Ghana and other countries. (of)
- iv. You are not interested of doing some of the careers (in).
- v. In addition, let me chip into this.
- vi. ...an individual to proud be off the course you have chosen to offer. (of)

#### **4.1.3.2 Redundant use of preposition**

This is a situation in which prepositions were not necessary; they were not needed and examples include these extracts from the data:

- i. In addition with, I have developed....( Inaddition, ...)
- ii. I am with much pleasure to write you. (It is my pleasure).
- iii. To conclude with, (To conclude,)
- iv. Send them to study at abroad....(to study abroad).

The examples above reflect the unnecessary of preposition. Redundancy manifests the learners tendency to over-elaborate the target language which often results in verbosity. This error occurs by carrying considerable unnecessary preposition. This is shown throughout the system in the form of unnecessary addition of preposition.

#### **4.1.3.4 Missing preposition**

It was noticed in essays that student missed preposition in their constructions. This implies that they failed to use the propositions when were required in some instances. Examples from the data include the following and the corrected version is in the brackets

1. Knowledge on the topic you are researching^with the view...
2. Many of them do open defecation because ^the fact that they....
3. The reason ^writing this letter.....

In the sentence above, there are omissions of prepositions „into“, „of“ and „for“ which make the sentences ungrammatical. Table 4.1.3 and Figure 4.1.3 summarise the types of prepositional errors as captured in the data.

**Table 4.1.3: Summary of Prepositional Errors**

Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
Wrong use of preposition	41	39
Redundant use of prep.	39	37
Missing preposition	26	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

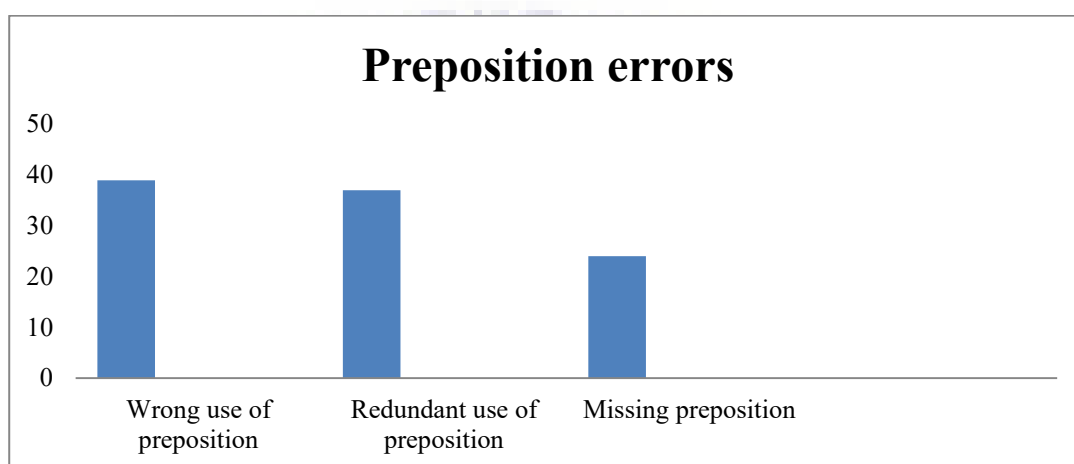
**Figure 4.1.3: Summary of Prepositional Errors**

Table and Figure 4.1.3 show the summary of preposition errors. The dominant category is wrong use of preposition with 41 of the total of 106 errors which represented 39% followed by redundant use of preposition with 39 errors (37%) and missing preposition amounted to 26 errors (24%). It should be stated that prepositional errors placed third under grammatical errors categorization representing 8% in the category. The implication is that it poses the third threat to the challenges of the students. Suzanne (2017) explains that the use of wrong preposition and the use of preposition that must not appear in a well-formed utterance are the major errors found in the students' utterances. The errors are caused by some factors but dominantly influenced by the interference of first language. Levin (2001) reports that preposition

errors are one of the common grammatical errors committed by the students, indicating their poor knowledge of prepositions. From the students' written reports, the prepositions were used interchangeably. For the students, prepositions do not affect the meanings of their sentences.

#### ***4.1.4 Articles errors***

Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) suggest that there are some basic rules in the use of articles in English; a singular common noun must have an article, a plural common noun can be used with or without an article. Also, the definite article, the, is used with superlative adjectives, while a proper noun does not normally take an article. It should be noted that these basic rules were violated by students used in the study. The article errors are also categorized as missing articles, wrong article use, and redundant article errors.

##### ***4.1.4.1 Missing articles***

In the following sentences, the articles were provided by the students. In written discourse, the omission of an article or the use of the wrong article may cause some ambiguity for the reader, especially when the writer wants to identify a noun anaphorically or cataphorically or assume reader or writer familiarity. Halliday and Hasan (1976), on investigation on cohesion, pointed that "whenever the information is contained in the text, the presence of an article creates a link between the sentence in which it occurs and that containing the referential information; in other words, it is cohesive" (p. 74). In effect, the missing articles have the potential to subvert the cohesiveness of an utterance or write-up. Examples extracted from the data include:

- i. and ...whole family members (the)
- ii. Firstly, ...reason is that (the)

Obviously, the examples above show missing article „the“ in both sentences. The corrected ones are the parenthesis.

