

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

PUNCTUATION ERRORS IN THE ESSAYS OF ADAMU D/A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

PUPILS



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**PUNCTUATION ERRORS IN THE ESSAYS OF ADAMU D/A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
PUPILS**

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**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, FACULTY OF
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MASTER OF EDUCATION IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
(TESL)**

SEPTEMBER, 2018

DECLARATION

STUDENTS'S DECLARATION

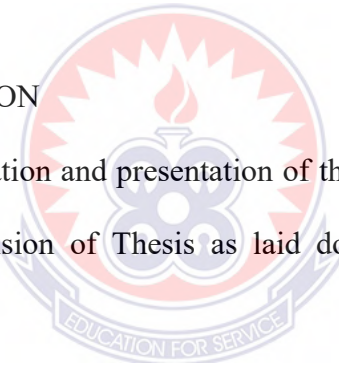
I, VICTOR AMPONSAH declare that this thesis with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE.....

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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 as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



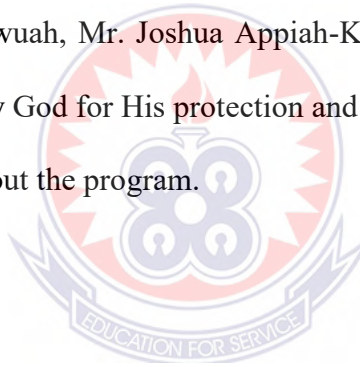
DR. MRS. REBECCA AKPANGLO-NARTEY

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, Mr. Joseph Kankam, who could not live to witness this achievement.



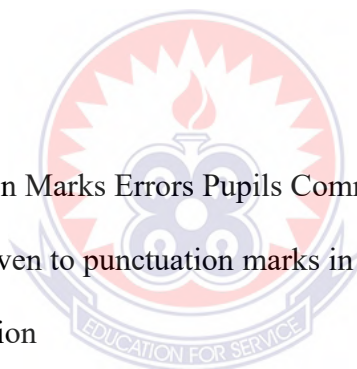
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ABSTRACT

The ultimate aim of this study is to find out the punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils; to ascertain why the pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays and come out with solutions that will help solve the situation. The research design used is participatory action research. Eighteen pupils and two teachers of English were sampled through purposive and simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire, interview, observation and class test were the research instruments employed to collect the data. The results of the findings revealed that the pupils' commonest punctuations errors were overgeneralization, omission and wrong placing of the said marks. The implications of this study to teachers of English are that English teachers need to devote more time to the teaching of punctuations and also need to encourage the pupils to read more story books. In addition, teachers of English in should endeavor to insert the correct punctuation marks at where they ought to be during the marking for the pupils to know how to place them correctly. Lastly, more exercises on punctuations and essay writing should be given to the pupils to practice frequently, for practice they say leads to perfection.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

Many people all over the world speak English Language. A working knowledge of English language in Ghana for that matter is a prerequisite in gaining admission into institutions and acquiring gainful employment. It fosters smooth communication among people who do not speak the same local language as it is the case in a multilingual state like ours. Unfortunately, the performance of Junior High School pupils in English language as a Second Language in recent times has been a source of worry to teachers of English language at all levels. A close look at the results of students in external examinations has raised several concerns in respect to the mastery of the English Language especially in the written language. Basic Education Certificate Examination for example requires the pupils to write an essay for thirty (30) marks out of the hundred (100) marks. This means that one's inability to write an error-free essay will affect the final mark. The unfortunate thing is that, most of the pupils in our basic schools cannot express themselves well in essay writing, and those who try to compose, do so with many errors including errors of punctuations, tenses, subject-verb agreement, spellings and others.

Punctuation marks are conventional signals that help to communicate effectively in written language are mostly absent in the essays of pupils. The punctuation marks indicate how sentences are related to one another. Students are supposed to master how they are used in order to write meaningful sentences. The absence of punctuation marks in a written work, or misuse will slow down reading. This is because the reader must break very often to think and associate meanings to clear up haziness. Punctuation marks hold sentences together as mortar does to blocks, as a result sentences become loose without them.

This research work is meant to investigate the nature of punctuation problems in the Junior High School. This study identifies errors made by the pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School and find out the causes and the solution for the punctuation problems.

The following areas of the study are discussed in the first chapter: background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, and organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

To have students produce a well-organized, eligible, error-free piece of writing has always been the dream and aspiration of all teachers of English Language. If a piece of writing is full of incorrect use of punctuations, reading becomes extremely difficult and boring just as food without salt is tasteless. Without appropriate punctuation marks in sentences, there is certain amount of ambiguity, which will impede comprehension. Sani (2015) is of the view that, the purpose of punctuation marks is to make a clear meaning of sentences. With punctuations appropriately used, the meaning of the text is clearer and concise which fosters understanding. Thus, punctuation plays a vital role in developing writing skills. Punctuation marks are therefore one of the rules that govern written language.

Pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School have been writing essays without using punctuation marks accurately. The evidences are showcased in their essays being it class exercises, home works and end of term examinations. Most of the students write without bringing the full stop, question mark and commas at where they should be. There is therefore the need to look out for the punctuation errors that have added to this poor state of affairs. The researcher seeks to analyze and bring to light the ‘silent killer’, punctuation errors, which some teachers overlook. These errors affect students in the long term. An example is in a situation where a

Junior High School graduate who fails English Language paper is denied access to enjoy free Senior High School education.

There have been several studies on punctuation marks in Ghana and beyond, (Akampirige & Apam, 2014; Amoakohene, 2017; Sani, 2015). Such researches reveal that students at all levels have problems in recognizing punctuations in a text. Those studies were conducted to address the challenges students have with regard to the use of punctuation marks at pre-tertiary and the tertiary level. It has been argued by most linguists that, writing difficulties are not only limited to Second Language learners, but even native speakers as well. The importance of writing error-free composition in students' academic life cannot be overemphasized. The most difficult of the four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is writing, Arama (2010). In spite of the difficulties associated with writing activity, it is a requirement for promotion to the next level in school. The pupils' thoughts and views are expected to be expressed through writings as far as examinations are concerned. This implies that failure to write accurately means one cannot earn the required marks.

The West African Examination Council Chief Examiner's reports (2014 and 2015) attributed students' low performance in English Language to punctuation errors and general basic grammar. Some of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) candidates had very little idea of punctuation marks, and it affected their performance. Examiners get bothered to see students leave their sentences unpunctuated, Chief Examiner's report (2015). This observation trickles down to the primary school and the Junior High School one and two pupils.

In most cases, examiners get frustrated with the many punctuation errors they see in the scripts of candidates. Candidates lose marks as they leave their essays unpunctuated in both internal and external exams. One consequence of punctuation errors in essays leads to what is referred to as carryover. Asamoah-Gyimah (n.d. p: 107) is of the view that carryover occurs when

the mark for a question is influenced by the performance of the previous questions. Generally, carryover effect sets in when candidate's previous work is rated poor (full of punctuation errors) by an examiner. When candidates leave their essays unpunctuated, it creates impressions that often lead their work to be marked down. Examiners are required to do their work with due diligence without prejudice, but as they mark unpunctuated essays, they are tempted highly to rate the candidate's work down. Unpunctuated piece of work can kill the examiner's interest and that may lead to scoring such a work down, thereby affecting the candidate's final grade.

During a school based in-service program for the 2016/2017 academic year, it became known that most of the first year pupils could not read, let alone write. The second year pupils had issues with concord and punctuations. A diagnostic test indicated that, those who could write somehow had difficulties in using punctuation marks appropriately or write without punctuating marks. A twenty-one day intensive reading teaching was rolled out to assist our pupils to solve the reading challenge first, before they were introduced to writing compositions. The results indicated that about sixty percent (60%) of the pupils showed signs of improvement, however it was realized that, it would be of great help to improve the writing skills of the pupils in the school. Punctuation errors were so severe in their essays that it caught the attention of the researcher to venture into this area of study. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to analyze the sources of punctuation errors and suggest appropriate measures to address the problem.

Adamu D/A Junior High School is a school in the Tain District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The school has a population of one hundred (100) pupils and eight (8) teaching staff as at the time of the study. Seven (7) of the teachers are trained professionals. From a humble beginning, the school has chalked many successes in areas of academics and co-curricular activities. Owing to this fact, the school has the most disciplined and dedicated staff

and pupils. Despite all these accolades, it would be an indictment on the school's image if its pupils cannot produce essays devoid of punctuation errors. Owing to this, the competencies of the teachers of English and the other subject teachers in the school would be questioned by all, especially external markers of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) when they mark the scripts of Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils.

The rationale of the National Syllabus for English Language Junior High School 1-3 (2012) states that the status of English Language and the roles it plays in national life are well known. As the official language, it is the language of government and administration; it is the language of commerce, the learned professions and the media. As an international language, it is the most widely used on the internet. Beyond the lowest levels of education, that is, from Primary 4, English is the medium of instruction. This means that success in education at all levels depends, largely, on the individual's proficiency in the language. It is for these and other reasons that English Language is a major subject of study in Ghanaian schools.

In studying the aspect of composition writing, teachers and pupils usually tend to focus on some aspects as the grammatical rules and the writing techniques, but sometimes overlook the essence of surface features particularly punctuation marks. English like any other Language, has rules that governs its usage, and all the rule must be applied in both speech and in writing. In a situation whereby some of the rules are ignored, then its end results will be rated as substandard. When essays of pupils are not punctuated, they score low marks in both internal and external examinations. The researcher thinks that all rules including punctuation marks should be given equal attention as other rules of the English Language.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to lack of competence in the correct use of punctuation marks, which pupils demonstrate in their writings, it becomes difficult in some cases to read their examination scripts

let alone make meaning out of their writings. Pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School lack skills for the appropriate use of punctuation marks. They place the punctuation marks at where they do not belong. In some situations, they omit them at where they ought to be used. When this happens, the intended meaning of their written piece is lost. The pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School have been reading text with correct punctuations, but observation indicates that they have difficulties in inserting punctuation marks at their right places in their own writings. Research into this problem is necessary to give a report on the problem and find solutions to it, yet there have been no such study conducted at Adamu D/A Junior High School in order to solve the problem.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify punctuation errors, why students commit those errors and suggest what can be done to improve upon the use of punctuation marks by the pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

- Identify the punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils.
- Ascertain why the pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays.
- Suggest solutions to help the pupils to overcome the problem.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions were set to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the research:

- What are the most common punctuation marks errors the pupils commit?
- Why do pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays?
- How can the pupils overcome the challenge?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Punctuation marks play a vital role in writing composition. The researcher deems it necessary to re-echo the awareness of punctuation errors, which students commit at all levels especially at the basic level. Several researchers most especially at Senior high schools and the tertiary institutions have created the awareness of punctuation marks errors. It is expected that the outcome of the research will go a long way to assist pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School to identify their errors and assist them to master the use of punctuations marks. This work will assist teachers in the basic schools to be conscious and proactive towards teaching punctuation marks.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

Some of the basic school pupils have problems with regard to the use of punctuations. These errors are showcased in their essays being it exercise, homework or end of term exams. The researcher thought of tackling all punctuation marks, but due to time constraints, not all punctuation marks are covered in this study. This study focused on the basic punctuation marks such as the full stop, exclamation mark, comma, question mark, and apostrophe. The aforementioned marks are enshrined in the basic school teaching syllabus for English Language. This study concentrated on Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils with only twenty participants.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

The researcher could have included all the pupils in the school for the study, but because of time constraints, it was not possible to include all pupils in the school. The findings of this research as a result of its small population cannot be generalized to include all schools in the District and the Nation at large. That notwithstanding, findings of this study might prompt further in-depth work on the issue at stake. The limitation however, does not make the outcome of the study invalid or unreliable.

1.9 Organization of the study

This report is organized into five chapters with each chapter describing an aspect of the study. Chapter 1 focuses on the overview of the thesis by reporting on the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and the significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study and organization of the report. The chapter 2 discusses the review of related literature. Related literature from books, the internet, journal, articles and periodicals are reviewed.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology employed for the study. It includes the study design, study population, research instruments and methods of data collection. The results and findings of the study are captured in Chapter 4. The concluding chapter, which is Chapter 5, is on the summary, conclusion, and recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter encapsulates the review of related literature on punctuation marks and their uses in English Language. It examines language experts' views, and other researchers' work about punctuations. The conceptual framework is also discussed in this chapter. It looks at various punctuations in written work. The key reasons of the review are to review what other researchers have done on issues of the use of punctuation marks and how best teachers of English can help their learners to use them effectively. The related review has been organized under headings such as: English punctuation marks, the basic punctuation marks, errors and mistakes, common punctuation errors, why students commit errors, teaching strategies for curbing the problems, the theoretical framework and the concluding part of the chapter.

