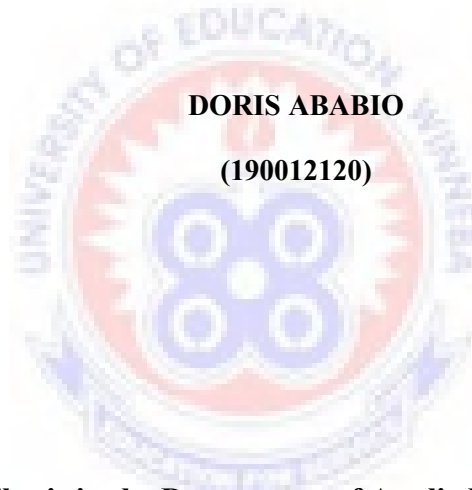


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**CONCORD PROBLEMS IN THE WRITINGS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS. THE CASE STUDY OF TEMA TECHNICAL INSTITUTE**

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**A Thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics,
Faculty of Foreign Languages Education and Communication,
submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education
(Applied Linguistics)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

OCTOBER, 2020

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

SIGNATURE :

DATE :



SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. CHARLOTTE FOFO LOMOTEY

SIGNATURE :

DATE :

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Mr. Sylvester Ofori Asiedu and my kids Joel Ofori-Asiedu, Jesse Ofori-Asiedu and Jason Ofori-Asiedu for their sacrifice and support for this work. This work is also dedicated to my mum Madam Mary Obenewah whose advise has brought me this far.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Almighty God for the strength and grace given me throughout the period of my study. I want to acknowledge the support of these individuals who made it possible for a successful completion of this work. My sincere gratitude goes to Dr Charlotte Fofu Lomotey who supervised, guided and encouraged me through the writing of this dissertation. I again owe a great deal of thanks to Mr. Mawutor Fleku for his immense support. I also say a big thank you to Mr. Perlsy Dongotey, HOD of the English Department of Tema Technical Institute, the members of the entire Department and the Form two (2) students of the school for their cooperation during the collection of data to complete this work. I am heavily indebted to my sister Deborah Addison and my entire family for their unflinching support and encouragement.

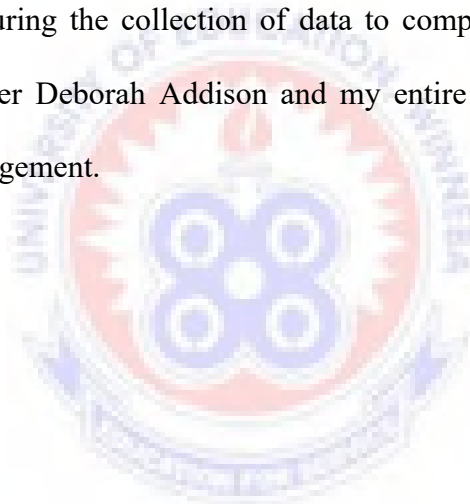


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ABSTRACT

The problem of form two students of Tema Technical Institute in the use of concord cannot be overemphasized. Eighty percent (80%) of the students cannot use concord correctly. This is seen in students' written exercises, conversations, class discussions, as well as asking or responding to oral questions. Thus, this study sought to firstly identify the causes of concord errors in English language among form two students of Tema Technical Institute and use the results of the study to make recommendation to the stakeholders in education as to how to improve the performance of students and other learners of English language. One hundred and thirty-nine (139) students were sampled for this study using the process of random sampling. Pre and post tests were taken by sampled students, frequencies and percentages were then run to analyze their overall performance as well as their performance per type of concord. Findings indicted that students had poor knowledge on the right use of subject-verb agreement. Intervention process employed by the researcher however improved their performance. Besides, five (5) teachers were sampled to collate responses on how to explore the causes of poor performance of form two students of Tema Technical School in English Concord. All teachers were of the view that the frequent speaking of English language has a direct influence on students' performance in English concord. According to them, when students frequently use the English Language in communication, they get use to the syntax of the language and then become familiar with it. It is recommended among others that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should ensure that only trained teachers are engaged in teaching children starting from the primary level of education. In addition, the Ghana Education Service should supply each pupil with requisite English books to aid comprehension of the English language as a whole with extra focus on the use of notional concord. This will help prepare pupils at the pre secondary level adequately before moving on to the secondary level.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter is made up of background of the study which describes the circumstances leading to the problem. The chapter also comprises the following: statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations and organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for which it is the chosen foreign language of communication is English language. This language enables people across the globe to transact business, integrate, communicate effectively and live harmoniously. The importance of the .English language as a second language in Ghana cannot be overemphasized. English is the official language of government administration, the learned professions, the media and business. It is the most widely used language for international communications and also the dominant language of the internet.

English language has become important in Ghana because it is the language that builds a bridge across the barriers created by the existence of many languages. All Ghanaian schools use English for instruction at all levels except from primary one to three. In our education set up, one cannot do away with English language and still climb the educational ladder.

Being the lingua franca, English language has always been a core subject as it stands today. Almost all subjects studied and examinations taken in our schools are written in English. It is also a compulsory subject of study up to the second cycle level in the

Ghana Education Service. A good grade in English is a prerequisite for furthering one's education in any second cycle and tertiary institution. A good pass indeed, lies in the realm of a good understanding of the concept of concord and an in-depth knowledge of English grammar on the part of students.

According to Richards, Platt, and Weber cited in Nunan (2005) grammar is a description of a language and the way in which units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language.

Grammar as an aspect of the English language must be given more attention because, the more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. Grammar can also help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English and it can help everyone – not only teachers of English, but teachers of anything, for teaching is ultimately a matter of getting to grips of meaning (Crystal 2004).

For all the years I have taught as an English teacher, my interactions with my pupils and students as well as my colleague teachers at school revealed to me that the use of concord is a problem right from the primary school through to the university level.

As a result of this, form two students of Tema Technical Institute are also faced with a lot of challenges when it comes to the use of concord. Teachers of English in general, are still unclear about the problems of concord. Form two students of Tema Technical Institute's inability to use concord correctly was diagnosed through observation, class exercise, interviews and class discussions. The researcher found out that, the students constructed a lot of ungrammatical sentences in their essays, spoke non-standard

English and performed poorly in their concord exercises. Many authorities have expressed their concern about the deterioration of English in Ghana.

What the researcher diagnosed in the school on concord as well as the reports given by the authorities motivated her to conduct a study into the problems form two students of Tema Technical Institute have on concord.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of form two students of Tema Technical Institute use of concord cannot be overemphasized. Eighty percent (80%) of the students cannot use concord correctly. This is seen in students' written exercises, conversations, class discussions, as well as asking or responding to oral questions.

Teachers of English in the school, especially the researcher are worried about the poor use and command of the English language by a vast majority of the students. Paramount among these problems is the wrong use of concord.

In the course of teaching concord in form two, it is common to see students forming sentences such as the following;

- ❖ “She have a book.”
- ❖ “Mansa write beautifully”

In both sentences, the verbs “have and write” do not agree with their respective subjects. It is against this background that the researcher has devoted time and resources to identify the causes of the poor performance of form two students of Tema Technical Institute in English language concord and also to design an intervention measure with the aim of motivating the students to develop positive attitudes towards

the study of English concord and to improve their performance in the subject in general.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the types of concord errors that Form 2 students of Tema Technical Institute commit in their writing.
2. examine the causes of concord errors in English language.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the problems associated with the use of concord as a crucial element in English language. It is also meant to assist students of Tema Technical Institute to improve their performance in English language through a conscious effort to develop and sustain their interest in the study of concord in English language.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study, the researcher considered the following research questions;

- What are the causes of form two students' of Tema Technical Institute concord errors?
- What areas do students concord errors arise?
- What are the effective ways of teaching concord?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Students, teachers, parents and whoever studies English language will benefit from this study. For students, it will improve their competence and accuracy in their speaking and writing and build upon their proficiency in the language.

For teachers, it will offer them the opportunity, innovation and effective ways as well as strategies and methods of teaching concord. According to Green (2006), it will be appropriate for teachers to give students plenty of opportunity and practice in subject-verb agreement. It will also make parents develop positive attitude towards English language.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study was limited to only the population of the second year students of Tema Technical Institute, in Tema. This particular year group's population was chosen because they showed very weak performances, in the end of year promotion examination they wrote in English in form one. Also, the students' inability to express themselves in English language made the researcher choose this population.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study was to be conducted in Tema Technical Institute but the researcher focused her attention on form two because of her teaching contact with that form. Her contact with them had equipped her with first-hand information about the problems that these students encounter in concord. Therefore, the study was limited to the second-year students of Tema Technical Institute so as to help them overcome these problems.