#### **4.1.4.2 Wrong article use**

Regarding this category, the students used articles incorrectly. In this circumstance, a particular article is inappropriately used. The following are examples from the data collected:

- i. In a nutshell.... (the)
- ii. English language can said to be a keys to the success...(the)
- iii. The time that about an bell of the school. (the)

In the above examples, the use of article „a“ and „an“ is inappropriate, therefore the appropriate ones are the bracket.

#### **4.1.4.3 Redundant article use**

In this category of article errors, students used articles when they were not required to be used. This means that the use articles were not necessary. The occurrence makes sentence awkward and ungrammatical. The following extracted examples from the data.

- i. If the Ghanaians don't understand English.....
- ii. To the last but not the least.....
- iii. The school I chose as my favourite is the Ghana senior high school.....
- iv. The school has a serious teacher who always come.....

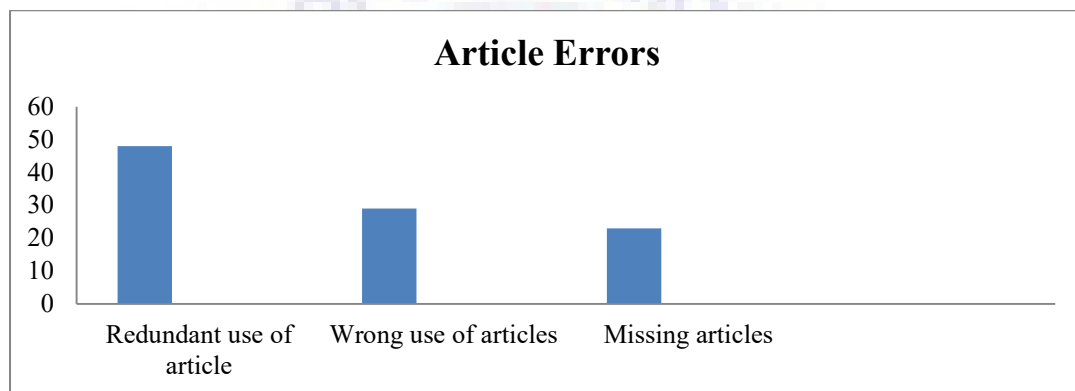
The sentences above show redundant use of articles. The different utilizations of „the“ and „a“ are redundantly used; those articles should not be there. Table 4.1.4 is the summary of article errors captured in the data. In total, 31 errors were committed. The redundancy was the highest with 15 errors (48%), wrong use of articles followed with 9 errors (29%) and missing articles with (23%).



**Table 4.1.4: Summary of Article Errors**

<b>Types of Error</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Redundant use of article	15	48%
Wrong use of articles	9	29%
Missing articles	7	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

The information on Table 4.1.4 is presented in Figure 4.1.4 as follows:

**Figure 4.1.4: Summary of Article Errors**

The figure above represents the summary of article errors. Master (2007) is of the conviction that article errors rarely lead to outright misunderstanding in the spoken language. This is because pragmatic clues, such as pointing or knowledge of the situation, can usually communicate the intent of the speaker. However, many writing teachers desire to know which article errors need to be corrected because they are unacceptable in all circumstances and which “errors” reflect a choice that the speaker or writer has made that must be incorporated into the meaning of the utterance.

#### ***4.1.5 Errors of number***

The wrong number of nouns means that either a singular noun should occur in the plural form or a plural noun should occur in the singular form. A special case of such

errors was that sometimes uncountable nouns were used in the plural, which is ungrammatical. The following exemplified these errors identified from the data;

- i. Some of this disadvantages and reasons...(some....these)
- ii. You also remembered a chemist..... (a chemist)
- iii. My school is surrounded by different kind of flowers. (different kinds)
- iv. ...All the country schools are offering..... (school)
- v. ....lead on any activities.... (any activity)

The sentences demonstrate students' lack of understanding of the concept of number and the rules that govern it. Like all other languages, English has singular and plural phenomenon. In English, only count nouns usually have plural forms, while non-count nouns represent items existing as a mass and rarely take plurals. In data, the students used for the work, some of them had difficulty using singular and plurals. It is likely that the errors committed by the students are attributable to overgeneralization of count and non-count nouns. Students used plurals where they were not required and singular they not necessary (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017).

#### ***4.1.6 Errors of adverb***

The data were also fraught with errors relating to adverb. Precisely, adverb of time and manner are those that occur in the data. The following sentences constitute instances in the data in which there is violation on the use adverb.

