UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

WRONG USAGE OF CONCORD AMONG SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS: A STUDY

AMONG SHS 2 STUDENTS OF NKAWKAW SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MOHAMMED TAWAKALITU

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

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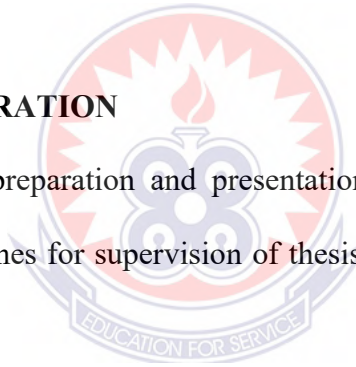
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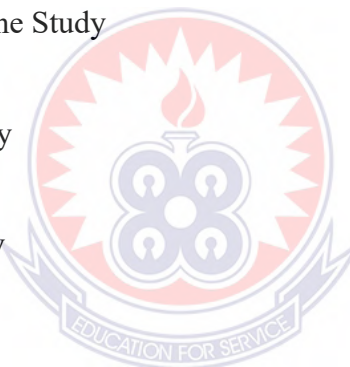
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Issah Saeed Umar and my two handsome sons,

Mustaqueem and Nawaaz for their prayers and support throughout my course.

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ABSTRACT

The major problem investigated in this study is the difficulties Senior High School year 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School encounter in the use of concord in English. The purpose of the study was to identify this concord learning challenges, find out why those challenges exist and find appropriate ways to help the students. The instruments used to collect data were observation, questionnaire and tests. A total of 50 students were randomly selected to take part in the study. Findings showed that most of the students could not apply the rules of concord correctly. They had very serious problems with subject-verb concord. Most students applied concord rules correctly to a very large extent after they were taken through the rules guiding concord in the intervention procedure. In conclusion, this research has proved that an intervention discussion is very important in assisting students to overcome their concord learning challenges.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Grammar is central to all languages including the English language (Yankson, 1994). Grammar is defined as the art of writing and speaking correctly by adhering to usage standards and rules-allows people to communicate (William, 2009). Without common form and structure and left to their own devices, people would not understand each other's word order or sentence construction (Yankson, 1994). In studying English language, it is imperative to study the grammar to understand how it is structured, that is, whether it is generally descriptive or prescriptive by nature. Concord constitutes one of the key grammatical rules of English language (Larry, 2005). In concord analysis, rules are clearly spelled out and grammatical accuracy is measured by one's adherence to these rules (prescriptive grammar). This study seeks to explore deeper into the problems that Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School face in adhering to concord rules in English language.

Without conforming to rules, the primary function of language as a tool for communication may be compromised since meaning can be changed merely by the addition or omission of even just a little element in a grammatical structure (McGraw, 1993). It is therefore imperative for the language user to aim at bettering his/her language by following prescribed rules. The purification or betterment of a language largely depends on the efficient and careful enactment of its rules of grammar. By the bettering of a language, one understands little else than the extensive teaching just its forms, according to analogy and the general custom of the most accurate writers. This teaching however, may well embrace also, or be combined with, an exposition of the various

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forms of *false grammar* by which inaccurate writers have corrupted, if not the language itself, at least their own style in it (Yankson, 1994). It is only in cases susceptible of a rule, that any writer can be judged deficient. One can censure no man for differing from him, till he can show him a principle which he ought to follow. The rules in English grammar must, thus, be observed if we are to avoid having our students grope in the dark regarding grammar and usage or holding them to ransom for wrong usage. Rule observation in English Grammar underscores the primary aim of the subject *concord* which many students find very challenging.

The English Language is crafted to a large extent, on grammatical rules and guidelines. Hardly can a person makes a correct statement in English without the interplay of one grammatical rule or the other. Many students, especially those who learn English as a second language (L2), are mostly caught in the web of these rules. Concord, unarguably, plays a major role in the right application of grammatical rules without which one would be lost in speaking good or acceptable English (Tuurosong, 2012). A great percentage of the errors found in our students' essays are concord-related. Basically, a good English student must be one who has a good grasp of concord. Despite the frantic efforts and energies that educators, particularly English educators, have invested into putting students right on the path of concord and English Grammar for that matter, much has not been achieved in this endeavor. English language teachers should have kept this problem at bay but the problem still persists, if not in an even higher dimension. Also, the presence of sophisticated learning avenues such as language laboratories and censored recordings of native speakers among others as well as the comparatively high percentage of speakers and users of the English language the world over today, do not seem to provide any respite in checking this grammatical deficiency.

In Ghana, English is used as an official language and the medium of instruction in our schools from the upper primary level to all higher levels. William (2009, p.8) says, "a single grammatical error in the speech of a public speaker, even if it is immediately corrected, is an almost indelible stigma on his public image". The need to study English is, therefore crucial for students as well as sectors of the population since it is the main medium of instruction for official work and international communication. English language at the Senior High School (SHS) level is to give students the confidence as they communicate in the language. Students at the Senior High School level are to study some essential rules governing the use of English language.

In fact, the general aims of teaching English as a subject at the Senior High School level, according to the Ministry of Education Teaching Syllabus for English (Senior High School), September 2007, include among others to:

1. Reinforce language skills and competence acquired at the Junior High School level.

2. Develop further, the language skills and competence which were acquired at the Junior High School Level.

3. Improve the communicative competence of the students and give them confidence to communicate.

4. Raise students" level of proficiency in English usage and their ability to communicate with other users of English.

5. Enable all Senior High School products deal effectively with the accumulated knowledge of their chosen fields and be able to communicate such knowledge through the speaking and writing of English.

