

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNIBA

**INVESTIGATING CONCORD ERRORS AMONG THE FIRST YEAR
STUDENTS OF ODUMASE AKRO M/A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



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**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, JUDITH LARBI, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in the published work 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

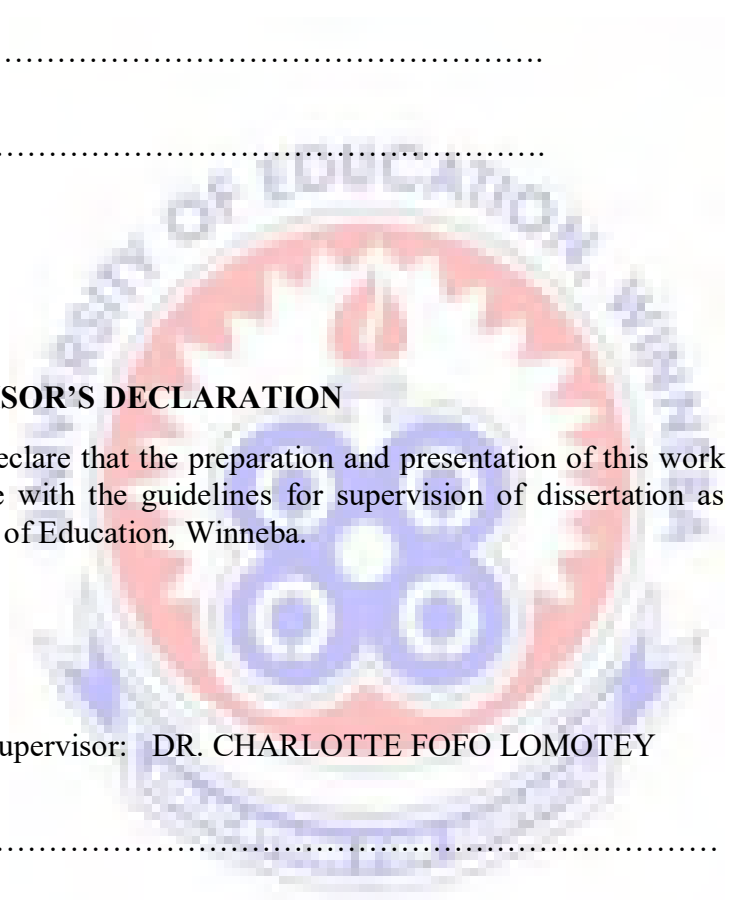
SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

Name of Supervisor: DR. CHARLOTTE FOFO LOMOTEY

Signature.....

Date.....



DEDICATION

To my lovely husband, Ernest Kwapong and my children, Nissi Kwapong and Stacy Kwapong.



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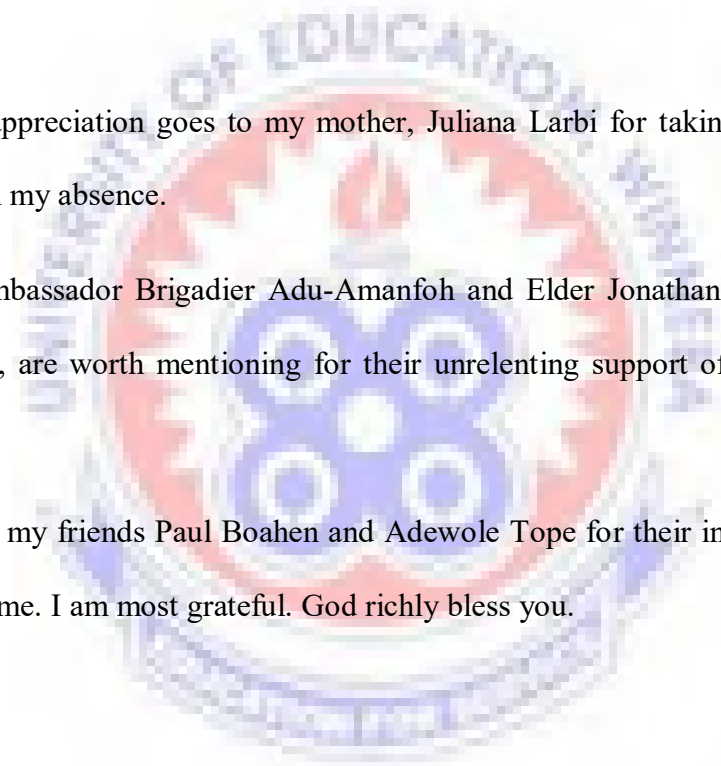


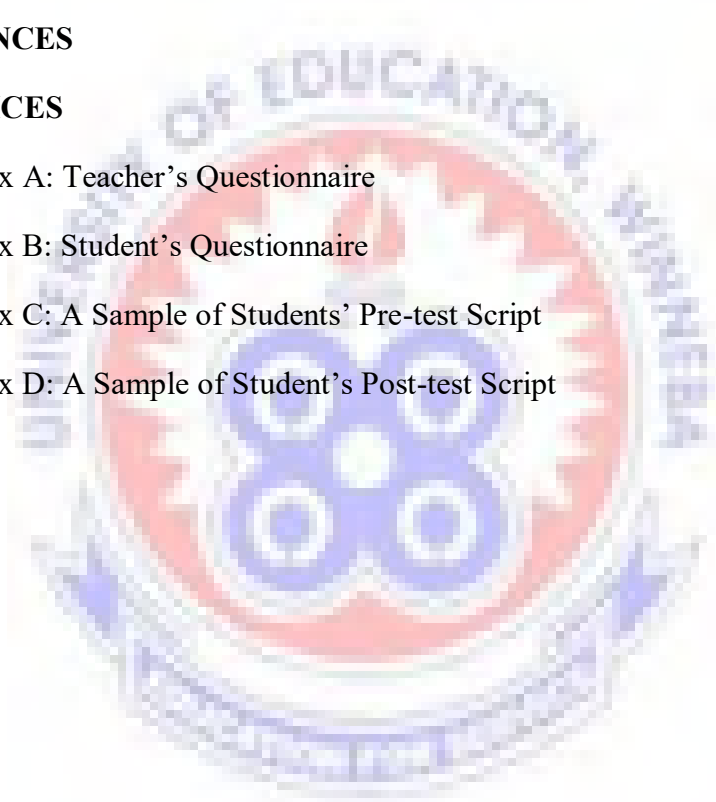
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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to investigate the concord errors among the first year students of Odumase Akro M/A Junior High School in the Lower Manya Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The main objectives addressed in the research were to identify and discuss the concord errors and to find out ways of addressing them. The instruments employed in this study included test questionnaire and observation. Data analysed revealed that it is difficult for the first year students to answer concord effectively and this has gone a long way to affect students' performance in English. It has therefore been recommended that qualified teachers should be made to teach the subject. More so, there is the need to have regular in-service training for English teachers in the junior high school to equip them in modern trends in teaching English.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

In recent years, students have spent a lot of time and effort in learning English, and they have got unprecedentedly increasing input, which can greatly improve their reading and enlarge their vocabulary. The major goal of teaching is to make learners proficient in all the basic language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. As Brown (2000) puts it, in order to master the English language, learners have to be adequately exposed to all the four basic skills. To achieve this goal, the English Language components of vocabulary, structure, pronunciation and spelling need to be taught right from the lower level of education. Presently, English language is an international language and it is used as the language of international relations, and in exchanging knowledge and technology. It is the medium of communication at all official gatherings. For this reason, it becomes necessary for anyone aspiring to any official position or dreaming to join the formal sector in the country to learn to be able to use Standard English language.

In Ghana, English is used as the official language and medium of instruction in schools. In the basic schools, English is taught as a subject in the lower primary and the first language (L1) is used as the medium of instruction. The target language is rather used as a medium of instruction when the child gets to the upper primary which begins from primary four. Though the child is taught some components of the target language at the lower primary, she/he still experiences some problems due to the sudden switch from the L1 as medium of instruction to the L2 and the most difficult aspect is writing in the target language.

Among the four language skills, writing is known to be the most complex skill to master. To this effect, the contents of the English language syllabus designed for instruction entails four major aspects namely; listening and speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Writing is more complex and complicated especially when it is done in the second language since the L1 interferes greatly when producing a piece of writing in the target language. It is being argued that the impact of the first language of learners' English is heavily felt whenever they write in the English language (Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002).

As a result, second language learners tend to structure their writing incorrectly and violate the English grammatical rules. Braganza (2002), Cedar (2004), Chen and Huang, (2003) examine the inter-language interference of the mother tongue in the process of writing in the target language. They found that most of the writing errors committed among second language learners are due to mother tongue interference. But many stakeholders, especially teachers, keep complaining about the poor level of pupils' academic performance which is evident in their written exercises, in all subjects. Pupils commit a lot of errors in their writing and this affects their performance. These errors seem to occur due to several factors. In most Ghanaian primary schools, a teacher is assigned to a class to teach all subjects, including the English language, whether or not the teacher has knowledge in it.

Odumase Akro M/A JHS is situated in Odumase- Krobo. Odumase, is the capital of Lower Manya Municipality in the Eastern Region, where English is hardly spoken. The dominant language spoken in the community is Ga-Adangme. Most parents in the community are farmers and traders who have not received formal education. Pupils speak their local language both in and outside the classroom and even use it to answer questions during lessons. Moreover, library facilities which could have

helped pupils to read wide in order to acquire enough vocabulary for good writing is absent in the school. Also, most pupils do not have access to electricity in their homes to enable them read pieces that are given them by their teachers as extra class assignment. Again, most teachers in the school lack knowledge of the English content but are supposed to teach it since they have been assigned the subject, as mentioned earlier. What then will be the outcome of pupils' language as they write? It is in light of this that the current study seeks to analyze the common errors JHS 1 pupils of Odumase M/A JHS School of the Lower Manya Municipality in the Eastern Region commit in their English Grammar and Essays.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that pupils of Odumase Akro M/A JHS face some difficulties in constructing simple and meaningful sentences. This reflects in their written essays and grammar exercises where they constantly make concord errors such as subject verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, construction with more than one concord errors, including wrong use of punctuations, tenses, articles, and even spellings. It has therefore become difficult for teachers to read their scripts, let alone make meaning of their writings. This goes a long way to affect their performance in class exercises, tests and examinations, and later their promotion to the next class since they are always marked down due to these errors which most teachers rather see as mistakes.

It is also realized that no free writing is done in the classroom unless it is a composition lesson. As said earlier, library facilities which could have motivated pupils to read wide to enable them acquire enough vocabulary for good writing is absent in the school. Teachers do not allow pupils to use the text books, if there is any at all,

unless it is time for lessons. Pupils seem to commit errors in all aspect of the target language. They usually face difficulties in learning the target language aspects such as concord (subject-verb agreement), spellings, the use of articles, and punctuation. Kahn (2005), in a study, investigated errors of 30 form five Malaysian students and found out that the students were weak in grammar. It is believed that learning a second/foreign language is a gradual process, during which errors are made in all levels of learning. However, the use of Error Analysis and appropriate corrective measures can help effective teaching and learning of English language.

Researchers agree that it is more effective to teach concord, punctuation, sentence variety, and usage in the context of writing than to approach the topic by teaching isolated skills (Calkins,1980) Presada and Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They confirmed that Error Analysis (EA) could lessen the number of errors in their students' work. Errors play an important role in learning a second/foreign language; from these, 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 that 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 investigate the errors that 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, they may become problematic. For example, in an era in Ghana where students are expected to pass English language before they can gain admission to institutions of higher learning, a fail can prevent them from continuing their education. Several factors can be identified as contributing to the student 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.

Thus far, there has not been any such study in relation to the errors that pupils of OdumaseAkro M/A JHS commit, although such information would go a long way to expose the teacher to the types and causes of errors that are seen in their writings. In view of this, the present study focuses on analyzing the common concord errors that JHS 1 pupils of OdumaseAkro M/A JHS 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 sources of learners' errors is an effective way to help reduce them (Bennui, 2008; Penny, 2001).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the common concord errors JHS 1 pupils of Odumase M/A JHS commit in their writings. It analyzes and discusses the causes of the concord errors as well as the implications of the findings, and makes necessary suggestions to both teachers and learners to help solve the problem identified.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to identify the common concord errors JHS 1 students of Odumase M/A JHS commit in their writings;
2. to discuss the causes of the concord errors found;

1.4 Research Questions

The study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the common concord errors that occur in the English writings of JHS 1 Students of Odumase M/A JHS?
2. What are the causes of these concord errors?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are significant for several reasons. First, it creates awareness in language teachers, about the kinds of concord errors basic school pupils make in their grammar and essays, as well as the sources of these errors. Secondly, it enlightens language teachers on the role error plays in the language acquisition process. Again, the findings of this study reveal to language teachers, aspects of the subject that need more attention in order to devise the appropriate remediation to help pupils out. The results help pupils to identify and correct their own errors with time. In addition, the findings of the study provide language curriculum planners with enough input on how to design appropriate language programs and resources for the basic school. Finally, the results serve as a source of reference and add to knowledge on concord errors in Ghana and beyond.

1.6 Delimitation

Geographically, this study concentrates on the concord errors that JHS 1 students of OdumaseAkro M/A JHS commit in their English writings. The study also looked at the causes of the concord errors and their implication on the teaching and learning of English language.