- i. ....he was the son of Mr. Barnabas. Silver now got to know that....
- ii. ...the driver mistaken drove Silver home. ...
- iii. ....3: 30 am, they would now stop and went home...
- iv. ....English language which has almostlybecome the common language...
- v. Furthermore, to make socialization more easy. (Furthermore,.....

Ramat and Ricca (1994) indicate that adverbs are the most problematic major word class because they are extremely heterogeneous in all languages, and unlike nouns, verbs and adjectives, no semantic prototype can be identified easily for them. Greenbaum (1996), on his part, states that adverbs are a heterogeneous class, varying greatly in their functional and positional ranges. They constitute a series of overlapping subclasses, and some of them belong to more than one subclass. The complex grammatical relations involving adverbs and other sentential elements cause students commit errors. Badawi (2008) believes that English adverbs must be identified by understanding the grammatical relations within the sentence or clause as a whole since they can be found in various places in sentences.

#### ***4.1.7 Sentence fragments***

Sentence fragments are grammatical structures that look a sentence but lack the basic constituents of a sentence and are portrayed as sentence. It is a common knowledge that, a sentence as the highest unit of grammatical construction comprises subjects and verbs as well as other constituents to express a complete thought. It is however, to state the students violated the rule that sentence must have subjects and verbs as obligatory elements as shown in the following.

- i. First of all, the provision of good toilet facilities....
- ii. Again, conducting public education on the need to avoid open defecation....
- iii. Recording of many rape cases in our community.
- iv. To begin with, taking of hard drugs and alcohol.
- v. Furthermore, lack of enforcement of the law.

Hartley (2012) indicates that people do not violate grammar rules by mistake. They do so in full knowledge of what they think the rules are. That fragments look like sentences does not make them sentences and this substitution is an obvious error

committed. In formal writing, fragments are errors because their deployment is inappropriate to formal writing. The errors committed by in the above could have presented as;

- i. First of all, the provision of good toilet facilities is one the measure of curbing open defecation.
- ii. Again, conducting public education on the need to avoid open defecation is another measure of stopping open defecation.
- iii. Recording of many rape cases in our community can be one of consequences of youth.
- iv. To begin with, taking of hard drugs and alcohol is one of the causes of youth
- v. Furthermore, lack of enforcement of the law can make the youth to engage.

Amoakohene (2017) opines that students make use of full sentences in order to make their points clear and complete in meaning, they, however, sometimes use fragments which distorted the ideas that they want to advance in their essays. This constituted one of the many factors that rendered their essays very difficult to comprehend.

## **4.2 Spelling Errors**

Subhi and Yasin (2015) and Cook (1997) assert that writing well is really a big challenge for both native and non-native students. In general, it is much bigger with the students of English as a foreign language. They put forward some causes of spelling. The convergence of their works classifies the causes of spelling errors as omissions, substitutions, insertions and transposition as well as wrong capitalization.

### ***4.2.1 Spelling errors of omission***

As far as the errors of omission are concerned, the data was fraught with words which fall under this group. The words contained deleted vowels or consonants in their presentations as captured the sentences.

- i. ....the school entering compund.... (compound)
- ii. Last but not lest....(least).
- iii. ....a modern equiped laboratories. (equipped)
- iv. ...has a lot of intertainment for students. (entertainment)
- v. The school also has a dispensal block. (dispensery).

#### ***4.2.2 Spelling Errors of Insertion***

For the spelling errors insertion, the data contained many instances students added to words vowels or consonants which should not be added. Such insertions reflect in the following sentences.

- i. Ericus, it is very naice of you.
- ii. ...the food they give as in the dinning hall...(dining)
- iii. ....transfer from your school to maine..... (mine)
- iv. ...and for escation or anywhere.... (excursion)
- v. I am writting this letter to talk about.... (writing)

#### ***4.2.3 Errors of substitution***

From the data, the students committed errors of substituting certain vowels or consonance in some words their essays which are reflected in the following sentences

- i. ....like the volonties to chest those who refuse.....
- ii. ....is a determinent to get grades.....
- iii. ...and whole famile members. ....
- iv. The school has dane for the students. .
- v. ....to become greet in future...

#### **4.2.4 Wrong Capitalization of words**

Another area relating spelling errors in data is the wrong use of capitalization. It was clear that common nouns and other words which should not be capitalized were wrongly capitalized and the vice versa as seen the following sentences

- i. ...by the grace of Almighty Allah..... (almighty)
- ii. ....go to Ghana Senior High School....(senior high school)
- iii. ...who is John dramaniMahama..... (Dramani)
- iv. Also, Most countries....(most)
- v. ....It Is good for ghanaians ....(Ghanaians)
- vi. GHANA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL(Ghana Senior High School).