2.1 English Punctuation Marks

Punctuation marks are marks used in writing to bring about clarity and to make reading of the write-up flows well. Sani (2015 p. 7) explains that “punctuation marks aid clarity and understanding of written communication”. Also punctuation marks show pauses and stopping points in written piece. As we talk, we always break to rest, and stop when we finish. Punctuation marks serve the same purpose when we write. For example, a paragraph or sentence without pauses will make reading extremely difficult. This implies that for effective spoken or written communication, punctuation marks are required. In a situation in which students wrongly use or fail to use them, understanding is impeded. This results in poor performance in written English.

More to that, Ritter (2001, p. 112) indicates that “punctuation marks exist to clarify meaning in the written word and facilitate reading.” Similarly, Sani (2015) and Irawan (2016) indicate that, punctuations enable us clarify statements and communicate better with readers. Too

much of punctuation can distort meaning, and in the same vein too little can lead to misunderstanding of construction. Indeed it is not an overstatement to conclude that the desired message a writer wants to convey can be lost without punctuation marks. This is very common with the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School. The writer's choice of punctuation is a skill that is important as one's diction (Irawan, 2016). This suggests that the use of punctuation marks must be balanced. As the saying goes too much or too little of everything is bad hence the usage of punctuation marks in write-ups should be regarded as a necessity.

Punctuation marks play the role as pointers in write-ups, Metcalfe & Astle (1980). The pointing role of punctuations is used to break off communication. It is essentially showcased in division of utterances, phrases and clauses. Ataman (2002) and Sani (2015) agree with Metcalfe & Astle in their assertion. Ataman & Sani, went ahead to classify punctuation marks into two main types namely: terminal markers and internal markers. The terminal markers are full stop, question mark, exclamation, exclamation mark which indicate end of sentence or utterance. The internal markers are comma, colon and semi colon which denote the interruption of thought in a sentence. The meaning of a written work depends greatly on the correct placement of punctuation marks.

Ataman (2002), Straus, (2008), and Sani (2015) itemized different types of punctuation marks which entail: full stop or period (.), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), comma (,), semi colon (;), colon (:), apostrophe ('), interred comma (" "), dash (-) and (()). This study focused on the basic punctuation marks such as the full stop, exclamation mark, comma, question mark, and apostrophe.

2.2 The Basic Punctuation Marks

2.2.1 The Full stop or Period

The full stop is a very common end mark and has many other functions. It plays a vital role in written piece. According to Irawan (2016) the main use of the ‘full stop’ is to end a sentence. The full stop is not used after asking a question or exclamation sentence. In the same vein, Rahmawati (2014) describes the full stop as the workhorse of punctuations. It is the most used mark in a written piece of work.

Some of the uses of the full stop include the following: The full stop is used at the end of a declarative sentence. An example is “the boy in black shirt fell down.” It is also used to separate the hour figure, the minutes and the seconds to show time as in “06.26.12 pm.” Another use of the full stop is found in authors’ names, title of papers and place of publications in bibliography. Eg. “*Gelb, I.J. (1952), “A study of writing” London: The University of Chicago Press: P.T, Rijeka Cipta.*”, Rahmawati (2014, p: 14).

To provide more explanation on how to place the period, Smith (2003, p. 121) adds that it should be put in the following circumstances: at the end of an imperative sentence which makes a request, gives an instruction, or states a command. Examples are: “Print your work in the office”, “It is bad to make phone calls while driving” and “Kill the snake, Kofi, before it enters the room.”

The period is also used at the end of a sentence that asks an indirect question. For instance: “Manu asked if I had watched the drama “The dilemma of a ghost”. (Indirect question) also, “my headmaster wanted to know if I had finished my end of term report”. (Indirect question)

Smith (2003) agrees with Bram (1995) that the period is chiefly used in indicating an abbreviation for instance “Thur.” for Thursday, “Mr.” for Mister, “Jul.” for July. Smith indicates

that if the abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence, only one period is used for instance when the abbreviation is followed by a comma, both a period and a comma are used as in “Dufie’s first exam is on Tues., and mine is on the following day”.

2.2.2 The Comma (,)

The next basic punctuation mark under consideration is the comma. “Commas are the most used and misused mark than any other punctuation mark” (Jo and Anthony, 2000:660) as cited by Rahmawati (2014, p: 15). For this reason, Langan (2006) admonishes writers on the need to learn the dynamics of the ‘comma’ as they endeavor to write. Sani (2015) similarly describes the comma as the most commonly required and used yet it is less understood and mostly misused.

The comma has several functions in written work and as a result confuses most of the Junior High school pupils. The comma is used to mark subordinate clauses of a sentence when such clauses are not required to complete the sentence, Rahmawati (2014). An example is: “Hannah came here earlier, looking hungry”. The second use of the comma is to enclose appositives in the form of noun or noun-phrase that explains preceding noun or pronoun as in “Akosua Awuah, the only female child in the family, is expected to read law.” The comma on the other hand, according to Schiffhorst and Schell, (1991) ought to be used with coordinating conjunction (*or, but, and, for, yet, so*) to coordinate two independent clauses. Again, it is required to mark noun phrase in direct speech for instance, “my great friend, what did you say?”

The comma is also useful in dates, to separate the name of the month or day of the month from the year as in: “Adwoa Kisiwaa was born on December 7, 2017 at Ankaase Methodist Hospital”. Sani (2015) adds that the comma is required to mark adjectives or adverbial modifier in a sentence for example: “Shehu is a nice person, quick witted, always having fun with his friends.” In addition, it is used to separate dependent clause for the purpose of avoiding ambiguity in a sentence as in: “While travelling, we saw an amazing monkeys at Fiema.”

The comma also helps to indicate parenthetical expressions that have no direct grammatical function except to improve general meaning in a sentence such as: The youth, on their own, have not been involved in acts of hooliganism. The comma is needed in absolute phrases as in: Breakfast having been served, we went ahead to eat, Ahmad et al, (1999).

Another function of the comma has to do with its interjection role. Langan (2006) explains that the comma plays an integral part in interjection not strong enough to require an exclamation for an example: “Oh dear, how could you do this to me?” It helps to complete enclosure when used in pairs such as: “My actions, which I portrayed in class, were not the best.”

2.2.3 Semi Colon (;)

The semi colon behaves like a flushing red light, telling readers to come to a quick stop. Dyskstra (2007 pg.60) describes the semi colon as a combination of a period and a comma and has a little of both. It is weaker than period and stronger than a comma. It is used to separate two sentences if those sentences are closely related. According to Namme & Smith (1981) cited by Sani (2015, p: 14) the semicolon (;) is used to separate items in a list when the items have several words and often need the use of commas within themselves as in:

“You should remember these things when you go camping: check that all your gear is in order; see that you are equipped for emergencies: if you are trekking over uninhabited country, take a good supply of food; take a first aid kit-you never know when it might be needed and as far as possible, plan your route”, Namme and Smith (1981).

It also indicates pause that is slightly longer than comma. An example is: “Nana Agyei may be requested to present the budget before the board of governors as first; since he will be using the company’s vehicle to travel to Techiman-Agosa in an hour’s time”.

The semi colon is used to divide a sentence which consists of two balanced statements: An example is: “Damoah did most of the work; and he was rewarded for his resilience”. Sani (2015)

opines that, semi-colon is also used as separation device before certain adverbs e.g. however; nevertheless; hence; moreover etc.

2.2.4 The colon (:)

Colon is like an announcement that says important information is coming. The colon is used after a main clause where the following statement explains the content of the clause. It may be replaced by a semicolon, or a full stop, Essel (2007). An example of use of colon is: “the house has been neglected for a long time: it was very dirty and full of cobwebs.” On the other hand, Oshima & Hogue (2006) claim that, “the colon is used at the end of statement to introduce a list, an appositive, a long quotation and an explanation.” They added that colon is also used before a long list, and often introduced by phrases like: “such as”, “as follows”: and “for instance”: Similarly, the colon is used in reference to publications. It is found in footnotes and bibliographic references, inserted between the place of publication and the name of the publisher as in: “Stanley R. (1962) Poetry II New York: Macmillan Company Ltd.”

Lastly, the colon is used between chapter and verse in scriptural references such as: John 10:30.

2.2.5 The Question Mark (?)

The question mark is used at the end of a direct question. Question marks are not supposed to be used at the end of indirect question. Rahmawati (2014, p: 15) outlines two main functions of question mark. The first, use of question mark is to ask only direct question. Example: “Will you go home with me?” Secondly, question mark is used when the sentence is half statement or half question. Example: “You trust me, don’t you?”

Essel (2007, p: 69) suggests that, the question mark is also used in parenthesis () to express doubt.

2.2.6 Exclamation points (!)

We use exclamation points to show expression of surprise or emphasis. This kind of punctuation mark is very strong in showing expression. This mark is required at the end of sentences or remarks expressing a high degree of joy, anger or other strong emotion, Essel (2007). Therefore, it is not advisable to use exclamation points in formal situation, Langan (2006) asserted.

2.2.7 Quotation mark (“”).

Quotation marks play a major key in citations. The quotation marks are used in quoting someone else’s speech, Rahmawati (2014). There three functions of the quotation marks are as follow: First, it is used in direct quotations that are repeated verbatim. For example: Adu said, ‘I hate rice’. As a result, quotation marks are not used to enclose indirect quotations, Kosur (2013). Any statements that are paraphrased from direct quotation should not take the quotation marks. Rahmahwati (2014) and Sani (2015) agree with the above assertion that under no circumstance should the quotation be placed haphazardly.

The second function of quotation marks are that they feature predominantly in titles of minor works and parts of wholes. Minor works and parts of whole include short stories; magazine; plays; speeches; television and radio shows. Major works like books; magazines; newspapers; journals; and other periodicals should not have quotation marks around, rather italics or underline should be used, Kosur (2013).

Thirdly, quotation marks are used to highlight novel uses of words and phrases. For example: The motherboard is also referred to as the “brain” of the computer. The quotation marks are used to indicate words or phrases which are purposely misused or used ironically. As in, His “friend” brought about his downfall. Kosur (2013) adds that the quotation mark should

not be used after introductory elements such as so-called or supposed. Example is: His so-called “friend” brought about his downfall instead of His so-called friend brought his downfall.

2.2.8 Apostrophe (’)

The apostrophe is usually used to show possession. However, apostrophes also have other functions in writing. In the first place, we use apostrophe with contractions. Example: “He isn’t a bad teacher” instead of, “He is not a bad teacher.” Contractions are accepted in informal write-ups but not in formal writings. In the case of question tags and answer tags, the contracted form of the verbs features prominently, English Language teaching syllabus (2012).

Secondly, an apostrophe is used to indicate possessive form of a noun. This indicates that something belongs to someone or denotes a relationship with another person. Example include: Asare’s phone. The apostrophe is also used after the second noun in order to show people possess the same item. Example: Ebo and Maria’s job contract will be renewed next year, Rahmawati (2014).

According to Manser (2006), “singular nouns ending in s, x, or z, the apostrophe may or may not be followed by ‘s’. The general rule is that possessive nouns are formed by adding ‘s’ to a singular noun (the boy’s shoe, the people’s choice). In the case of plural nouns that end in ‘s’ the possessive noun is formed by adding a final apostrophe (a bees’ nest, the solders’ barracks; five years’ experience).

2.2.9 Hyphen (-)

One dynamic punctuation mark is the hyphen. According to Ataman (2002:p78), hyphens are used to join words. Meanwhile, hyphen has various functions. They are also used to join prefixes, suffixes, and letters to words. Irawan (2016) underscores two main functions of hyphen. Firstly, it is a requirement that we hyphenate all compound numbers from twenty-one through ninety-one. Example: “Mr Mensah had thirty-two children in her classroom.” Another use of

hyphen is that, it is placed after prefixes. Example: re-tell. The hyphen hyphenates all words with ‘self’ at the beginning. Example: Self-respect, self-assured. Again, the hyphen is used to match the prefix “ex”. Example is: His ex-wife will come to your birthday, Irawan (2016).

From the above discussion, it is worth noting that punctuation marks have various functions. A punctuation mark can have two or three functions in writing sentences with different aim of the sentence. It is important that English language learners study the functions of punctuation mark especially for the purpose writing. The students must understand how to apply every kind of punctuation in all writings.

2.3 Errors and mistakes in essay writing

In essay writing, pupils/students make errors and mistakes. They do so because they do not know, or forget to use all the rules governing writing. Abound (2009) explains that, errors occur as a result of competence deficiency due to the incorrect storage of rules in the learner’s mind. The errors occur because language learners do not understand the rules of the language or are confused when writing essays. Mistakes and errors in composition writings are not only limited to second language learners, but inherent speakers as well, Amoakohene (2017).

Errors and mistakes have been distinguished by language experts. Brown (2001) admits that mistakes occur in essay writing or speaking due to fatigue, lack of concentration and carelessness. According to Brown, mistakes are often self-corrected when attention is drawn to. When a writer is prompted, they realize their mistakes and do justice with it. The fellow who commits mistakes might be privy to the right rules as it is in the case language learning. As Abound (2009) puts it, errors are not corrected suddenly by the writer or speaker because the learner does not know the correct pattern. In the case of Adamu D/A JHS pupils, their essays could be attributed to both punctuation errors and mistakes.