It is almost impossible to have a Form 2 student of Nkawkaw Senior High School, compose a paragraph of their own without any grammatical error, specifically in the area of concord. Minor

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errors are constantly repeated and with their widespread nature, they appear to be correct in the eyes of learners. It is undoubtedly the responsibility of language purists to get our large chunk of students today, who are consumed by this "calamity," out of this language mess. As Broughton et al (1968, p.79) put it: "Certainly, repeated errors become confirmed and unless the learner is made aware of them, he cannot learn from them." Our failure to identify the causes of this menace and feverishly find antidotes to them will stagnate the growth of English grammar among students. Surely, the fact is undeniable that language can be learnt without errors as Nelson (1964, p.45) puts it: "It is just as unrealistic to reckon on language learning without errors as to reckon on existence without sin." Similarly, according to Lutrin and Pincus (2004, p.68), "Language learning is a creative goal-oriented, developmental process…, errors are, therefore, unavoidable". However, it is equally a fact that the language learner can rise above grammatical errors if a number of critical factors are observed.

The poor nature in which students tackle problems relating to English grammar in general and the rules of concord in particular, gives cause for worry. Students' neglect or inappropriate use of grammatical rules in the English language could be called to question since it will be an obvious departure from the norm (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2010). For us to maintain the proposed use of English language by high school students, we must seek, assiduously, to address some of the drawbacks that confront learners. Campbell (2006, p.27) indicates: "In what regards the laws of grammatical purity, violation is much more conspicuous than the observance." The non-adherence of students to rules remains a long-standing challenge to English writers and educators who tirelessly work for the development and sanctity of the language.

Nkawkaw Senior High School was formerly a Teacher Training College. Its inception traces back to the year 1964. It initially started as Nkawkaw Training College. The Training College had to give way to Nkawkaw Secondary School whilst the College was moved to Abetifi. The institution was housed in temporary premises at a place called Tobacco house owned by Mr. W. A. Wiafe, a renowned businessman, industrialist, politician and traditional ruler. It was converted into a Secondary school in 1969 and co-existed alongside the Teacher Training College until the latter gradually phased out in 1974. The school moved to its present permanent site, located on the hill parallel to the Accra-Kumasi rail line south of Nkawkaw suburb, called Domeabra.

Nkawkaw is the capital town of the Kwahu Municipality. Majority of the students admitted into Nkawkaw Senior High School come from the remote areas of the Municipality, and are faced with a lot of grammatical problems. Students obtain low marks in both class exercises and homework related to concord, which could be due to inadequate teachers or students were not exposed to the fundamentals of the English language at the basic level.

It is against this background that this study attempts to identify their challenges and devise appropriate techniques to help solve their concord problem.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Researchers have debated whether grammar should be taught in the classroom and students, for their part, have generally looked upon grammar instruction as a necessary evil at best and an avoidable burden at worse concord, a central aspect of English grammar, has become very problematic among the Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School in particular. Generally, the subject "concord" is categorized into four thematic areas under which all issues relating to concord in English fall. These four thematic areas include subject-verb, verb-verb, noun-pronoun and point of time past-verb concord. Students are unable to match the appropriate

verbs with their subjects in terms of number. Just imagine an Nkawkaw Senior High School (S.H.S) 2 student making a statement such as:

*The students **knows** their rights*.

This is a gross violation of the rules of English grammatical concord. Among other violations of concord rules, the researcher in her interaction with students of Nkawkaw Senior High School (as she teaches English language) observed the following:

*1. I **does** all my homework, sir!*

*2. Two thousand cedis **are** not enough for me.*

*3. Each of us **have** a red pen.*

This is exactly the situation among Nkawkaw Senior High School students. It is very worrisome, given that the English language is the springboard on which all other subjects can be learnt. It is the official language of instruction in Ghana and if students fail to grasp its rudiments such as concord, then one would be right to conclude that the entire educational system is in jeopardy.

Indeed, this messy situation has also been observed by Heid, Dulay and Burt (1997). They observe that students at the senior high level in particular commit concord errors across all the four key dimensions of concord: Subject – Verb, Verb – Verb, Noun – Pronoun and Point – of – time – past – Verb concord. They add that these errors range from proximity to grammatical concord, pronoun and its antecedent to headword identification in complex noun phrases, the s–inflection to demonstrative pronouns, adjectives as headwords to two titles for one person and so on.

The conclusion drawn from the above revelation attests to the fact that the difficulties Nkawkaw Senior High students have as regards the study and use of concord are, undeniably, a contributory factor to the poor performance in core English Language at the senior high school

level in general. Performance of students in the Nkawkaw Senior High School regarding concord has been abysmal over the years and the researcher wants to investigate the exact problems, find out the underlying causes and find the way forward. It is against this background that this researcher has set out to investigate the difficulties faced by students as far as the study and use of concord are concerned at the Senior High School level with specific reference to Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High school.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to find out the challenges the form two students encounter in studying concord which is an integral part of English grammar. It further seeks to explore how these difficulties encountered could be remedied. The objectives in this research are to find out the following:

a. the difficulties Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School encounter in studying and using concord in English,

b. the reasons why Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School encounter difficulties in studying concord in English and

c. the feasible ways of helping Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are raised:

1. What difficulties do Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School encounter in studying concord in English?

2. Why do Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School encounter difficulties in studying concord in English?

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3. How can Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School be helped to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English?