1.7 Limitations

This study is limited to only the JHS students of Odumase Akro M/A JHS. It is also limited to the Lower Manya Municipality in the Eastern Region and its findings cannot be generalized to all Ghanaian pupils. Due to the level of the pupils, the grammar test and the written essays were conducted within the normal instructional hours so it was always difficult to get enough time since the researcher needed to go by the school's time table. Some pupils were also reluctant to submit their scripts on schedule and this somehow delayed the data collection process. Also, due to financial and time constraints, the study could not focus on the entire school, but limited to only the JHS 1 students of OdumaseAkro M/A JHS.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 reviews related literature on the study. This focuses on theoretical views that are closely relevant to concord errors. It includes what constitutes an error, the concept of concord errors, sources of concord errors, the significance of errors and related studies. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology adopted for the study. In this chapter, the instruments and sampling technique used for the study, as well as data analysis, are discussed. The results of the study are discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis revealed that pupils committed subject verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated

subject concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, and construction with more than one concord errors. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the study. This includes the summary of findings of the study, the pedagogical implications, as well as suggestions for future research study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the concept of concord errors and the types of concord errors. It also discusses the importance of errors in second language learning. The causes of concord errors and their categorization are also discussed. The chapter finally ends with a discussion on approaches to studying errors as well as related studies on errors in second language acquisition.

2.1 Concept of Errors

In language study, errors can be termed as the deviation from the norms or rules of a language. Brown (1994) defines linguistic errors as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. For Burt, Duley and Krashen (1982), errors are the flawed side of a learner's speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norms of mature language performance. Errors are studied in order to identify the learning process and the strategies employed in learning another language (Lungu, 2003). The definitions by Brown and Burt et al differ from that of Corder (1981), who defines an error in the context of the effectiveness of the utterances made by language users. Corder (1971) identifies what he calls covertly idiosyncratic and overtly idiosyncratic errors. The former refers to flaws in utterances that are grammatical but do not clearly convey the speaker's intended meaning. Overtly idiosyncratic errors on the other hand, occur in sentences that appear to be ill-formed but whose meaning is transparent to the listeners. Corder's provision of these broad error categories was preceded by that of Burt and Kiparsky (1972). They classified

errors in terms of whether they were “global” or “local”. Global errors can be considered synonymous with what Corder refers to as covertly idiosyncratic errors while local errors, on the other hand, are synonymous with overtly idiosyncratic ones.

As indicated by Maicusi and Maicusi (2000), in the language learning process, errors have always been regarded negatively, and must be avoided. As a result, they contend that teachers tend to show a suppressive attitude to their students. On one hand, errors are considered as a failure of teaching process and on the other hand, they are seen as a natural result that can hardly be avoided, so we should deal and learn from them. Therefore, errors can be a very helpful means in learning a second language as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 61) explain, learners’ errors are significant in three ways. (1) They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered; (2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and (3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback.

2.2 Concord Errors in English

Various authors have given different authoritative definitions of concord in Grammar. According to Crystal (1988), concord or agreement is a way of showing that two grammatical units have a certain feature in common. Thus, if the subject is singular the verb must also be singular. For example,

- i. My Uncle has a beautiful daughter.
 - a. Singular subject Singular verb.
- ii. My brothers have nice cars.
 - b. Plural subject Plural verb

Crystal (1988) holds the view that the most important is the third person rule for verbs in the present tense, which states that singular subjects take singular verbs. Quirk and Greenbaum (2000, p. 176), define concord as “the relationship that exists between two grammatical elements such that if one contains a particular feature, the other must also have that feature”. They further note that “the most important type of concord in English is concord of number between subject and verb” (p. 176). Quirk et al (1985, p. 755) define concord as “the relationship between two grammatical units such that one of them displays a particular feature (e.g. plurality) that accords with a displayed (or semantically implicit) feature in the other”.

Arthur (2009), draws attention to the fact that the term concord is used to describe the relationship between the inflectional forms of different elements within a sentence. Mark and Kirsten (2011) explain that concord or agreement occurs when one element in a sentence takes the morphosyntactic features of another element. Morphosyntactic involves both morphology and syntax. All the definitions cited above imply that if a grammatical unit possesses a feature, for example, a plural noun, that plurality feature of the noun should be matched correctly with the verb.

2.3 Types of Concord Errors

Concord errors found in second language learners’ writing are analyzed based on the principles governing their usage and categorized into various types as follows:

2.3.1 Subject verb concord errors

Wiredu (1999) defines Subject verb (grammatical) concord as the relationship that exists between the subject of a clause and its accompanying verb. Hornsby (2002) describes grammatical concord as the fact of having the same number, gender or person. Ogunsonwo (1993) is also of the view that it is important to note that the form of the

verb required in a sentence depends on the nature of its subject. He indicates that the verb agrees with its subject in number and in person. Subject-verb concord is generally defined as formal agreement between different sentence constituents. Quirk et al (1985) make a distinction between two types of concord:

- a) Notional and
- b) Proximity

According to Quirk et al, the most important type of concord in English is Subject-Verb concord which involves, mainly, number, and or person. In English, syntactic concord is established between the central constituent of the number phrase subject, typically the noun head and the initial constituent of the verb phrase, predicator. Also, it involves a distinction between 3rd person singular number present tense verb form and non-3rd person singular number present tense verb form.

[My son] [sweeps] every morning.

NP/Subj. VP/Pdtor

As Quirk et al explain, that there is a basic rule to follow: a singular subject takes a singular verb as in *The man dances (singular)* and plural subject takes a plural verb, as in *The men dance (plural)*. They treat the following as singular subjects which attract singular verb forms.

- a. A clause that is in the position of a subject counts as singular for the purpose of concord. Observe the following;
 - i. To speak harshly to your elders shows disrespect.
 - ii. Absenting yourself from lectures attracts queries.
- b. Singular subjects followed by intervening expressions like ‘with’ or ‘together with’, ‘including’ etc. take singular verbs
 - i. The headmaster, together with his teachers has met the Education minister.

- ii. The president as well as the first lady, his wife was in Winneba yesterday.
- c. Finite and non-finite clauses generally count as singular;
 - i. How you get there does not concern me.
 - ii. Smoking cigarette is dangerous to your health
- d. Prepositional phrases and verbs functioning as subject also count as singular:
 - i. In the evening is good for me
 - ii. On the road side serves it well.

The second part of grammatical concord states that a plural subject attracts or takes a plural verb. Swan (1984) agrees with the above assertion that verbs form change according to whether the subject is first, second or third person. What he meant by person is that a subject can be of the first, second or third person. Hence, a singular subject must be paired with a singular verb and a plural subject must be paired with a plural verb. The following are examples:

- a. Water does mix well with gari.
- b. A man, his son and a dog go to the farm every morning.
- c. The teacher, his pupil and the circuit supervisor walk to the party.

Aartst (2001) makes a generalization that subjects of sentences are usually nouns, noun phrases or pronouns. Subjects are obligatory and they determine the form of the verb. A careful teaching of how subjects are realized in English sentences will help students to select appropriate verbs for their sentences.

2.3.2 Proximity concord

Leech & Svartvik (2002) term this principle “attraction” because the last noun attracts a certain form in the verb and upsets the rule of grammatical concord. The principle of ‘proximity’ also termed as ‘attraction’ denotes agreement of the verb with a closely preceding noun phrase in reference to agreement with the noun phrases that

function as subject (Quirk et al, 2005). The proximity concord may be extended to mean that concord is determined by whatever immediately precedes the verb. In other words, it is the position of the subject which normally determines the concord. Wiredu (1999, p. 113) has the same view that *proximity concord* refers to the agreement between a subject and its verb based not on notion but on the fact that there is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. That is, grammatical concord is established between these elements instead of the normal formal agreement with the head of the noun phrase/subject (NP/Subj). Below are examples:

- i. Either the driver or his mates collect money
- ii. Neither he nor she writes well

In the above sentences, the predicators or verbs “collect” and “writes” have two or more alternatives subjects, linked by “or” or “nor”. This should agree with the subject that precedes it. Thus, “collect” and “writes” agree with his “mates” and “she” respectively. On the other hand, where the alternative subjects are of the same person and number, the verb can be common to them as in:

- i. Either the teacher or a student performs the experiment.
- ii. Neither the girls nor their mothers sweep the house.

In agreement with this rule, Sekyi-Baidoo(2000, p. 483) states that two singular nouns joined by the correlatives; either...or, neither.... nor, not...but, take a singular verb, the verb however agrees with the noun nearest to it when one of them is plural as in;

- i. Either the children or the woman wants the television.
- ii. Neither the woman nor the children want the television.

Yankson (1994) defines proximity concord as “the verb agreeing with the noun immediately preceding it in a sentence.” For example; the reasons for its fall in these areas are not known.

According to Sidney (1990, p. 215), proximity concord “denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrases.”

2.3.3 Pronoun-antecedent concord

A pronoun typically restates a noun, called its antecedent; it must agree with its antecedent in gender and number as opined by (Wiredu, 1999) who states that pronoun antecedent refers to the agreement which exists between a pronoun and the noun it refers to. The agreement here involves three major features associated with pronouns. These are number, person and gender. That is pronouns in English generally display distinctions in terms of;

- i. Number... whether it is singular or plural
- ii. Person ... whether it is first, second or third person
- iii. Gender... whether masculine, feminine or non-human.

Freeborn (1987) refers to pronouns as co-referential of nouns and when linked should agree with their antecedents so that it will be possible to associate them with the nouns in whose place they occur or perform. Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) buttresses this by proposing that since pronouns are pro-forms which are used in place of nouns, there is every reason they should agree with their antecedents so that it will be possible for us to associate them with these nouns in whose place they perform. Consider the following examples;

- i. George planted a palm tree on his farm.
- ii. The women have gone to their farms.
- iii. The hen protects its chicks.

Oluikpe (1981) comments on pronoun antecedent agreement that a pronoun must agree in number, gender and case with its antecedent. By number, he means the

subject can be singular or plural, while “person”, according to him, can be seen as a relationship between the speaker and what he is speaking about. If the speaker speaks to himself, we refer to it as the first person. The first person is associated with the pronoun “I” and “We”. The person he speaks to is the second person which has a general meaning of “you”. The “third” person is the one talked about and it is associated with the pronouns “he”, “she”, “it” and “they”. “He”, “She”, “It” and “I” have singular reference. “We” and “they” have plural reference, while “you” may refer to singular or plural. It can be concluded after having discussed the above types of concord; grammatical concord, proximity concord and pronoun antecedent concord, that the principles governing their usage share in the following general rules of concord. If the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree, that sentence is considered ungrammatical. We, therefore, speak of errors in agreement of faulty agreement. To avoid this, we must adhere to the rules of concord. Brown (2009, p. 134) states the following rules of concord;

a. A verb must agree with its subject in number/person; that is, a singular verb should follow a singular subject; and a plural verb should follow a plural subject.

Examples are:

- i. The book is on the table.
- ii. The books are on the table.

However, singular subjects followed by such word as: with, together with, as well as, accompanied by, take singular verbs. The phrases introduced by these expressions are not considered as part of the subject and so do not change the number, although they do suggest plural meaning. Examples are;

- i. The vice-chancellor, as well as his staff, is hard-working.
- ii. Dr. Fofu, together with other lecturers in her department, is here.

- iii. The course representative, accompanied by the students, has arrived.
- b. Indefinite pronouns such as everyone, everybody, somebody, take singular verbs. Examples;
 - i. No one “wants” to die.
 - ii. Somebody “has taken” my phone.
 - iii. Everybody “is” important.

There are other subjects which appear deceptively plural but function as singular:

- i. Each of the students owns a car
- ii. One of the teachers appears lazy
- iii. More than one student has complained about her laziness
- c. When two or more subjects are joined by “and” and refers to the same person or thing, the verb is in the singular. However, compound subjects referring to two different people or things take plural verbs. Examples;
 - i. His brother and sponsor was there to help him.
 - ii. The president and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces has arrived.
 - iii. A dog and a cat are seldom friends.
 - iv. The man and his wife have come
- d. When two subjects (a compound subject) refer to the same thing or is thought of as a simple idea or a unit, a singular verb is used. Examples:
 - i. Gari and beans is my favorite meal.
 - ii. The hammer and the sickle was flying from the flagpole.
 - iii. My colleague and longtime friend has bought a car for me.
- e. Some nouns appear plural in form but are singular in meaning and therefore take singular verbs. Examples:
 - i. The United Nations has its headquarters in New York.

- ii. Economics is an interesting subject
- iii. The sports news was aired an hour ago.

Other words that are always in the singular form include; information, music, advice, United States, evidence, aid, research, phonetics, semantics, physics, furniture, luggage, equipment, knowledge, stationary, mathematics etc.

f. When singular subjects are joined by “not only but also”, “neither...nor”, “either...or”, the verb is in the singular. Example:

- i. Not only the vice president but also his wife was present at the meeting.
- ii. Either the teacher or the class prefect is expected to attend the meeting.
- iii. Neither the boy nor his father has eaten.

However, if the subjects differ in number (that is, one subject is in the singular and the other is in the plural), the verb agrees with the subject (noun) nearer to it. For example,

- i. Either the students or the teacher has to be present.
- ii. Neither the teacher nor the students seem lazy.

g. A collection noun takes a singular verb when the group is regarded as one unit. But a collective noun takes a plural verb when emphasis is placed on the individual members of the group; that is, the individual members of the group are acting separately. Consider the following examples:

- i. The audience were arriving. (individually).
- ii. The audience was clapping (together).
- iii. The committee are unable to agree on the matter (individually).
- iv. The committee is meeting today (together)

h. A demonstrative adjective (such as this, that, these, those) must agree in number with the noun it modifies. Examples are;

- i. That kind of music is out of date.