#### **4.2.5 Spelling Errors of transposition**

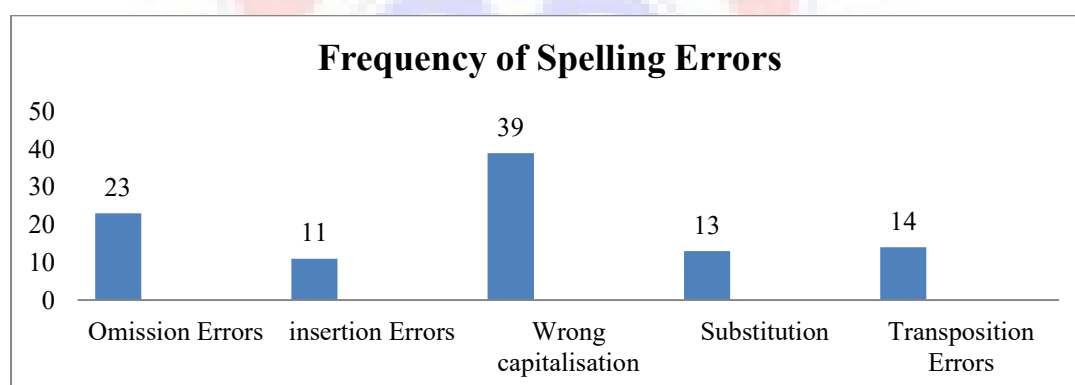
The discussion on the spelling errors also includes transposition or reversing part of the word order. Amir (2016) explains that Transpositions are spelling errors of words where two consecutive letters change place and further notes that one of the most common transposition errors occur with the letter pairs <e> and <i>, producing errors such as decieve, beleif, beign and foriegner. He states further that transposition of the letter pairs <t> and <e> are also common and can lead to well-known confusions of homophones such as spelling *discreteas discreet*, or near-homophones such as spelling *quiteas quiet*, Some of the examples in the data include the following;

- i. You can beleive all that I am telling you... (believe)
- ii. They good and intergent students .....(intelligent)
- iii. Also now recieves the chop money.....(receives)
- iv. ....programme beign the only course .(being)

Table 4.1.8 and Figure 4.1.8 show various errors committed on spelling errors. On this categorization, wrong capitalization recorded the highest errors with 497 (39%) errors, followed by omission errors with 292 (23%), transposition errors with 178 (14%), substitution with 166 (13%) and insertion errors with 141 (11%).

**Table 4.1.5: Summary of Spelling Errors**

Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Omission Errors	292	23%
Insertion Errors	141	11%
Wrong capitalization	497	39%
Substitution Errors	166	13%
Transposition errors	178	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1274</b>	<b>100</b>



**Figure 4.1.5: Summary of Spelling Errors**

Spelling errors dominated the overall categorization with 1274 errors. In average terms, every student commits 6 spelling errors. The implication for the hugeness of this category means a lot the learners and teachers. Spelling errors are likely going to be a performance derailing one. The results revealed that the students confused words with similar spelling but different meanings. They also showed confusion in spelling

while they write. It can be inferred that the cohort of students had challenges faced in their writing, which could be due to the influence or interference of their mother tongue (Swaran et al, 2017).

#### **4.3 Errors of Punctuation**

Punctuation, according to Richard and Schmidt (2010), is the use of graphic marks such as commas, semicolons, dashes and periods to clarify meaning in written sentences or to represent spoken sentences in writing. In instances when these graphic marks are not properly deployed or virtually non-existent, punctuation errors committed. Alamin and Ahmed (2011) have captured the areas of punctuation errors as; using the semicolon incorrectly at the beginning of the passages and after the words, exclamation mark hardly used, forgetting to use full stops at the end of a sentence, not using enough space between words, hardly using question marks and hardly using hyphens.

##### ***4.3.1 Inappropriate use of full stop***

It was realized the respondents inappropriately used full stops and failed to use them when they were required as captured in the following sentences.

- i. Teachers are good when it comes to teaching There is discipline in the school.....
- ii. I hope you are well friend the reason why I write you this letter....
- iii. Again. It helps.....
- iv. I hope you are fine by the grace almighty God I am also doing very well....
- v. ...why I chose Ghanasco thank you.
- vi. ....performance WASSCE They always pass their examination.

The sentences above violate the rules of punctuation. Full stops are used at wrong place and the vice versa.



#### ***4.3.2 Inappropriate use of commas***

Awad (2012) supports the claim that the most common errors the learners of English make relates to commas. They are probably the most frequently used punctuation mark, therefore, come up as the most frequently misapplied in student's write-ups. They are usually used wrongly in place of semi-colon or vice versa. The most common errors students make is the assumption that a commas go wherever one hears a pause in a sentence. That's not true at all, and this assumption is likely to lead to comma errors.

- i. ...in our Ghanaian society therefore students are made .....
- ii. Once upon a time a small village called Tepo in the northern region of Ghana.....
- iii. On the individual and Zohe as a locality is the reason behind .....
- iv. As a result members of the committee find it difficult to put a check on open defecation.