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

This study centered on one distinct class of respondents-students in Nkawkaw Senior High School. Concord is a topic under core English language and so all senior high school students learn concord. Fifty (50) Form 2 students from Nkawkaw Senior High School in Eastern region were given a total of 50 written grammar exercises from where concord errors were identified and analyzed. The sample size of 50 students is deemed appropriate as the written grammar exercises of these students conveniently unveiled the concord complexities which kill "The English in our students". Apart from the fact that the information from them was sufficient for this study, the time constraints did not allow for a bigger sample size if analysis was to be thorough.

Concord is learnt at almost every stage of the English student's academic ladder. Arguably, the Senior High School level is the most crucial and critical as far as one's progression or otherwise in the academic field is concerned in Ghana. This informed the researcher's choice of Senior High School two students who are in the middle of knowledge at the Senior High level and was also observed that almost every sentence they constructed had a concord error.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The review of literature showed that active students of the English language are caught up in the web of grammatical concord regarding the mastery and appropriate enactment of its rules and terminologies. Admittedly, a wide range of difficulties come the way of the concord learner and identifying such difficulties for learners and teachers alike to be consciously aware of their ways

would help them (teachers and students) find ways of overcoming them for effective grammar learning and instruction.

There have been some investigations of the difficulties faced by students in the area of English concord. However, students may face diverse challenges in this area for different reasons and there may be many more different remedial strategies to arrest this situation. For instance, some teachers of grammar employ theoretically recommended methods without necessarily taking into account their learners' potential difficulties. Teachers may not be conscious of difficulties which are serious and may thus hinder students" learning of English grammar and do not choose the method of instruction that would pose fewer difficulties and problems to their learners.

It is in this context that the present study was undertaken to capture valuable insights into how the difficulties Form 2 students of Nkawkaw Senior High School encounter and how they could be helped out of these difficulties. Teachers of English grammar, by this study, are furnished with the reasons for the difficulties students' encounter which will serve as the benchmark for effective teaching and learning. The study also primarily aims to add to the stock of knowledge in the field of concord.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five (5) chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the study whilst Chapter 2 discusses literature review. Chapter 3 looked at the methodology for this research and Chapter 4 contained the discussion of research findings. Finally, the summary and recommendations of the study came under Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The English teacher is often portrayed as an "unattractive grammar monger whose only pleasure in life is to point out the faults of others" (Baron, 1982, p. 226). For the most part within the classroom, any mention of grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror. Many teachers have tried to make grammar teaching a non-threatening, imaginative and useful activity within the English curriculum.

Previous studies on students" and teachers" attitudes and perceptions of grammar instruction in the context of language teaching and learning suggest a disparity between students and teachers. While students favor formal and explicit grammar instruction and error correction, teachers favor communicative activities with less conscious focus on grammar (e.g., Scherre & Naro, 2014).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

By the nature of the subject concord, which is a rule-governed enclave within the terrain of English grammar, one would easily and rightly so, conclude that the topic belongs to the traditional grammar theory in which language is prescriptive rather than descriptive as early on indicated. With the operations of the rules of concord, it is abundantly obvious that concord depends on the Dependency Grammar Theory. Beason (2005) indicates that "concord is prescriptive by nature as its rules maintain the correct dependency of lexis to make grammatical sense".

The dependency grammar theory, dating back to the middle-ages and still useful today, starts from the premise that words "depend" on each other for the sentence to make sense. The

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structure of a language is determined by looking at the relationship between a primary word and its dependents. This theory of grammar competency works very well with German/Dutch and English, which allow for word order mobility. Relatedly, concord is concerned with the rightful combination of lexis or words in a sentence to make both social and grammatical sense. Across the four dimensions of concord, word-order dependency is the key thing and hence, the application of the dependency grammar theory in this work.

2.3 Attitudes towards Grammar Instruction

According to the Traditional Grammar Theory, in teaching grammar, three areas have to be considered: *grammar as rules*, *grammar as form* and *grammar as resource* (Scherre & Naro, 2014). For many L2 learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and having an intellectual knowledge of grammar. Teachers often believe that this will provide the generative basis on which learners can build their knowledge and will be able to use the language eventually (Klu, 2014). For them, prescribed rules give a kind of security. A better approach is perhaps to see grammar as an aspect made of many resources that we have in language which helps us to communicate. We should see how grammar relates to what we want to say or write and how we expect others to interpret what our language use is and its focus.

Grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and a purely lexical categorization of reality (Tshotsho, Cekiso & Mumbembe, 2015). Given that many learners – and teachers – tend to view grammar as a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use – „a linguistic straitjacket" in Larsen-Freeman's words (2002, p.103) – the conception of grammar as something that liberates rather than represses is worth investigating.

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According to Morelli (2003), students perceived themselves as having a better attitude towards grammar instruction in context, while performing slightly better after having experienced the traditional grammar instruction. Generally, attitudes of students studying English grammar at a private primary English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom towards studying grammar have been reported to be positive (Odamtten, Denkabe & Tsikata, 2015). In particular, however, a little over 50% of their subjects claimed to enjoy grammar very much and only about 10% reported finding some difficulty in learning and remembering grammar (Odamtten et al. 2015).

2.4 Students' Expectations on Grammar Instruction

Student expectations of traditional, explicit grammar teaching have been confirmed by many teachers. Lambani and Nengome (2017) also conclude that teachers believe that explicit teaching of grammar is favored by their students because of expectations and feeling of insecurity. Since the 1970s, attention has shifted from ways of teaching grammar which has been seen to be a powerful undermining and demotivating force among L2 learners (Amoakohene, 2017). In terms of motivation and learner success with languages, grammar has been seen to be a problem and to stand in the way of helping learners to communicate fluently. The rules of grammar are taught in the classroom. They may know the rules perfectly, but are incapable of applying them in their own use of the language. Teachers" recognition of this process (i.e., of transferring declarative knowledge about grammar into procedural knowledge) as a problem for many of their students has been reported by Burgess and Etherington (2002, p.442). Obi and Ezekulie (2014) has reported that many learners have difficulty in internalizing grammar rules, although these have been taught intensively (Quagie, 2013).