Moreover, due to the broad nature of the research topic, the researcher limited the study to specific areas where form two students' of Tema Technical Institute concord errors arise.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This is about how the study is organized. The study is in five chapters with each chapter well elaborated to achieve the purpose of study.

The first chapter consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, and the organization of the study.

Chapter two will be concerned with the literature review on the stated topic, referring to authorities' view and the way the researcher also sees the problem.

The third and fourth chapters deal with methodology and results of the study respectively, the methodology aspect explains to the reader the methods that were employed to undertake the study; such methods include observation and interview and the presentation and analysis of data.

The last chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study. This chapter plays an important role to the study as it opens to the world further research that could be done in the same area of study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The objective of this study is to identify the causes of the poor performance of students of Tema Technical Institute in concord, an aspect of grammar. This chapter has as its aim to review some available literature on concord, definition of grammar, definition of concord, types of concord, rules of concord, areas where students' concord problems arise, causes of concord problems and effective ways of teaching concord. The researcher aims at identifying areas where students' of Tema Technical Institute concord problems arise, and be able to find solutions to them.

2.1 What is Literature Review?

Literature review or narrative review according to *Galvan (2015)*, is a scholarly paper, which includes the current knowledge including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. Literature reviews are secondary sources, and do not report new or original experimental work. Most often associated with academic-oriented literature, such reviews are found in academic journals, and are not to be confused with book reviews that may also appear in the same publication. Literature reviews are a basis for research in nearly every academic field.

2.2 Definition of Grammar

This study covers an aspect of grammar. Grammar is the basis on which language depends and spells out the dos and don'ts of the language. Language is involved with everything that we do as human beings on this earth. Nothing can be done without language.

In emphasizing the uniqueness of language, Palmer (1983) maintains that grammar of English in particular or that of any other language should never be based upon the grammar of Latin or of any other language as no other language will be like ‘our own’ in their grammatical structures, as well as in their sound systems and their semantics. Palmer (1983) explains further that languages differ in their “logic” as well as in their grammar. Therefore, the speech or writing is judged by how well it follows the rules of grammar of that language (Merriam-Webster, 2015). In other words, different word classes have a particular position they occupy in a sentence in order for the sentence to be grammatically meaningful. It is therefore clear that if a speaker should disregard this fundamental rule of grammar, either or both intentionally and by mistake, the utterances by the speaker might be ungrammatical.

According to Murthy (2012), grammar is a systematic study of scientific method which provides us information and guidance necessary to learn a language. The science of grammar teaches us how a language is spoken correctly and effectively.

Crystal (2004) says that grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use languages. Grammar can help everyone including students, teachers of English and teachers of any other subject.

Grammar, according to Aduse (2005), is the way in which words are used in a given language. Ur (1988) says grammar may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines (or bits of words) to form longer units of meaning. Grammar is the way in which words change themselves and group together to make sentences. The grammar of a language is what happens to words when they become

plural or negative, or what order is used when we make questions or join two clauses to make one sentence (Harmer 1987).

Ur (1988) and Harmer (1987) are both of the same opinion about grammar. They see grammar as the way in which words are modified and combined to form meaningful sentences. Their definitions are relevant to this study because students of Tema Technical Institute are not able to express themselves in English language as a result of their inability to combine words to form meaningful sentences which result to concord problems in their everyday communication.

With a fair Knowledge of these definitions about grammar, the researcher will be able to help these students to improve upon their usage of concord, an aspect of grammar. From the various definitions given by the various authorities above, grammar can be explained as the name given to a system of rules by which the words in a language can be organized so that when put together according to those rules, they make sense to the users of that language. This means that, for users of the English language, of which students of Tema Technical Institute are of no exception, to be able to use English language correctly, they must be presented with certain rules that will guide them to make up correct sentences either in speech or in writing.

2.3 Concord/Subject Verb Agreement

Various scholars as authorities have talked about concord in different ways and also defining them. The following are some of the views. Yankson (1994), in his work “Better English through concord for West African students”, sees concord as the necessary agreement/coherence needed in a sentence/statement to yield a flawless grammatical structure. As to what informs this unfortunate attitude of non-adherence

to the rules of concord on the part of both native and non-native students, one has to probe through research.

According to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) each noun phrase is either singular or plural, and its number is determined in general by its head, which is typically a noun. Senn and Skinner (2001) explain that the agreement of the verb with its subject is not changed by any interrupting words.

Sullivan (2015) explains agreement further by stating that the subject-verb pair unifies the sentence, and it does not consider the number of modifying words, adjectives, adverbs, and independent clauses attached, the basic unit should remain. The subject-verb pair guarantees that the sentence is meaningful and without this unity, a sentence fragments and loses its power to speak. The subject-verb agreement competence requires the knowledge of all aspects involved including: third person singular and plural subjects, indefinite pronouns, collective nouns, phrases of amounts, fractions and measurements, phrases of inclusion, neither and either, other interruptions and here and there. It is necessary that the communicator should know and use these aspects without committing grammatical errors.

“Concord or agreement,” according to Mark Aronoff and Kirsten Fudeman (2010), “Occurs when one element in a sentence takes on the morph syntactic features of another element.” In basic terms, concord refers to agreement between two or more words in a sentence. English grammatical concord is very important for correct English usage. The unfortunate manner in which English students, especially in contemporary times, violate the rules of grammar in general and concord in particular, is a worrying issue.

Blake (1988) states that, “the principle that the form of one grammatical unit in a sentence is influenced by the features of a different unit within the same sentence is referred to as concord.”

Quirk and Greenbawn (1985) believe that “concord is the relationship between grammatical elements such that if one of them contains a particular feature then the other also has to have that feature.

Concord refers to the grammatical relationship between a subject and a verb, or a pronoun and its verb, or a demonstrative and the word it modifies (Brown, 2009). According to Wiredu (1999), the term concord in grammar is used to refer to the agreement relations which exist between two grammatical units so that when one unit displays a particular feature the other unit will also display a similar feature.

Again, according to Downing et al (2006) “Concord is number (singular or plural) and person with verbs, which are determined by subjects”. They go further to explain that “Concord is manifested in only those verb forms that show inflectional contrast”.

Sekyi – Baidoo (2002), argues that “in concord the verb which is also called the predicator must agree with the subject in number and person”. He explains that number is the singularity or plurality of the subject, while person simply means whether the subject is first person singular or plural as *I* or *we* respectively or second person singular or plural, that is you, and third person singular or plural as in he, she, it, and they. For example: He sings nicely. In the sentence, ‘he’ is a third person singular and ‘sings’ is also singular. So in terms of person he and sings agree. In the same way, He is singular and sings is also singular because of the singular marker /s/ attached to the verb. Therefore, the point can be established that, He and

sings agree in number (singular). Most of the students of Tema Technical Institute commit concord errors such as he sing and they sings because they have not firmly grasped the concord rules.

Palmer (1994) says that there is a freedom of choice between the forms of the verb especially where concord is concerned. Palmer argued that an inadequate understanding of such rules of English grammar is the general cause of errors. According to him, this is due to the fact that the choice of the verb is determined by the occurrence of the subject. But if we pair them wrongly, we shall produce sentences which will be immediately recognized as ungrammatical. Palmer is saying that whenever one wants to write a sentence the verb or the predicator is very crucial. He says that it is the action of the verb that indicates the kind of subject.

Palmer (1994), further states that if this concept is neglected then one utter or write an ungrammatical sentence. This problem is always manifested in the speeches and writings of the students of Tema Technical Institute. For example, students of this school will provide an ungrammatical sentence like: *The student are not learning*, instead of, *The students are not learning*. The students did not take into account that, are in this context is plural and must agree with students which is the subject and plural in nature. From what the various authorities above say, concord can be described and explained as an agreement between a subject and a verb in a sentence. This means that subjects and verbs in sentences should display similar features. A singular subject must be accompanied by a singular verb, and a plural subject must be accompanied by a plural verb, this is referred to as grammatical concord.

2.4 Types of concord

It is very important to note that before the students of Tema Technical Institute can use concord in its appropriate environment, they must know the types of concord that exist.

The three categories of concord under consideration are:

- i. Grammatical concord
- ii. Notional concord
- iii. Proximity concord

2.5 Grammatical Concord (Subject –verb agreement)

Quirk et al (1972:360) define subject-verb agreement as “The rule or principle that the verb matches its subjects in number”. Wiredu (1999) defines grammatical concord as the relationship that exists between the subject of a clause and its accompanying verb. Honsby (2002) describes grammatical concord as the fact of having the same number, gender, or: person.

According to Blake (1988), “The normal rule for subject – verb agreement is that a singular subject requires the verb of the present tense in the “s” form when the subject is a third person one”.

What these authorities mean is that grammatical concord is the most important of all the types of concord and that every verb must agree with its subject in person and in number. So, a singular subject must take a singular verb and a plural subject must take a plural verb.