#### ***4.3.3 Inappropriate use of semi colon***

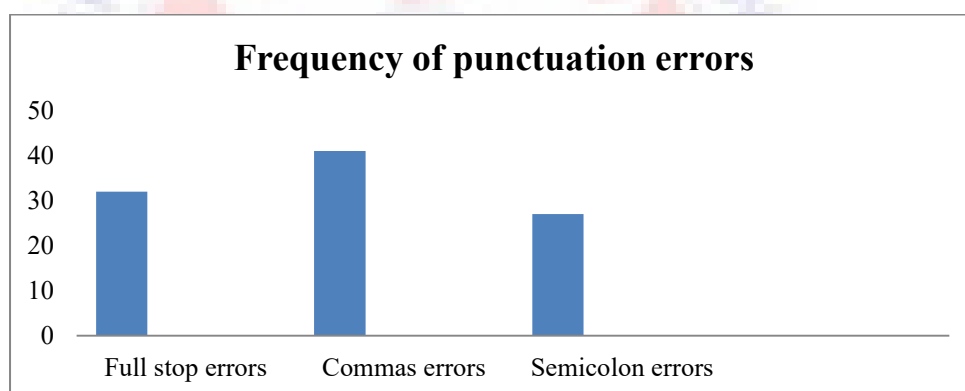
Al-Mutib (1989), intimates that semicolons are used to connect two related clauses. Commas have been inappropriately used to link two clauses where the result is often a run-on sentence. Conjunctive adverbs (like "however," "therefore," "moreover") or transitional phrases (like "in fact," "in addition") must be used with a semicolon when they connect two independent clauses. The inappropriate of semi colons in data of the respondents are as follows;

- i. ....almighty God the creator of the universe..
- ii. ....divided into two parts Food and Nutrition and Clothing Textiles....

Table 4.1.6 and Figure 4.1.6 summarise punctuation errors captured in the data. In all, 320 errors were found. Errors relating commas dominated followed by full stop and semicolon.

**Table 4.1.6: Summary of punctuation Errors**

Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Comma errors	102	32%
Full stop errors	131	41%
semicolon errors	87	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>



**Figure 4.1.6: Summary of Punctuation Errors**

The data revealed that inappropriate use of commas dominated, followed by full stop and semicolon errors respectively. The misapplication of punctuation creates confusion through ambiguity. Without punctuation marks, many sentences are mere jumbles of words. The art of punctuation, as any other art, is acquired only by study and practice. There are certain well-defined rules observed by all; the mastery of these will make one capable of deciding where rules do not apply (Lukeman, 2006).

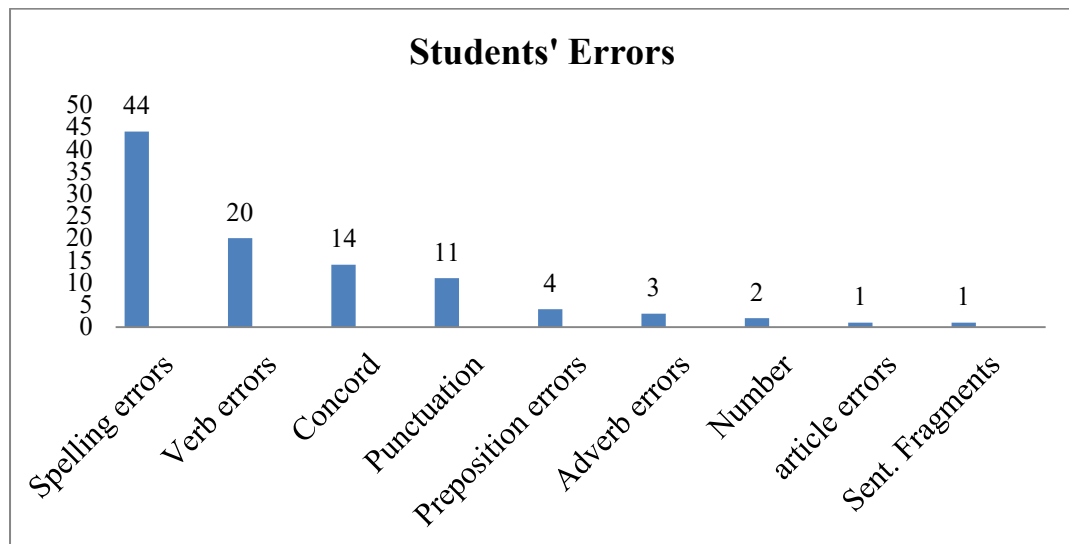
#### 4.4 Analysis of Errors

This section focuses on discussions on both grammatical and mechanical errors made by the students in their essays. The results showed that of the total errors (2,864) committed by the students, 1594 representing 56% were related to punctuation and spelling. These errors are largely considered in the marking schemes for English language by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) as mechanical errors. The grammatical errors comprise tense, concord, prepositional, number, article, adverb and sentence fragments errors and 1270 representing 44% were found in the data. A summary of the errors is presented in Table 4.1.7.