2.3.1 Common punctuation errors

Several authors and researchers have concluded that the commonest punctuation errors are the comma and the full stop. Rahmawati (2014) aptly identified that common errors made by students are the wrong use of the period, comma, question mark, quotation mark, omission and exclamation point. Students forget to bring them in their compositions. In some cases, students place them wrongly. The comma is said to be the most misused punctuation mark due to misunderstanding.

In addition, Apam & Akampirige (2014) asserts that Polytechnic students in Ghana have greater challenges in identifying punctuation in written texts as well as using these marks. The colon and the semi colon are wrongly used interchangeably. The misapplication of colon and semi colon in their essays was because of confusion about the functions of the former and the latter. Akampirige's research reveals that 10% of his subjects could not use the colon and 13% of the population failed to use them in their write up. Omission of the colon and the semi colon were prevailing error they realized in the write-ups of the participants.

From the foregoing, there seems to be some disagreement between authors about the most common punctuation mark that students use wrongly. According to Sudilah (2015 p.92), the comma and the apostrophe are the leading punctuation marks that are mostly misused. These punctuation marks required extra care when using them. Gaines (2002) on the other hand, has stated that students think that the comma goes everywhere there is a pause in a written piece. This has nearly caused most of the Second Language learners to commit mistakes in using the comma. Per the observations so far, the researcher of this current study, belongs to the school of thought that claimed the comma has the highest frequency of errors in students' essays.

Award (2012) and Khansir (2013) reveal that aside the wrong use of the comma, which has the highest occurrence, the omission of the period or the full stop poses a challenge for

students. The use of the full stop was found to be a challenge for young learners than the adults. The full stop and the comma were omitted in the essays of the participants of their research. This suggests that the full stop is a common error in children's write-ups than adults.

The findings from the researchers above, confirm that a great number of students had issues with the correct use of comma, semi colon, apostrophe, quotation mark, and hyphen. The most dominating errors made by students were the omission and misuse of the commas and the full stop in their writings. The findings of Rahmmati (2014) confirmed previous studies such as that of Award (2012) and Khansir (2013) that Second Language learners had issues with the correct usage of punctuations though some native speakers had some challenges with punctuations as well.

2.4 Why Students Commit Errors

The reasons students commit errors are numerous. Abound (2009) attributes some of the reasons students commit errors to: overgeneralization, simplification as a result of redundancy, developmental, communication, and overproduction. Yang (2010) on the other hand claims that, learners' errors, to a large degree, are not only caused by the influence of their mother tongue; instead, their errors reflect some common learning strategies.

Owu-Ewie & Lomotey (2016) differ a bit from Yang (2010) and maintains that the mother tongue actually has great influence as far as errors are concerned. Owu-Ewie & Lomotey observed that English Language (L2) writers employ their local Language (L1) skills in writing the English Language (L2). The structure of other languages especially the Akan Language differs from the English language and yet, Second Language learners convert their writing system into another. An example is in the case of Akan language. In writing Akan, the writer makes use of the apostrophe to show possession and contraction at the same time. A learner can easily transfer this use of apostrophe in the L1 into English Language writing in all situations. As in:

“ɔkraman no gyaa n’aduane no hɔ”, “The dog left it’s food there” instead of “The dog left its food there.” Most pupils are already confused with the functions of the apostrophe so they transfer their Local language into the target language.

Teachers’ intervention in language development of their students cannot be overemphasized. Some teachers lack the basic skills to deliver as expected in teaching English Language. They have challenges in areas like grammar practice, getting students to speak and write and giving instruction for classroom activities, (Kumi, 2014.p 107).

Most Ghanaian teachers employ the traditional, whole-class, and teacher centered methods. The ‘look and say’ as used in teaching reading to Grammar-Translation which focuses heavily on teaching rules of the language into parts. This does not encourage students to communicate in the target language because the above methods do not give students the opportunity to practice, (Kumi, 2014 p: 27).

Many students get confused when it comes to correct usage of punctuation marks, and these range from lack of exposure to negligence on the part of writer. Horsu (2014) cited Meyer (1965) that, teachers observe punctuation accuracy as the difference between good and bad writing. Meyer therefore recommended that writing error free composition requires students to use the various punctuations in their write-ups. Robinson (2002) argues that, students easily forget punctuation rules. Robinson further stated that, most writers lack the knowledge of punctuation hence commit errors.

From the above statements, teachers have a great deal of work to help their students to reduce punctuation errors. However, other researchers have different views on the sources of student’s errors in writing. Abound (2009) opines that, learners’ cognitive and personal learning styles may affect the correct use of language. He cited Taylor (1975) that, the student’s mental and physical process could be a source of error. He mentioned overgeneralization, convergent

structural analysis, and formal item conflation as some of the sources of errors. Usually students write better as they progress in their education, so to some extent students errors may be attributed to the fact that they are not developed mentally and physically. Hence we expect students to write better as they climb the academic ladder.

2.5 Teaching Strategies for Curbing the Problem

To use punctuation marks correctly is not an easy task for Second Language Learners, and is acquire not only by learning, but continuous practice. Punctuation rules are to be adhered to as one writes. Since Rome was not built in a day, correct usage of punctuation and mastery cannot be achieved overnight; but through constant practice. Moy (1996) claims that, “punctuation is not as uniform and prescriptive as it was believed; therefore teaching this sub-skill can fall into a mechanical, monotonous abyss”. Teachers of English should endeavor to encourage their learners to read wide. In the same vein, students should be guided to discover more on punctuation on their own. Discovery learning is lasting and sustains students’ interest in learning, Angelillo (2002). This underscores why learners get motivated when they are able to solve or find answers to a puzzling learning situation. Through constant trials, they improve gradually thereby improving their competencies as in the case of essay writing. Horsu (2014.p 18) establishes that, challenging tasks should be given thus allowing the pupils to have a feel of error-free English, such as reading newspapers, listening to news and administering a punctuation test.

On the other hand, Arama (2010) recommended that the following techniques could help reduce if not curb the situation (punctuation marks errors). She admonishes teachers to devote enough time and effort when dealing with punctuation marks. Consequently, teachers should not teach punctuation marks as a fixed or separated aspect during the writing classes, but rather place it within the course. Students should recognize the importance of punctuation marks, and should be informed regularly that the more they use them, the more they will produce better piece of

writing. Moreover, Teachers should encourage students to place punctuation marks whenever they write by creating activities to make use of these crucial marks. Teachers of English should also motivate students to apply the necessary punctuation marks in their compositions by giving good marks to those who apply them rightly. The teacher as the pivot in teaching and learning process should equally punctuate their write-ups on the chalk/marker board so that their learners would emulate.

The above recommendations largely can bring about the change this study seeks to effect. Angelillo (2002) opined that, children usually forget to use punctuations. This is because punctuations are taught as rules instead of functions. When the pupils understand the role punctuations play, it reduces the errors they commit in the essays. Primary school teachers should endeavor to expose the concept of punctuation to pupils at formative years and not under the carpet with the reasons that their pupils are immature to understand the use of punctuation marks, Horsu (2014) asserted.

The poor performance of the students in the written language is a common phenomenon at all levels. Horsu (2014) carried out a research on problems associated with the use of punctuation marks in the essays of SHS 2 students using St. Peters Senior High School as a case. The researcher considered activities such as punctuating a given text and writing essays on quite a number of topics. In that study, students were given the chance to observe how various texts were punctuated under the guidance of the researcher.

The researcher made use of questionnaires as an instrument of data collection. As an Action Research, she made good use of the pre-intervention, intervention and post- intervention stages. The researcher did well by providing her participants with a material to go through in the course of the study. Amoakohene (2017) on the other hand, provided tuition for the participants for two semesters before starting the study. This study will adopt both approaches. Though

interviewing the teachers and pupils on the issue of punctuation would have enriched the research, Horsu (2014) did not include not include interviews. The result of the research showed that students had more problems at the pre-intervention stage with the use of punctuation marks and could use the comma, and semi colon at the expense of others such as the colon and apostrophe. There were some significant improvements after the intervention stage. The finding also revealed that teachers of English Language did not teach punctuation as a separate topic.

Critically, the researcher tried her best to find out the problems associated with the use of punctuation marks of students. The more room for practice that Horsu employed actually helped the participants to showcase great signs of improvement. The interventions employed in the above mentioned achieved the purpose for which they were used.

2.5.1 More questions on punctuations

A research on the effects and the use of punctuation marks on the essays performance of SS2 students in selected schools in Kano State was carried out by Sani (2015). The participants of this research were from Rumfa College and Government Senior Secondary School Gwammaja. The population was one thousand (1,000) while the sample was one hundred (100). The instruments were teacher constructed objective test and an un-punctuated passage to be punctuated. The variables tested were the full stop, comma, colon and semi-colon. The choice of these variables was based on the belief that it was hardly if not impossible for one to write appropriately in English or understand the same without properly applying these punctuation marks.

The participants of this research study were randomly selected. The data for the research were mainly collected from the tests given to the students. T-test and ANOVAs were used to analyze the data collected in testing the four hypotheses formulated. The hypotheses were formulated to investigate the effect of the said variables on the essay performance of the subjects.

The finding indicated that there was significant effect of the variables on essay performance of the subjects, as T calculated was greater than T critical. He opined that practice based approach should be used in teaching and learning punctuations. Students' essays ought to be marked promptly and their scripts should be discussed with them as a measure to curb the problem.

Sani (2015) recommends that, the National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Examination Council (WAEC) should start setting questions on punctuation marks and the various stakeholders should start accessing new findings via university authorities. Sani's work was in line with Neda (2012) to some extent. Neda shared similar views that, language department in higher learning institutions should be interested in punctuation related issues. Award (2012) and Amoakohene (2017) argue that students or pupils should be introduced to punctuation marks as early as possible so that they can master and use them well in composition writings. From all angles, the researcher, Sani did justice to the work and could achieve the purpose of his study but the variables tested should have included basic marks like the question marks and the apostrophe since even primary school pupils often use them. This current research seeks to include question marks and apostrophe that Sani did not capture. Again, the scripts that were marked and discussed promptly with the participants actually helped the subjects to improve, would be taken into accounts in this study at the methodology section.

2.5.2 The importance of practice in teaching and learning punctuations

To have students write with least or no punctuation errors is the heart desire of every teacher of English. One critical way of ensuring accuracy in the use of punctuation marks is to practice constantly. According to Arama (2010) and Sani (2015), the possibility of more practice, in addition to theory, improves performance. As the popular saying goes "practice makes perfect." With regard to the use of punctuation marks such as the comma and the period, one has to master the rules in order to have a good punctuated piece of writing. For this reason, Arama

administered teacher's questionnaire, which helped to know the teachers' point of view as far as punctuation is concerned. Arama also conducted a pre-test and a post-test with a sample of 15 second-year English students at the Department of Languages, University of Constantine.

The first thing Arama did at the pre-test stage was to give the participants of her work several unpunctuated text that needed only commas and periods to be inserted. After adding an extra practical tuition, the same participants received the post-test similar to the pre-test and were asked to place the previously mentioned marks correctly. Punctuation lessons were practically taught in context. Participants of the study were assigned to work in groups and individually. Arama believed in peer teaching, so she allowed the participants to do collaborative work in order to master the use of punctuation marks. The obtained results confirmed the hypothesis which stated that students would produce better writing if they were given more practice on punctuation marks, especially the very frequently used ones.

Practice leads to perfection, and frequent use of punctuation marks are no exception. Arama (2010) agrees with Allen (2002) that constant practice will reinforce the mastery of punctuation usage. Arama believes that more time should be given for the learners to practice after every lesson. There is always a high level of retention when pupils are challenged constantly in a learning situation. For this reason, this study will focus more on constant practice on the use of punctuation marks in the intervention stage to test the validity of the above mentioned authors' methodology whether or not those strategies would work best with the participants of this study.

2.6 The Theoretical Framework

Kumbo (2006 p. 57) defines theoretical framework as "a collection of interrelated ideas based on the theories". It seeks to get a general set of assumption about the innate characteristics of occurrences in their natural world. To fathom conjectural bases, analyses of theories need to be established. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Quirk's (1973) idea of

punctuation. Quirk (1973 p. 458) theorizes that “punctuation serves two main functions. The first one has to do with successive, such as sentences that take periods, or items in a list by commas. They include units like parentheses which mark off an interpolated phrase or clause. The second function indicates separation of language function as in the case when an apostrophe indicates that its inflexion is generative.

This statement by Quirk suggests that for one to write and get others to understand, then, one has to use punctuation marks to separate sentences, clauses, phrases and items in a list. In addition, one has to use the above mentioned marks so as to have a comprehensive written piece which would eventually avoid lack interest and attention by readers. Quirk’s theory in relation to the use of punctuation marks will be very useful to this study. Having considered and identified the coverage the theory gives to punctuation marks, this study will employ this as a model to explaining the collected data.