- ii. Those kind of cars are in high demand.

Nouns (subjects) that are always regarded as plural verbs are police, people, and cattle.

Etc.

- i. The cattle look healthy.
- ii. The police are hard-working
- iii. The people of Bauchi State love their culture

2.3.4 Determiner-noun concord errors

According to Downing and Locke (2006), English obliges us to make a distinction with regards to how a referent is cognitively perceived: whether as a discrete, countable entity such as stone or as an individual, non-countable 'mass' entity, such as sheep. This difference constitutes a feature which is salient in speakers' experience of 'things'. Other languages make a count-mass distinction, but we must not assume that particular items are conceptualized or lexicalized in the same way in different languages. News, for example, is a singular mass noun in English language, (the news is good) *one news, *a news, *many news are ungrammatical.

2.3.4.1 Count-nouns

This is basically one whose referent can be counted, as in one cow, two cows but not *one sheep, *two sheeps. The referents of these nouns are viewed as individuated in things or in persons. The following count nouns include both regular plurals in -s or invariable or 'zero' plurals: 5 cyclists, 3 trouts, a dozen eggs, three new television series, 7 minutes, 4 salmon, 3 crossroads, five and a half kilos, a hundred sheep, two US aircraft, five spacecraft. Countable nouns are nouns that can be quantified in units and in numbers; that means they can be counted.

2.3.4.2 Non-count nouns

This is one whose referent is cognitively perceived as not countable. We don't therefore say, for example, three furniture, two luggages. Both *furniture* and *luggage*, as well as *news*, can be individuated by a preceding counter- 'a piece of'. Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be quantified in units and numbers.

2.3.5 Coordinated–subject concord errors

Concord with subordinated subject has been discussed by Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) as a process where equivalent units are linked by 'and', 'or', 'but'. They further explain that it may occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements, words coordinating with 'and', coordination with a 'singular subject and coordination with 'or' and 'nor'.

2.3.6 Noun-pronoun concord errors

Like a machine, for a sentence to be grammatically correct, all its parts should agree with one another. When a pronoun is used to refer to a noun used, there must be an agreement. A pronoun which refers to a singular noun phrase is in singular, and a pronoun which refers to a plural phrase is in plural, (Leech & Startvik, 2002). For example,

1. He goes to his work place
2. They go to their work place

A pronoun is generally defined as a word which can replace a noun. The definition may be considered appropriate at the basic level where the learners are studying mainly words or the parts of speech. However, at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels, where phrases and clauses are taught, the definition must change accordingly. Hence, the pronoun may be defined as a word that can replace a

noun or a noun phrase. Wiredu (1999) also defines pronouns as words which are used to replace a noun, especially where we do not want to repeat that noun.

2.3.6.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

Personal pronouns in third person must agree with their antecedents both in number and (with the singular pronouns; he, she, it) in gender, (Quirk et al, 2002).

Examples:

1. Eric goes to Winneba (He goes to Winneba)
2. Stacy exercises everyday (She exercises everyday)
3. The dog hunts on Fridays (It hunts on Friday)

2.3.6.2 A pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase

As Leech and Startvik (2002) write, a pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase is in plural. For example,

1. Joshua and Eric do their exercise (They do their exercise)
2. The head teacher and his staff go for their salary (They go for their salary)
3. Students do not want studies (They do not want studies)
4. A smart phone does not like water (It does not like water)

2.3.7 Inverted subject-verb concord errors

Downing and Locke (2006, p 44) explain that this type of concord involves sentences whose subjects are interrogative pronoun, the adverbial *here*, or the unstressed existential *there*. Interrogative pronouns include *what*, *which*, *who*, and *whose*. If an interrogative pronoun, the adverbial *here* or the unstressed existential *there* is used as subject of verb of a sentence, it is the noun phrase that follows the verb that acts as the subject. Therefore, if the noun or the noun phrase that follows is singular, the verb must be singular and the vice versa. For example,

- i. Who is your favorite author?
- ii. Here lies the oak tree.
- iii. What were the reasons for his actions?
- iv. There is no girl in the classroom.
- v. There are no girls in the classroom.

2.4 Causes of Concord Errors

It is very important to know the source of errors learners commit in their writing because it helps the teacher to provide the appropriate remediation. Though knowing the source of an error is essential in language teaching, there is not a generalized agreement on the sources by researchers. For instance, errors may emanate from first language (L1) habits, psychological state of the learner, teaching methods, styles of course materials and introduction of written language. In the opinion of Touchie (1989), language learning errors consist of components like phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic. Brown (2002) classifies second language error sources into two main categories. These are L1 interference and intralingual and developmental factors. The intralingual and developmental errors are subdivided into simplification, overgeneralization, hypercorrection and faulty teaching. Other subcategories are fossilization, avoidance, inadequate learning and false concepts hypothesized.

In another development, Richards (1971) categorizes sources of second language errors into three which include interference errors, intralingual errors and developmental errors to build up hypotheses. According to Richards, intralingual errors can be broken into overgeneralization, ignorance of rules, incomplete application of rules and false hypothesis. As a result of criticisms from Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977), Richards combined intralingual errors and developmental errors into one and states that two major sources of errors are interlingual errors and intralingual errors. For

him, the first refers to errors caused when learners wrongly transfer the rules of their first language to the target language as they produce sentences.

The second one is caused during the learners' language learning process and such errors include overgeneralization and false analogy. Heydari and Bagheri (2012) also suggest that interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer are the two main sources of errors committed by English learners. Based on her study, Penny (2001) also concludes that there are two sources of language errors namely interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Likewise, Kaweera (2013) argues that interlingual interference and intralingual interference are the two major sources of errors in language learning. He explains interlingual transfer error as negative transfer of the learner's first language while intralingual involves errors caused by the learner's incomplete knowledge of the target language. Besides, Hinno (2004) differently proposes that there are three sources of errors which are negative transfer of the mother tongue, limited knowledge of the target language and the difference between words and sentence structures of the mother tongue and those of the target language. Finally, James (1998, p.178) identifies the following as sources of second language errors: interference errors or interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, communication strategy-based errors and induced errors. These causes are explained in the following sections:

2.4.1 Interlingual transfer

Interlingual transfer mostly occurs when one is learning a second language. Here, the second language learner frequently transfers L1 structures to the L2. When this happens, the second language learner produces what Latiff and Bakar (2007) term as interlanguage; the language produced by second language learners or foreign language learners in the process of learning a target language. Such transfer can be

either positive or negative. Positive transfer leads to the facilitation of learning while negative transfer leads to error.

2.4.2 Intralingual transfer

Intralingual transfer is one within the target language itself. This occurs when learners begin to acquire new structures in the target language. As learners progress, their experiences begin to include structures in the target language. This causes negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization. Here students fail to apply the rules they have learnt in the target language correctly. Some of these causes by learning strategies include:

2.4.2.1 Fossilization

Sometimes a learner's grammatical development appears to have stopped at a certain level and recurring errors of both grammar and pronunciation have become permanent features of a learner's speech. This is referred to as fossilization. It consists of the persistence of errors in a learner's speech despite progress in other areas of language development. Littlewood (1984) stresses that fossilization is most likely to occur when a learner realizes (subconsciously) that the error does not hinder him in satisfying his communicative needs (at the functional or social level). This is what Gass and Schacter (1989) refer to as a stage short of success as it is the stage when development ceases and even serious conscious efforts to change are often fruitless, and even if there might be some brief changes, those would just not take the learner anywhere as the learners always backslides to the stable state. Spada and Lightbown (1993) add that this lack of change happens even after extended exposure to or instruction in the target language. Brown (1994) indicates that this could a problem even with those who have otherwise learned the language quite well. For example,

1. I doesn't understand what she wanted.
2. He never ask me for help.

Errors due to fossilization such as those above tend not to affect comprehension although they might be stigmatized due to the fact that they often reflect errors that are typical of very basic-level learners (such as omission of 3rd person -s). It is therefore essential to discuss the global research findings on concord/subject verb agreement which will shed light on the complexity of the subject.

2.4.2.2 Incomplete rule application

This arises when the participants fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences. It involves learners failing to learn more complex types of structures since they think they can succeed effective communication by using relatively simple rules. This can be said to be the opposite of overgeneralization as the learners do not apply all the rules. They rather change or decrease the complicated rules to simpler rules since they aim at simplification rather than attempt to get the whole complex structure. An example is seen in: *They showed me who their father instead of who their father is*. Here, learners have used a wh-element but have failed to invert the subject and the verb.

2.4.2.3 Overgeneralization

This covers the instances where the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structure of the target language. Nordquist (2010) defines overgeneralization as the application of a grammatical rule in the case where it does not apply. He further explains that it is part of the language-learning process in which children extend regular grammatical patterns to irregular words. Two of the examples of overgeneralization are:

a) When a learner adds a plural marker –s or –es on a noun which has a different plural formation as in:

1. Tooth – toothes/ tooths instead of (Tooth – teeth)
2. Equipment – equipments instead of (Equipment – equipment)

b) When a learner gives the past tense form of an irregular verb by adding –ed as in:

1. Teach – teached instead of (Teach – taught)
2. Buy – buyed instead of (Buy – bought)

This occurs when learners misuse words or grammatical rules. For instance, in the sentence: *The boy that came here*, the learner used a relative pronoun *that* instead of *who* and that is an error.

2.4.2.4 Simplification

This occurs when learners reduce a complex aspect of grammar to a much simpler set of rules and reflects a process that is used when messages need to be conveyed with limited language resources. For example, instead of making the distinction between “he” and “she” the learner may use the masculine pronoun even where the feminine ones would have been a requirement. This is because he does not take the pain to differentiate between genders by using different pronouns. At other times, instead of distinguishing between first and third person in verbs (“I like, she likes”), the learner may use the first person rule for all persons (“I like, He/ She like”). This is also because the learner sees it simple using what he is already familiar with and so does not offer different inflections with any of the different number of pronouns Brown (1994) explains this type of an error as intralingual transfer and claims that it is evident once learners have begun to acquire parts of the new system of the target

language. Ignorance of rule restriction, occurring as a result of failure to observe the restrictions or existing structures causes simplification

2.5 Importance of Errors in Language Learning

Language learning, like any kind of human endeavor, involves committing errors. Previously, language teachers considered errors as something unacceptable which they try hard to prevent from occurring (Touchie, 1986). Most second language teachers also think that every error students commit should be corrected to make them excellent. In recent times, second language teachers and even first researchers in the area of applied linguistics have identified that errors are significant in language learning. They have noted that students' errors are evidence of what they are learning and how they are learning. It makes language teachers aware of how learners acquire the second language. In effect, errors are no longer seen as nuisance in the classroom which should be terminated by all means but are seen as enhancing second language learning. For the learners themselves, errors can be regarded as a device that one uses in order to learn. Gass and Selinker (2001) define errors as 'red flags' that provide evidence of the learners' knowledge of the second language. Selinker (1969, cited in Brown, 2002) has noted errors in two important ways.

First, errors make the language teacher aware of the progress of learners in the language learning process. Second, it gives language researchers an insight into how language is learnt and lastly, errors help language teachers to get involved in hypothesis testing to know whether what their students have learned is being used appropriately. This implies that errors in language learning have importance to the language learner, language researcher and the language. Richards (1971), from a linguistic, psycholinguistic and pedagogic perspective, observes that errors help us to discover what constitutes human intelligence, reveal the mental processes involved in language,

and help language teachers identify and analyse learners' errors and design appropriate ways of dealing with them.

2.6 Related Studies

Various researchers such as Yankson (1994), Edu-Buandoh (1996), Agor (2003), Akrong, (2008), Arthur (2009), and Annor (2011) have studied errors of students. A research work which is closely related to the present work is that conducted by Yankson (1994) conducted a study aimed at increasing an awareness of the enormity of concord problems and helping both students and teachers to overcome these problems. The study was based on concord errors made by first year undergraduates of two West African universities. Hewas of the view that concord rule deviances reflect badly on the speaker's personality. His study provides the needed scientific empirical data that are reliable to help English language teachers at all levels in West Africa who seem to be operating in the dark. Yankson analysed the errors students make and classified them into categories such as subject-verb concord errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors, and plural inflection concord errors.

Again, Oribabor (2006) studied concord errors in the written composition of JSS 3 pupils in some selected schools in the Abeokuta Local Government area. From this, he found that most of the pupils have problems in applying the rules of concord. He observed that this could be inferred that the pupils made concord errors of different types and few of them were able to write error-free essays. He further noted that most of the errors committed were under subject concord errors of number and persons. Based on his results, he recommended that much time should be devoted to concord errors by writers of grammar books for use in schools.