**Table 4.1.7: Summary of Students' Errors**

<b>Types of Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Spelling Errors	1274	44%
Verb Errors	565	20%
Concord Errors	416	14%
Punctuation	320	11%
Prepositional Errors	106	4%
Adverbial Errors	70	3%
Number	53	2%
Article	31	1%
Sentence fragment	29	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2864</b>	<b>100</b>

The information in Table 4.1.7 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.9 as follows:



**Figure 4.1.7: Summary of Students' Errors**

The grammatical areas in which the learners commit errors are verb patterns, concord or agreement, preposition, number, articles, adverbs, and sentence fragments. In relation to the data found in the students' compositions it is suggested that English instructors should pay attention to the students' area of difficulties in learning their major study, mainly to verb patterns, concord or agreement, the passive, noun, tenses, and article in which they make many errors.

Grammar and mechanical errors constitute 2/5 of the total allotted marks for essays students present for marking by WAEC. Other determining factors for good grades, pass or fail include content, expression and organization. When all these factors are employed in assessing the students, they are likely to perform poorly. In effect, spelling errors 1274 (44%) represent the highest frequency of error followed by tense 565 (20%), concord 416 (14%), punctuation 320 (11%), preposition 106 (4%) adverb 70 (3) and number (53) (2%) respectively as well as article and sentence fragments (1%). The findings are similar to the results of Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017). The dominant errors found in their work were tense, concord and preposition. The findings

of this study share some similarities in part, especially, tense and concord errors. The slightest difference between the findings of the research and that of Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) is in adverb, number and article. The occurrence of errors relating to number, article, adverb and sentence fragments is quite serious as they drain the efforts of the students. The implication is that the students lack the ability to express themselves and to clearly state their arguments in their write-ups.

#### **4.5 Causes of the Errors**

Causes of errors are multi-faceted: Interlingual error (L1 interference), intralingual errors, context of learning and communication strategies were causes of the errors as proposed by Brown (2000).

##### ***4.5.1 Interlingual Transfer***

Interlingual transfer refers to transfer from L1 or any previously acquired language into second. Learning acquisition is a strategy relies on when their linguistic vocabulary in the target language runs short. Learner tries to formulate hypothesis in the target language based on the rules of L1. The learner therefore uses the interlingual transfer strategy to make do for the limited vocabulary in the target language. Deviations resulting from interlingual transfer have been recorded at all levels of linguistic, Gass and Selinker (1994). Some examples of this as captured in the data are:

- i. This [help] to protect the school properties.
- ii. The study of English language in Ghanaian schools [help] the students improve.
- iii. The reason why English language is important Ghanaian schools [are] highly...

In the sentences, the students erred in subject verb agreement. This can be described as interlingual, Erkaya (2000). This occurs when an element from one language, (L1) is used when speaking a second language. The research site was dominated by Mole Dagbani, Gonjas, and Konkomba speakers. Most of the structures in Dagbani do not have English equivalents. In their attempt to communicate in target language, the source language interferes.

#### ***4.5.2 Intralingual transfer***

This cause of errors transcends the boundary of interlingual transfer in L2 learning. Intralingual transfer is that which is noticed in the target language itself. This occurs when learners begin to acquire new structures in the target language. As learners progress in the target language, their previous experiences begin to interfere in the target language. This causes negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization and developmental errors.

- vi. ...the driver mistaken drove Silver home. ...
- vii. ....3: 30 am, they would now stop and went home...
- viii. I am writting this letter to talk about.... (writing)
- ix. ...and whole famile members. .... (family)
- x. The school has dane for the students. (done)

In these sentences, the students' acquisition of the concept of adverb is faulty as captured in sentences (i) and (ii). In sentences (iv) and (v), students basically transfer pronunciation of „done“ and „family“ to writing. It can also be inferred that in sentence (iii); the learner was confused in selecting between „writing“ and „written“, hence wrote (writting).

#### ***4.5.3 Overgeneralization of the target language linguistic items***

This is the use of one form or construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. Some elements of the Interlanguage may be the product of overgeneralization of the rules and semantic features of the language. Selinker (1972) refers to the process of overgeneralization as an extension of rules in the TL to an environment in which it does not apply. Below are some examples discovered in the learners' essay (data).

- i. ....I have stoppied using *somethings* which *wastes* my time.(waste)
- ii. ...and *dormitories* which *makes* learning more effective. (make)
- iii. This epidemic diseases thrive and grow. (This epidemic disease)
- iv. ....toilet facilities is one of the major cause of open defecation...(causes)

It can be seen from the examples above that the learners tried applied deviant structures on the basis of their experiences of other structures in the TL. They have thus overgeneralized the suffixes -s in expressing simple present tense and plural markers. In sentences (i), (ii) and (iii), learners overgeneralized the inflections -s in their supposed plural sentences.