Example:

- a. The woman eats apples.
- b. Adoma and Yaa eat apples.

2.5.1 Notional Concord

Wiredu (1999) explains notional concord as the agreement that exists between the verb and the subject not because the subject has a form that shows it but rather the agreement is based on the speaker's perception. For example, the following words can be distinguished on the basis of their form:

Singular	Plural
Tree	Trees
Man	Men
Goose	geese
Criterion	criteria
Stadium	stadia

Quirk and Greenbawn (1985) asserts that “notional concord is agreement of verb with subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that idea.”

Parrot and Martin (2000) state that “conversely plural nouns lacking the inflection (-s) such as a collective noun is considered singular when it refers to a group. When this is the case, the noun takes a singular verb. An Example is: Our team is the best.”

According to Sakyi-Baidoo (2002), notional concord can be described as the agreement between the verb and the subject according to the perception (that is the idea of numbers) rather than the actual display or presence of a grammatical feature for the idea.

2.5.2 Proximity Concord

According to Wiredu (1999), there is proximity concord, if the agreement between the Verb and its subject is not based on notion but on the fact that there is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. For example:

- i) Either Adwoa or his friends are weeding.
- ii) Either the friends or Adwoa is weeding.

In these examples, the plural form 'are', is selected because of its proximity to the plural nominal group 'friends'. And the singular verb 'is' has been chosen in the second example, because of its proximity to the singular nominal group 'Adwoa'. 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), 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."

2.5.3 Rules of Concord

If the subject and the verb of a sentence do not agree, that sentence is ungrammatical. We therefore speak of; problems in agreement or faulty agreement. To avoid this, we must stick to the rules of concord:

Rule 1: A verb must agree with its subject in number or person; a singular verb should follow a singular subject; and a plural verb should follow a plural subject. For instance:

- a. The marker is in the book.

The subject of the sentence is the marker and the verb is 'is'. The subject and the verb in this instance are both singular so there is an agreement.

- b. The pens are four.

In sentence (b), the 'pens' is plural. This plurality of the subject is marked by the /-s/ plural as a subject noun inflection attached to pen. The subject is followed by are'

which is a plural verb. In this case, the subject and the verb are both plural so there is an agreement.

Rule 2: Indefinite pronouns such as *everyone, everybody, nobody, somebody*, '- take singular verbs. Examples:

- (i) Everyone is good.
- (ii) Someone has taken it.
- (iii) Everybody hates a bad friend.

Rule 3: Singular subjects followed by such words 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. Also the headwords are also singular. For example:

- a. The headmaster, as well as his teacher, is in Tema.
- b. The teacher, accompanied by the students, has arrived.

Rule 4: When two or more subjects are joined by “and” and refer to the same person or thing, the verb must be in the singular form. However, compound subjects referring to two different people or things take plural verbs.

Example:

- a. The Acting Principal and Director of the Tema Metro has travelled.

In this sentence the implication is that the “Acting Principal”, is the same person as the “Director of Tema Metro” so the singular verb “has” was chosen.

- b. A mouse and a cat are usually not friends.

In this sentence, the subject of the sentence is “A mouse and a cat”. But both mouse and cat are two different entities, therefore they can be recognized as plural to match with the plural verb *are*.

Rule 5: When two subjects (a compound subject) refer to the same thing or is thought of as a single idea or a unit, a singular verb is used. For example:

- a. Banku and Okro stew is my favorite.

The subject Banku and Okro stew is a single idea so it is regarded as a singular subject. Hence, the singular verb *is* ‘is’ selected to match with the subject.

Rule 6: Some nouns are plural in form but singular in meaning and therefore take singular verbs.

For example,

- a. Linguistics is an interesting subject.
- b. Sports is good for the body.

The two subjects Linguistics and Sports in sentences ‘a’ and ‘b’ respectively are singular but their form appears to be plural because of the –s attached to the end of the words. Since the subjects “Linguistics” and sports” have singular meaning, singular verbs are chosen to match them.

Rule 7: When singular subjects are joined by not only....*but also*, *neither...nor*, *either....or*, the verb should be in the singular form.

For example:

- a. Not only the Principal but also his daughter is present at the meeting.
- b. Neither the boy nor his father has eaten.

With these two sentences, since the singular subjects are joined by not only, but also, and neither...nor, they are recognized as singular subjects. Therefore, the two

sentences match with the singular subject is and has in sentence 'a' and 'b' respectively.

Rule 8: If subjects differ in number or person (one subject is in the singular and the other is in plural), the verb agrees with the subject (noun) nearer to it. This is what is known as proximity concord.

For example:

- a. Either the students or the teacher has to be present.
- b. Neither the teacher nor the students seem lazy.

In sentence 'a', the subjects are identified as students (plural) and the teacher (singular). So has, as a singular verb, was selected to agree with teacher which is also singular. Similar thing can be said about sentence b. The teacher and the students are two separate subjects. However, since the second subject the student is plural the verb seem was chosen to agree with the subject students. This is also known as proximity concord.

Rule 9: A collective noun takes a singular verb when emphasis is placed on the individual members of the group; that is, the individual members of the group are acting separately. This type of concord rule is known as notional concord. This is because it is based on notion and perception. These words together and separately are used to indicate whether the collective nouns are considered as single item or separate items.

For example:

- a. The congregation was clapping. (Together)
- b. The congregation were arriving. (Separately)
- c. The committee is meeting today. (Together)
- d. The committee are meeting today. (Separately)

Rule 10: A demonstrative adjective such as *this*, *that*, *these*, *those* must agree in number with the noun it modifies. *This* and *that* are singular while *those* and *these* are plural.

For example:

- a. That man is cute.
- b. Those men are cute.
- c. This is my dress.
- d. These are my dresses.

In example *a*, since *that* is singular it agrees with the singular noun *man* and the singular verb *is*. In example *b*, *those* is plural so it agrees with plural noun *men* and the plural verb *are*. In examples 'c' and 'd' however, *This* and *Those* take singular and plural nouns and verbs in their respective sentences.

Rule 11: Nouns (subjects) that are always regarded as plural take plural verbs.

Examples are: *Police, People and Cattle*

- a. The cattle look healthy.
- b. The police are working hard.
- c. The people of Ghana love their chiefs.

The subjects (the cattle, the police and the people) are plural so they collocate with their plural verbs *look*, *are*, and *love* respectively.

Rule 12: Indefinite pronouns such as *anybody*, *anyone*, *somebody*, *everybody*, *neither*, *anything*, *something*, and *everything* are considered as singular. The underlined verbs are also singular so they match with the indefinite pronouns in the following sentences.

For example:

- a. Everybody has a stomach.

- b. Something is going to happen.
- c. A lot of students are coming: none is a boarder.
- d. Everything about Mansa is bad.
- e. Each room has its own bathroom.

Rule 13: Titles of words such as books, poems, plays, programs and art works are singular therefore they take singular verbs. The titles of works together with their respective verbs are in italics in the following sentences.

For Example:

- a. *The Burbs is* a movie starring Tom Hanks.
- b. Good evening Ghana is a good Program

Areas Where Students' of Tema Technical Institute problem of concord Arise

Students of Tema Technical Institute have special problems that they normally face when it comes to concord. These areas include:

- **Subject-verb agreement when the subject is in the plural form.**
- **Subject-verb agreement in number and**
- **Subject-verb agreement in inverted sentences.**

Subject-Verb Agreement when the verb is in the plural form

In writing, students usually make common mistakes. A singular subject may appear plural, students unknowingly match this subject with a singular verb.

The following examples explains further.

- Example 1: Neither male nor female students seems to be interested in participating in the after school clean-up at the local beach.
- Example 2: Either Liam or Desmond deserves to be an award-winning poet.

Words such as *neither* or *either* must be treated as singular. Most constructions do not create compound subjects. Each requires a singular verb since they are singular. Students of Tema Technical Institute face problems with regard to the usage of concord which prevents their effective communication in English language. As a matter of fact, students normally become confused when the subject is separated by numerous modifiers or when a singular subject appears plural. For instance;

- The Principal, as well as the teacher, is absent.

Students will likely assume the principal and the teacher to be the subject and will therefore use a plural verb with it. An insight into the areas where students' mistakes arise are listed and will equip researchers on how to help students to overcome their difficulties as regard concord.

Subject -verb agreement in Number

Many problems evolve out of subject and verb agreement. Most problems occur when the subject is separated by several modifying words as in the following sentences:

- Example 1: Many teachers who have always wanted to study in America are looking forward to summer travel.
- Example 2: Each of the two hundred and thirty teachers wants to get a high promotion score.

In example 1, students may get confused with the singular noun nearest the verb, which is *America*, and will want to write the singular verb *is*. In example 2, students may identify teachers as the subject of the sentence. However, the real subject, *each*, is singular and therefore requires a singular verb.