2.7 Conclusion

It is obvious from the reviewed literature that punctuations in the English Language are reasonably multifaceted. This complexity often leads to confusion in the minds of the student. Consequently, most of our students use punctuation marks in their writings wrongly or fails to use them. Gaines (2002), Menand (2004), and Horsu (2014), vehemently admit that the comma is among the punctuation marks which present a great challenge to students. The comma is the most versatile punctuation mark. It requires skillful writers to achieve its different communicative purposes. The cautious use of punctuation marks would therefore require commitment and due diligence. The strategies must be judiciously selected to meet the learner’s precise needs.

Notwithstanding, the fact that information provided by the language experts is readily available information to be used for any remedial purposes, there are some limitations in their applicability in some specific situations for instance, the environment and the cognitive level of

the learners are not the same. Teachers are fond of teaching the punctuation marks in isolation instead of teaching them in context. Likewise, the punctuation marks are not treated as a separate topic by most of the teachers of English, so this makes it difficult for pupils to apply them well when they write their compositions, Owusu (2009).



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The methodology section of this study explains the research procedures. It encapsulates the research design, the population, the sampling technique and procedure, the data collection instruments, and the data collection procedure. The researcher used frequency tables and percentages for the analysis.

3.1 The Research Design

This part deals with the planning and the form of the study. It is the design that assists the researcher in the process of collecting data in a cost effective manner. Gay (1992) observed that the research design outlines the blueprint of a study, the nature of the hypotheses and the variables involved in the study. It outlines the process of planning and organizing the form of a research to achieve valid and reliable results. It comprises the arrangement conditions for collecting and analyzing data. Secondly, it guides the researcher in the process of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of observations made in the cause of the research. Owu-Ewie (2012.pg.99) opines that there are two main kinds of research designs and they are the practical action research and participatory action research as cited by Horsu (2014). The design for this study is a participatory action research. The aim of this participatory action research is to improve the quality of situation in human institutions. This study is an action research which was carried out in Adamu District Authority Junior High School, Tain District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The researcher, in the course of work observed the various challenges the pupils faced with regard to the use of punctuations in essay writing and tried finding solutions to arrest the situation. The ultimate aim of this work was to assist the pupils to improve upon their writing skills so as to overcome the errors they commit in their essays. This, the researcher believes will

go a long way to enhance their writing skills. This design was used because it provides the best opportunity to the study in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data as the study is ongoing.

3.2 Population

The population of this research is the pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School. Creswell (2013, p.142) said that “population is a group of individuals who have same the characteristics” Similarly, Ary et al (2002) explains population as the entire group of individuals in which the results of a study apply. It is the group the researcher intends to study. The population of this study consists of pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School. The reasons for selecting this population is that they are within the same age bracket and show similar difficulties in using punctuations in their essay writing. The total number of pupils in the school at the time of the study was one hundred (100). Consequently, the target population was JHS one (1) and two (2) pupils as well as two teachers of English in the school. In addition to the pupils, teachers of English of the above school served as respondents to the study. Their selection was based on the fact that they were the ones who teach English Language in the school.

3.3 Sample

As the entire students’ population was not easily accessible, there was the need to get some of the students to be as representatives. Amedehe (2002) opines that, sample is a selected subset of the unit that is part of the population. In this study, pupils in JHS one (1) and two (2) were sampled. The researcher chose the JHS one (1) and two (2) pupils because they were not candidates as their JHS three (3) counterparts who had few days to write their external exams, Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Also the JHS one (1) and two (2) pupils had the same level of development so far as English Language is concerned. They all had similar traits when it comes to wrong use and omission of punctuations in their essay writing. The

sample size was made up of twenty (20) participants. The study consists of eighteen (18) students and two (2) teachers of English.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in the sampling process to select the target population. The teachers of the English were purposively sampled because they are in charge of the teaching and learning of the language in the school. In the case of purposive sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites to study or understand a phenomenon, (Creswell, 2013). Kumi (2014) also claimed that “purposive sampling helps researchers to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment and typicality.” For this reason, the researcher obtains a sample that will meet a desired outcome.

The random sampling technique provides the participants an equal chance for selection. Horsu (2014) buttresses that, random sampling technique allows each member of the population an equal opportunity to be selected. The researcher used cut pieces of paper labeled ‘IN’ or ‘OUT’ and then placed them in a small box for students to select. Those who picked ‘IN’ had the chance of being part of the sample of the study. In a nutshell, eighteen students were selected randomly. This method ensures free and fair as oppose preconception just as (Kumi, 2014) asserted.

3.5 Research Instruments

The research instruments used in collecting of data for this research were the questionnaires, observations and interviews. These instruments were used because they foster validity and reliability. According to Ary et al (2002:67) as cited in Kumi (2014:58), an interview and questionnaire are the two primary ways in which data collected in research. Observation on the other hand provides first-hand information on the behavior and activities of individuals at research site, (Creswell, 2013).

3.5.1 Questionnaire

In order to answer the research questions, it was important to design questionnaire to elicit the views of the participants. Questionnaire is used in a survey design so that subjects in a research work will complete and return it to the researcher, Kumi (2013). In the questionnaires, participants are expected to supply the desired responses.

The items in the questionnaires were close-ended and open-ended questions. The desire for close-ended questions was influenced by the fact that closed-ended questions are easy to construct and code, Cohen *et al* (2003).

The questionnaires for the pupils contained seven (7) items. The items were geared towards finding out whether or not they have fair idea on punctuation marks and their views about them. Others include; those that pose challenges to them and what they think can be done to improve upon the errors they commit with regard to punctuations. Similarly, thirteen items were constructed to illicit the views of the teachers of English about the challenges of punctuations of their pupils. They were indeed requested to offer solutions to address the problem. The questionnaires were discussed with the respondents before they were administered.

3.5.2 Interview

Questionnaires do not provide absolute details of specific situation, the researcher thought of conducting interviews to complement the information acquired. Creswell (2013) defined an interview survey as a form of data collection in which the researcher conducts face-to-face interactions with participants, generally with open-ended questions to elicit their views and opinions of the participants. The questions asked were relevant to the study. Ary *et al* (2002) posited that an interview is used to collect data on subjects' opinions, beliefs, and attitude about the phenomena. A Semi-structured interview was conducted for the students and teachers in focus group. Permission was sought from the headmaster and the master in charge of Physical

Education. The Physical Education period was used to meet the participants for the interview. The participants were interviewed in groups because of time factor, but there was fruitful interactions with them before the purpose of the interview were announced. This set the pace for the main purpose of gathering to commence. The participants were very cooperative at this point.

Students were made to understand the purpose of the interview. The students were also made to speak one after the other to make the information valid to the researcher.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher. Everybody in the sample population took part in the discussion which provided a diversity of views. The responses were handwritten alongside tape recording to avoid loss of data.

3.5.3 Observation

In order to have a feel of the phenomena, the researcher resulted to the use of observation. This was because the researcher wanted to gather firsthand experience of the situation. Amedahe (2002) Creswell and (2013) agree that observation is a method of data collection that employs vision as its means of collecting data. In observational studies, researchers collect data on the current status of subjects by watching them, listening and recording what they observe rather than asking questions about them, Creswell (2013) asserted. The researcher became an active observer so that he could have a clear picture of what happened in the class. One lesson was observed in each of the two selected classes to see teaching the learners' attitude toward punctuation lessons and also the teachers' techniques in delivery. The teachers were expected to treat punctuation marks and give room for the pupils to practice what have been taught. The data required was obtained with the help of an observation guide. The teachers' teaching and learning materials and usage, pre-delivery, delivery and post-delivery activities were looked out for. The information showed that the teaching methods related issues were partly responsible for the pupils' punctuation errors.

3.6 Class Test

As part of data collection, class test was employed. According to Arikunto (2006), a test can be described as series of questions or other instruments, which are used to measure a group's skill, knowledge, intelligence, capability or talent. Here, the researcher used a test to know and identify the errors made by pupils in placing punctuation marks. The scripts of the participants were observed as how they make good use of punctuation marks in their composition work. Samples of the wrong use of punctuations were selected for better appreciation of the phenomena. This was the primary source of data. The second source has to with the questionnaire and interview which were employed with the aimed of eliciting the views of teachers and students on the challenges associated with the use of punctuation marks. Responses were critically examined both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.7 Pre-intervention

This is the stage that provides the platform to diagnose the extent of the prevailing situation. As such, the participants were tasked to write series of essays. Arama (2010) agrees with Sani (2012) that the pre-intervention in a study is mainly concerned with the analysis of feedbacks in order to determine the current state of the problem. At the pre-intervention stage, eighteen pupils from form one and form two were asked to write a letter to their pen-pals telling them about their school. This was to ascertain their difficulties in using the basic punctuation marks. In this step, the researcher tried to find out all the punctuation errors in the pupils' essay. The errors made by the pupils consist of full stop, comma, apostrophe, question mark and the exclamation marks and the rest. The errors identified were as a result of omission, addition, and misunderstanding. It was found out that, the pupils did not know much about the uses of punctuations. For this reason, they were examined on the full stop, comma, exclamation, question mark, and apostrophe mark. This set the pace for the intervention to take place.

3.8 Intervention

Having identified the various errors associated with the use of punctuation marks, the researcher helped the pupils on how to use the various punctuation marks especially those under consideration in this study. Horsu (2014) opined that, series of activities are required at this stage. These activities and strategies were backed by literature. In other words, the various activities should have been tested and proven.

This study adopts Mayo et al (2000) strategies in curtailing the challenge. Activities such as extra tuition on punctuation in an interactive manner, home works /assignments and regular class task and language games on punctuations were performed. More time was devoted to address the weakness of the pupils with regard to punctuations. The full stop, comma, question mark, exclamation mark and the apostrophe were the punctuation marks under study. Each of the aforementioned marks were discussed and explained in context with the participants. The pupils were assisted through various activities such as punctuating a given text and also guiding them through pre-writing activities before they write compositions. These activities helped them to master the basic punctuations. Through constant practice they could identify their peers' mistakes as well as theirs. This was in line with Arama (2010) and Sani (2012) idea that practice is as essential as well as teaching punctuation. It was realized after two weeks that, most of the pupils could use the punctuation marks better than before. The questions posed to them were answered satisfactorily, though few of them had some challenges. As part of consolidating the punctuation marks, more demanding tasks were given to the pupils.

3.9 Post-intervention

Here, the researcher's concern was to verify whether the interventions yielded the desired results or not. According to Arama (2010) the main purpose of the post-intervention in action research is to test the ability of the participants whether the intervention employed went down

well with the participants. The researcher deemed it appropriate to assess their competency in the application of punctuation marks in another test. At this point, majority of the respondents were able to punctuate a text correctly. The motivation and encouragement employed at this stage aroused the pupils' interest in the topic. As a result, they were completing more tasks on their own.

3.10 Conclusion

The methodology of this study employed participatory Action research design with JHS one (1) and two (2) pupils and teachers of English in Adamu D/A Junior High School as the population. Eighteen pupils and two teachers of English were sampled to be participants through purposive and simple random sampling technique. The instruments used were class test, questionnaire, observation and interview. After administering the class tests, it became obvious that there was the need to probe further and ascertain the current affairs of the problem. This development set the pace for the next plan of action that needed to be taken. This led to the use of pre-intervention, intervention and post intervention as employed in Action research. These interventions helped in verifying the extent to which the pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School commit punctuation errors and an insight as how to address the issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the methodology deployed in this study was discussed. This chapter of the study on the other hand tells the empirical findings of the data gathered. A total of twenty participants took active part in the study. The focus of the study was to identify the punctuation errors and offer some remedies to solve the punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils. A brief characteristics of the respondents are presented in table one and table two respectively.

Table 1 Respondents, Pupils

Class	Number	Male	Female
JHS1	9	5	4
JHS 2	9	4	5
Total	18	9	9

The respondents were sampled from the form one and two classes. Nine of the pupils from the form one class made up of five males and four females. Four males and five females were randomly selected from two class, making nine participants. This was to ensure a fair representation of the population studied.

Table 2. Respondents, Teachers

Demographic variable	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	2	100
Female		
Total	2	100
Year of experience		
Under 10 years	1	50
11-21 years	1	50
Total	2	100
Level of Education		
Diploma	1	50
Bachelor's degree	1	50
Total	2	100

The two male teachers of English in the school representing 100% agreed to share their expertise with the researcher and as a result, they contributed meaningfully to this study. Their number of years in service differs significantly. One had taught for a range between eleven (11) to twenty-one (21) years which represents 50% and the other teacher had taught under the period of ten (10) years representing 50%. Their academic qualifications differ as well. The teacher of English who possesses Diploma in Basic Education is the one with the lowest year of experience whereas the other teacher with Bachelor of Education in Basic Education as his qualification has the highest number of years in service.

A synopsis of the level of progress of the pupils from the pre-intervention and the post-intervention stage is covered in this chapter. There were signs of improvement after they had tried series of exercises on punctuation marks. The questionnaires, observation and the interview sought to illicit the views of the participants and their understanding of the phenomena.

The analyses are presented in line with the research questions raised as a guide to the study. The three main questions posed earlier are:

- What are the most common punctuation marks errors pupils commit?
- Why do pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays?
- How can the pupils overcome the challenge?