Finally, Quagie (2014) examined concord in the writings of students of a public university in Ghana. He found that although concord continues to pose problems to

students, its teaching has not been foregrounded in Ghanaian institutions. This, according to him, was evident in the responses given by students to the questions asked on concord and the errors revealed in the marked essays scripts of students. He therefore argues that if concord was taught to include its various aspects using effective methods, the challenges that students encounter with its usage could be minimized. Following the discussions on the studies carried out by different researchers, it is clear that concord is an aspect of English grammar that cannot be glossed over. This is because it has proven to be the pivot around which English language revolves, hence the importance of this research with JHS 1 student of OdumaseAkro in the Lower Manya Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter deliberated on the concept of error and narrowed down specifically to the concept of concord errors. It also discussed the importance of errors in second language learning, the causes of errors as well as their categories. The chapter finally touched on some important related studies on concord errors in second language acquisition. The discussion shows that second language learners are bound to make errors (Myles, 2002). Error analysis can therefore be considered as one of the effective ways to identify and analyze such errors since it can reveal the causes of the errors of their frequent occurrences. It is possible to determine a remedy once the causes of the errors are noticed (Penny, 2001).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

One important feature of any research work is the gathering of information which can be used to solve stated problems. To achieve this, systematic methods, procedures and instruments of collecting data need to be adequately used. The accuracy of these processes determines, to a large extent, the validity and the reliability of the data collected. This chapter describes and explains the methodologies as well as the strategic measures employed in order to obtain the necessary information relevant for the study. Specific areas looked at include research design, population and sampling, research site, data collection, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

In order to ensure the success of an investigation, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher's determination of valid findings. A design, according to Punch (2005), is the strategic plan to structure the conduct of a research project. It encompasses the methodology and the procedures employed to conduct scientific research. To Adentwi and Amartey (2009), research design refers to the overall plan the researcher employs to collect data in order to answer the research questions including the research data analysis techniques or methods. The success and validity of results of any investigation is based on the appropriateness of the research design used. Kader Parahoo (1997, p. 142) describes research design as "a plan that describes how, when, and where data are to be collected and analyzed research data". To investigate concord errors made by OdumaseAkro M/A JHS students, a

qualitative case study design was adopted to identify and interpret the concord errors in the students' written essays and grammar.

3.2 Population

Population is the entire group of individuals or objects having common observable characters. That is to say, the group has some common observable characteristics and each member can be identified as having these characteristics. According to Castillo (2006), research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. Population is defined as the group as the group of teachers and pupils or objects that the findings of a research work are interestingly applicable to (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003) such as pupils and primary schools in Ghana. Agbeke and Denkyirah (2001) also define population as the total set from which the individuals or units of a study are chosen. It is the totality of persons, events or organization units with which the real research problem is concerned. In addition, Seidu (2007) maintains that population is the entire group of people, objects, animals institution which the research intends to study.

The population selected for this research work comprised students of Odumase Akro M/A Junior High School. Since the study was limited to this school, it is useful to provide a description of the school, its geographical location, as well as its material and human endowments. The school is co-educational. It has a total population of about three hundred pupils at the Junior High School. The teaching staff at the Junior High level is made up of thirteen (13) teachers who teach different subjects. Outside of the school premises, learners are not exposed to spoken English, since no one usually speaks English in the vicinity, except the local language, Ga-Adangme. The only exposure the learners get to English language is at school where English language is used as a medium of instruction. Even at school, learners find it difficult to get more practice in

English since during English periods, a teacher of English either uses the mother tongue as a medium or code-switching by explaining challenging concepts in their language. This being the case, it would have been ideal if all the students were included in the research.

However, the researcher decided to use JHS1 “A and B” students. The reason for selection is that, the pupils at the three class levels exhibit almost similar characteristics of interest to the study. Again, the researcher has been teaching core English language in the school for the past seven (7) years. This undoubtedly enabled her to gather the required data with ease since she already knew some of the students’ difficult areas regarding concord.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher relies on her own judgement when choosing members of the population. Purposive sampling technique may prove to be effective when only limited members of people can serve as primary source. Particularly useful in selecting major stakeholders in a case study (Palys, 2008). The purposive sampling was used to select 60 pupils from JHS 1 ‘A’ and ‘B’. Purposive sampling technique was adopted because the pupils at the three class levels exhibit almost similar characteristics of interest to the study. “Purposive sampling method is adopted when the respondents selected maybe either judged to have certain characteristics or more commonly those who are likely to provide the most useful information for the purpose for which the study is being done” (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1990, p. 100). The researcher chose purposive sampling technique because the selected students are the people that could give the needed information he was looking for.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

The instruments used in the study were on in class essays, objective test, observation, semi-structured questionnaire, and observation. By observation, we mean the systematic selection, recording and encoding of a set of behaviours and setting. Peil(1982) observes that as a method for social scientists, observation involves more than just looking at what is going on. Because our participants can talk and explain their behaviour, observation includes listening and asking questions and often participating in the activities of the group to get a first-hand experience. In the course of gathering data, the researcher employed observation as one of the primary sources of data collection. The researcher undertook a systematic observation of students' events on school compound. The findings helped in crosschecking responses considered to be inconsistent with their questionnaire which were given. Students and teachers were observed during their normal learning environment. The researcher undertook a systematic observation of the grammar lesson taught by a teacher of English to ascertain the strategies he used in his lesson. The lesson involved imitating, repeating and memorizing the rules of grammar.

Outside the classroom environment, the researcher observed students' way of interacting in the playground. In all these observations, the researcher employed the concealed approach method of observation. This was done to enable the researcher have a firsthand information about the language in which students communicate in their own free time. The researcher employed the observation tool because it offers first-hand information without relying on the report of others which sometimes may be underestimated or exaggerated. The researcher observed the students objectively as they communicated orally, both in and outside the classroom. In the classroom, she observed

the students as they engaged in discussions. Outside the classroom, she observed the students as they communicated with fellow students as well as teachers.

Outside the classroom, she engaged the students in conversation, listening carefully to them and noted down their errors in concord. In the classroom, she used the question-and-answer technique to acquaint himself with the degree of students' errors in concord. The researcher, in her attempt to know more about the students, used observation as a test tool to find out the strength and weaknesses of the students. A test or an examination is an assessment tool intended to measure a test taker's knowledge, abilities, skills, aptitude or classification in other topics. The data collection instrument for this research is a non-standardized test which is used to determine the proficiency level of students, to motivate them to study and to provide feedback to students (Goswani, 1991).

An ethical procedure was followed for the collection of data for this research. Firstly, the head and teachers of the school were contacted, and explanation of the study was given to them. The researcher explained to them that the study is only for academic purpose. They were assured that only the school's name is used for the study; no teacher's or student's name would be used. The students were informed as well. Once permission was granted, the day and time of the examination were given by the head. The researcher went to observe the way the students were writing the paper. This was to ensure that what was gathered from the students' scripts was the actual representation of them and nothing else. After the examination, the written scripts were taken and photocopied and the original scripts given back to the teachers for marking. After marking and gathering of the concord errors, the researcher also gave some of the students questionnaire where ten students, made up of five boys and five girls, to afford

the researcher much knowledge on the students' concord errors. Seven (7) English language teachers were also given questionnaire.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming and modeling data with the sole view of discovering useful information, information conclusion, and supporting decision making. The data were analyzed using Error Analysis approach, which, according to Crystal (1987), p 112, is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language using any one of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics. The researcher collected the data, identified the errors, classified the errors by categorizing them into groups, discussed the errors in a suitable way and evaluated the errors by interpreting tables, graphs, and conclusions. The researcher also used descriptive analysis to analyse the Likert-scale responses with the aid of the SPSS software. Corder's (1974) error analysis model was employed to aid in the analysis. For the purpose of the study, these steps were adapted to suit the nature of the study after the selection of the test instruments. The stages were; identification of errors, classification of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of errors. The analyzed data are presented in bar chart to indicate the frequency and percentage of each category of concord error. Responses of the questionnaire on causes of concord errors were also analysed and discussed in Chapter 4.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

For a dissertation to be scientifically acceptable it has to be located in a 'homological network', made up of laws that are either statistical. These laws tie observable properties to one another, in other words the same topics are grouped together (Garrison, 1994; Moss, 1992). The main purpose of a researcher by exploring validity is to determine whether the inferences made about the results of the assessment are meaningful and serve the purpose of the assessment. Following what some few authorities have to say about a research validity, the researcher, before the proper commencement of this study ensured that the research design was carefully planned in order to ensure the success of the investigation. With this in the researcher's mind, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher's determination of valid findings.

Also, the data collection instruments were consciously selected in a way that would not compromise the validity of what the instrument seek to measure. The researcher having in mind what is known in research validity as test-retest, decided to use a number of instrument so that one could be used to check the other to ensure validity. The researcher after having observed the participants in the classroom also observed them outside the classroom to ensure validity and reliability since validity begets reliability. After the observation came the test so that the data could be compared to ensure that inconsistencies were taken care of. The researcher monitored the conduct of the test from the start to the end to ensure that the exam was conducted under a serene, non- threatening environment, and also to ensure that fairness was ensured throughout devoid of discrimination and bias. The test was relevant, appropriate and used correctly to ensure that it actually measures what it seeks to measure.

Since validity gives rise to reliability, the researcher was conscious enough to ensure that the design, the data collection instrument and all that went into the collection and analysis of the data collected was replicable, hence ensuring reliability. In the researcher's quest to ensure reliability, she engaged the seven English Language teachers in the school where the research participants are drawn from, to also observe, test and interview the participants so as to check reliability and what they had did not reveal anything different from the data collected by the researcher from the same students. The researcher also took some measures towards ensuring test-retest at the analysis of results stage to check to be sure that the test was replicable and consistent since reliability reflects consistency and replicability over time.

3.9 Conclusion

The analysis and discussion of data on concord errors in students' scripts were presented in this chapter. From the discussion above, it was discovered that in the students' scripts, subject verb agreement errors had the highest number. The discussion also revealed that students found it difficult to apply their knowledge of concord rules correctly in their writing thereby leading to the commissions of many errors.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the main findings of the study. The data for this study were drawn from various sources; questions and tests administered during the research process. The data gathered for this study were analyzed using tables and figures. The results have been analyzed in line with the research questions. The interpretation of findings was done to match the three main objectives of the study. The four main objectives were classified under three headings. The first section discusses the concord errors JHS 1 students of Odumase Akro M/A JHS make in their writings while the second section presents a discussion of the causes of concord errors committed by JHS 1 students of Odumase Akro M/A JHS in their writings.

4.1 Categorization of Concord Errors

After analyzing the data, different types of concord errors were identified in the objective test and essays which were written by students. These are subject-verb concord errors, verb-tense concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors and noun pronoun concord errors. Student response as collated from the essays were twenty-five (25) for *“my second week at the Junior High School”* and thirty-five (35) for *“how my best friend’s birthday was celebrated”*. For *“my second week at the Junior High School”*, three hundred and eight (383) errors were identified and concord errors amounted to one hundred and two (102). For *“how my best friend’s birthday was celebrated”*, three hundred and nineteen (319) errors were identified and one hundred and seventeen (117) concord errors were identified as well.

The objective test generated seventy-six (71) concord errors. In sum, two hundred and ninety-five (290) concord errors were identified in the scripts of students.

4.1.1 Subject verb concord errors

Subject-verb concord errors have been noted for a large number of recurrence of errors which students show from their write-ups. It is also apparent that a few students wrongly use singular verb with plural subjects. They rarely notice the number of the subject that is the thirdperson plural number. As a matter of fact, some students rarely notice the subject while using the verbs in the sentences. For example, among the types of concord errors such as grammatical concord, proximity concord, notional concord, categorization concord, concord of indefinite pronouns, concord of quasi coordinated subjects, concord of coordinated subject and other types.

4.1.1.1 Plural subject with singular verb

Generally, in English, a count noun takes an-s when forming its plural. For example, boy (singular), boys (plural). However, with verbs it is the third person singular form in the present tense that takes-s. The fact that a plural noun usually ends in an-s does not necessarily mean that verbs should also have an-s at the end to make them plural. The grammatical rule states that the verb must agree in number with its subject. That is, the subject of a sentence and its corresponding verb must agree in number. An agreement error occurs when a plural subject is used with a singular verb as in the following extracts. In these examples, the students mismatched the subjects and their verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verb is singular. For example:

1. Everybodysings and dances.

2. Seventy seven peoples attends the party.
3. Our pastors and friends also presents some gifts
4. All the juniors is picking the rubbish
5. All the prefects was supervision us.

Haydari (2012) asserts that these are errors that occur during the learning process of the second language. Thus, they are developmental errors. Developmental errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience. These errors are also intralingual because the writers made faulty generalization of the rules of -s inflection of nouns. Generally, in English, a count noun takes an -s when forming its plural. For example, boy (singular), boys (plural). However, with verbs it is the third person singular form in the present tense that takes -s. These students may be operating intuitively by thinking that the first -s of the noun attracts a second one of the verb.

4.1.1.2 Singular subjects with plural verbs

The following examples show that students committed errors in their use.

1. I give my friend some gift.
2. A child wash all the plates after the party.
3. The headmaster tell us to pay our school fees.
4. The school prefect conduct a roll call.
5. She understand mathematics.

Though the subject of each of the sentences is singular, their corresponding verbs are plural. Regarding singular subjects with plural verbs, although the subject of each of the sentences is singular, their corresponding verbs are plural. One other factor that may be the cause of this error is that teachers tend to emphasize the use of third person -s after pronoun *he*, *she*, and *it*. Thus, when the subject of the verb is singular,

there appears to be confusion. Students therefore need to make a conscious effort to understand the grammatical rules. In other words, students should be more sensitive to the subject-verb agreement rule in English. The third sentence exemplifies the grammatical rule that in a structure where the same subject controls a series of verbs, all the verbs must agree with the subject.