Subject/ Verb Agreement in Inverted Sentences

Students may also have difficulty writing grammatically correct sentences when the subject is located after the verb in a sentence. These ‘flipped’ sentences often make it difficult for students to identify the true subject of the sentence.

For example:

- Besides American students enjoying diverse after school activities, there is a valuable health benefit for keeping teens physically active.

Many students would quickly assume the subject is students, which is a plural noun. They would, therefore, want to use a plural verb, such as *are*. In the above example, however, the true subject is benefit. This subject requires the verb which comes before it to remain singular, *is*.

These constructions do not create compound subjects. Since they are singular, each requires a singular verb.

The problem areas of concord stated by Thadra (2013) are similar to the problems that Students of Tema Technical Institute face with regard to the usage of concord and this impedes their effective communication in English language. For instance, Students of Tema Technical Institute become confused when the subject is separated by numerous modifiers, or when it proceeds the verb or when a singular subject appears plural as in the following:

- Teachers who perform creditably in Ghana receive promotion from the Ministry of Education.
- Either Ama or Esi is wealthy.

They will likely assume Ghana to be the subject in the first sentence and will therefore use a singular verb with it. With the second sentence, since there are two people (Ama and Esi) involved, they will use a plural verb for the subject.

2.6 Causes of Concord Errors

It must be noted that learning every foreign language is not an easy task which involves a gradual process and in doing this, mistakes are to be expected in all stages of learning. Mistakes will not disappear simply because they have been pointed out to the learner, contrary to what some language learners and teachers believe (Ferris, 2002). In fact, making mistakes and errors are the natural process of learning and must be seen as part of recognition. As a result, errors must be viewed positively. Some of the causes of Students' of Tema Technical Institute concord problems are: first language interference, inability to identify headword, negative attitudes towards English language and influence of technology.

2.7 Interference of First Language on English

Learners studying a second language go through so many kinds of learning difficulties concerning its vocabulary, structure, and sound system among others. This is normal since they already speak their own languages, which have been implanted in them as part of their habit. Very often, they transfer their habit into the target language they learn, which may result to errors (Smith, 1983). Ellis (1997) defined interference as "...the influence that the learners' LI exerts over the acquisition of an L2..." This influence ranges from the level of sounds to meanings (Pektus, 2013), (Brown, 2009). Tema is a typical Ga speaking community. In this case, the transfer happens between the Ga grammatical rules of Subject Verb/Predicate and the English rule of Subject and Verb Agreement. English language makes use of the third person singular inflection but this is not the case in Ga. This makes the students omit the third person singular marker 's or es' in their sentences. For example, in Tema Technical Institute, it is very common for learners to construct the following sentences:

*“The student write examination always”.

*“He sweep the classroom every morning”.

*“She love me”.

There is no agreement between the subjects - student, He and She and their verbs – write, sweep and love respectively. This concord error results from interference from the students ‘first language as there is no third person singular marker in their language. This can be supported by an assertion Lado (1957 :) makes that, ‘features or elements that are similar to a learner’s native language will be simple and those elements that are different will be difficult’.

2.8 Inability to Identify Headword

Before one is able to match the correct subject and verb then, that person should be able to identify the headword (noun/pronoun) in a phrase. The ability to identify the headword in a noun phrase will make it easier for the selection of appropriate verb. For example; *The short man desires to be a lecturer.* With this sentence, the headword in the subject of the sentence is *man* which is singular and the verb *desires* is also a singular verb, therefore, there is an agreement between the subject and verb. Another example is: *All the members of parliament are enlightened.* The headword in the subject is *members* which is plural and it agrees with the verb *are* which is also plural. Identifying the headword in a noun phrase has become a problem for most students of Tema Technical Institute.

2.9 Negative Attitude towards English

Most grown-ups in our Ghanaian homes believe that speaking English language with our growing children will not make them understand and speak their native

language well hence the negative attitude towards the English language. This makes them prevent their wards from speaking English at home. Lack of practice results to the student's concord errors which are evident in their day-to-day conversations and concord exercises. Tsaddey (1993) explains that the problem of falling standard of English may be due to some degree of negative attitude towards English by some people who consider the dominance of English in our lives as a sign of cultural enslavement. It is very obvious that parents of students of Tema Technical Institute may have negative attitude towards English since they do not entreat their wards to speak English at home.

2.10 The Influence of Technology

The influence of various forms of technology, especially mobile phones, is another cause of students' concord errors. At home and in school, these students usually use mobile phones to chat on the various communication and social networks such as palm chat, face book, viber, what Sapp, twitter and many others. They either use short form of words such as 'sam l' for someone, luv' for love and many more or non-standard English on these networks so as to make their chat very friendly or informal. The use of non-standard 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 and write them to a large extent.

2.11 Effective Ways of Teaching Concord

The growing interest for classroom research in recent years has made it possible to evaluate teachers' behavior. Studies have shown that teachers apply a variety of teaching techniques. The balanced approach, which has elements of all the approaches, has often been referred to as the 'eclectic approach' (Wagner, 1990:289).

An approach which includes understanding language, practicing it and producing it is now, according to Drew and McCallun (2005), recognized by many teachers as the best one.

Combining inductive and deductive methods is one effective eclectic approach to teach concord. This can be done by using deductive method to present the established rules of concord and allowing students to come out with rules that can be used to identify the headwords inductively. The effectiveness of deductive and inductive approaches, aiming at maximizing the students' opportunity to practice thinking skills, has been investigated in empirical studies. Deductive learning is an approach to language teaching in which learners are taught rules and given specific information about a language. Then, they apply these rules when they use the language. This may be contrasted with inductive learning in which learners are not taught rules directly, but are left to discover - or induce - rules from their experience of using the language (Richards et al, 1985).

Harmer (1989) ascertains that these two techniques encourage learners to compensate for the gap in their second language knowledge by using a variety of communication strategies. A number of research studies, likewise, have reported that successful learners often adopt certain learning strategies such as seeking out practice opportunities or mouthing the questions put to other learners (Peck, 1988). Inductive and deductive models offer this chance to learners because these two models foster a cooperative atmosphere among students. According to Celce-Murcia (1997), the communicative classroom provides a better environment for second language learning than classrooms dominated by formal instruction.

One of the creative approaches in teaching English concord, an aspect of grammar, is

the use of games (MacCallum, 2005). Arif and Esen (2000) stated that through well-planned games, learners can practice and internalize vocabulary, grammar and structure extensively. Play and competition that are provided by games enhance the motivation of the students and reduce their stress. This will help them to acquire certain essential language skills.

Ersoz (2007: 1) explains more reasons why games do work in grammar. Learning a language requires constant effort and that can be tiring, but Ersoz outlines two good reasons why games should be included in the classroom:

1. Games that are amusing and challenging are highly motivating.
2. Games allow meaningful use of the language in context.

Related to the worth of the games, Kim (1995: 35) adds many advantages of using games in the classroom, thus:

1. Games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class.
2. They are motivating and challenging.
3. Learning a language requires a great deal of effort. Games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning.
4. Games provide language practice in the various skill, speaking, writing, listening, and reading.
5. They encourage students to interact and communicate.
6. They create a meaningful context for language use.

Thus, it can be clarified that games can involve students especially students of Tema Technical Institute in mastering grammar, especially in using concord, which, through games, becomes more enjoyable and attractive.

Also, blending deductive and inductive methods of teaching will be very effective to teach concord to learners at all levels of which students of Tema Technical

Institute are of no exception so as to help them overcome their difficulties.

In summary, the problem of wrong usage of concord cannot be overemphasized since most learners of English language of which students of Tema Technical Institute are of no exception, encounter this problem. The above authorities have pointed out the areas where students' concord problems arise, causes of concord problems and have given effective remedies to this phenomenon. Though their views shared are very relevant to the study, they differ remarkably in objective significances, research strategy and analysis.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology is defined by Derek Jansen (2020) as “the practical how of any given piece of research”. Specifically, it is about how a researcher methodically designs a study in order to ensure valid and reliable results that addresses the objectives of the study.

This chapter details the research design, population from which data was taken, how this population was sampled, data collection methods and how the data was analyzed.

3.1 Research Design

Social scientists define research design in different terms. Ram (2010) for instance, defines research design as “the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure”. Whereas Akhtar (2016) describes it as the structure of research and the “Glue that holds all of the elements in a research project together”. This research considers the design as not only the plans of data collection to coming up with a reliable conclusion but also the reasons that accompany the decisions.