2.5 The use of Grammatical Terminology

Metalinguistic discussion (i.e, the use of grammatical terminology to talk about language) is seen by as one of the characteristics of explicit grammar teaching. Teachers believe that their students see grammatical terminology as useful and that its use does not present a particular difficulty for students (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2010). Descriptive grammarians acknowledge the fact that language is dynamic and its use is constantly changing, although not in major ways, the problem for ESL/EFL-English as Second Language/English as Foreign Language- learners, however, is that there is a time-lag between the awareness of such changes and their acceptance as the proper use of the language (Cambell, 2006).

Grammar can be taught traditionally or contextually, but student perception should be considered by teachers in the decision-making process (Heid, Dulay & Burt, 1997). Students need to feel confident that educators have met their needs… and educators should be willing to consider the attitudes and perceptions of students when making decisions about how to teach grammar.

2.6 Concord

"Concord" or "agreement," according to Aronoff and Fudeman (2010), "Occurs when one element in a sentence takes on the morphosyntactic features of another element." In basic terms, concord refers to agreement between two or more words in a sentence. English grammatical concord is very important for correct English usage. Larry (2005) define concord as that in which the words in a sentence must match or agree with one another. Concord, according to Lutrin and Pincus (2004) is agreement in gender, case, number or person between different words that share a reference.

William (2009) defines concord (subject–verb) as a grammatical relationship in which a predicate/verb must agree with the subject in nunber and person. By number, he means the

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relationship between the speaker and what he/she is speaking about. The term "agreement" according to him is used to describe the type of grammatical changes that take place between the subject of a sentence and its verb. He adds that it has to do with the "cordial" relationship that must exist between the subject and the main verb or the first element of the verb phrase. Tuurosong's definition is aspect–specific of concord, that is subject and verb concord. Yankson (1994), sees concord as the necessary agreement/coherence needed in a sentence/statement to yield a flawless grammatical structure. As to what informs this unfortunate attitude of non-adherence to the rules of concord on the part of both native and non-native students, one has to probe through research.

Aspects of Concord and their Underlying Principles

The term *concord* basically embodies any sort of grammatical agreement that occurs in a correct grammar construction. By this yardstick, one may find several forms of agreement that occur in various grammatical structures without which agreement of such structures would have lost their grammaticalness. Readily, the type of concord that comes to mind for many English users is that of subject- verb. Perhaps, this is attributable to the fact that it is the broadest and most intricate of all the aspects of concord.

Many scholars have generally agreed on four primary dimensions of this topic as per the grammar of English language, with subject-verb concord always leading the discussion. The forms of concord include: Subject-Verb, Noun- Pronoun, Verb-Verb and Point of time past-verb. Of these four parts, there are nineteen sub-aspects. According to Tuurosong (2012), the 19 sub aspects of these four main aspects include:

a) Subject – Verb Concord

According to Yankson (1994), subject-verb concord has thirteen sub-aspects as follows: - Grammatical concord - Proximity concord - Headword Identification in complex Noun phrases - The "s"-Inflection - There + verb +Noun phrase - Semi – conjunctions/Intervening expressions - Two titles for one subject - Adjectives as Headwords - The Indefinite pronouns "All" and "some" - Intervening prepositional phrases - Plural Inflectional concord - Other Indefinite pronouns (Apart from "all" and "some") -Notional concord

b) Verb – Verb concord

- Chain of verbs in one construction

c) Noun – pronoun concord

- Nouns and their corresponding pronouns. Examples are the demonstrative pronouns such as this /these/ that and those.

d) Point of time past – verb concord

- Adjuncts referring to time past

The works of many English grammar scholars on grammatical concord (e.g. Tuurosong, 2012; William, 2009) have all basically identified these four as the aspects of concord in English grammar. The basic concept behind each of the aspects of concord according to the above cited scholars are explained briefly in the ensuing paragraphs. Subject-Verb concord operates under the principle that singular verbs should go with singular subjects whilst plural verbs should go with plural subjects. This type of concord has in it, some intricacies which many a student has fallen victim to in one way or the other. These intricacies lie in six identified sources of errors which include typical development errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors,

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memory limitation concord errors, plural inflectional concord errors and the inability to identify noun headwords (Tuurosong, 2012).

Noun-Pronoun agreement on the other hand ensures that the appropriate pronoun should be used to replace a noun, both in terms of number and gender.

"My niece has lost his pen" and *"Students don't take his studies seriously'',* are thus inaccurate grammatically because there is no concord between "My niece" and "his" in the first sentence and "Students" and "his" in the second sentence as gender and number are disregarded. Verb-Verb concord is guided by the principle that when a number of verbs (two or more) are found in a construction, they should agree in terms of tense (present or past). Where there is tense disagreement, the reader or listener is confused about time in an expression.

She came and take the gun and shoot herself , is for instance wrong because we are left in the dark as to whether the actions conveyed in here are habitual or not.

Finally, the rule behind Point of time past-Verb concord is that a point of time past element (e.g. yesterday, in those days, that morning, etc.) must always take on past tense verbs only. *I sleep late last night* is thus incorrect since there is no agreement between "sleep", the verb and "last night" the point-of-time-past element (Odamtten, Denkabe & Tsikata, 2015).