#### ***4.5.4 Ignorance of rule restrictions***

The concept of ignorance of rule restrictions relate to the generalization of deviant structures; through extension of existing structures, that is, the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply" Richards (1971, p. 208). Incomplete applications of rules and ignorance of rule restrictions focus largely on subject-verb agreement and tenses. Below are some of the errors that come under these two sources;

- i. ... strange to hear that someone *killed* a minister and goes free. (killed...went)
- ii. You know that in this world, anything that *has* problems also have solutions.(has...has)

- iii. He told his father and he tells him to get ready. (told...told)
- iv. So they did everything together, eat Silver's food and used his money.(ate)
- v. Mr. Owusu's life began to change, his son receive the money....(received)

In English, there are some restrictions on the tenses of verbs when more than one occurs in an utterance. This rule is referred to as the sequence-of-tenses rule. That is what is being seen in sentences 1 to 5 above. Yankson (1994) refer to these types of structures as systematic errors. The students lack complete appreciation of the concord rules.

#### **4.5.5 Regularization**

Regularization is where a morpheme that is added to a linguistic item is wrongly to exceptional items of the given class that does not take a marker. That is, if a learner regularizes the irregulars, regularization is said to have taken place.

- i. I will stopped here by telling you. (willstop)
- ii. They have checks the classroom to see if swept it. (have checked)
- iii. Again, I intends to attend extra class during vacation.(intend)
- iv. ...very fast *organisms* which *lives* near where open defecation is done. (live)

In sentences the learners committed errors by regularizing inflection –s and –ed. In (i), -ed is regularized wrongly and the rest of sentences, inflectional –s is wrongly regularized.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed the data which were the students' scripts. The study highlighted errors that students captured in write-ups. In sum, the first research questions identified the major grammar and mechanical errors the students of Ghana Senior High School, in Tamale committed. In all, nine (9) errors were identified in the



students' scripts. These are verb errors, concord errors, preposition errors, adverb errors, number errors, article errors, sentence fragments, spelling, and punctuation errors. The causes of the errors were found to be interlingual and intralingual. The intralingual causes are overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, and regularization



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study, conclusion and suggestions. The purpose of the study was to identify grammar and mechanical errors learners at second cycle schools commit in their essay writings. This study adopted a qualitative analysis conducted in Ghana Senior High School, Tamale in Northern Region of Ghana. Data was collected from 201 students across three streams; SHS 1, 2 and 3. It revealed that errors were militating elements found in their write-ups. The errors identified are tense, concord, prepositional, adverbial, article, sentence fragments, spelling, and punctuation errors.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

A total of 2864 errors were recorded from the essays of 201 students. The findings showed that spelling errors recorded the highest with 1274, followed by tense errors with 565; concord errors were 416, punctuation errors were 320, prepositional errors 106, adverb errors recorded 70, number errors 53, article and sentence fragments recorded 2% respectively. For some specific errors in respect of verb related and concord errors, the data showed that in the tense errors category, wrong use of tense was the highest with 237 errors (42%), followed by wrong co-occurrence of verb elements with 214 errors (38%), omission of verb elements with 68 errors (12%) and wrongly substituted verb with 46 errors (8%). Similarly, on concord errors, subject-verb concord errors dominated with 172 errors (172) followed by verb-verb concord errors with 146 (35%), determiner-noun concord errors with 62 (15%) and relative and antecedents errors with 37 (9%).

Some of the categories were compared according to class and gender. In term of tense errors comparison, SHS 1 students recorded 198 errors, followed by SHS 2 with 186 errors and SHS 3 recorded 181 errors. On concord errors, SHS 1 students again topped the table with 175 (42%) errors followed SHS 3 students with 162 (39%) errors and SHS 2 students recorded the minimum errors with 79 (19%) errors. For the prepositional errors, SHS 2 students marginally dominated with 37%, followed by SHS 1 with 36% and SHS recorded 27%. As far as punctuation errors are concerned, a total 320 errors were committed by the students. The male students recorded 202 errors of the total and the male committed 118 errors. On the average, both gender committed about 1.6 errors per essay. Over all, the combination of grammar and mechanical errors show that spelling errors dominated with 1274 (44%), verb errors recorded 565 (20%), concord errors were 416 (14%), punctuation errors 320 (11%), prepositional errors recorded 106 (4%), adverbial errors 70 (3), number 2% and 1% for article and sentence fragments errors respectively.

On the basis of the findings of this study, it can be inferred that factors responsible for the errors related to the manner English language is taught at the senior high school level. Teachers at the second cycle schools were of the delusion that the transitioning from the previous level did not pose much of a problem and predicted wrongly the interlanguage of students and proceeded on that faulty assumption. Teachers did not contextualize the teaching and had difficulty using the language independently. It must also be stated that mechanical errors committed by students reflected the lackadaisical approach to teaching spelling and punctuation. Teachers did not usually teach mechanics and consider it irrelevant. Careless writing by students might also contribute to the occurrence of these errors. Tense errors found in the writings of learners were also mostly due to incomplete learning of rules,

overgeneralization of rules learnt and context of instruction. The learners' and teacher L1 could also be contributory factors to errors found in the study.