This study employed the case study strategy. This strategy was chosen in order to know precisely the factors leading to the difficulties that form two students of Tema Technical Institute face in the study and use of concord as an aspect of grammar. This strategy gives enough information about a person or a group and covers all aspects of a single entity. Results from the case study strategy will also aid in an intervention that could lead to helping students understand use of English grammar concord.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population, that is the complete set of individuals considered for this study was the students and teachers of the Tema Technical Institute in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The total number of students were 2,476 comprising 2,290 males and 186 females. One thousand and twenty-two (1,022) students were from two students. With regard to teachers, the total teaching staff was 132 made up of 12 English teachers.

As at the time of data collection, only second year students as well as final year students were authorized to be in school due to the COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, second year students were sampled for the study as the final year students were preparing for their final examinations.

Simple random sampling was used to sample second year students. Simple random sampling is a sampling technique that gives every member of the population an equal chance of being selected into the sample. The list of all second year students were collated and assigned numbers from 1 to 1022. Random numbers were then generated with the command prompt = RAND () found in the Microsoft excel platform. One hundred and thirty-nine (139) students were then selected based on the numbers generated. Out of the twelve (12) English teachers, five (5) were sampled for this study using the same process of random sampling.

3.3 Research Instruments

Questionnaire, test and observation were used as tools to gather data for analysis. A questionnaire was designed for teachers and test for students.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire for teachers was made up of three sections. The first section covered “the background information”, the second, “Teaching English Concord to Form Two Students” and third section covered questions on “the causes of poor performance among form 2 students” of T Tema Technical Institute. In all, eighteen questions were asked consisting of closed and open ended questions. (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was transformed into an online version using Google forms and the link sent to selected teachers through their whatsapp numbers. The teachers answered the questionnaire which came directly through the link.

3.3.2 Observation

In addition to administering test to students and collating teachers’ views through a questionnaire, the researcher observed students’ communication both in the classroom and outside the classroom. The researcher carefully listened to students’ oral communication and took note of their sentence construction.

3.3.3 Test

Pre- Intervention

For the researcher to be able to know the actual concord errors of the students, a pre-test was conducted for them. See Appendix B.

A test consisting of ten questions to find out how well students understand concord: subject –verb agreement was administered to one hundred and thirty nine (139) form two students. The test consisted of ten questions and students were supposed to choose the correct verbs to match the subjects in the sentences and that made the sentences grammatically correct.

The 10 questions were grouped into three types of concord i.e.

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 represented grammatical concord;

Questions 5, 6 and 7 represented proximity concord and

Questions 8, 9 and 10 represented notional concord.

The scoring scheme was as follows:

Excellent (90% plus)

Very good (80- 89%)

Good (60 – 79%)

Average (50 - 59%)

Poor (0-49%)

3.3.4 Intervention

After marking the pre-test questions, it came to light that majority of the students sampled never understood the subject verb agreement concept. This made the researcher put measures and effective ways of teaching the topic to the understanding of the students in place. The intervention was done according to the number of the students' concord errors areas to tackle in order to help them improve their concord usage. The areas she realized to be problem areas and which she went through with the students during the intervention period include all the three aspect of concord looked at, in this research that is:

Grammatical concord

Notional concord

Proximity concord

Measure 1: Grammatical Concord

First of all, I drew students' attention to the fact that grammatical concord means the agreement between the subject and the verb or the agreement between a verb or predicate and other elements of the sentence or clause structure. This has various rules governing it. The researcher thoroughly used discussion, question and answer method to explain the following rules to students with examples so students would understand.

Rule one: subject verb concord

When the subject in a sentence is singular, the verb should also be singular.

Examples:

- i) She goes to the market to shop.
- ii) The Supreme Court judge decides the appropriate penalty.

Rule two: when a subject is plural, the verb should also be plural.

Examples:

- i) My sisters are Mathematicians.
- ii) Your children sing well.

Rule three: phrases which are titles of books, newspapers, magazines, movies etc. take singular verbs.

Examples:

- i) Things Falls Apart has been read by many Ghanaians.
- ii) The Ghanaian times newspaper sells more than any other newspaper in Ghana.

Rule four: when two singular subjects refer to the same person or thing, the singular verb must be used.

Examples

- i) The teacher and catechist is doing a good job.
- ii) My father and friend hates lazy students.

I explained these concepts to the students very well after which the following sentences were written on the board for students to identify the subjects and verbs in them.

- i) Efe eats everyday.
- ii) The boys are jumping.
- iii) Mr. Ibu is a nice comedy.
- iv) The Agoo magazine centres on issues that bother on the African continent.

The students did the work accurately after which I asked them why the subject: Efe carried the verb eats and not eat. They eat and not eats and The boys are and not is. The students answered the questions correctly. From here the students were asked to form their own sentences and indicate the subjects and verbs in them.

After this, I paired the students to be drilled such that student 'A' formed a sentence, student 'B' stated the subject, and student 'C' identified the verb in the same sentence.

The researcher further gave an activity to ensure that students really understood the concepts that had been thought. Two options were given for students to choose the appropriate one. Students picked the right answers as follows.

Activity: Fill In the Gaps

- i) The student (Sing/sings).
- ii) The birds..... (does/do)

- iii) My teacher and counselor good (Is/are).
- iv) The Daily Graphic newspaper the most in Ghana (sell/sells).

I also further explained to students that **singular nouns joined by ' alongside', 'as much as', 'as well as', 'together with', 'with'** among others take singular verbs and where the subject is plural, the verb will also be plural.

Examples:

- i) Daniel together with his sister goes to church. The answer is goes because Daniel is the subject of the sentence.
- ii) Mary, as well as her friends is beautiful.

The answer is **'is' not are** because Mary is the noun that comes before 'as well as', hence Mary is the subject and it is a singular noun so it must take a singular verb.

- iii) The little kids alongside their parents are here.

The answer is **are** not 'is' because the little kids come before alongside. The subject 'little kids' is plural and for that matter the verb must also be plural.

Through discussion the researcher discussed with students what we call

(SVA) subject verb agreement with compound subjects.

- WHEN subjects are joined by 'and', they are considered plural.

Examples:

- i) **The quarterback and the coach** are having a conference.
- ii) **Kofi and Jane** go to school early.
- iii) **Both Kwame and Ama** come from Juaso.

- If a compound subject refers to two items, which are used as a single unit, the verb must be singular.

Examples:

- i) **Bread and butter** is good for growing children. (bread and butter are considered as one)
 - ii) **Fufu and palmnut** soup is my mother's delicacy.
- If one person is found in a compound subject performing dual role, the verb must be singular.

Examples:

- i) **My mother and advisor** rebukes me anytime I go out to town. (Here my mother is also my advisor). Since the two refer to the same person, the verb must be singular.
 - ii) **My coach and friend** watches every European football match.
- If a sentence compounds a positive and a negative subject, and one is plural and the other is singular, the verb must agree with the positive subject.

Examples:

- i) The teacher, not her students is in class.
- ii) The manager, not many of his workers is here.

After the researcher explained all these rules to the students, she took them through a game called the **think fast game**. Students were asked to move in front of the white board. I read a sentence once for them to identify the subjects and verbs as fast as they can in those sentences. Students who were able to answer correctly were made to quickly sit down till all had had their turns.

Examples included:

- i) It was the speaker, not his ideas, that has provoked the students to riot.
- ii) My brother and mathematician teaches very well.

- iii) Gari and beans keeps the body healthy.
- iv) Aku as well as her peers is humble.

Singular Nouns Ending with ‘S’

Singular nouns that end with ‘s’ take singular verbs because those subjects don’t show plurality. That is how they are originally written. Wherever they are found they are singular.

Examples:

- i) Politics is a dirty game.
- ii) Tuberculosis kills many smokers.
- iii) The series of incidents makes me shudder.

From here, the researcher organized an activity for the students.

Activity

Students were asked to mention some of the singular nouns that originally end in ‘s’ and use them in sentences.

Responses

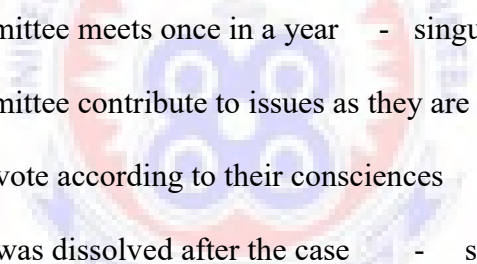
- i) Shingles is a dangerous disease.
- ii) The news from the messenger is unpleasant.
- iii) Physics is an interesting subject.
- iv) Mathematics has many formula.
- v) Linguistics has many branches.

MEASURE 2

NOTIONAL CONCORD

The researcher further explained to students the concept of notional concord. Here, notional concord, we consider the relationship between collective nouns and their verbs. A collective noun is a noun used to refer to a group of people or thing. Example; committee. Team etc. With collective nouns, the context determines whether the verb is singular or plural. If the noun is taken as a unit, then the singular verb will be used but if the members in the group are seen as separate then the plural will be used.