2.7 Difficulties of Studying Concord

According to Aronoff and Fudeman (2010), the agreement of a verb with its subject in a sentence is a major headache for most English students. This, they opines, stems from the fact that students basically have a difficulty identifying and classifying subjects in sentences. Whilst a singular subject could be taken for a plural one and vice versa, some students simply cannot tell the specific "right" subjects in their sentences for the right verbs to be chosen to agree with them. He cited a few cases where students in a high school committed concord errors as follows;

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1. *Two thousand, five hundred dollars are needed for the project*, instead of replacing the verb "are" with "is".

2. *The government, as well as citizens, do not seek the growth of the country*, instead of using the verb "does" in place of "do".

Obi and Ezekulie (2014) mention that many learners of English as a second language get themselves confused by the grammatical rules that pertain in their mother tongue. Rules of the mother tongue (L1) often contradict those of their second language (L2), thus propelling learners to commit concord errors unconsciously. Pointing out a few cases in their research, they indicate that in some languages, a singular verb for instance can partner both a plural and a singular subject in a sentence, thus rendering the principle of subject number in concord worthless.

Similarly, Yankson (1994) draws a very clear line of difference between concord as pertains in some local Ghanaian languages and concord in English. He cited a few examples in his native Fanti Language. These differences draw the English student back in his study of concord as he is often tempted to apply rules of his L1. He identifies the wrong use of the female pronoun "she" and the male pronoun "he" as common examples of this problem of L1 interference. Amoakohene, (2017), points out the fact that most students of English grammar fall short in their application of the rules of concord due to the limitations that go with some of the rules. Students, he argues, are left at the crossroads when they are faced with exceptions to some fundamental rules governing concord. Among other exceptions, he identifies the first person singular "I" which takes plural verbs though a singular subject and the second person plural or singular "You" which takes plural verbs regardless of its subject number in a sentence.

Klu (2014), underscores the fact that problems of concord among students occur basically due to the inability of students to note the dynamism of verbs as pertains in verb – verb concord, one of

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the aspects of this topic. Verbs must agree with one another where they occur in a chain or move with point-of-time-past references in one sentence to avoid confusing the reader or listener about time. In the following simple sentences written by some high school students, Lutrin and Pincus (2004) points out that many students have failed to recognize the relevance of tense in respect of time:

1. *Jones slept late but wakes up early.*

2. *Last year, Chelsea takes the champions cup.*

In the first sentence, the issue of time is not clear as the speaker combines both present and past tenses. Either the verb "slept" should be made present, that is "sleeps" or the verb "wakes" made past, that is "woke" for there to be agreement between the two verbs, in which case time will be catered for. In the second sentence also, according to Latin, the use of the point of time past reference "Last year" calls for only the past tense form of the verb, hence the verb "takes" ought to be "took" to give way for concord and time definition.

Tshotsho et al. (2015) attribute students' difficulties in studying grammatical rules to what he calls "false grammar" by which inaccurate writers corrupt the language and their own styles of writing. Thus, authorship shares in this blame. Relatedly, McGraw (1993) intimates that, *Nothing comes out of a sack except what is in it*. This means that the teacher of English, whose own competence level is so low, cannot by any means, raise the language level of his pupils or students above his own. At best, he can only bring them up to his level and even here, his success is dependent on a host of other variables.

Sysoyev (1999) conducted some experimental lessons in order to address L2 grammar teaching to students through an integrative method which proposes three stages: *Exploration, Explanation*

and Expression (EEE). This method is proposed out of the increasing difficulties students are confronted with in their bid to learn what Sysoyev calls "real language," that is grammar. By exploration, the student is guided to find patterns and formulate rules after being provided with sentences which illustrate such rules. At the explanation stage, the student is challenged to summarize what his findings are after the exploration. In the final stage, expression stage, the student practices the production of appropriate utterances with others, paying attention to the patterns and grammatical rules discovered during the exploration. This method is Sysoyev''s response to one of the underlying difficulties students encounter in studying grammatical rules which is the form – based or meaning – based approach to teaching grammar.

Heid et al. (1997, p. 102) developed a study to deal with significant problems involved in writing for international audiences including non – native speakers of English. In order to address these problems and the somewhat low rate of English speakers in some fields, a number of systems were developed, namely: Plain English, Simplified English and Controlled language. These systems are geared, in her own words, "to produce English that is easily readable, accessible and usable." Of the three systems, controlled language targeted the accurate application of grammatical rules in the English language to enhance effective communication. She explains that these systems are based on the manner in which readers' process texts, and consequently they have the tendency to concentrate on and apply similar rules of writing. Through Heid et al. (1997) work, it is revealed that wrong grammatical rules in written texts are often imbibed by readers or learners, exposing them to wrong grammatical usage.

Lambani and Nengome (2017) developed a study concerning the use of active verbs with inanimate subjects since this is a source of difficulty in writing for students whose L1 are Asian languages. He stated that although active verbs with "instrumental or inanimate subjects" are

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widely used in English, particularly in scientific prose, Japanese students, for example, find this structure unacceptable. A study by Quagie (2013) revealed that an active verb with an inanimate subject is possible in English only when the subject has an "inherent function" represented by the verb. He indicated that the inherent function of a thermometer, for instance is to measure, of a graph to show, of a law to state, and so on.