4.1 Pre-intervention Scores

This was the stage that confirmed the researcher of this study's suspicion as whether or not the pupils had issues with the use of punctuation marks. A diagnostic test was administered to ascertain the difficulties of the pupils with regard to the use of punctuation marks. The test was scored over ten (10). The pupils were required to place correctly some basic punctuation marks such as: the full stop, comma, apostrophe, question marks and the exclamation mark at where they ought to be.

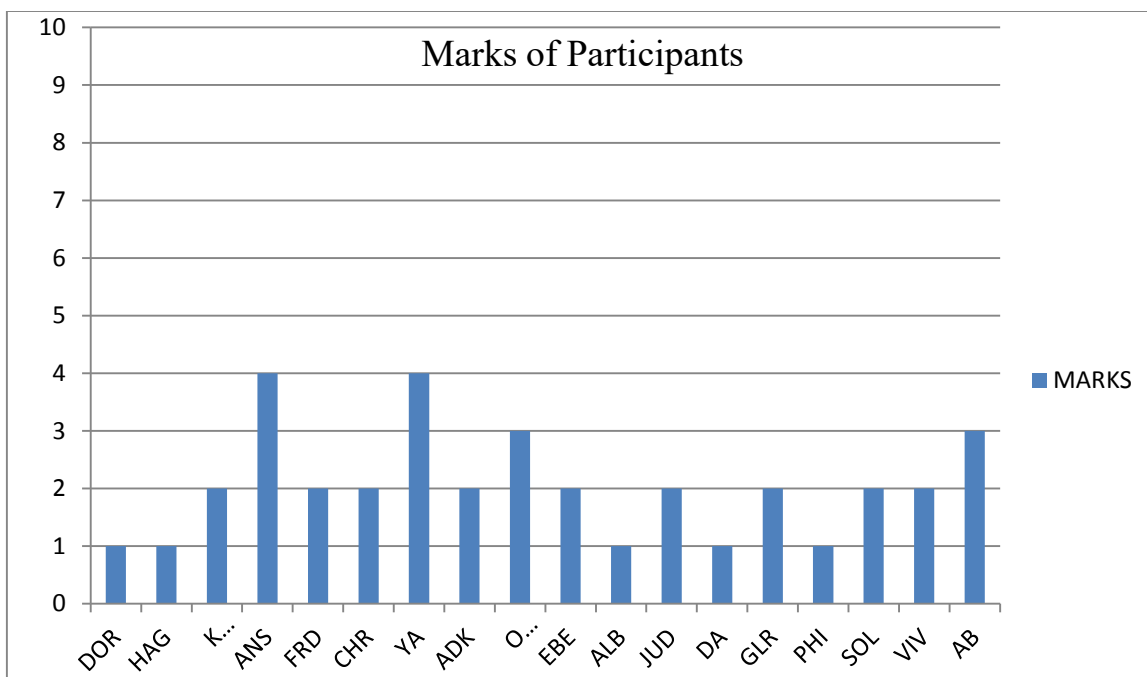


Figure 4.1 Scores from the Pre-Intervention Test.

The above results from Figure 4.1 indicated that majority of the pupils had issues with the functions of the basic punctuation marks. Two of the pupils scored four (4) out of ten (10). Not even one of the participants was able to attain half of the total mark. Thirty percent (30%) of the participants used the full stop as the only option throughout in punctuating the given sentences. Examples are found in the pre-test where they used the full stop in place of the question mark as in, “Is Cape Town a West African country.” instead of “Is Cape Town a West African country?”. Another was the use of full stop at where and exclamation is required as in, “What a good goal.” instead of “What a good goal!”. The trend was categorized as overgeneralization because some the pupils who represent 30% thought that every sentence must end with the full stop.

Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents did not punctuate some of the given sentences at all. They only punctuated few of the sentences and ignored the rest which was categorized as omission. Test items like: “Has Yaa left the city” where that sentence was supposed to end with the question mark as, “Has Yaa left the city?” similarly, Kwasi doesnt joke with his studies”

should have been , “Kwasi doesn’t joke with his studies.”, but the apostrophe and the full stop were omitted.

The remaining fifty percent (50%) selected the rest of the punctuation marks in the test instruction randomly. The researcher labeled them as wrong placing. Typical examples include: “What a good goal?” in place of “What a good goal!” where some of the pupils placed the exclamation mark with the question mark. A similar issue was detected in, “If I ask God. I know He will help me.” as oppose, “If I ask God, I know He will help me.” where the comma was substituted with a full stop right after the ‘if’ clause. This revelation helped the researcher to get the true picture of the subjects’ sources of errors. This set the pace for brainstorming on the research questions to confirm the analysis of the pre-test scores. The figure below summarizes the commonest errors found in the pre-test.

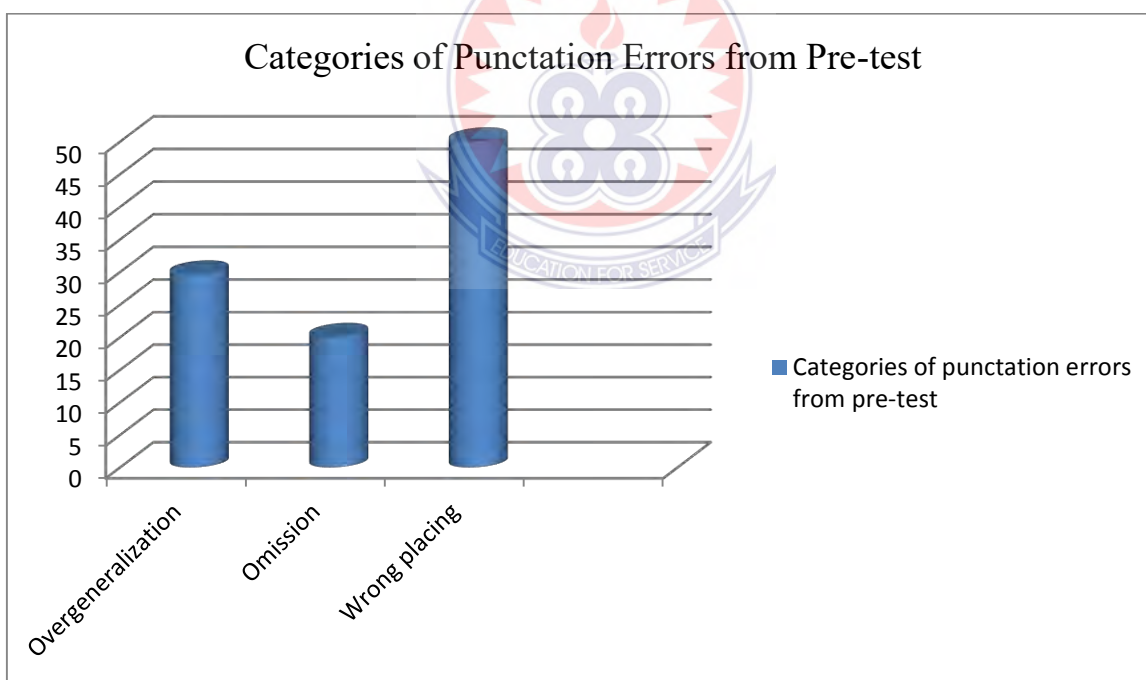


Figure 4.2 Categories of the Pupils’ Errors from the Pre-Test

4.2 Most Common Punctuation Marks Errors Pupils Commit

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the most common punctuation marks errors committed in the English essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School. Analyses of the most common punctuation marks errors gathered from the pupils' essays were grouped under the following: overgeneralization of the punctuations, omission of punctuation marks and wrong placing of punctuation marks. The following situation on the ground depicts the same prevalent categories raised above.

4.2.1. Overgeneralization of Punctuation Marks

The researcher took time to observe how the pupils had used punctuations in their exercise books. Punctuations mark like full stop for example, was found to be used at places they were not required to be used, for instance “How are you.” for “How are you?”, “Oh my God.” for “Oh my God!” , “Where is the money for T and T.” for “Where is the money for travel in and return?” and many others. It appeared to the researcher that the pupils might have heard in the class that every sentence must take an end mark and as a result, has taken it to mean that every sentence ends with the full stop even though the exclamation mark and the question mark are other end marks that are required after imperative statements or show surprise as in the case of exclamation mark, and the question marks placed after interrogations. The researcher decided to probe to find out things himself. The pupils were asked to answer the question, “Were you taught how to use punctuation marks in the primary school?” The respondents were required to answer whether they were taught punctuations or not in the primary school. They all responded “Yes” which represented 100%.

To verify their claims, the researcher gave a follow up question to test their knowledge on the subject matter. The participants were asked to outline the commonest punctuation they are

familiar with. Their answers to, “What are the commonest punctuation marks you know?” are capture in table two below.

Table 3: The most common punctuation marks

Punctuations	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Comma, full stop	9	50
Full stop, comma	5	28
Full stop, comma, question mark, exclamation	1	5.5
Exclamation mark, question mark, comma, full stop	1	5.5
Question mark, full stop, comma, exclamation	1	5.5
Question mark, full stop, exclamation, comma	1	5.5
Total	18	100

The respondents’ answers to the question, “What are the commonest punctuation marks you know?” revealed their little knowledge of the subject matter. At this point, the pupils were required to write their answers on the questionnaire sheet. All the eighteen pupils who served as respondents representing hundred percent (100%) provided their answers. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents wrote full stop and comma as the only common punctuation marks that they know. The remaining twenty percent added question marks and the exclamation marks to the full stop and the comma as the only punctuation marks they know.

From the analysis of the interview results was the true reflection of the answers they gave to the question posed earlier. A pupil remarked:

1. “The only punctuation I know is comma and full stop. One thing is that, I think they are the same. I always use the full stop throughout in my essays” (May 28, 2018).

Another pupil had this to say:

2. “Sir, as for punctuation marks, I only hear of them once a while in school oo. But we have been taught that every sentence must end with full stop.” (May 28, 2018).

The answers given by the pupils showed that indeed they had little idea of punctuation marks and therefore generalized their uses especially the full stop for the rest of the other end marks such as the question mark and the exclamation mark. Several evidences were seen in the pre-test results where 70% of the respondent used the full stop throughout in punctuating a given sentence though the other punctuations were there as an option in the test instruction to be used.

4.2.2 Omission of Punctuation Marks

The next table which is table 4 presents the responses from the eighteen participants and that of the two teachers of English in the school.

Table 4 Pupils’ responses on punctuation marks they normally omit in their essays

	Frequency	Percent (%)
comma	5	28.1
Full stop	2	11.1
Full stop, comma	3	16.6
Full stop, question mark	1	5.5
apostrophe	1	5.5
Comma, apostrophe, full stop	2	11.1
Comma, exclamation mark	1	5.5
Full stop, question mark, comma	3	16.6
Total	18	100

Five of the eighteen participants representing 28.1 % indicated that, they omit the comma whenever they write compositions. Two of the respondents wrote the full stop as the punctuation mark they omit in their written piece. Three of the respondents listed the comma and the full stop as the marks they forget to use in their essays. The full stop and the question mark were chosen by one pupil as the marks that he forgets to use often. Another pupil listed the apostrophe as the mark she normally omits in her essays. Two of the respondents representing 11.1% wrote the comma, apostrophe and the full stop as the punctuations they omit as a result of forgetfulness. One of the pupils indicated that, the marks she omits most are the comma and exclamation mark. Finally, from the table, three of the respondents stated emphatically that, the full stop, the question mark and the comma are the marks they omit completely in their essays.

From the pupils' responses in the above table, one can easily identify that the full stop and the comma topped the punctuation marks the pupils omit in their essays. The evidence in their exercise book revealed that they omit the basic punctuations in their write ups. The following are examples observed from their exercise books: omission of comma and full stop as in, "My point is that we need a road sign to reduce accident" instead of, "My point is that, we need a road sign to reduce road accident." "Because of speed they kill people on the road" in place of, "Because of over speeding, they kill people on the road.", "So I plead you to do something to prevent that." Instead of, "So, I plead with you to do something to prevent that.": omission of question mark as in, "How can I forget your birthday" instead of, "How can I forget your birthday?", "Which type of school do you want." instead of, "Which type of school do you want?"

Table 5 Teachers' responses on punctuation marks the pupils normally omit in their essays

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Comma, full stop, question mark, apostrophe, colon, semicolon	1	50
Comma, apostrophe, full stop, exclamation mark, question marks	1	50
Total	2	100

The two teachers of English in the school admitted that the pupils omit the basic punctuation marks in their essays. The omission of the full stop, comma and the question seemed to top the chart of errors under the omission category. From the responses, only one teacher included the apostrophe and the exclamation as among the punctuation marks the pupils omit in their essays.

The interview session with the pupils revealed that some of them always omit the basic punctuation marks in their write-ups. A pupil had this to say:

3. "Our English teachers tell us to put full stop at the end of our sentences but I always forget to use it. The comma and rest are not used in my essays" (May 28, 2018).

One pupil commented:

4. "Sir, I don't care about punctuations when writing essays in exams because it will waste my time when I want to punctuate all the time. As for the full stop, I sometimes use, but the rest I don't bring them in my work" (May 28, 2018).