4.1.1.3 Relative pronoun-subject with singular verb

In the principle of proximity, attraction is applied when a sentence has two clauses; main and subordinate, with the subordinate being a relative clause. A relative clause is introduced by the relative pronoun, *who, whom, that, which or whose*. It is in fact possible for the relative pronoun to be either singular or plural. They take their number from their antecedent- the words to which they refer. That is if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun is plural and therefore takes a plural verb. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun is singular and thus takes a singular verb. There should be an agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun in such sentences. For example, in *Kofi “stopped” the “boys” who were cleaning the compound*. In this sentence, the antecedent of ‘who’ is ‘boys’. Since the noun ‘boys’ is plural, the pronoun ‘who’ is plural as well and therefore takes a plural verb. In a different sentence, the antecedent of that could be a singular noun. For example, *Kofi stopped the boy who was cleaning the compound*.

Since the noun ‘boy’ is singular, the pronoun ‘who’ is singular as and therefore takes a singular verb. This rule was violated by the students in the following sentences:

1. The children who attends my friend’s birthday party dance sing five songs.
2. One thing that made my mates to attends my friend’s birthday for him is because he is a good person.
3. The teachers rewards students that pay attention in class.

4. His parent prepares a cake that for my birthday to surprise everyone in the family.
5. Teachers that disciplines the pupil who come to school late were not happy.

4.1.1.4 Headword-verb concord errors

The head or headword is the most prominent element in a string of words. For example, a noun phrase is a string of words whose head is a noun as in the black *flag*. Students who have properly internalized subject-verb concord rules have no problem matching subjects such as nominal group (a noun or pronoun) or the dummy *it* with the right verbs in their speech or writing. In other words, it is easier for students to let the simple subject agree with its verb in the present tense. However, there are instances where the subject is a complex one. A complex subject can be a noun phrase with a multiple pre-modification and post-modification. The complex subject poses problems in that the student loses track of the headword or memory limitation prevents them from employing the correct verb form, which should enter into a relationship with the noun headword. The rule should not change whether the subject is simple or complex. Thus, if the head is singular, the verb in the present tense should be singular. In the same vein, the verb is plural if the head is plural. Sometimes, there is an adverb between the subject and the verb. This does not change the number, person or gender of the subject. So, if the subject is singular, the verb must be singular and the vice-versa. The following are examples produced by the students.

1. Most of our mates in my community goes to the party.
2. His church member **prepares** a present for him.
3. The office **have** two tables and four chairs.

4. The pupils was playing football when the headmaster and teaching were having a meeting.
5. All the teachers speaksto us at assembly.

It is evident from the examples that the students could not identify the headword of the sentences. As a result, they were unable to match them with the appropriate verbs. In Sentence 1, the headword is *our mates* and it is plural. This headword is followed by a prepositional phrase *in my community*. The prepositional phrases that come between the subject and the verb may be the cause of confusion in determining the appropriate verb. It is important for students to understand that the verb agrees with its subject but not with a word in the phrase or a clause. They should mentally cross out the interrupting group of words, because these words serve as modifiers of the subjects. Since the headword **our mates** is plural, the verb should also be plural. The summary of the subject-verb concord errors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: A summary subject-verb concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Singular subjects with plural verbs	23	38.3%
Plural subject with singular verb	14	23.3%
Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors	10	16.6%
Headword-verb concord errors	8	13.3%
Relative pronoun subject with singular verb	5	8.3%
Total	60	100%

The table shows the different concord errors committed in subject verb agreement by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 1. The different types of subject-verbs concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is difficult from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense.

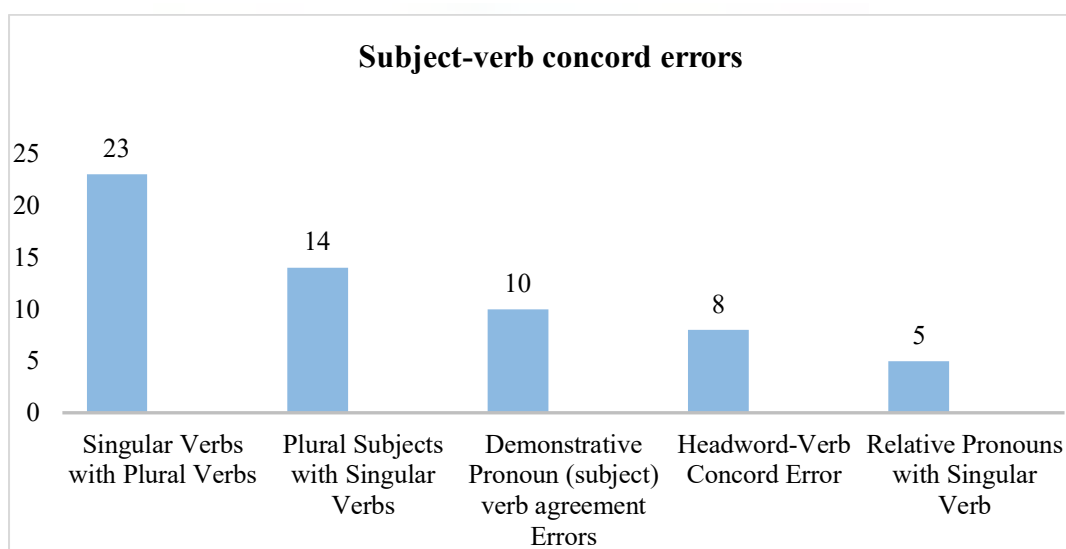


Figure 1: Subject-verb concord errors

The different types of subject-verbs concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is difficult from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense. With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences under singular subjects with plural verbs are singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In the category of demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but they violated the rules of subject-verb agreement (such as *table*), plural count (such as *tables*), and non-count nouns (such as *furniture*). *This* and *that* are one of the classes of determiners that can take both. The

Headword verb concord errors are also attributed to the inabilities of the students to identify the headword of the string of words. The headword is the most prominent element of a string of words. In the relative pronoun-subject with singular verbs, the principle of proximity (attraction) is applied when a sentence has two clauses; the main and subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the relative clauses which must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

4.1.2 Verb-tense concord errors

Verb-tense concord errors were common in the scripts of students. According to Downing and Locke (2006), tense is a grammatical category that is realized morphologically on the verb in English. In accordance with this criterion, English has just two tenses: the present and the past, as in goes/ went, respectively. English has no verbal inflection to mark a future tense. The forms **shall** and **will** are not verbal inflections but modal auxiliaries which, when used reduced, are attached to pronouns, not to the verb root (I'll wait outside). Also important are the form-meaning relationships. *Shall* and *will* belong to a set of modal auxiliaries and can express meanings other than reference to future time.

1. I go church every week. (Present tense)
2. I went to church every weeks. (Past tense)
3. I am going to/ will go to church every week. (Lexical auxiliary/ modal)

In general, as these examples illustrate, past and present events are taken to have the status of real events, while references to the future are to potential, that is unreal, events. In English, therefore, the three-term semantic distinction into past, present and

future time is grammaticalised as a two-term tense distinction between Past tense and Present tense.

4.1.2.1 The past tense

The Past tense in English is the marked form. Cognitively, the situations conceptualized by the speaker as past have the status of known, but not immediate, reality; they are not currently observed. Morphologically, the vast majority of verbs in English have a distinctive past form, (played, saw) and, semantically, the past tense basically refers to a situation that is prior to the present, as in *last night was fun*. Below are some of the sentences that were wrongly structured:

- i. I dance with my friends.
- ii. The children sing a song.
- iii. She recite a memory verse.
- iv. The teacher answer his question.
- v. I copy the homework at school.

Since all the actions underlined above has already been completed, the students should have used the past tense of the verbs. This is clear evidence to the fact that most of the students are not familiar with the rules governing the appropriate use of tense in the English language.

4.1.2.2 The present tense

The Present tense is the unmarked tense. Cognitively, it expresses situations which have immediate reality, that is, what is currently observed. Morphologically, it is marked only on the 3rd person singular (with the exception of be, which has three forms (am, are and is)). Semantically, it covers a wider range of temporal references than the Past tense, including reference to future time (Tomorrow is a holiday). Even

in our everyday use, 'at present' and 'at the present time' have a wider application than simply to the present moment of speech time. Thus, Dogs have tails represents a situation which holds not only at the present time but has also held in the past, and will conceivably continue to hold in the future. Some examples of sentences that were wrongly structured by students are as follows:

1. I comes home late.
2. Kofi play with me.
3. Mr. Tettey tell us to be quiet.
4. The girls sweeps the class room.
5. The lesson end after second break.

Over here also, errors were attributed to the fact that students were not conversant with the use of the tenses in the English Language.

4.1.2.3 The future aspect

We cannot refer to future events as facts, as we can to past and present situations, since future events are not open to observation or memory. We can predict with more or less confidence what will happen, we can plan for events to take place, express our intentions and promises with regard to future events. Although, English has no future tense in the strict sense, (i.e., it has no verb form specific to future meaning), we commonly refer to several structures that are used for future meaning as belonging to the "future tense". The most common structures begin with 'will' or a form of the verb 'be + going to'.

For example:

- i. I will reach there tomorrow.
- ii. I am going to begin today's lesson.

While these verb markers tell us that the action takes place in the future, it is the aspect of the verb that tells us how the event will be temporally structured. The combination of the future markers and the aspects results in the verb structure that we call the future simple, the future continuous or future progressive, the future perfect and the future perfect continuous. Some statements of students are shown as follows:

1. My friend promise my father to be a good student next time.
2. Ama said she continue tomorrow.
3. They meet again tomorrow at 5:00pm.
4. I change my dance in the next party.
5. We get a new headmaster next week.

A summary of the errors in this category is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: A summary of sub-categorization of verb tense errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Past	28	41%
Present	22	21%
Future	12	38%
Total	62	100

Table 2 shows the different verb tense concord errors committed by students and these are presented in Figure 4.1.2. The different types of verb tense concord errors from students' written essays show that getting verb to agree with the tense in structures in English Language becomes confusing to students. The students who made this type of error could not decipher the principle of sequences of tenses. When one is talking about the same event or group of events, one must make sure that he or she sticks to a

single general tense-present, past or future and this was the students' problem. The information in Table 4.1.2 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.1.

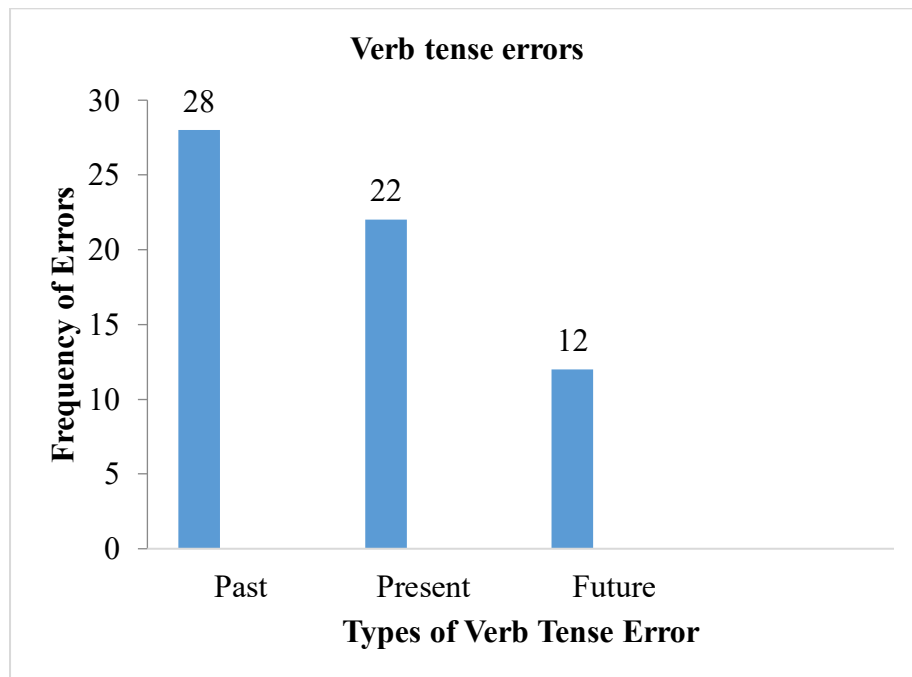


Figure 2: Verb tense errors

4.1.3 Determiner-noun concord errors

According to Angela and Philip (2006), English obliges us to make a distinction with regard to how a referent is cognitively perceived: whether as a discrete, countable entity, such as *cattle*, or as an indivisible, non-countable 'entity, such as *meat*. This difference constitutes a feature which is salient in speakers' experience of 'things'. Other languages make a count-mass distinction, but we must never assume that particular items are conceptualized and lexicalized in the same way in different languages. News, for instance, is a singular mass noun in English (the news is good); **one information*, **several information* are ungrammatical. Students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns in sentences therefore committing errors in their sentences.

4.1.3.1 Count-noun

This is basically one whose referent can be counted, as in one bat, two bats, but not *one wine, *two wine. The referents of these nouns are viewed as individuated things or persons. The following count nouns include both regular plurals in-s and invariable or 'zero' plurals: ten cyclists, two trout, a dozen eggs, three new television series, five minutes, five salmon, one grapefruit, four crossroads, two and a half kilos, a hundred sheep, two US aircraft, two spacecraft. Countable nouns are nouns that can be quantified in units and numbers, that is, nouns that can be counted. Examples of the determiner count errors that students made include:

1. The neighbors joins the dance at the right time.
2. The students sweeps all the classrooms.
3. Some furnitures was packed in the other class.
4. The girls in the other class watch all kinds of movies.
5. The food and drinks are served in the right quantity.