Through the analysis of subject – verb pairs from *Science News*, the author provides several examples of students" errors in the use of the passive in place of the active voice, which suggests that "writers may have an interlanguage rule requiring active verbs to have inanimate subjects" in the first case and in the second case, despite being aware of the fact that in English inanimate subjects can have an active verb, they over-generalize the rule and this could be due to the uncertainty as regards which verbs the rule can apply to. Hence, the accepted use of passive and active verbs as well as inanimate subjects in sentences poses yet another challenge, especially to L2 learners of concord.

Odamtten et al. (2017) argue that students' difficulties in learning concord rules emanate primarily from lack of "repetition" or constant practice which in educational circles, is said to be the *mother* of learning. They believe that if grammatical rules are to stick and stay with the learner, the learner must make a conscious effort to put them to use regularly. He admits that the rules of concord are quite numerous and the student needs time and practice to master them. Lambani and Nengome (2017) equally share in this view. Needless to say from the works of the foregoing writers and researchers, there really exists a problem – Why students encounter difficulties in studying Concord in English. This work seeks to dig deeper into this reality and map out more feasible interventions to check it.

2.8 English Grammatical Concord in Perspective

Almost always when the West African Examination Council (WAEC) results, both Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results are released, English is one of the subjects that records the greatest number of failures. Human beings all over the world communicate with one another in different languages and there is even a greater need now than before for us to be more serious as far as English Language is concerned. It is against this background that the poor performance of students in this area has become the greatest worry to parents, teachers, and opinion leaders, stakeholders and education authorities.

Many scholars have, therefore, written on or talked about grammar in general and concord in particular. Some of these people attempted to define grammar, subject, verb, subject-verb agreement and noun-pronoun/antecedent agreement.

In order that language accomplishes its communication function, both the speaker and the addressee need to share the same signals used in the transmission of the message. Grammar is of great importance in this case, for even in a situation where two people speak the same language, if the speaker sounds ungrammatical, communication is greatly impaired.

Blanche (1981), in explaining concord, states: "some words in sentences have matching forms to indicate their grammar relations. This is called agreement. Verbs agree with their subject and pronouns agree with their antecedents".

The above statement mean that when we construct sentences, we should make sure that our verbs agree with their subjects so that grammatical rules are not broken. Yankson (1994) is of the view that the choice of the verb is determined by the occurrence of the subject. He goes on to say that if we pair them wrongly, we shall produce sentences which will be immediately recognized as

ungrammatical. What he intends to say is that a plural subject requires a plural verb whereas a singular subject requires a singular verb. A violation of any of these rules is considered therefore ungrammatical.

Palmer's (1994) assertion above that wrong pairing of the verb produces ungrammatical sentences, is supported by Leonard and Laurence (1994, p.76). They say, "….these elements (subject and verb) occur in pairs. The subject of a sentence must be paired with a verb to make a complete statement". Tuurosong (2012), touching on the subject under discussion, also states that "Verb forms change according to whether the subject is singular or plural or according to whether the subject is first, second or third person". It can be realized from the above quotation that the choice of the main verb present tense is determined basically by the subject and vice versa. Baidoo (2000, p.497) also supports this idea of relationship between the subject and the verb making a complete grammatical structure by saying:

The predicate/verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, we mean the subject can be singular or plural.

According to Baidoo (2000), compound, collective and mass nouns are created as singular or plural. In addition to being singular or plural, a subject can also be the 1st, 2nd or 3rd person. He goes on to add that person can be seen as "The relationship between the speaker and what he is speaking about ". From this quotation, we realize that when a speaker speaks about something or himself, it is FIRST PERSON (I/we, me, us,). The person he/she speaks to is the SECOND PERSON which has general meaning of "you". The person or thing the speaker speaks about is THIRD PERSON. Still talking about agreement, Baidoo (2000, p.95) says:

"where there is an auxiliary, the subject agrees with the auxiliary. Where there is more than one auxiliary, agreement is with the first. The problem we normally have with subjects (i.e. third

person subjects) is to establish whether they are singular or plural, so that we can select the appropriate form of the verb for them."

Talking about pronoun-Antecedent Agreement, he says:

"pronouns are substitutes which are used in place of nouns to prevent repetition of

nouns. If substitutes act in place of nouns, then there is every reason why they should agree with their antecedents so that it will be possible for us to associate them with these nouns in whose place they perform."

From the above definition of pronouns, it would therefore be ungrammatical and unpleasant in our ears if someone spoke: *Pious told Pious' sister to bring the books back to Pious for Pious to see the books.* It would be jarring (i.e. unpleasant) in our ears because we would expect the speaker to replace the name (Pious) sometimes with "him" and "his" in the course of that sentence.

Agreement between pronouns and antecedents according to Baidoo (2000) covers;

- Agreement in number

- Agreement in function and case

Yankson (1994) has the following assertion to make:

The rule for the formation of English subject-verb concord is that a singular subject requires a singular verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb.

He stresses that the noun-verb agreement is very basic in an English sentence. He goes further to enumerate five main categories of subject-verb (concord) errors as:

- Typical development errors

- Inability to identify noun headword

- Notional concord errors

- Plural inflectional concord errors

- Memory limitation concord errors.

McGraw (1993), commenting on concord in English, says "The most important type of concord in English is the concord of number between subject and verb". Olusegun (2017) supports this assertion on the concord system (i.e, subject-verb agreement made by Quirk and GreenBaum by stating that "The most important concord relation in English exists between the subject of a clause and its accompanying verb". From the above assertion, it is clear that the subject-verb agreement system of a language is very important for one who wants to learn to speak well in the said language, in this case, English language. Obi and Ezekulie (2014) has the belief that "Concord means agreements or harmony". Thus in grammar, we apply this word as meaning, perfect agreement between a subject and verb having the same number and person".