There were clear indications that the pupils omit most of the basic punctuation marks in their compositions from the evidences put across. Most of the respondents admitted that they omit the basic punctuation marks as a result of forgetfulness a pupil had asserted in the interview.

4.2.3 Wrong Placing of Punctuation Marks

As a way of getting answers to whether or not the pupils place punctuations wrongly and the reasons for doing so, the researcher asked the both the pupils and the teachers who were the respondents similar questions and eventually summed it up with an interview session with the pupils on the topic under discussion. The researcher observed in both the pre-test and their exercise books that the pupils placed punctuations haphazardly and was so pervasive though a fraction of the pupils had placed the marks at just where they were needed. The comma, full stop and the apostrophe dominated as in, “Yours ever.” for, “Yours ever,”, “When we were writing exams? I fell sick.” instead of, “when we were writing exams, I fell sick.”, “I dont have money” for, “I don’t have money.”, “My fathers farm is very big.” for, my father’s farm is very big” and many more. The situation in their exercise books prompted the researcher to ask the respondent to testify whether they placed the punctuations at where they ought to be.

All the pupils representing 100% ticked “No” as an option. Table 6 represents their reasons for the answering “No”.

Table 6 Pupils' responses on why they place punctuations wrongly

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Because of lack of understanding of the uses of punctuations	11	61.1
Because of not knowing their difference	5	27.7
No idea of where they are supposed to be placed	2	11.2
Total	18	100

Eleven of the respondents which represent 61.1% said, they do not understand the uses of punctuations and for that reason place them wrongly. Another five of the respondents indicated that, they do not know the differences of punctuation marks and as a result place them anyhow. Finally, two of the respondents representing 11.2% opined that they do not know the exact place they are supposed to place punctuations. In answering the same question in a different way by the teachers, all the teachers ticked “No” for an answer to the question, whether the pupils place punctuations at where they should be. This claim to some extent reflected what was observed in the pupil's exercise books even though minority of the pupils had placed some punctuation marks sparingly.

Table 7 Teachers' responses on why the pupils place punctuations wrongly

	Frequency	Percent (%)
The pupils lack understanding of punctuations. They also do not pay attention to punctuations during reading.	1	50
Confusion about the uses of punctuations and the pupils do not read their notes on punctuations when they get to the house.	1	50
Total	2	100

The two teachers had different opinions on why the pupils place punctuation marks wrongly. One teacher attributed why they place punctuations wrongly to the fact that the pupils lack understanding of punctuations and do not take key interest in them when they read passages. The last teacher of English responded that the pupils are always confused about the uses of punctuation marks and do not read their notes on punctuation marks when they go home.

During the interview, almost all the interviewees admitted that placing of the punctuations correctly was one of their major challenges. One student made this submission:

5. "Our teacher always complains about how and where we place punctuation marks in our essays. I always feel bad about that because I'm part of those who make such mistakes" (May 28, 2018).

In attempts to answer the first research question, the researcher used the various instruments in triangulation. The evidences gathered above showed the most common punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School. The errors were categorized as the error of overgeneralization due to little knowledge, omission and wrong placing of punctuation marks. The just mentioned errors were found to be common in their essays during the intervention stage.

4.3 Why Pupils Commit Punctuation Errors in their Essays

The second research question looked at why the pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays. In an attempt to get answers to the above research question, the researcher observed the following as some of the reasons the pupils commit errors in their essays. The first reason has to do with the fact that the pupils see punctuations to be complex. The second factor was that, the pupils did not consider punctuation marks to be important to use in their essays.

4.3.1 Complexity of Punctuations

In order to know the difficulties of the pupils faced with the use of punctuation marks, the researcher asked the learners to voice their difficulties on the questionnaire. A question went like, “do you admit that you have difficulties in using punctuation marks”?

All the pupils who responded this question, which represent 100% admitted that they had issues with punctuations and for that reason selected “Yes”.

Another question followed to get their reasons for selecting that option. Table eight (8) represents their reasons for ticking “Yes”.

Table 8 Pupils' responses on why admitted they have issues with punctuations

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Because some of the punctuations have several uses	10	55.5
Because we were not taught how to use them	8	44.5
Total	18	100

The teachers of English in the school who served as respondents equally agreed with the pupils by ticking “Yes” which according to the teachers, was an indication that, the learners have issues with the use of punctuations. Their reasons are illustrated in the table below.

Table 9 Teachers' response why pupils have issues with punctuations

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Lack of the pupils' interest in punctuation lessons, and late exposure of punctuations to learners	1	50
Lack of understanding due to the poor teaching methodology, and the inability of the pupils to read and pay attention to punctuation marks	1	50
Total	2	100

The researcher wanted to know why the pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays from the teachers. A respondent claimed that lack of the pupils' interest in punctuation lessons and late exposure of punctuations to the learners was represented by 50% on the statistics. The last respondent of this question listed lack of understanding on the part of learners due to poor teaching methodology and the pupils inability to read and pay attention to punctuations marks

which represented 50%. Another question was posed to the teachers in relation to their above claims which went like:

Which method do you consider appropriate in teaching punctuations?

All the teachers who served as respondents to this study chose the option “treat it as a complete topic” which represent 100%. Their reasons were captured in the table 10 below.

Table 10 Teachers’ responses on the method they used in teaching punctuations

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Punctuation marks are many, so treating them as complete topic as aspect of composition will help the learners to grasp them fully.	1	50
Treating punctuations as complete topic will enable the pupils to have in-depth knowledge and better understanding of the concept.	1	50
Total	2	100



Although the teachers’ responses indicated that they subscribed to the fact that punctuation marks should be taught as a complete topic, but their reasons were different. One teacher explained that teaching punctuations as a complete topic will give room for the teacher to be focused and can cover more of punctuations than treating them while teaching composition. This is because in teaching composition, the various aspects such grammar, vocabulary,

organization of ideas and punctuations are all come to play and there is a possibility of not overlooking them.

In the interview session, the same question was posed to the pupils and one of them candidly said:

6. “We are not taught how to use punctuations, our teacher only talks of them briefly when we are learning compositions”, (May 28, 2018).

7. Sir, I only hear of punctuations marks once a while. He sometimes talks of them after marking our work, (May 28, 2018).

The researcher at this point did not know whom to believe. This was because the teachers had contrasting views. The teachers vehemently claimed that, they belong to the school of thought that believe in teaching punctuations as a complete topic as the best way to go, yet the comments from the pupils in the interview session proved otherwise.

4.3.2 No or little importance given to punctuation marks in essays

The importance of punctuation marks can never be underestimated in a written piece. Amateur writers have missed reactions about the value of punctuations and Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils are of no exception. The researcher in wanting to know their disposition on the importance of punctuation marks asked the questions below:

Do you think is important to use punctuations in your essays?

Only one of the respondents selected “Yes” which represents 10%. The rest of the respondents ticked “No”. The table summarizes their reasons for their answers.

Table 11 Pupils' responses on the importance of using punctuations in their essays

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Punctuations are not important as spellings and grammar.	17	90
It makes sentences complete to read, and if you don't use them it will affect your marks.	1	10
Total	18	100

Seventeen of the respondents representing 90% said, punctuation marks are not as important as spellings and grammar whereas one pupil made mention that, punctuations make sentences complete to read and failure to bring them in your work affects your marks.

The teachers were equally asked to indicate whether they rate the use of punctuation marks to be important by ticking "Yes" or "No".

All the two teachers of English in the school responded "Yes" to the question posed. Their reasons are shown in the table below.

Table 12 Teachers' responses on how they rate punctuation marks to be important

	Frequency	Percent (%)
They facilitate understanding and make reading easy. Punctuations help to disambiguate all ambiguities in written work.	2	100
Total	2	100

All the teachers shared similar views with regard to the importance of punctuations which represent 100%. They indicated that, punctuations facilitate understanding and make reading easy and they also help to do away with ambiguity in written work.

The pupils were to confirm why most of them underestimate the use of punctuations during the interview sitting. A pupil asserted that:

8. My major concern in essay writing is to spell my words correctly and to be able to write more. I don't even care about punctuation marks if I'm able to spell my words correctly, (8th May, 2018). About sixteen of the interviewees nodded their heads and even applauded to express their agreement to what their colleague said.

In summary, the evidences gathered so far on how the pupils think about the importance of punctuations revealed that, 90% of the pupils do not seem to regard or know the importance of punctuation marks. This is one of the reasons why the pupils they commit the punctuation errors in their write-up. Their teachers on the other hand place high value on them.

4.4 Report on Lesson Observation

One lesson was observed in each of the two classes. The lesson objectives were clearly stated. The teachers used several of the teaching techniques during the lesson delivery. The researcher was impressed about how the teachers had systematically arranged the various stages with a swift transition from one stage to another. The teachers were on top in content of the subject. All the sentences that were constructed by the teachers were punctuated on the chalkboard. Punctuation marks were inserted at where they ought to be in the pupil's exercise books by the teachers during marking which was very commendable.

Nevertheless, few areas were spotted to be unsatisfactory. It was observed that the pupils were not actively involved in the lesson because the teachers dominated the entire teaching and

learning process. The pupils seemed not to be interested because they were not engaged in the lesson fully. The teachers did most of the talking and occasionally asked few questions. There was an evidence that, the only teaching and learning material used in the JHS one class was the chalkboard illustration. It was the expectation of the researcher that the teacher who handled the form ones would use the pupils' textbooks just as the other teacher had used them. This could have saved time in writing the texts that were already in the textbook and also to have provided the learners the opportunity to see punctuation marks in prints.

One of the teachers used clapping as the only motivation for the few pupils who managed to answer some questions. It must be placed on record that only one of the teachers could not make enough time for the pupils to practice the punctuation lesson taught. The lack of practice did not help the learners to reinforce the new skill learnt.

Lastly, the teachers of English in the school selected the option on the questionnaire that says, "Treat it as a complete topic" to the question, "Which method do you consider appropriate in teaching punctuations?" but what was observed was in contrast to what they had said earlier in answering the questionnaire. Even though one could argue that teaching punctuations along with composition would help the pupils to use them well in context, but teaching punctuation as a complete topic would have been more appropriate for the pupils under study. The observation revealed that the teachers' methods of teaching punctuation were not the best to suit the learners' needs. Also, lack of interactions between the teachers and the pupils during the lesson could not stimulate the learners' interest of which some of them dozed off and missed some of the salient points and could use punctuation marks as expected. This might explain why pupils made many punctuation errors including the following in their essays:

1. "I m very happy to write to you this letter" instead of "I'm very happy to write to you this letter."

2. “By the way how are you” instead of “By the way how are you?”
3. “Firstly father I thank ,you for sending me to education” in place of “Firstly, father, I thank you for sending me to school.”
4. “I cant use them.” for “I can’t use them.”
5. “Dear dad.” for “Dear dad,”

4.5 How can the pupils overcome the challenge

From the foregoing, this question demanded from the respondents what can be done to solve the punctuation errors in the pupils’ essays. At this point, the researcher had schooled the pupils on the importance of punctuations in essays. The various answers from both the pupils and the teachers are highlighted in the tables below.

Table 13 Pupils’ responses on how to curb the challenge

	Frequency	Percent (%)
More questions on punctuation marks should be given as well as providing corrections.	4	22.2
Extra tuition on punctuations should be given so that we can cover more.	5	27.8
Will pay rapt attention to punctuation lessons	3	16.7
Will read a lot of books to know about their uses	6	33.3
Total	18	100

Out of the eighteen participants, four of the respondents representing 22.2% claimed that more questions should be set on punctuations as well as providing corrections for wrong answers. Five of the respondents representing 27.8% suggested that, the teachers should provide extra tuition so they can cover more on punctuations. Three pupils from participants contributed that; they will pay rapt attention in class especially in punctuation marks lessons. The remaining respondents representing 33.3% were of the view that a lot of reading will help solve the challenge.

The answers that were obtained from the pupils in the interview meeting on their views as how to curb the problem they have with regard to punctuation marks usage were as follow: A respondent remarked that:

9. “Our teachers can give us more lessons and homework on punctuation marks”,
(May 28, 2018).

10. “As for me, from now going I will be more serious in class when the teachers are teaching punctuations”, (May 28, 2018).