Examples;

- 
- i) The committee meets once in a year - singular
 - ii) The committee contribute to issues as they are empowered - plural
 - iii) The jury vote according to their consciences - group
 - iv) The jury was dissolved after the case - singular

The researcher made students to understand that from the examples, in sentence (i) the committee is taken as one unit that is the individual members of the committee is taken as one not separate entities that is why it has taken the singular verb meets. The second example takes committee as separate that is referring to the individual members in the committee as individuals hence the plural verb contribute. The third and fourth examples also follow the same explanations.

When these explanations were done, students were asked to form their own sentences with the following collective nouns (team, audience, youth, club, and clergy).

Some of their examples are:

- i) The team play well.
Subject - team (plural)
Verb –play
- ii) The team plays well.
Subject – team (singular)
Verb – plays
- iii) The audience is very happy. (singular)
- iv) The audience are going back to their seats. (plural)
- v) Our club is celebrating its twentieth anniversary.(singular)
- vi) Our club are going on a vacation tomorrow.(plural)
- vii) The clergy deserves recognition. (singular)
- viii) The clergy are demanding more incentives. (plural)

The researcher gave ample time for students to practice these. She asked them to create portions in their note books where they will write a sentence a day on this continuously for a month for each student and she supervised daily. Where students went wrong, she corrected them and made them write the correct thing.

SVA with Indefinite Pronouns

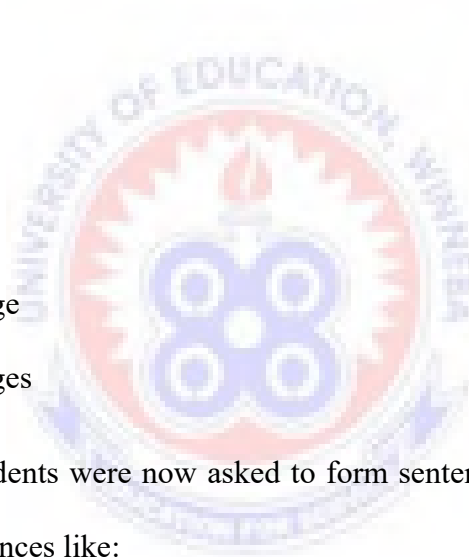
The researcher through question and answer method revised students' previous knowledge on pronouns. She then introduced indefinite pronouns to them. Indefinite pronouns such as **each, anyone, everyone, someone, nobody, no one, everything, everywhere, nowhere, anywhere, anything** and many more take singular subjects.

The researcher used educational games to help students understand this concept. She wrote the indefinite pronouns on a blue manila cards and wrote two options of verbs on a red manila card. Students were then asked to stand in pairs. In pairs, one

student picked an indefinite pronoun from a blue card shows it to the friend and the other picked the verb that matches it from the red manila card. This continued till all students had their turn and they were very happy they had done the right thing.

Examples of verbs on the red manila cards:

- i) Has
- ii) Have
- iii) Want
- iv) Wants
- v) Play
- vi) Plays
- vii) Speak
- viii) Speaks
- ix) Encourage
- x) Encourages



After the game, students were now asked to form sentences with some of them. The researcher had sentences like:

- i) **Everyone has** done their work.
- ii) **Every student comes** to school early.
- iii) **Anyone who wants** to live long must eat well.

MEASURE THREE:

Proximity Concord

With proximity concord, the rule says when a subject of a sentence is initiated by ‘**eitheror**, ‘**neither.....nor**, ‘**not only.....but**’ the noun after these correlative conjunction, that is, the one closer to the main verb is considered to determine the status of the verb.

Examples:

- i) Either Ama or her sisters come here.
- ii) Neither the girls nor the boy is under the table.
- iii) Not only the king but his subjects swear to the gods of the land.

These examples were explained to students vigorously and they were given time to try their hands on them.

To add to the above, and make students understand the concept very well, I made students role play sentence three above. The class choose a king and ten others who were his subjects. The king swore to the gods as well as his subject. When they had all taken their turns, I brought the sentence out again, so you see, **Not only the king but his subjects swear to the gods of the land.**

Students were allowed to form various sentences in order for them to understand the concept very well.

Examples:

- i) Either my friends or my brothers eat fufu.
- ii) Neither the vice principal nor the teachers respect the principal.

3.3.5 Post Intervention

The researcher conducted a post- test to see how far students had understood the concepts regarding the types of concord treated. See Appendix ‘C’.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to derive helpful information from data collated from respondents, the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS- Version 20) was used.

3.4.1 Teachers’ Responses

Responses from teachers were exported from Google forms to the SPSS software through the excel sheet attached to Google forms. Quantitative data was analyzed using the appropriated buttons such as frequency and crosstab. Microsoft excel was used to generate graphs for pictorial representation. Qualitative data were arranged and coded in such a way that similar responses from respondents were not repeated.

3.4.2 Students’ Pre and Post- Tests

Marked scripts per student per question were inputted into SPSS software; “0” for a wrong answer and “1” for a correct answer. Frequencies and percentages were then run to analyze their overall performance as well as their performance per type of concord.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of data gathered from both second year English grammar teachers and students of the Tema Technical Institute. Analysis was done keeping in mind the objectives of this study by providing answers to the research questions posed.

4.1 Background Information of Teachers

Five professional English language teachers, two males (40%) and three females (60%) took part in this study (*See figure 1*). Four (80%) out of five teachers had first degree as their highest educational level whereas one (20%) had a second degree. They all had 10 or more years of teaching experience, one having as high as 25 years of teaching experience (*See figure 2*). Of the total number of teaching experience they had spent between three to twelve years teaching English language in Tema Technical Institute.

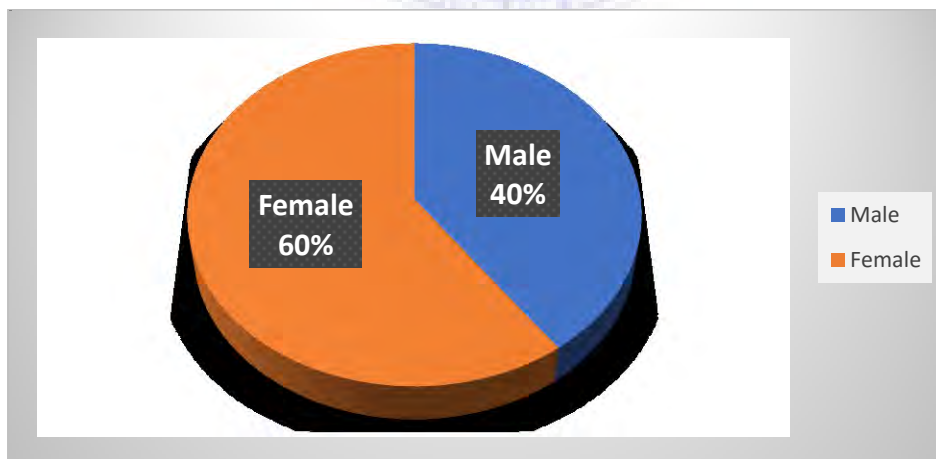


Figure 5: Sex Composition

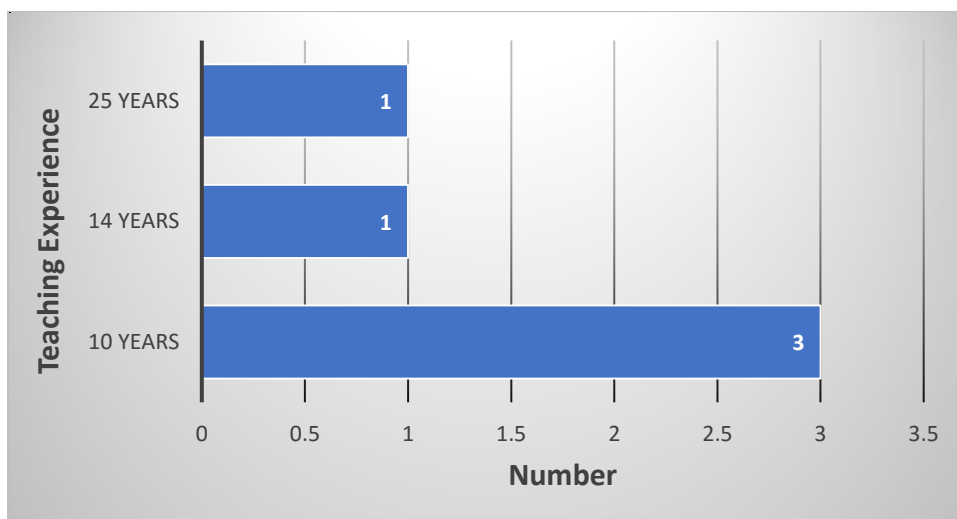


Figure 6: Teaching Experience of Teachers

4.2 Teaching English Concord to Form Two Students

This section looked at the experience of English teachers, the performance of their students, problems encountered during teaching and how to address these problems.