In the examples, students mismatched the verbs to their referent nouns and noun phrases. In the first example, the noun phrase "the neighbor" is a plural count-noun and therefore requires a plural verb 'join' and not a singular verb 'joins'. Also, in the third examples, "furniture" is a non-count noun a must not take a plural marker '-s' so the correct sentence should have been: "*Some furniture was pack in the other class*".

4.1.3.2 Non-count nouns

This is one whose referent is cognitively perceived as not countable. We don't say, for example *three floor, *five milk. Both *floor* and *milk*, as well as *sunshine* can be individuated by a preceding 'counter' – 'a piece of'. Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be quantified in units and numbers. Some errors that students commit include:

1. Some foreign milks were serves at the party.
2. The class instructed us to gather all the woods in the garden.
3. A lot of non-alcoholic wines were served.
4. They were late for the party as a result of too many traffics on the way.
5. The rice seller gave me a lot of meats.

The words underlined in the above sentences should have been written without the plural markers as in *milk, wood, traffic, wine, and meat*.

Table 3: Summary of determiner noun concord errors

Types of error	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Count noun errors	27	56%
Non-count errors	21	44%
Total	48	100

Table 4.1.3 shows the different determiner-noun concord errors committed by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 4.1.3. The different types of determiner noun concord errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns. From the table above, it could be observed that students were ignorant about the concord rules and therefore misapplied them in their sentence constructions.

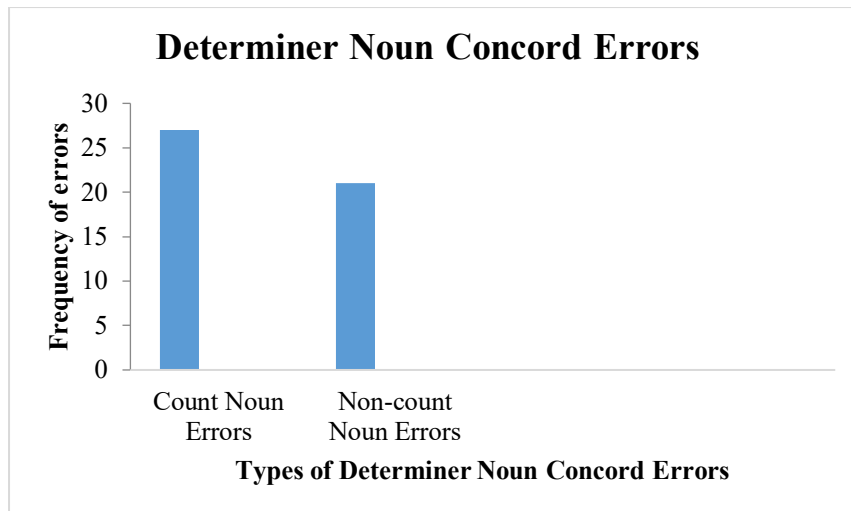


Figure 3: Determiner-noun concord errors

4.1.4 Coordinated subject concord errors

Concord with coordinated subjects has been discussed by Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) as a process where equivalent units are linked by *and*, *or* or *but*. They further explain that it can occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements, words. Some of the common errors that students committed could be classified under the following sub headings: coordination with *and*, coordination within a singular subject and coordination with *or* and *nor*.

4.1.4.1 Coordinating conjunction 'and' concord errors

Coordinating conjunctions coordinate or join two or more sentences, main clauses, words, or other parts of speech which are of the same syntactic importance. Also known as coordinators, coordinating conjunctions are used to give equal emphasis to a pair of main clauses. When the subjects in a sentence are joined by “and,” ALL the subjects collectively control the verb. Hence, you should use a plural verb. For example:

1. It is wrong to write “Kwesi and Amaplays video game”

The above statement is wrong because there are two subjects in the sentence that is 'Kwesi and Ama' hence making the subject plural. Therefore, the accompany verb should be 'play' plural as the two subjects control the verb. We therefore, have the correct sentence:

2. *Kwesi and Ama* play video game.

Despite the above rules, there's an exception which states that when you use "and" to join two subjects and both subjects refer to the same person (i.e. the person has two titles), use a singular and not a plural verb. Therefore, it will be inappropriate to write:

3. *The Church Manager and President of Youth Association* are doing well.

Here, 'The Church Manager' and 'President of Youth Association' are two titles referring to the same person and therefore take a singular verb 'is' and not 'are'. But if the definite article, "the" is used before the second title, it means both titles refer to separate people. In that case, you should use a plural verb. For example,

4. The Church Manager and *the* President of Youth Association are humble.

Some examples of errors committed by students under the coordinating conjunction concord errors *include*:

5. My Brother and sister is going to the party.
6. Mr. Dautey and Miss Teye, my teachers also instructs.
7. The teacher and the school prefect is at assembly.
8. His cat and dog is also present at his party.
9. The school prefect and youth leader at school are not pleased.

In this instance, students could not apply the rules of coordination with *and* which simply states clearly that "When a subject consists of two or more noun phrases (or clauses) coordinated by *and*, distinction has to be made between coordination and

coordinative apposition. Coordination comprises, cases that correspond to fuller coordinate forms. A plural verb is used even if each conjoin is singular”. The examples cited from students’ essays could be attributed to over generalization of rules as most students concentrated on singular subjects with their corresponding verbs forgetting about the rules of coordinating conjunctions. Quirk and Greenbaum (2002), Leech and Svartvik (2002), and Yankson (1994) discuss this type of error under coordinated subject concord error.

4.1.4.2 Subordinating conjunction concord errors

Subordinating conjunctions break sentences into word clusters called dependent (or subordinate) clauses. Dependent clauses cannot stand alone and must be connected to an independent clause to make a complex sentence. Subordinating conjunctions connect the dependent clause to the independent clause. For example, in the sentence

1. *Everyone was angry when his father started speaking.*

The first part of the sentence ‘everyone was happy’ is an independent clause because it carries a meaning while the second part ‘when it stopped raining’ is a dependent clause because it must be connected to an independent clause to make meaning. When you join the subjects in a sentence with any of the subordinated conjunctions, only the subject *before* the subordinating conjunction controls the verb. When both a coordinating conjunction (i.e. “and”) and any of the subordinating conjunctions (e.g. “with,” “also,” “together with,” etc.) appear in a sentence whichever of them appears first, controls the verb. If “and” appears first, the rule of “and” applies, and that means *all* the subjects collectively control the verb. For example,

2. *The headmaster and his assistant together with his staff member are absent.*

Over here, both ‘and’ which is coordinating conjunction and ‘together’ which is also a subordinating conjunction appear in the same sentence, but then, ‘and’ appears first

therefore all the subjects collectively must control the verb in the sentence. But if a subordinating conjunction appears first, only the subjects which appear *before* the subordinator control the verb. For instance,

3. *Michael with his sister and adults is present.*

In this case, the subordinating conjunction 'with' appears first before a singular subject 'Michael' therefore as the rule of concord implies, a singular verb 'is' must be used and not a plural verb 'are'. Some of the deviant sentences from students' scripts include:

1. Kofi with his sister dance at the party.
2. Everybody were amused with the side attraction.
3. My pastor and choristers together with my congregation was present.
4. My headmaster and assistant besides my teacher is addressing us.
5. My friend with his mother and my mother were at school.

The above statements of students indicate clearly that they could simply not decipher the rules governing the use of the subordinating conjunctions structures in sentences where the subject controls the verb in each case. At the end, their structures could not agree in terms of subject and verb as the rule of concord states.

4.1.4.3 Correlative conjunction concord errors

Correlative conjunctions connect similar parts of a sentence, such as adjectives, nouns, and clauses. However, unlike coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions are combinations of coordinating conjunctions, not only a single word. They always come in pairs and link grammatically equivalent items. Some commonly used correlative conjunctions are: 'As...as', 'Both...and', 'Neither...nor', 'Either... or', 'Not only...but also', 'Not...but', 'Whether...or'. For example,

1. Kwame prefers rich with goat stew as much as gari with beans.

2. Both Afia and Dede paid no attention.
3. Neither Sangmor nor Tetey come to school.

For correlative conjunctions only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb. So if the subject after “nor” or “or” as the case may be is singular, use a singular the verb. But if the subject after “nor” or “or” as the case may be is plural, use a plural verb. Some faulty constructions of students include:

1. Neither my Ama or Korkor wants to dance at the party.
2. Neither the officers as well as their assistants is present.
3. Either Apana or Akpatsu my relatives eat at school.
4. Neither my school prefect or teacher on duty go home early.
5. Either Mensah or Akwele pick the compound.

The sentences from students’ scripts could be attributed to the fact that students could not apply the rule of correlated conjunction which states that when two subjects are found in sentences only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb. The summary is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of coordinated subject concord errors

	Frequency of errors	Percentage
Coordinating conjunction concord errors.	31	45%
Subordinating conjunction concord errors.	20	30%
Correlative conjunction concord errors.	17	25%
Total	68	100

Table shows the different coordinated subject concord errors made by students in the study and these are presented in figure 4. The different types of coordinated subject

concord errors realized shows that most of the students could not decipher between the use of the conjunctions to agree with the verbs in the English Language.

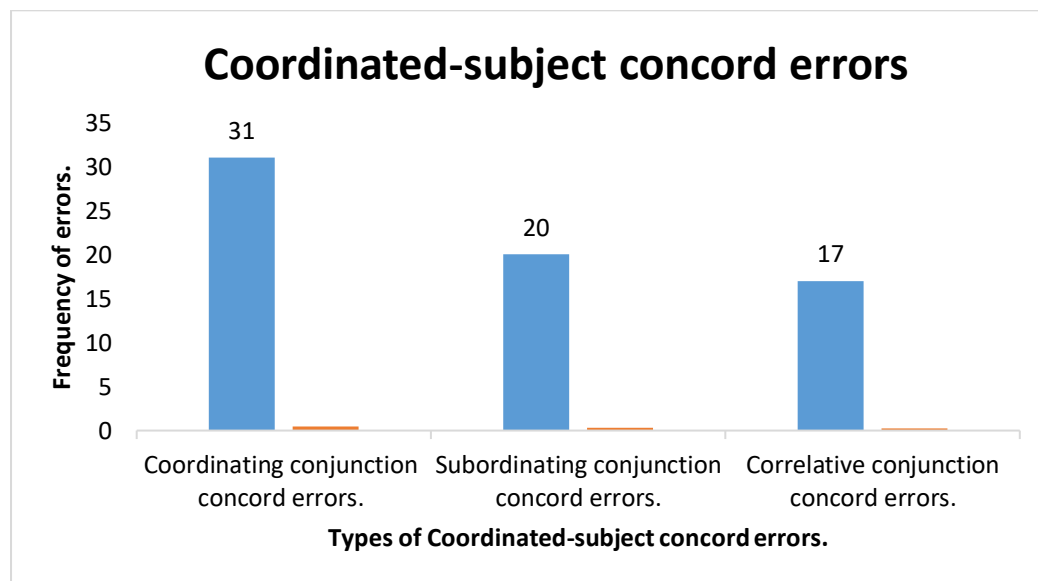


Figure 4: Coordinated-subject concord errors

4.1.5 Noun-pronoun concord errors

For a sentence to be grammatically correct, all its parts should agree with one another. When a pronoun is used to refer to noun used, there must be an agreement. Leech and Startvik (2002) write that a pronoun which refers to a singular noun phrase is in singular, and a pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase is in plural. For examples,

1. He gained energy
2. They gained energies

A pronoun is generally defined as a word which can replace a noun. The definitions may be considered appropriate at the basic level where the learners are studying mainly words or the parts of speech. However at the junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels, where phrases and clauses are taught, the definition must change accordingly. Hence, the pronoun may be defined as a word that can replace a noun or a

noun phrase. Wiredu (1998) also defines pronouns as words which are used to replace a noun, especially where we do not want to repeat that noun.

4.1.5.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

According to Quirk et al (2002), personal pronouns in the third person must agree with their antecedents both in number and (with the singular pronoun he, she and it) in gender.

Examples:

1. Ama likes movies (she likes movies)
2. Kwame cleans the gutter (he cleans the gutter)
3. Daddy gives me money (he gives me money)
4. This rule was overtly violated by some students
5. The above sentences were written as:

4.1.5.2 A pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase

As Leech and Svartvik (2002) write, a pronoun which refers to plural noun phrase is in plural. For example:

1. The teacher discipline the children. (They discipline the children.)
2. My parent visit me. (They visit me)
3. Kweku and Yaa like fighting. (They like fighting)
4. The tables are under the tree. (they are under the three)

These rules of agreement between pronouns used to refer to nouns or noun phrases in the above sentences were written:

1. The teachers disciplines the children. (They disciplines the children.)
2. My parent visit me. (They visit me)
3. Kweku and Yaa likes fighting. (They likes fighting)

4. The tables are under the tree. (they is under the three)

In examples (1) and (3), the students who committed these errors thought that once the subjects are in plural forms, an-s should be added to the verb. In examples (2) and (4), some of the students also took *my parent and the tables* to be one subject and therefore matched them with singular verbs.

Table 5: Noun-pronoun concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Personal pronoun in the third person	28	53.8%
A pronoun which refers to the plural noun phrase	24	46.2%
Total	52	100

The table above presents the different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by students and these are presented in Figure 5. The different types of noun-pronoun concord errors from students' essays indicate that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with the verb in structures in English Language is different for student. This is illustrated in Figure 5.