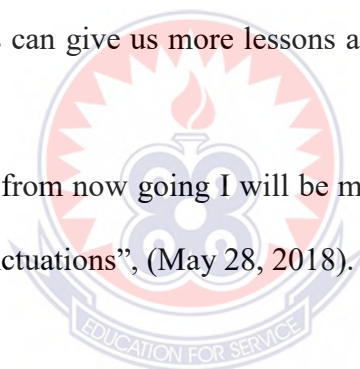
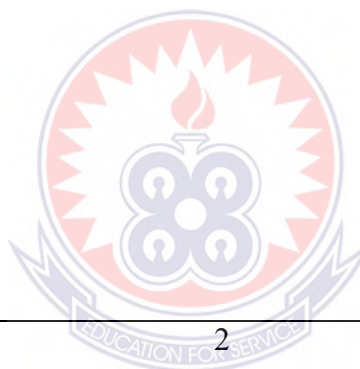


Table 14 Teachers responses on how to curb the problem

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Drawing pupils' attention to punctuations in compositions exercises regularly even in other subject areas. Motivating the pupils to read wide, so they can appreciate their uses.	1	50
Giving more room for the pupils to practice on the usage of punctuations. Correcting their punctuation errors by inserting them at where they ought to be when marking.	1	50
Total	2	100



The first respondent said, the challenge can be solved by drawing the pupils' attention to punctuations in composition lessons regularly even in other subject areas. He added that one of the surest ways to go is to motivate the pupils to read wide so they can appreciate the uses of punctuation marks. The other respondent believed that, giving more room for the pupils to practice the usage of punctuations and correcting their punctuation errors by inserting them at where they ought to be when marking.

In conclusion, the researcher of this study identified some key areas to tackle in the intervention stage. The solutions offered by pupils, teachers and that of the experts in literature were adapted.

4.6 Post-Intervention Scores

From the research questions, the researcher of this work gained insights of the phenomena. Adaptions were made from the literature review and the respondent of this study. The statistics in figure 3 shows the pupils performance after the post intervention test. It was realized that the pupils had improved creditably.

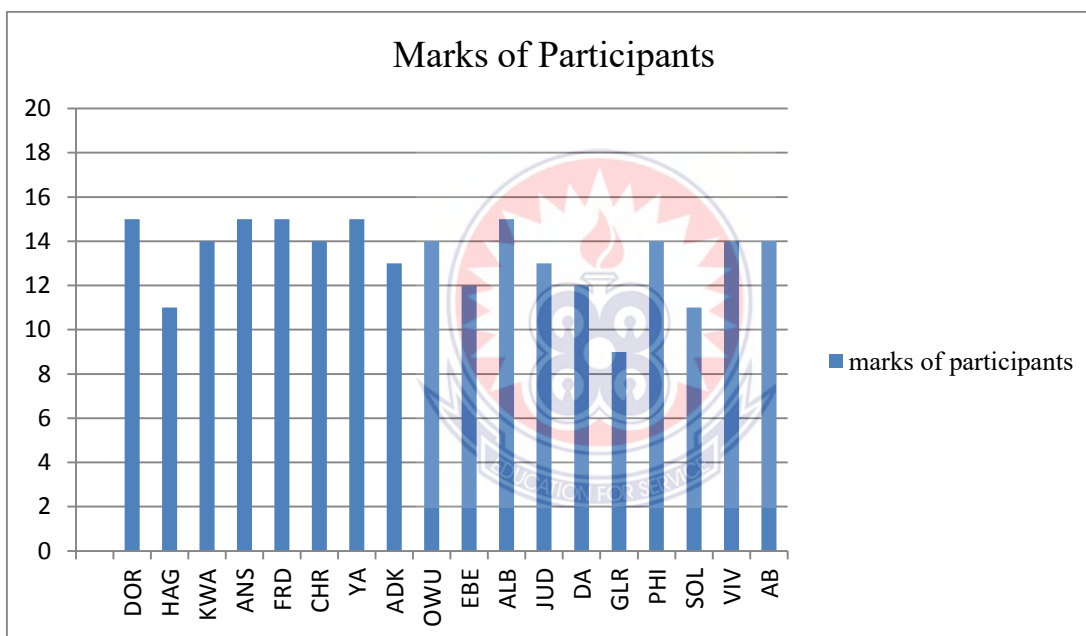


Figure 4.3: Post-Intervention Scores

The results shown in Figure 4.3 were achieved as results of continuous practice. The pupils were taken through series of exercises in the intervention stage. Punctuations lessons were taught as complete topics and in context under the researcher's tutelage. After writing several essays, the participants showcased tremendous improvement and were then asked to take the last essay test. The results indicated that majority of the pupils had scored more than half of the total mark which was twenty (20).

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, results of the study have been discussed. The data included pre-test scores, post-test scores and responses to the questionnaires administered to teachers and pupils, interview conducted with the pupils and report on observation of lessons of the teachers of English. The main instruments for the study have revealed the possible sources, causes and how to solve the punctuation errors in the essays of the Adamu D/A Junior High School. These instruments attempted to find answers to the three research questions raised to guide this study.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter contains the summary of the study, conclusions drawn and recommendations made from this work. The main objectives of the study were to identify the punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils, ascertain why the pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays and suggest solutions to help the pupils to overcome the problem.

5.1 Summary

This study sought to investigate the punctuation errors of the Adamu D/A Junior High School. Initially, the pupils seemed somehow to be ignorant of punctuations and their importance in written work. More to that, some of them overgeneralized the uses of the full stop for example and omitted the rest of the basic punctuation marks. The diagnostic test used in the pre-test stage revealed that the pupils had serious issues with punctuations. The main errors observed in the pupils' write-ups were categorized as: overgeneralization of the use of punctuations, the omissions of punctuations and wrong placing of punctuation marks. It was also came to light that the main reasons for committing such errors were as a result that: the pupils perceived punctuations to be complex, the pupils attached no or little importance so far as punctuations are concerned in essay writing and because the teachers were observed to be treating punctuations lessons as sub-topic instead of treating punctuations as a complete lesson. After implementing the strategic and carefully selected approaches from the respondents of this study and the expert advice from literature, the pupils showed some significant improvement. They were able to punctuate some given sentences and use punctuations in their essays. The post-test revealed that

the pupils had performed better than before. This success was not won on a silver-platter, but through external motivation and constant practice opportunities that were given to the pupils.

5.2 Recommendations

Punctuation marks have been embedded in the aspect of compositions in the basic teaching syllabus and as a result they are not treated as full topic by the teachers of English in Adamu D/A Junior High School. This has made it difficult for the pupils to grasp the correct usage of punctuation marks in their write-ups. I therefore suggest that teachers of English Language should as a matter of urgency treat punctuations as a full topic. This way, teachers can give in-depth explanations of punctuations to their learners.

Most of the pupils in Adamu D/A Junior High Schools disregarded the essence of punctuations, due to the relatively less time devoted to its teaching. It is recommended by this researcher that teachers should imbue in their learners the importance of punctuations not just by mouth but should demonstrate them. Again, teachers of English in should endeavor to insert the correct punctuation marks at where they ought to be during the marking for the pupils to know how to place them correctly.

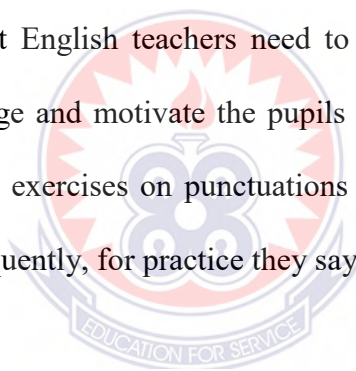
In the course of investigating the topic under discussion, the researcher realized that providing the pupils with more room for the pupils to practice really helped them in overcoming some of their shortcomings. This, the researcher believed should be encouraged in teaching punctuation marks. Also, the pupils should be motivated to read more books so that they can see how seasoned writers and use punctuations to make their work so beautiful.

The study of punctuation errors in essays was limited to JHS one and two pupils of Adamu D/A Junior High School. Situations dominating in Adamu D/A Junior High School may be different from other schools. Similar studies can be carried to include all punctuations or

relatively larger population in other parts of the country especially in the basic schools to create a full trend of matters.

5.3 Conclusion

The main aim of this work was to identify the punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A Junior High School pupils; to ascertain why the pupils commit punctuation errors in their essays and suggest solutions to help the pupils to overcome the problem. The study identified that the commonest punctuations errors were overgeneralization, omission and wrong placing of the said marks. The study also identified that most of the pupils had challenges with punctuations because they saw punctuations to be complex. The second factor was that; the pupils did not consider punctuation marks to be important to use in their essays. The implications of this study to teachers of English are that English teachers need to devote more time to the teaching of punctuations and also encourage and motivate the pupils to cultivate the habit of reading more story books. In addition, more exercises on punctuations and essay writing should be given to pupils to try their hands on frequently, for practice they say leads to perfection.



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APPENDIX A

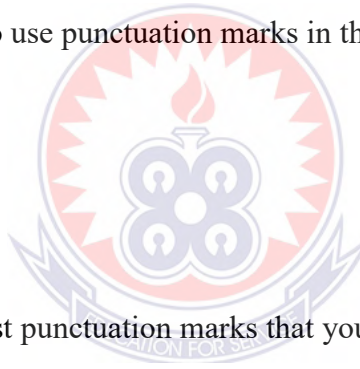
Pupil's questionnaires

The purpose of this study is to examine the problems that you, pupils in the Junior High School face with the use of punctuation marks in your essays. You are therefore kindly required to complete this questionnaire as candidly as possible. You are assured that your responses will be kept confidential and shall be used only for this research.

Please write your response that is the reflection of the extent to which you accept or not with each of the following questions.

- Were you taught how to use punctuation marks in the primary school?

Yes No



- What are the commonest punctuation marks that you know?

.....

.....

- Which punctuation marks do you normally omit in your essays?

.....

.....

- Do you place punctuation marks at where they ought to be?

Yes No

Reasons for your answer

.....
.....

➤ Do you admit you have difficulties in using punctuation marks?

Yes No

Kindly give reasons

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

➤ Did you think that it is important to use punctuations in written work?

Yes No

Why?

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

➤ What do you think you can do to minimize your punctuation errors?

.....

.....

.....



APPENDIX B

Teacher's questionnaires

Please, you are requested to participate in an Action research titled, punctuation errors in the essays of Adamu D/A JHS pupils.

The main purpose of this study is to:

- Examine carefully the challenges with regard to punctuation errors in the essays of pupils.
- Suggest interventions and recommendations for solution of the problems based on the findings of the study.

Your response will be used just for this report and shall be treated as confidential.



Answer the following questions explicitly as possible. Please tick where applicable.

SEX: M F

Academic qualification:

.....

Year of experience:

- Which punctuation marks do your pupils normally omit?

.....

.....
.....

- Do you your pupils place punctuations at where they ought to be in their write-ups?

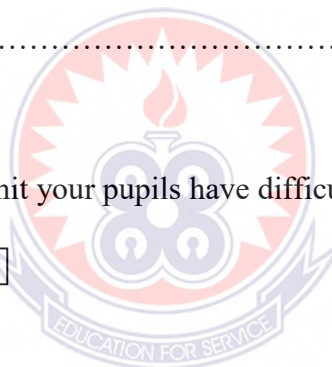
Yes No

Please, your reasons

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

- Please, do you admit your pupils have difficulties in using punctuations?

Yes No



Give reasons

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

- Which method of teaching do you consider appropriate in teaching punctuation marks?

i. Treat it as a complete topic.

ii. Treat it while teaching composition.

Kindly give reasons for your answer.

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

- Do you rate punctuations to be important in essay writing?

Yes No

Kindly reasons to validate your claim

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

- What can be done to solve this challenge?

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

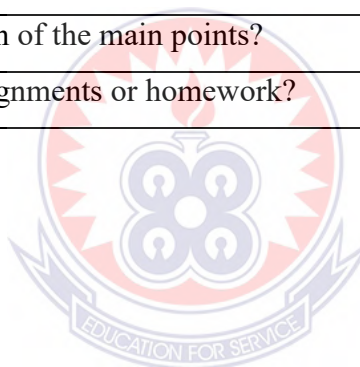


APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS' LESSON

S/N	Variable	Good	Satisfactory	Bad
1	PRE DELIVERY STAGE			
A	Are the objectives of the lesson clear?			
B	Are the stages of the lesson clear?			
C	Is there a revision of relevant previous knowledge?			
D	Does the teacher do a variety of activities to warm up the class?			
2	USE OF TEACHING AIDS			
	Does the teacher write clearly?			
	Does the teacher punctuate his text on the chalkboard?			
	Does the teacher encourage pupils to take notice of punctuations of written text?			
3	DELIVERY STAGE			
A	Do the students participate actively in the lesson?			
B	Does the teacher encourage weaker students to answer questions?			

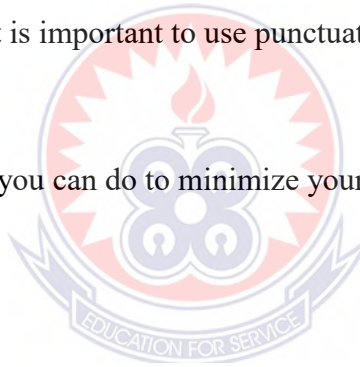
C	Do teacher monitor the pupils write?			
D	Do teacher give room for the pupils to practice?			
E	How clear and accurate is the teacher's punctuation marks?			
F	How appropriate is the teacher's use of English to the learner's level of English?			
G	How well does the teacher use instructions?			
4	POST DELIVERY STAGE			
A	Is there feedback to the pupils?			
B	Is there room for discussion of the pupils' punctuation errors?			
C	Is there any recapitulation of the main points?			
D	Do teacher gives the assignments or homework?			



APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PUPILS

1. What are the commonest punctuation marks that you know?
2. Which punctuation marks do you normally omit in your essays?
3. Do you place punctuation marks at where they ought to be?
4. Do you admit you have difficulties in using punctuation marks?
5. Did you think that it is important to use punctuations in written work?
6. What do you think you can do to minimize your punctuation errors?



APPENDIX E

PRE-TEST SCORE

CHRS

ADAMU D/A JHS

TEST 1

Punctuation marks

Place correctly the full stop, comma, apostrophe, question mark and the exclamation mark in the sentences below at where they ought to be.

- A. I am French, but I speak very good English. ✓
- B. The boys dormitory is over there. ✓
- C. What a brilliant student Mary is! ✓
- D. Is Cape Town a West African Country? ✓
- E. If I ask God, I know He will help me. ✓
- F. Has Yaa left the city? ✓
- G. What a good goal! ✓
- H. Kwasi doesn't joke with his studies. ✓
- I. Adu said, "I am finished". ✓
- J. Shall we give Mr. Kobi a round of applause? ✓

2/10

ADK

ADAMU D/A JHS

TEST 1

Punctuation marks

Place correctly the full stop, comma, apostrophe, question mark and the exclamation mark in the sentences below at where they ought to be.

- A. I am French, but I speak very good English. (.)
- B. The boys' dormitory is over there. (.)
- C. What a brilliant student Mary is! (.)
- D. Is Cape Town a West African Country? (?)
- E. If I ask God, I know He will help me. (.)
- F. Has Yaa left the city? (?)
- G. What a good goal! (!)
- H. Kwasi doesn't joke with his studies. (.)
- I. Adu said "I am finished". (.)
- J. Shall we give Mr. Kobi a round of applause? (!)

2
10

YAS

ADAMU D/A JHS

TEST 1

Punctuation marks

Place correctly the full stop, comma, apostrophe, question mark and the exclamation mark in the sentences below at where they ought to be.

- A. I am French, but I speak very good English. (.) ✓
- B. The boys' dormitory is over there. (.) ✓
- C. What a brilliant student Mary is! (!) ✓
- D. Is Cape Town a West African Country? (?) ✓
- E. If I ask God, I know He will help me. (.) ✓
- F. Has Yaa left the city? (?) ✓
- G. What a good goal! (!) ✓
- H. Kwasi, doesn't joke with his studies. ✓
- I. Adu said, "I am finished". ✓
- J. Shall we give Mr. Kobi a round of applause? (?) ✓

4
1
2

ALB

ADAMU D/A JHS

TEST 1

Punctuation marks

Place correctly the full stop, comma, apostrophe, question mark and the exclamation mark in the sentences below at where they ought to be.

- A. I am French but I speak very good English ! ✓
- B. The boys' dormitory is over there ? ✓
- C. What a brilliant student Mary is ! ✓
- D. Is Cape Town a West African Country ? ✓
- E. If I ask God, I know He will help me. ✓
- F. Has Yaa left the city ? ✓
- G. What a good goal ! ✓
- H. Kwasi doesn't joke with his studies. ✓
- I. Adu said, "I am finished". ✓
- J. Shall we give Mr. Kobina round of applause ? ✓

1
10

APPENDIX F

EXERCISE

Exercise

1-6-18

Write a letter to your father telling him to help you in your education

Adamu DIA JHS

P. O. BOX 13

Adamu BIA ✓

1-6-18

Dear dad

I am very happy to write you this letter. By the way how are you? I hope you are well. I need you help in my education.

Firstly father, I thank you for sending me to ^{school} education. I need more books, pens, ^{mathematical} and maths set.

C-3 I need torch light to learn at
O-2 night. ^{this is} because we don't have light in our
E-3 town. Please, please, please dad I need
MA 0 new school bag, uniform and sandals. My
old sandals I can't use them.

7

To end, ^{greet} everybody for me. Please! Dad write back soon

Yours ever
Your daughter

Exercise

~~14~~ - 6 - 18

Adamy D/A JHS
Post office Box 13
Adamy - Tain
14th June, 2018 ✓

The MP

P.O. Box 209

Tain

Dear Sir / Madam, ✓

SOME PROBLEM FACING MY AREA ✓

I am by this letter to bring to your notice about some of the problems facing my area. ✓

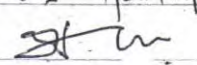

To begin with, my area is lacks of electricity. Since there is no light in my area, all the area has ^{become} become dark. So it has increase armed robbery in my area. And so far as there is no light, the students in my area do not learn. They roam about without no reasonable.

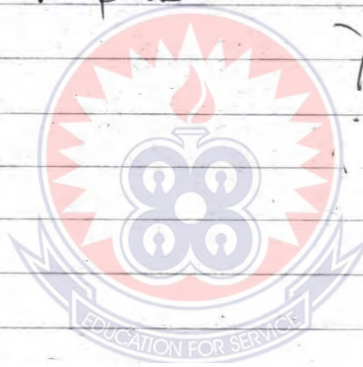
Secondly, my area lacks school building. In my area, there is no school building at all, because of this people at my area don't attend to school.

P. T. O

So, we ^{beg} put our palm to you to build ^{us} a school building ⁱⁿ my area. Since education is very important ^{to everyone} to every body in this world. My point is that, we need a road sign to reduce accident. ^{this is} why because ^{without good sign} it causes death. Because of overspeeding, they kill people on the road. Who will arrest ^{those} that drivers? So, I plead ^{with} you to do something to prevent that.

I hope my points will ^{reach} your department ^{ends} so that you can ^{come to our aid} bring help in my area. I know you will help ^{us} :

Yours faithfully,





File
 MA 0

8

EXERCISE

17-6-18

Write a letter to the member of Parliament of your constituency, telling him/her about the problems facing your area

Ademu D/A JHS

P.O. Box 13

17-06-18.

Member of Parliament

P.O. Box 1009

Badu-Tain ✓

Dear Sir (✓)

PROBLEMS FACING MY AREA

I inform you by this letter to inform you about the problems in my area (✓)

Firstly, we are ^{lacking} so many things in our ^{area}. The very serious problem is we don't ^{have} water or boreholes. So anytime we need water, we have to walk ^{for very} a long ^{distance} journey before we get to the river side to fetch.

We ^{don't} have clinic in which is another problem to ^{us}. ~~Everyday~~ ^{one of the people falls} a person will fall sick. Where is money for ^{land}? So the person will suffer till the person dies.

Again, another problem is that we

P.T.O

do not
don't have light. This has made
many people ^{armed} robbers in the night
they will steal others ^{people's} properties in
the night all because we don't have
light.

Last point is that, our school
building is very old. when it rains,
we have to close and go home.

Please M.P come and help ^{us}. Thank
you. I know you will do it.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]
A.K

C-3
O-3
E-3
MA 0
(9)



Exercise

1-6-18

Write a letter to your father, telling him to help you in your education.

Adamu D/A J.H.S.

P.O. Box 13.

Adamu B/A

1-6-18(c)

Dear father,

I'm very happy to inform you this letter. By the way how are you? I hope by the grace of God you are ^{fine} fine. Please dada how are you? I hope Ama is fine. Oh my God! I forgot it is your birthday.

The main reason for writing this you this letter is that you should help me in my education.

P-2

O-2

E-2

NA-0

6

Firstly I need you to buy me a school bag. I need laptop computer too for my education. This is because ^{nowadays} now a days everything is computer based. All my friends are having ^{one} apart from me.

I need pamphlet to read. Please dada, if you don't buy the things for me I will be sad. Good bye

Yours ever

Adamu

APPENDIX G

POST TEST

write a letter to your father telling him to help you in your education.

Adamu LA JH.S
P.O. Box 13
~~Adamu - B/A~~
14-6-18 ✓

Dear father Gyamfi, ✓

I am with a silence voice ~~as I am~~ ^{as I} write ^{when I am} writing to you this letter. By the way, father how are you, father? I hope by the grace of Almighty God you and my mother are drinking in a cup of Mr good health. And I hope your work are going well. The reason why I am writing you this letter is that, help me in education.

To start with, father, I hope you know how I am father, I am now in ^{school} education, I want you to help me. I hope if you help me today, you will be paid back when I ^{have} complete school. father help me for if you don't help, ~~with~~ maybe I will ^{to be} myself in difficulty life. One boy completed school and begeth paid by the government. This boy helped his parent as they did. I think if you help me ~~with~~ there will be an opportunity like the above boy mentioned. My school bag has gotten spoilt and for that matter, I will need a new one from the house to the school is little far. If I don't have bag my books will get wet in case if ~~there~~ rains. My school fees is one problem which worried me when I go to school. I always become worried when Mr. Apau ask about the money. My gari and sugar had gotten finished. Since last week I have not eaten ~~anything~~ anything. The soap which we use have get finished. Father, I have myself dirty and I have hunger, so father help me.

To conclude, I hope this my letter will be accepted and considered. So I am happy that by a week I will have a

1 my needed things.

Yours Ever

Kwaa: Godfred ✓

1-4
2-4
3-4
4-0

12

CK



1. Write a letter to ~~you~~ the member of parliament of your constituency, telling him or her about the problem facing your area.

Adamu HIA JHS
P. O Box 13
Adamu ✓
14-06-18. ✓

The Member of Parliament
P. O Box 1009 ✓
Zacku-Tain ✓

Dear Sir, ✓

PROBLEMS FACING MY AREA

I am by this letter to inform you about the problems facing my area.

To set the ball rolling, we are lacking so many things in our area. ^{the} first point, the very serious problem is we don't have water or bore holes. So anytime we need water we have to walk a long journey before we get to the river side to fetch water to cook. We don't even get some to wash our clothes. And when it get to the dry season, the water will not even see a single drop of water in the river. So we will have to walk to the next village to go and fetch water. and even when you get about 1:00pm you will come back home about 5:00pm in the evening. 89

so this is causing a great problem to us. We are suffering as animals don't even get water to drink. So everyday some ~~do~~ die.

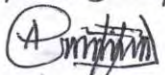
Another point ^{is that,} we do not also have clinic which is ~~the~~ another problem to ~~us~~. Everyday person will fall sick. And ~~to~~ they will not have any drug to cure the disease. So the person will suffer till the person die. Even when a woman is pregnant and yet to deliver they will not have any clinic to ~~the~~ take the person to. And this will result that either the baby will ~~be~~ loose his life or the mother will loose her life.

Further more, another problem is also that we don't use electricity. This has made ~~a~~ many people armed others in the night. ~~they~~ will be stealing others properties in the night all because we ~~don't~~ do not use electricity.

To conclude, I believe my request will meet you kindly, and please try to help us in our problems. I know you will do it.

C-3
D-4
E-5
MA-0

(13)

Yours faithfully

ADK

Write a letter to the member of parliament of your constituency tell him or her about the problems facing your area.

Adamu D/A JHS
P.O BOX 13
Adamu
14th June, 2018.

Member of parliament

P.O BOX 12
Tain District ✓

Dear sir, ✓

PROBLEMS FACING MY AREA ✓

I am by this letter to tell ^{you} the problems facing my area. The following are the problems.

First of all, I ^{would} like to start with the pipe borne waters, there are only three pipe borne waters in the community. Two are at the end of the community and one is also at the other end of the community but that one is also for the clinic ^{and} ~~so~~ the ^{client communities} do not allow anyone to ~~fetch~~ fetch water from the pipe. ~~so~~ Those at the other side of the community goes to fetch water from the other side of the community and it takes one a long distance before getting there.

secondly, we do not have a good health ^{facilities} ~~facilities~~. The one we have is a ~~CHP~~ compound, and there are no machines like incubator, scanning machines and the rest and ~~we~~ ^{do not} have so many medicines. ~~So~~ ^{the} patient is covered with the health insurance ^{insurance}, and has the malaria ~~parasi~~ ^{parasite} instead of the doctors to give the patient the anti-malaria drugs. ~~it~~ ^{will} say the patient should go and buy some, ~~because~~ ^{because} the doctor ~~will~~ ^{do not} have some.

To conclude, ~~that~~ ^{that} these are some of the problems facing my area. And I ^{hope} ~~that~~ ^{that} what I have is heard ~~and~~ ^{and} you will do what you can do to help us.

Yours faithfully,

~~PHIL~~
PHIL

C-3
D-4
E-14
MA 5

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vr

Write a letter to your father convincing him to help you in your education.

Adamu O/A J.H.S
Post Office Box 15
Adamu

14th June, 2018

Dear dad,

I am very happy to write to you this letter. How is work? I hope everything is alright.

Please Dad, the reason why I am writing to you this letter is to tell you to help me in my education. Please Dad, you know that education is the key to success. I want to become some one in future so please help me in my education. If I ask you for anything in my education, please give it to me if not I cannot further my education. And you know with education, life will be very difficult. This is because if you are able to complete your school and you go to government don't employ you, you will have some techniques which you will use to make things and get money. I am pleading with you to help me in my education.

Dear Dad, I hope you will accede with me to help me in my education. And if you are able to do so, God will bless you.

C-5
O-5
E-5
MA-0

Your daughter,
Vivian

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