The study revealed that all five teachers sampled for this study had taught concord an aspect of English grammar during the 2019/2020 academic year. It included grammatical concord, notational concord and proximity concord. All five used illustration and discussion as a means of teaching during the academic year. Four (80%) out of five teachers used lectures as a method of teaching and only one (33%) out of three employed games as a method of teaching.

Three (60%) teachers indicated that second year performance of students was average (50-59) % when examined on English concord during the 2019/2020 academic year whereas two (40%) said students' performance was good (60-79) %. It was revealed that no teacher averaged students' performance 80% and above. (See figure 3)



Figure 7: Teachers' response as to the performance of form two students

Four (80%) of teachers indicated that they encountered problems while teaching English concord. The problems were that

- Students use plural verbs for compound noun or pronoun subjects.
- They also get confused with proximity Concord where the noun or pronoun closer to the verb needs to be considered
- Students were confused as to which rule should be applied in different cases

Sampled teachers proposed that students should be given more work to do with much explanations and demonstrations coupled with several examples, students will be able to relate the rules to context. In addition, teachers indicated that students must be encouraged to be conscious of their concord rules when they are speaking.

4.3 Causes of poor performance among form two students

Teachers' point of view was gathered on students' rating on oral conversation, factors that influence the performance in English concord and possible causes of poor performance of students.

Only one teacher indicated that second year students always speak English while in school. The rest indicated that form two students sometimes speak English and not all the time.

Responses to rating students' oral conversation were divergent. Only one teacher stated that second year student's oral conversation in the use of English concord was excellent (90% plus). Another rated their oral language as good (60-79%), another rated average (50-59%) and two teachers rated students as poor (0-49%).

All teachers were of the view that the frequent speaking of English language has a direct influence on their performance in English concord. According to them, when students frequently use the English Language in communication, they get use to the syntax of the language and then become familiar with it. This will aid them to construct very good sentences in both speech and writing they added.

With regard to the causes of poor performance of students in English concord all teachers supported the assertion that weak foundation in English at the JHS level was a factor. However, three teachers (60%) believed that mother's tongue influence was a cause and the same percentage were of the view that inadequate teaching and learning materials was a cause. In addition, two teachers thought that the fear of committing errors prevents students from practicing.

4.4 Key interventions that can be instituted by stakeholders to promote the accurate use of grammatical concord among students

Sampled teachers were asked what groups, namely the Ghana Education Service (main duty bearer), teachers and students, can do to promote the accurate use of grammatical concord among students.

They proposed that the Ghana Education Service should provide more teaching and learning materials such as books on grammar. They also asked for frequent in-service training for teachers. One teacher advised the GES to discourage parents from speaking English Language with their wards when they start talking, since parents fail to adhere to the grammatical rules and teach them the wrong structures of the language.

For teachers, it was recommended that they use more student centered methods of teaching and teach English language exhaustively and motivate them to use the right English structure. Also reading clinics should be organized for students, they added.

For students, they said same must be encouraged to use the English language frequently. They must also make the conscious effort to learn the subject and engage in more practice such as answering questions based on different type of concord.

In all, teachers must take their time and explain the rules of concord very well to the students. Students must also be made aware that there is the need for them to prioritize the learning of English Language as they do for other subjects.

4.5 Test – Overall Performance

One hundred and thirty- nine (139) students took part in an objective test to assess their understanding of subject –verb agreement.

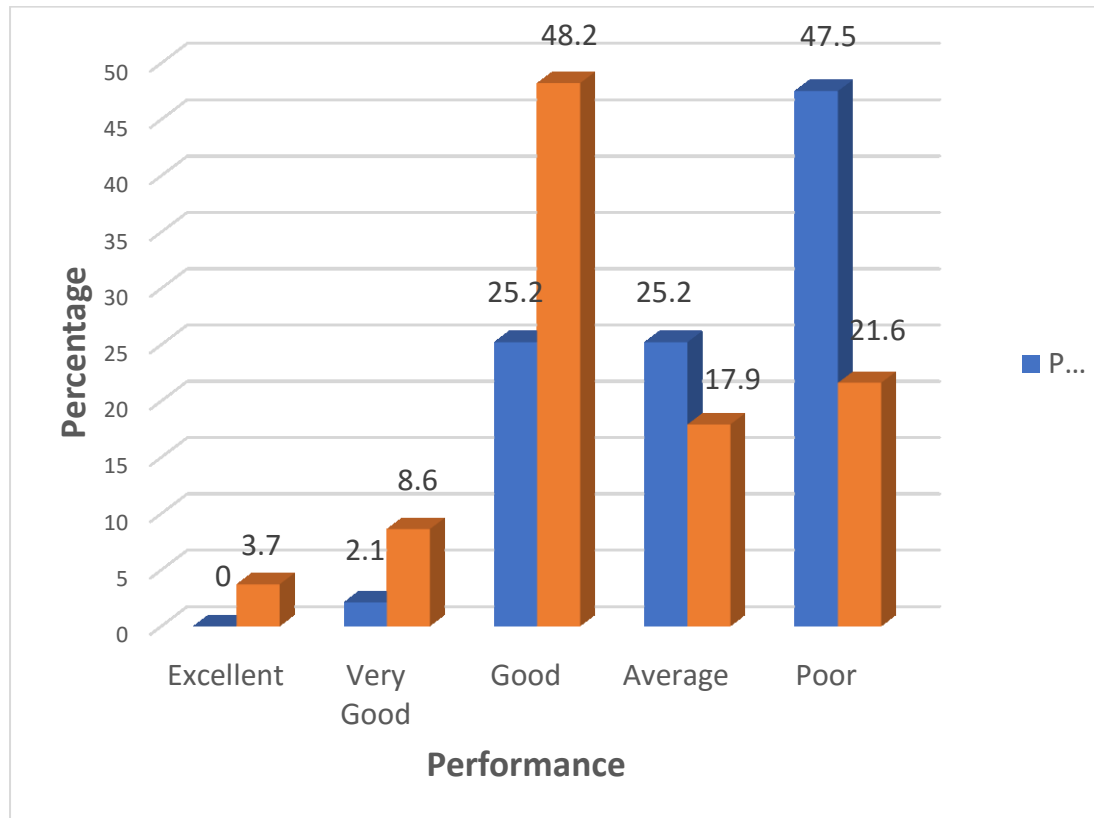


Figure 8: Percentage Performance of Second Year Students- Before and After Intervention.

4.5.1 Before Intervention

Figure 4 shows that majority (66 representing 47.5%) of the students scored poorly, 35 (25.2%) had an average score and same had a good score. Only 3 students scored “very good” and none had an excellent mark. In fact, seventy three percent (73%) scored either “average” or “poor” in the test administered. This shows generally that second year students had a great difficulty with the correct use of subject –verb agreement.

4.5.2 After Intervention

The test results generally improved. Nine (9) students representing 3.7% had an excellent mark, an improvement from no student (0%) before intervention. Moreover, there was an improvement in the number of students who had “very good “score; from 3 (2.1%) to 12 (8.6%) students. On the other hand, the number of students who performed poorly reduced from 47.5% to 21.6%.

4.6 Test – Performance by Type of Concord

Table 2: Test – Performance by Type of Concord 58

Type of concord	Grammatical (% of student)		Proximity (% of student)		Notional (% of student)	
	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Excellent (90% plus)	2.8	3.6	13.7	24.5	4.3	25.2
Very good (80- 89%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good (60 – 79%)	23.8	24.5	30.2	47.5	30.9	43.9
Average (50 - 59%)	32.4	40.3	0	0	0	0
Poor (0-49%)	41	31.6	56.1	28.0	64.8	30.9

4.6.1 Before Intervention

The general performance per type of concord was not good; more than half of the sampled students performed poorly in proximity and notional concord test questions whereas approximately 4 out of 10 students performed poorly in grammatical concord test.

4.6.2 After Intervention

The percentage of students who performed poorly improved from 41% to 31.6% in grammatical concord; 56.1% to 28% in proximity concord and 64.8% to 30.9% in

notional concord. Also the percentage of students who scored excellent marks improved from 2.8% to 3.6% in grammatical concord, 13.7% to 24.5% in proximity concord and 4.3% to 25.2% in notional concord.

4.7 Discussion

Even though none of the teachers rated students' 2019/2020 academic performance in English grammar as poor, two of them stated that students' oral conversation was poor. This poor oral construction in English seem to have been revealed in the use of subject –verb agreement test administered to sampled students as part of this study ; they performed poorly. This is not surprising because majority of teachers stated that they encountered problems teaching English concord. According to teachers, students were confused as to which rule should be applied in different cases.