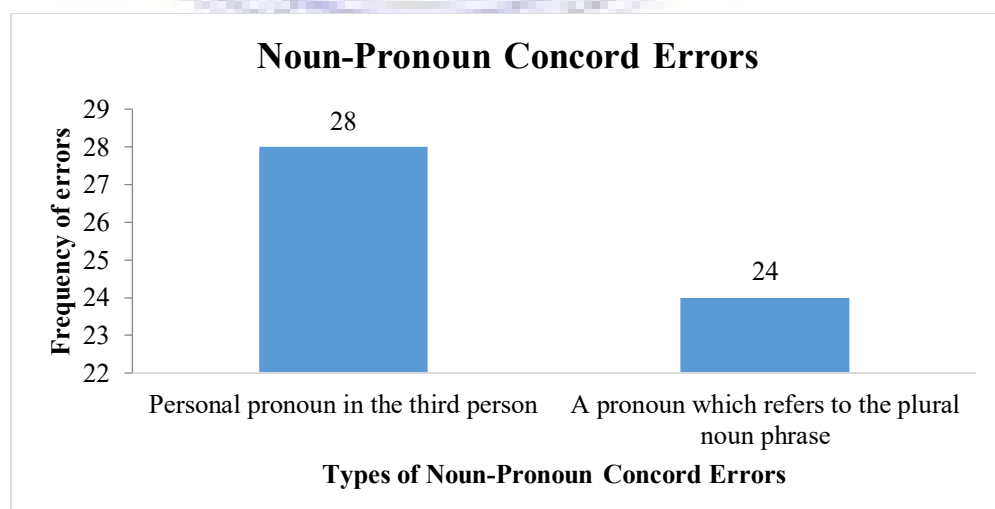


Figure 5: Noun-pronoun concord errors

4.1.6 Summary of the categorization of concord errors

*There are adjectives that denote a group or category of people. Such words include The poor, the rich, the lame, the blind, the helpless, etc. When these words are used as the subject of a sentence, two things happen. The first is that these words are not pluralized, though they mean a group of people (the poor means everybody that is poor, so does the rich, the lame, the blind etc.). So we do not have the forms *the poors, *the blinds etc. Secondly, they take plural verbs. For example, the poor need our help (not needs), The blind see with their inner eyes (not see). In this study, five(5) different types of concord errors were identified in the objective test and essays which were written by students. They were: Subject-verb concord errors, Verb-tense concord errors, Determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, and Noun pronoun concord errors. Table 6 presents a summary of the categories of concord errors identified in students' scripts.*

Table 6: A summary of concord errors

Categories of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Subject-verb concord errors	60	20.6%
Verb-tense concord errors	62	21.4%
Determiner-noun concord errors	48	16.5%
Coordinated subject concord errors	68	23.4%
Noun pronoun concord errors	52	17.9%
Total	290	100

The information in Table 6 is shown in Figure 6.

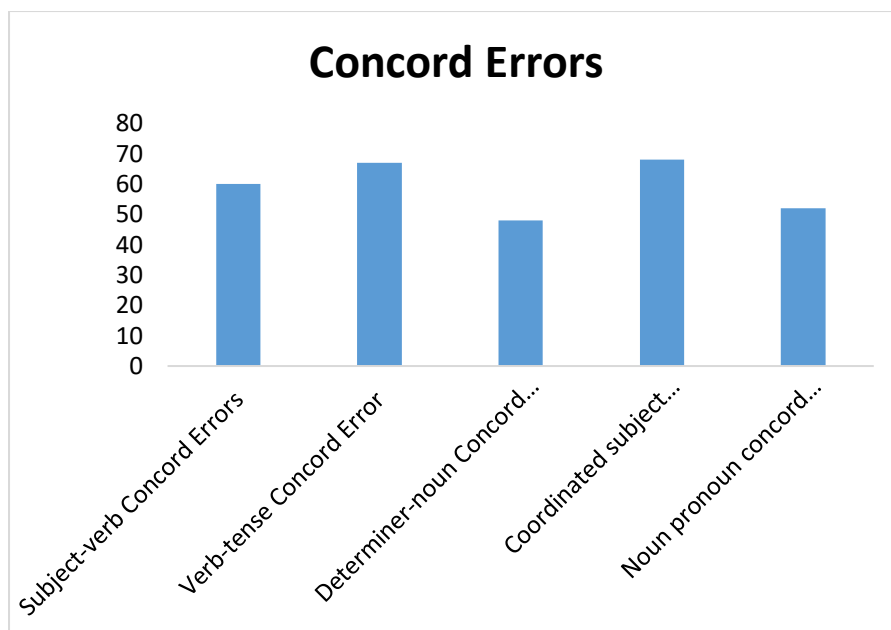


Figure 6: Categories of concord errors

Figure 6 shows that coordinated subject concord errors constituted the highest error which could be found in the writings of students. This had the percentage of 23.4% with 68 cases recorded in this study. The chart again reveals that verb-tense concord errors have a total of 62 errors occurrences representing 21.4%. It can be said that the concord errors may be due to simplification strategy and overgeneralization of English language rules. Some substitution errors like *buy* instead of *bought* and *has* instead of *had* might have resulted from inadequate competence in the target language. The next is subject-verb concord errors also constituting 20.6% representing 60 cases were due to lack of knowledge of the basic rules on subject-verb agreement therefore resulting in students producing deviant construction of sentences. Also, noun-pronoun concord errors recorded 52 representing 17.9%. Finally, determiner noun concord error errors had a frequency of 48 representing 16.5%. These errors also occurred due to the students' inability to apply the rules of classes of determiners.

4.2 Causes of the Errors

As Ibrahim (2015) points out, there were factors accounting for the concord errors that were made by students, the study wanted to find out the reasons accounting for the concord errors that were made by JHS1 students of Odumase Akro M/A JHS in their writings. Data gathered were presented in the view point of both teachers and students. The views of teacher in relation to the reasons accounting for the concord errors that were made by JHS1 students of Odumase Akro M/A JHS in their writings were based on 4 statement for which teacher were supposed to choose the extent to which they agreed or disagreed. Other open-ended reasons which were provided by teachers were added in the presentation. Teachers generally argued that majority of students were not always regular and punctual at school. This is an indication that most of these participants either absent themselves from school or are not punctual at school. A pointed out:

For example, when they were asked the reason for absenting themselves or coming to school late, some said, it is because they come from the outskirts of town. Others said they live with their step-mothers who make them sell during market days and in the night. They also let them do a lot of work before coming to school.

On the teachers' account, students perform poorly in their concord exercises as they sometimes miss their English lesson on concord which is taught in the morning. They come to class very exhausted which prevents them from paying attention to what is being taught by the teacher. Some are perpetual late comers, and others are regular absentees.

Teachers explained that students make a lot of concord errors in the attempt to speak Standard English language. They attributed it to interference of their local

language on English language as some grammatical elements in their local language do not exist in English language and vice versa. Lado (1957) states that students learning a second language have interference if the elements in their first language differ from those of the second language. Teachers generally argued that students' inability to identify the subject when there are several modifiers in front or after it was a reason accounting for their concord errors. Nonstandard English actually has a negative influence on their usage of English Language since they turn to have a lot of concord errors whenever they want to express themselves in the latter. The views of student in relation to the reasons accounting for the concord errors they made in their writings were based on 7 statement for which students were supposed to choose the extent to which they agreed or disagreed. Other open-ended reasons which were provided by students were added in the presentation. The views of student in relation to the reasons accounting for the concord errors they made in their writings were presented in Table 7.

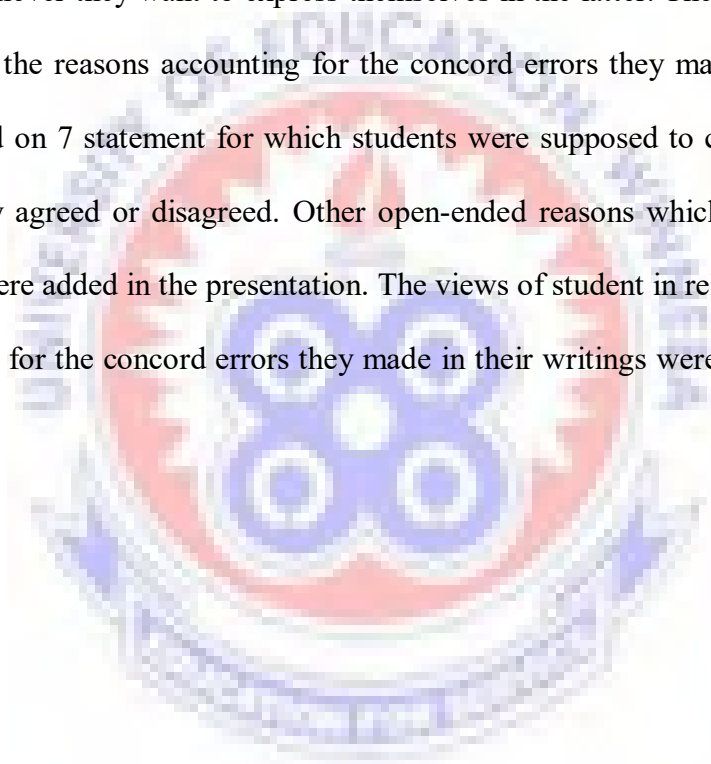


Table 7: Students' perceived reasons for the concord errors

Statement	Agree f (%)	Disagree f (%)
I prefer learning other subjects than English language	43 (71.7%)	17 (28.3%)
I find it difficult to understand when I am taught by my teacher	35 (58.3%)	25 (41.7%)
I prefer using non-standard forms of English such as pidgin	39 (65%)	21 (35%)
I find it difficult to understand what I read	16 (26.7%)	44 (73.3%)
I speak most of my English in school	51 (85%)	9 (15%)
I do not have reading materials	47 (78.3%)	13 (21.7%)
I do not like concord lessons	38 (63.3%)	22 (36.7%)
I am not taught with teaching and learning materials	47 (78.3%)	13 (21.7%)

From Table 7, 43 students who constituted 71.7% agree with the view that they preferred learning other subjects than English language. This was reason accounting for the concord error made by students in their writings. 17 students who constituted 28.3% disagreed with this view. Thirty-five (35) students who constituted 58.3% agreed with the view that they found it difficult to understand when they were taught by their teacher. Students generally argued that they did not enjoy concord lessons. This implies that most of the pupils do not understand and enjoy their English language lesson on concord. For instance, when they were asked the reason for not understanding and enjoying their English language on concord, a student argued:

I don't understand it because I cannot identify the subject and the verb mostly in sentences”.

Another student added:

“I also don’t understand my English language lesson on concord because I get bored when my teacher teaches so I’m not able to pay attention to him.

This affects their concord usage as they did not grasp the concept of concord when taught in class. Some of the teachers interviewed were of the opinion that learners get confused when it comes to the differences between singular verbs and plural verbs. They have difficulties as to when to add the-s inflection of the singular verbs. Thirty-nine (39) students who constituted 65% agree with the view that they preferred using non-standard forms of English such as pidgin. This was a reason accounting for the concord errors that was made by students in their writings. 21 students who constituted 35% disagreed with this view. 16 students 26.7% agree with the view that they found it difficult to understand what I read. This was a reason accounting for the concord errors students made in their writings. 44 students who constituted 73.3% disagreed. Fifty-one (51) students who constituted 85% disagreed with the view that they spoke most of their English in school. They had the unwillingness to communicate regularly using the English language. They preferred to be speaking Dangme more often than English. When they a student was asked why he speaks Dangme in school, he argued: “I speak Dangme because it is my local language”. Another student also argued: “I speak Dangme because all my friends speak it”. A third student also argued: “I speak Dangme because if you speak English and you make an error, they laugh at you”. For this reason, they paid little attention to the English language. 9 students who constituted 15% disagree with this view.

Forty-seven (47) students who constituted 78.3% agreed with the view that they did not have reading materials. This means that after school, apart from their notebooks,

they do not have any other material to read so as to add up to their knowledge especially with regard to concord. They also hardly visited the community library. Since they do not visit the library, it deprives them from reading from other sources that will enhance their knowledge to the extent of improving their usage of concord. 13 students who constituted 21.7% disagreed with this view. 38 students who constituted 63.3% agreed with the view that they did not like concord lessons. This was a reason accounting for the concord errors made by student in the writings. 22 students who constituted 36.7% disagreed with this view. Students were of the view that the teachers were not doing enough to help them to understand the concept despite their qualification. Qualification of the teachers teaching English at the basic level was not a reason accounting for the concord errors they made in their writing. They considered their teachers to be professionally trained but they felt they did not have the competence to make them understand the concept of concords.

Students felt that lack of individual attention during concord lessons also contribute greatly in making errors in their writings. This is so because when the student was asked whether they will like individual attention to be given to them during concord lessons, majority of them were of the view that if individual attention is given to them, they can understand the lesson on concord. Majority of the students were of the view that their teachers were not giving them enough examples to understand the concept of concord very well. They also believe that if more examples are given to them they can easily understand the lesson on concord.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has looked over the data which contained the students' scripts, observation and questionnaire. The study highlighted some common concord errors that students make and the causes that account for these errors. To come to the conclusion,

the first research questions addressed the major concord errors of students of Odumase Akro M/A JHS. In all, five (5) major types of concord errors were identified in the students' scripts. The error categories were the subject- verb concord errors (60), verb-tense concord errors (62), determiner noun concord errors (48), coordinated subject concord errors (68) and noun pronoun concord errors (52). The second research question was also addressed by examining the causes of some students' errors. These causes were identified as poor teaching methods, L1 interference, competence of teachers and laziness on the part of the students. The next chapter discusses the summary of the study, recommendation for future research and conclusion.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter presents the summary, recommendations and conclusions of the study. It deals with the summary of the research design used for the study and findings of the study. The last part of the chapter discusses the recommendation of the study and recommendation for further studies.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The major findings of this research are listed below. The research findings have revealed that factors responsible for poor concord usage of students can be grouped under the school environment, the learners' background and strategies that could improve the concord ability of students. Errors in this category emphasized on grammatical concord, proximity concord, notional concord, categorization concord, concord of coordinating subjects. Moreover, concord of singular subjects with plural verbs, plural subjects with plural verbs, relative pronoun subjects with singular verbs, demonstrative-pronoun subject verb agreement, and headword concord errors were also noted. The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is a big problem from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense.