## **5.2 The Role of Errors in Learners' Writing**

The findings of the study indicate the relevance of learners' errors to teachers of English language. The myth about errors learners should be demystified on the basis of findings and understanding the sources of errors. Corder (1974) is of the opinion that the study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning and indicates that it mirrors linguistic development of a learner. Accordingly, remedial exercises could be designed to deal with the trouble spots and provide corrective feedback to learner. Stark (2001) observes that teachers need to view students errors positively and should not regard them as the learners failures; errors as a process of learning. Errors, if studied systematically, can provide significant insights into how a second language is actually learned. Through EA educators are informed about devising appropriate materials and effective teaching techniques, and tests suitable for different levels and needs of learners.

One of the most important interventions teachers of English can consider in class is to give regular exercises on grammatical errors in the form of written essays. Contextualising the elements of ungrammaticality in teaching writing can be of immense benefit to learners. The rate of occurrence of errors will point to the teachers to appropriate corrective mechanism. According to Richards (2002), errors play the role in pointing to the teacher to identify and analyse learners' errors and adopt use appropriate methods. Richards (2002) suggests that errors serve as a tool through which the learner discovers the rules of the target language which could not be understood earlier and with time, these learners will be able to identify and correct their errors. Corder (1967) states that learners' errors serve as pedagogic purpose by

indicating to the teachers the linguistic aspects and forms learners have difficulties, also provide evidential direction to language teacher as to how language is learnt and as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

### **5.3 Pedagogical Implications**

This study has pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of English Language which has to do with teachers' approaches and strategies, methods of assessment, feedback and corrective mechanisms in the class. When students are assisted to correct their errors, they become more accurate in using the L2. Selinker (1992) suggests that errors are indispensable to learners since the making of errors can be regarded as 'a device the learner uses in order to learn'. Errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they haven't acquired enough knowledge. Teachers of English aware of this can design appropriate correction strategy to help student. Therefore, Brown (2006) suggests that error correction can be very helpful in L2 learning. Teachers are expected to design learning tasks that encourage consistent practice of forms and structures learnt. Teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods and approaches for the benefit of students. They can use teaching techniques such as role-play, drama, conversation, and peer-teaching.

In case teachers want to adopt Content-Based Instruction (CBI), the content of the reading material should communicate relevantly to the learners at their level. Teachers of the language have to encourage the learners to take risks in making mistakes, loss marks and are better for it ultimately. It is an established fact that risk-takers are able to learn from their mistakes. As a consequence, Brown (1993) claims that one of the keys to successful learning lies in the feedback that a learner receives from others. The feedback can be cognitive, affective, can be negative or positive. Providing

immediate feedback on students' performance is a measure of encouraging more practice. The task of the teacher is to discern the optimal between the positive and negative cognitive feedback: providing enough green lights to encourage continued communication (Rustipa, 2014)

A favourable classroom atmosphere for learning enables students to freely express themselves. There is a lot negotiation between the teacher and the learner in the process of learning. Successful learning is based on sound negotiation in terms of form, content and meaning. If cordial relationship is not created between them, negotiation for improved learning is at risk. Again, language lessons should be learner-centred so that the process of learning exudes fun and make learning interesting to students. To achieve this, the teacher should be innovative in order to devise effective learning activities for learners to practice. Most importantly, the teacher must be a master of the content as well as the techniques to translate the content to meaningful lessons for students. To be a master of content and methodology requires that in-service training for language teachers to learn new ideas and teaching strategies from one another. Finally, teachers should strive to learn L1 structure of the learners to be able to explain why some errors occur in their works so they will help minimize such errors. The researcher is of the opinion that suggests that the syllabus should include a variety of child-centred approaches to guide the teacher to teach learners based on their learning abilities. The syllabus should be designed with its corresponding textbooks to enable teachers get appropriate materials for learners. Information in the text books should also match the topics in the syllabus.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

This work investigated grammatical errors in the essays of students of Ghana senior High School, Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana. Prospective researchers can

venture into other categories of errors other than the grammatical categorization. Additionally, future research can consider the specific elements of grammar that pose challenges to students. The overwhelming category that derailed the efforts of students relates to the mechanical errors, therefore, the need for some in-depth investigation to be carried out. The researcher is also of the view that comparative study of grammatical errors involving many schools in the Northern Region would be laudable.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

The rationale for conducting this study at Ghana Senior High School, Tamale in the Northern Region was to ascertain grammatical variables that cause poor performance at public examinations. The study was broadly grouped into two; Grammar and mechanical errors. The order of commission of errors in the study saw spelling errors dominating followed by verb error, concord errors, punctuation errors, prepositional errors and sentence fragment became the least in the category. Based on these findings, it makes professional sense for the teachers of language to be given periodic in-service training to keep up to date adequate appropriate language teaching approaches at all levels. For individual language teachers to be counted, conscious effort should be made by teachers for self-upgrading by constantly reading on current trends or seek further studies.

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