Obi and Ezekulie (2014, p.33) comment on pronoun/antecedent agreement that "The second rule of agreement states that a pronoun must agree in number, gender and case with its antecedent". He adds further that this rule implies that:

    i)   A pronoun replacing a noun must have the same number as the noun it replaces

    ii)   A pronoun replacing a noun must be masculine if the noun is masculine: feminine if the noun is feminine: and neuter if the noun is neuter.

    iii)   A subject noun must be replaced by a subject pronoun: an objective noun is replaced by an objective pronoun.

Scherre and Naro (2014, p.64) make a concise summary of concord by saying that: "Violating concord rules is synonymous to a goat wearing a shirt, a part of trousers and sun glasses". Their analogy points out the undeniable fact that violating concord rules can be extremely serious and humorous. This means that the effect of such a violation of concord rules is not only confusing

but also makes our understanding of such ungrammatical sentences very difficult. Campbell (2006) defines concord as "the grammatical relationship between a subject and a verb or pronoun and its verb, or demonstrative adjective and the word it modifies". The above is an indication that the subject of a sentence can also be a pronoun and not necessarily a noun. The demonstrative adjectives or pronouns *this*, *that*, *these* and *those* indicate whether the noun it is referring to is a singular or a plural noun. Also, a demonstrative adjective shows whether the noun it is referring to is far or near to the speaker. The demonstrative adjective is followed by the noun that is being referred to always and therefore, there is the need for an agreement between the demonstrative adjective and the noun. In the expression, "This boy is my son." The subject is "This boy". There is concord (i.e. agreement) because "This" is singular and "boy" is equally singular.

Heid, Dulay and Burt (1997, p.91) define concord as "the fact of having the same number, gender or person". He further gives its synoptic meaning as agreement. He is, in fact, trying to say that the subject must always agree with the verb in person. What this means is that when the subject is singular, the verb must also be singular. With regard to gender, where the subject is a masculine or feminine pronoun, a feminine pronoun must correspond to a feminine noun and a masculine pronoun must also correspond to a masculine noun. Tshotsho et al. (2015) agree that in languages, agreement or concord is a form of cross- reference between different facts of the sentence or phrase. Agreement happens when a word changes form depending on the other words it relates to. One does not for instance, say "You is" in English because "is" cannot be used when "You" is used as the subject. It does not agree with "You". Here, the grammatical form is "You are", even though the verb still has the same functions as well as basic meaning.

Swain (1994, p.32) says "a common error in academic writing is the use of a wrong form of the verb for its subject". In other words, a common error is when the verb form chosen does not agree with the subject of the sentence or clause. He went further to state that concord error can affect the clarity of a piece of writing. Olusegun (2017) argues that certain words in sentences have matching forms to indicate their grammatical relations. He argues that the sort of grammatical relationship he is referring to is known as agreement. He goes on to add that verbs always agree with subjects while pronouns also agree with their antecedents. In, for instance "She eats", the pronoun "She" is the subject and it is a third person singular. The word "eats" on the other hand is a verb. It is also a singular verb so there is an agreement between the subject and the verb because both "she" and "eats" are singular in terms of number.

Pronouns also agree with their antecedents in the sense that when the third persons, i.e, *he*, *she*, *it* are used, they must agree with their antecedents. In the sentence "I threw the pens to him and he caught them" "pen" is the antecedent of "them". McGraw (1993), talking about agreement of subjects and verbs, says: *Number refers to the form of a word that indicates whether it is singular or plural.* A verb must agree with its subject in number. Singular subjects indicate one and require singular verbs plural subjects indicate more than one and require plural verbs. With most regular verbs, add „s" or „es" to form the singular.

The above simply means that, it is ungrammatical to use a plural verb with a singular subject and vice versa. It is therefore wrong to construct sentences such as :

- Kofi *go* to school on Mondays

- The man *walk* to church on Sundays

- Kofi and Ama *goes* to school on Mondays

- The men *walks* to church on Sundays.

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They are wrong because:

1. Kofi is a singular subject/noun and must go with a singular verb „goes.

2. The man is a singular subject and requires a singular verb „walks".

3. Kofi and Ama is a plural subject and requires a plural verb „go" and

4. The men is a plural subject and does not require a singular verb but a plural verb 'walk'

McGraw is rather quick to add that: *An exception to the rule occurs with the pronouns **I** and **you**. Both take the plural form of a verb even when you refer to one person. The only exception is **be**: when **I** is the subject the verb form is **am***.

The above indicates the pronoun *I* and *you* (singular) always require plural verbs. It is ungrammatical therefore to make them go with singular verbs in sentences. It is wrong therefore to construct sentences such as:

- I *eats* rice once a week.

- I *goes* to school on Mondays.

- You (one person) *eats* "fufu".

- You (one person) goes to school.

Talking on notional concord, Wiredu (1998, p.112) explains that "It is the agreement between the verb and the subject". This agreement, to him, "…is based on the speaker"s perceptions". What Wiredu is trying to say is that English group or collective nouns may take plural or singular verbs depending on the perception of the speaker. The general rule of notional concord is that a plural verb is used if the thought is of the individuals in a group rather that the group as a singular unit and vice versa. The singular words *girl*, *school, child, station, table, man, pen*, etc are distinguished from the plural versions through their formal differences. For example, *girl* is different from *girls*. We can tell that anytime we see the word *girl,* it is singular while anytime

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we see the word *girls*, we know it is plural. These formal differences enable singular or plural verb forms to satisfy the concord rules.