With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences under singular subjects with

plural verbs are singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In the category of demonstrative pronoun- subject verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but they violated the rule of subject-verb agreement. The headword- verb concord errors are also attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword from a string of words.

Verb-tense concord errors were second with 60 instances which represents 21%. Errors in this category were on the different types of verb-tense concord errors identified which indicated that getting a second verb in the right tense to agree with the first verb used is a challenge to the pupils. These errors were due to incomplete learning of rules as well as overgeneralization of rules learned. Noun-pronoun concord errors ranked third with 52 occurrences representing 18%. Noun-pronoun concord errors were categorized into personal pronouns with the third person and pronouns which refer to a plural noun phrase. These errors distorted the meaning of texts in pupils' writing. The different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by pupils in their essays indicated that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for them.

Coordinated subject concord errors also recorded 68 errors representing 23%. Determiner noun concord errors recorded 48% representing 17%. This could be subject-verb concord errors and verb-tense concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, or any others. These errors were mainly caused by overgeneralization of rules and incomplete learning of rules by pupils. Some of the causes of these errors were about the influence of the schools' environment and the learners' educational background. On the influence of the schools' environment, there was a notice on the use of most common method of teaching grammar translation method, poor teaching methods of teachers of English and inadequate reading materials at school. Also learners'

educational background was considered, in the sense that poor and negative attitude towards grammar lesson by learners were not encourage able and also inadequate reading materials were not available at school. Lastly, there was intra- lingual and inter-lingual transfer.

5.2 The Role of Concord Errors in the Teaching and Learning of English

This study helps teachers identify the problem they face in the language class. Frequent exercises on students' errors and occurrence in which they appear, enable the teachers plan appropriate strategies to organize extra classes on those errors to help reduce them. This is necessary because errors provide adequate feedback that tells the teacher on the effectiveness of teaching techniques. According to Richards (2002), errors play the role of enabling the teacher to discover, identify and analyze learners mistakes as well as designing the appropriate teaching method for solving them. In another instance, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p.61) suggest three significances of learners' errors; firstly, they serve as a pedagogical purpose by showing teachers what they have learned and what they have not mastered; secondly, they serve as a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned and lastly they serve as a learning purpose by acting as a device by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

This paper presents some pedagogical implications, including a suggestion that direct learners as to the structure and interrelations of hypertext. When students are helped in correcting their errors, they become perfect in their second language. Since consistent practice leads to perfection, teachers should design learning task that encourage practice of forms and structures learnt. This can be done through role-play,

drama and others. Teachers should also provide pupils with reading materials to help them read at home where the content of the reading materials should be helpful to the learners at their level. This will enable them enjoy the reading as they read a lot. With this, their knowledge on concord awareness will be improved to help limit errors in both their written and oral work. Again, language lessons should be learner centered so that the learner should be actively involved in the learning process. Moreover, teachers should have in depth understanding of the native language structure of their learners to be able to identify the sources of their errors in order to provide the needed assistance to these learners where necessary, this way, they will help minimize such errors.

Again, there is the need to have regular in-service training for English teachers in the junior high school to equip them with modern trends in teaching English as a second language in general and dealing with students writing error in particular. Also, in the training of English language teachers, pedagogy of second language teaching should be emphasized with particular reference to the identification, describing and treatment of errors. Moreover, English language teachers should use strategies that will help learners attend to the errors they commit in their writing. They should use strategies that will help students to be involve in identifying the sources of the errors they commit and how to avoid them in their writing.

Furthermore, there should be enough opportunity practice to be provided to students in writing and immediate feedback given for students to progress in their writing. In spite of this, English language teachers should create a classroom which is conducive to language learning so that learners can take risk without fear of intimidation. It is through this that students can test their hypothesis in the language learning situation. Lastly, teachers should involve the oral proficiency of learners. The teaching of grammar and other language skills should be avoided and emphasis placed

on communicative language teaching. On the basis of the finding of the study, these recommendations were made.

5.4 Suggestion for Future Research

The researcher has researched into one sensitive area of language study which poses a lot of problems to students, concord. It does not however, claim to have answered all questions that have to do with all aspects of concord and grammar in general. Improvement on the study is still possible by repeating the same sample size and methodology but in another school or geographical environment and there is also the need to look on the effects or impact s of the recommended strategies in this study on the reduction of concord errors.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study, an attempt was made to identify some concord errors in English at the basic school. The study among other things revealed that the causes of the errors are numerous in English as a second language writing and speech. These are caused by overgeneralization of rules, misapplication of rules to L1 and mother tongue interference as well as inadequate understanding of grammatical rules of English concord. What the study has clearly shown is that the level of competence of English concord at the basic level is very low. On the basis of this, some teaching strategies are suggested as a way of minimizing the errors.

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Yankson, K. E. (1994). *Better English through concord for West African students*. Accra: Commercial Associates Ltd.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teacher's Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

Department of English Education

This Research Instrument is designed to seek relevant primary data for the conduct of an academic study on the topic "Investigating poor summary writing skills among the second year students of Dadieso Senior High School". Your support and co-operation is very much appreciated and please be assured that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Teacher's questionnaire

SECTION A

Rank of Respondent: Age:

Date..... Gender:

Qualification Number of workshops attended:

Section B

1. What aspect of English language do you often teach?
 - a) All aspect
 - b) Some aspect

2. Which aspect is more difficult to teach?
 - a) Grammar
 - b) Comprehension
 - c) Essay writing

3. What is your personal view about the standard of English language in your school?

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4. What in your view is the reason for the use of non-standard English?

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5. What problems do students have in dealing with summary writing?

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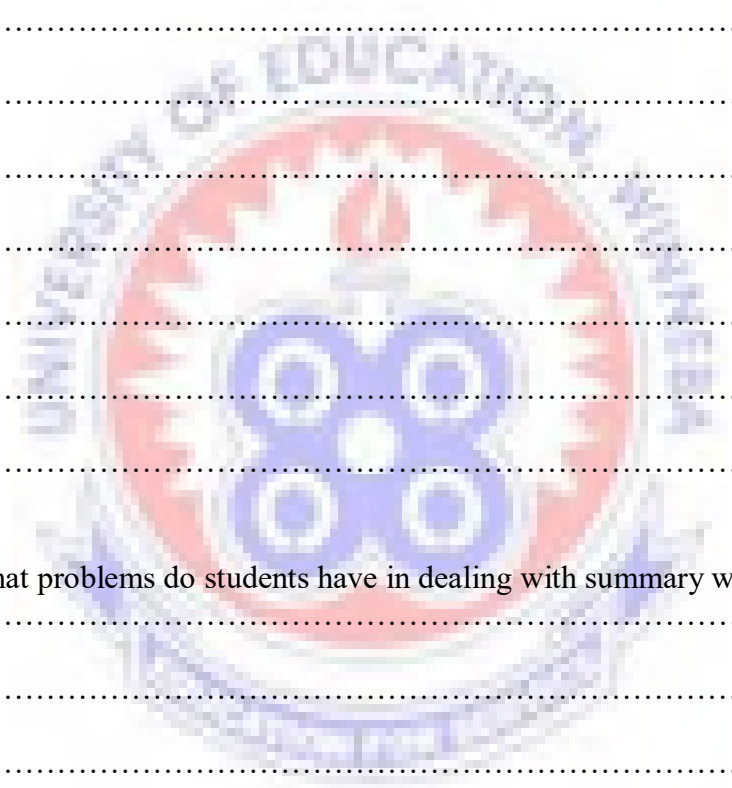
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6. How does poor summary writing affect your student's academic performance?

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7. What are the factors responsible for poor summary writing among the students?

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Tick [√] in the columns where applicable, factors responsible for poor summary writing.

Item	Column
Negative attitude towards learning of English	[]
Inadequate qualified teachers of English at the senior high level	[]
Non-standard forms of English such as pidgin	[]
The inability to understand what they read	[]

Bad reading habit among students []

8. Suggest remedies to help improve the teaching and learning of summary writing.

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Tick [√] in the columns where applicable to suggest remedies to help improve the teaching and learning of summary writing.

Item	Column
Provision of personal reading materials for students	[]
Encourage the student students to read more often	[]
Using practical ways to teach summary writing	[]
Giving more exercises to students	[]

Appendix B: Student's Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

Department of English Education

This Research Instrument is designed to seek relevant primary data for the conduct of an academic study on the topic "Investigating poor summary writing skills among the second year students of Dadieso Senior High School". Your support and co-operation is very much appreciated and please be assured that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Student's questionnaire

SERCTION A

Class of Respondent: Age:

Date..... Gender:

Section B

1. What aspect of English language do you often find it easier to learn?
 - a) Grammar
 - b) Comprehension
 - c) Essay writing

2. What aspect of English language do you often learn?
 - c) All aspect
 - d) Some aspect

3. Which aspect is more difficult to learn?
 - d) Grammar
 - e) Comprehension
 - f) Essay writing

4. Are you regular and punctual in school?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

5. What language do you usually speak in school?
 - a. English language
 - b. Ghanaian language
 - c. Non-standard English

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10. How does poor summary writing affect your academic performance?

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11. What are the factors responsible for writing poor summaries?

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Tick [] in the columns where applicable, factors responsible for poor concord usage.

Item	Column
I prefer learning other subjects than English language	[<input type="checkbox"/>]
I find it difficult to understand when I am taught by my teacher	[<input type="checkbox"/>]

I prefer using non-standard forms of English such as pidgin []

I find it difficult to understand what I read []

I speak most of my English in school []

I do not have reading materials []

I do not like summary lessons []

I do not like too much reading []

12. Suggest one thing that should be done to improve upon your understand of summary writing.

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Appendix C: A Sample of Students' Pre-test Script

Pre-Test

Name: Kenner Isaac
 School: Chirakpan, Akropong, N/A, TUSA

From the options provided in the brackets in each question below, write down the most appropriate answer to complete each sentence.

1. Teteh ~~is~~ keɔ us happy always. (make/makes)
2. Kofi ~~knows~~ ɔ where to go tomorrow. (knows/know)
3. His uncle ~~teach~~ teachi him lessons. (teaches/teach)
4. They ~~understand~~ ɔ mathematics. (understand/understand)
5. Either the teacher or head master ~~have~~ ɔ come here. (has/have)
6. Neither the pastor nor his congregation ~~is~~ ɔ ethical. (is/are)
7. Either the children or their mother ~~is~~ ɔ doing the washing. (is/are)
8. Neither Kofi nor his roommate ~~is~~ ɔ in class. (is/are)
9. Indisciplined among children ~~is~~ ɔ on the increase. (is/are)
10. All the women of my fellowship ~~is~~ ɔ were. (is/are)
11. The death of five men of war club ~~is~~ ɔ made the district police come to the church. (was/were)
12. A basket full of food ~~was~~ ɔ laid outside the classroom. (was/were)
13. All the oil ~~was~~ ɔ sold. (was/were)
14. All the liquid in the barrel ~~was~~ ɔ dried up. (was/were)
15. Some of the oil ~~is~~ ɔ gone. (is/are)
16. These ~~is~~ ɔ my men. (is/are)
17. Pappah's ~~was~~ ɔ laid on the "ground". (was/were)
18. Statistics ~~show~~ ɔ that girls grew faster than boys. (show/shows)
19. Oti ~~is~~ ɔ playing draft. (like/likes)
20. She ~~told~~ ɔ him to give it to me. (tells/to tell)

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Appendix D: A Sample of Student's Post-test Script

Post-Test

Name: Asare Abraham
 School: Oduroase Akro N/A P.T.H.S.

Write down the correct to agree with the subject in each sentence

1. I always WAS for good luck when I see a falling star. (was/were)
2. The woman with her children ARE travelling. (are/is)
3. The bus STOP at all railroad crossing. (stop/stops)
4. The toys on the television ARE beautiful. (is/are)
5. Few Christians ACCEPT rebirth. (accept/accepts)
6. You COOK very well. (cook/cooks)
7. These ARE yours. (are/is)
8. This IS a new car. (is/are)
9. Take these plates and WASH them. (wash/washes)
10. These ARE the laws of my country. (are/is)
11. Either the teacher or the boys ARE innocent. (is/are)
12. Either the boys or teacher ARE innocent. (is/are)
13. Neither the student nor headmaster WERE here. (was/were)
14. Neither the student nor headmaster WERE here. (was/were)
15. Everybody WAS please with the result. (was/were)
16. He TALKS a lot. (talk/talks)
17. Many people DON'T like him. (don't/doesn't)
18. She PREPARED the food herself. (prepare/prepared)
19. The students filled the tank with water by THEMSELVES (themselves/themselves)
20. The boy hurt HIMSELF. (himself/herself)