It is worthy to note that the highly poor performance in notional concord as compared to grammatical and proximity concord errors could be explained by the confusion students are likely to face by the rule covering the use of notional concord. The rule focusses on the idea of numbers rather than the actual display or presence of a grammatical feature as espoused by Sakyi-Baidoo (2002).

In order to be able to address the problem of poor performance, the study sought to find out the causes of such poor knowledge in the correct use of subject-verb agreement. Teachers unanimously agreed that weak foundation in English at the JHS level is major factor among several other causes.

Majority of students communicated in the local language rather than the Standard English language. Some teachers were also of the view that when students frequently use the English Language in communication, they get use to the syntax of the language and then become familiar with it. This aids students to construct very good

sentences in both speech and writing. The view of teachers is corroborated by Tsaddey (1993) who explains that the problem of falling standard of English may be due to some degree of negative attitude towards English by some people who consider the dominance of English in our lives as a sign of cultural enslavement. However, there was a caveat from one of the teachers, the point of view was that parents should be discouraged from speaking English Language with their wards when they start talking, since parents fail to adhere to the grammatical rules and then teach them the wrong structures of the language. Despite the saying that “practice makes perfect” the right grammar must be practiced. Therefore, parents who are not good in communicating in English language should communicate in their local languages to their children.

Another is the mother’s tongue influence and this is corroborated by Pektus (2013) and Brown (2009) who contend that there is an influence that the learners’ first language exerts over the acquisition of a second language. This influence ranges from the level of sounds to meanings.

On the subject of effective way of teaching, Arif and Esen (2000) stated that through well-planned games, learners can practice and internalize vocabulary, grammar and structure extensively. According to them, play and competition that are provided by games enhance the motivation of the students and reduce their stress. Teachers of Tema Technical Institute used a number of teaching methods including lecturing, illustration and discussion. However, teachers hardly used games in the form of play and competition as a method of teaching. The use of games is likely to have enhance students’ motivation to study.

To solve the problem of poor performance, teachers as well as students must contribute towards its success. Teachers must take their time and explain the rules of concord very well to students. Students must also be made aware that there is the need for them to prioritize the learning of English Language as they do for other subjects.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the study which encompasses the identified problem that necessitated the study, the methodology used to answer the research questions through to the findings. It also records relevant recommendations and conclusion inferred from the findings of the study.

5.1 Summary

The study identified that second year students of Tema Technical had poor knowledge on the right use of subject-verb agreement. The study aimed at identifying the causes of the poor performance and designs an intervention measure with the aim of motivating the students to develop positive attitudes towards the study of English concord and to improve their performance in the subject in general.

Questionnaire for teachers and a test for selected students as well as observation of students' communication were tools used to collate data for this study. The poor performance of students especially in the use of notional concord was evident in the test administered to them and this performance was corroborated by their teachers.

Results from the subject-verb test clearly showed that form two students need a lot help. Teachers recommended that the Ghana Education Service should provide more teaching and learning materials and organize frequent in- service training for teachers. They also encouraged teachers to use more student centered methods of teaching and asked students to cultivate the habit of reading wide to broaden their scope of knowledge in the language.

5.2 Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should ensure that only trained teachers are engaged in teaching children starting from the primary level of education. In addition, the Ghana Education Service should supply each pupil with requisite English books to aid comprehension of the English language as a whole with extra focus on the use of notional concord. This will help prepare pupils at the pre secondary level adequately before moving on to the secondary level.

The Ghana Education should also provide adequate teaching and learning materials in the form of textbooks and story books to Tema Technical Institute and all other secondary schools to facilitate the study of concord and other aspects of English Language. Teachers on the other hand, need to resolve to more competitive and techniques of knowledge transfer such as quiz competitions. These quizzes could be organized once a week and winners given English books to further enhance the motivation to learn English language.

Finally, reading groups should be formed and e-books shared online. Since students are known to spend much time on social media, e-books could be shared via social media i.e., face book, twitter, whatsapp, telegram etc. and questions asked by teachers at the end of every week. This practice is likely to aid improve students' understanding of concord and the English language as a whole.

5.3 Conclusion

English language is the first choice of language in most countries as well as the most language used to teach in all levels of education. Moreover, a good command of the English language helps students understand other subjects better since they are also

taught in the English language. A good command of the language is easily cultivated when started at an early age. Teaching of English at the pre secondary level of education should be given the utmost attention.



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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Form 2 English Language Teachers

This study seeks to explore the causes of poor performance of form two students of Tema Technical School in English Concord. The data you provide during this study is primarily for academic purposes. As a result, the confidentiality of your identity and the information you disclose is assured.

Section A: Background Information

1. Sex
Male
Female

2. Highest Educational Level
 - i. Second degree
 - ii. First Degree
 - iii. HND
 - iv. Diploma
 - v. Other(s)
Specify.....

3. Status
 - i. Professional teacher
 - ii. Non-professional teacher

4. How long have you been teaching English language in Tema Technical?
.....
.....

5. Position (Rank).....

Section B: Teaching English Concord to Form Two Students

6. Have you taught an aspect of concord in the 2019/2020 academic year?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

7. If yes, which aspect(s) did you teach?
 - i. Grammatical concord
 - ii. Notational concord
 - iii. Proximity concord
 - iv. Other(s) specify.....

8. What method (s) of teaching did you employ?
- i. Lecturing
 - ii. discussion
 - iii. illustration
 - iv. games
 - v. Other(s)
specify.....
9. How was the performance of students, on the average, when you examined them on concord?
- i. Excellent (90% plus)
 - ii. Very good (80 -89)%
 - iii. Good (60-79)%
 - iv. Average (50- 59)%
 - v. Poor (0 – 49)%
10. Do you encounter problems when teaching concord?
- i. Yes
 - ii. No

11. If yes, what are some of these problems?

.....
.....
.....

12. How can these problems be solved?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Section C: Causes of poor performance among form 2 students

12. How often do form two students speak English in school?
- i. Always
 - ii. Sometimes
 - iii. Not at all
 - iv. Other(s) specify.....
13. How would you rate their oral conversation in the use of concord?
- i. Excellent (90% plus)

- ii. Very good (80 -89)%
- iii. Good (60-79)%
- iv. Average (50- 59)%
- v. Poor (0 – 49)%

14. Are you of the view the frequent speaking of English language has a direct influence on their performance in English concord?

- i. Yes []
- ii. No []

15. Explain your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

16. What do you think are the causes of poor performance of students in concord?

- i. Weak foundation in English at the JHS level
- ii. Mother’s tongue influence
- iii. Inadequate teaching and learning materials
- iv. Other(s) specify.....

17. What key interventions can be instituted by the under listed groups to promote the accurate use of grammatical concord among students?

- i. Ghana Education Service
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.....
.....
- ii. Teachers
.....
.....
.....
.....
- iii. Students
.....
.....
.....
.....

iv. Other Interventions (specify)

.....
.....
.....
.....



APPENDIX B

PRE-TEST.

In each of the following questions select the verb that answers the question in each case.

1. The man..... his children. a) Like b) like's c) likes d) liking.
2. The woman with her childrento farm every day. a) Go b) gone c) goes d) going.
3. Their mother and counsellor.....them on a daily basis. a) Advice b) advises c) have advice d) advised.
4. The boys, as well as their friend.....defensively. a) Drive b) has drive c) drives d) has driven.
5. Either the boy or his siblingshow to cook. A) know b)knows c)have known d) known
6. Either the boys or their sistershow to pound fufu. a) Know b) knows c) have know d) known.
7. Neither Yaa nor her brothers.....everyday. a) Prays b) pray c) is praying d) have pray.
8. The group of students.....on a field trip. A) Are b) were c) is d) have.
9. The jury.....not bias a) were b) are c) is d) have
10. The committee.....every Monday a) meet b) meeting c) metted d) meets

APPENDIX C

POST-TEST QUESTIONS

1. Either the girl or her siblingshow to cook. A. know b.
knows c. known d. is know
2. Either the ladies or their cousinhow to pound fufu. A.
know b. knows c. have know d. known
3. Neither Ivy nor her friends.....every day. a. prays b)
pray c. is pray d. have pray
4. The jurynot bias. A. were b. are c. is d. have
5. The committeeevery A. travels b. travelling c. travel
d. have travelled Ten years in prison not a pleasant
experience. A. is B. are C. were D. have not been
6. Ten years in prison not a pleasant experience. A. is B. are
C. were D. have not been
7. The lady and her children.....the same church. A. attends
b. attend
c. attending d. is attend
8. The chiefhis children. a. love b. love's c. loves
d. loving
9. Adwoato school every day. a. walk b. walks c.
walked d. have walked
10. The childthe truth. a. know b. knows c. known d.
have know