There are however certain words which cannot be said to be either singular or plural. Some examples are team, congregation, staff, French, army, clergy, club, Portuguese, committee, company, audience, class, etc. The above words can choose either a singular verb or a plural verb depending on the context in which they are used. Yankson (1994) shares the same ideas with Wiredu when he says:

If the group is being considered as a singular individual body, the singular verb will be chosen. However, if the group is being perceived as a collection of individuals, the plural verb is a more likely candidate.

From the quotations on notional concord, it is however clear that consideration is being given to the action of the individual members of audience, staff, and congregation resulting in the choice of the plural verbs *are, have* and *support* respectively in the following sentences.

- The audience *are* tired of watching the film

- The staff *have* been served

- The congregation *support* me

But it is equally correct to say

- The audience *is* tired of watching the film

- The staff *has* been served

- The congregation *supports* me.

Yankson (1994) sums it up by saying:

On the whole, the plural is said to be more popular in British speech.

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The advice to foreign learners is: when in doubt, it is safer to go by grammatical concord which says a singular noun selects a singular verb, a plural noun, a plural verb.

Lutrin and Pincus (2004) also add their voice to the definition of notional concord defining it as: *Agreement of verb with subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that idea.*

Baidoo (2000) contributes to notional concord as the agreement between the verb and the subject according to perception: the idea of numbers rather than the actual display or the presence of a grammatical feature for the idea. What this means is that while we can distinguish between singular and plural forms of the same words, for instance, the plural form of teacher is teachers, with others for example class, crowd, and team it is very difficult to do that.

Defining notional concord, the online dictionary of languages terminology says it is the type of concord decided by the speaker's idea or perception rather than in grammatical reality. If a speaker for example says "a group of teachers have come", he or she is correct under notional concord. The perception is that it is singular individuals rather than the grammatically singular group. Notional concord simply means, in deciding whether two parts of speech are in concord or not, one considers the concept of notion that is denoted and formal characteristics of the parts of speech. Another example of notional concord is; "Senior management have been resisting the changes to the company for some years now." Whereas "Senior management" is considered singular, "have been" is plural. This lays emphasis on the fact that the individual senior managers, constituting the group are referred to as singular. The notion is that one of the groups of individuals is acting individually and is therefore plural and the verb is also plural. Notional concord normally deals with collective nouns. McGraw (1993, p.79), talking about concord with regard to intervening prepositional phrases, says "the subject of a sentence is never the object of

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a preposition. The verb must agree with the actual subject of the sentence, not with the object of the preposition."

This implies that in " The colour of the roses pleases me", the actual subject of the sentence is "colour" and it is singular, " of the roses" is a prepositional phrase, the verb "pleases" is therefore singular.

From the foregoing discussion, there is no denying the fact that all the authorities are pointing at one major or central theme, AGREEMENT. Agreement is the key word. An agreement between a subject and its accompanying verb or a pronoun and its antecedent. Even the Bible says that "Two people cannot stay or move together unless they agree on something". The old adage "Birds of a feather flock together" also supports the point made by the bible.

2.9 Conclusion

Among many other issues pertaining to concord discussed in the review of literature above, some highlights in respect of the research questions of this study are worth identifying.

In respect of research question one, difficulties SHS students encounter in studying concord, various authorities emerged with different findings. McGraw (1993) points out the difficulty of students to identify subjects in sentences as a challenge. Yankson (1994) also saw negative influence of the L1 as one difficulty. With regard to research question two-why SHS students encounter difficulties in studying concord, William (2009) in his study discovered lack of practice of concord rules on the part of students as a leading reason whilst some attributed students" woes to "false grammar" by authors who mislead students on the rules guiding concord. Tutor incompetence has been reported as an underlying cause of this menace. The temptation to transfer L1 grammar to English was equally revealed in a study by Tuurosong (2012) as yet another reason for students' concord learning difficulties.

On research question three-ways of helping SHS to overcome their concord learning difficulties-some of the researchers proposed the use of grammatical terminology in the teaching of English grammar (e.g. Heid et al. 1997). Others in separate studies equally found the use of prescriptive/traditional grammar to teach concord as a way out. Tshotsho et al. (2015) suggested the use of what they called "systems" namely: plain language, simplified English and controlled language; as a feasible way of arresting the situation. And last but not least, Aronoff and Fudeman (2010) discovered the form/meaning-based approach to teaching grammar as an antidote to overcoming these challenges.

The summary of reviewed literature in this work above points out that students encounter myriad of challenges in studying concord, different reasons account for this and there are various ways of overcoming concord learning challenges. Researchers have suggested antidotes to these challenges. There are, however, many types of difficulties that students encounter in studying concord, many reasons why students encounter these difficulties and there are many more effective and feasible ways by which students can be helped out of the situation. It is in this context that the present study was undertaken to capture valuable insights into how students of concord could be salvaged from these difficulties.

After reading the works of the various authors, cited and not cited in this work, who studied the subject matter of my topic (concord), I discovered that very little data could be found to address the key objectives of this research. Therefore, it is in an effort to fill this gap of finding many more feasible solutions to the research objectives herein that the researcher set out to do this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological processes that were followed in gathering and analyzing data for the study. The sections captured here include research design, population, sample and sampling technique and research instruments. It also provides the pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention processes.

3.1 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall plan the researcher employs to collect data in order to answer the research questions including the research data analysis techniques or methods (Adentwi & Amartei, 2009). The research design used for the study was a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative design is an approach to gathering data using numbers. In this study, the quantitative data was gathered in the form of scores on tests. Qualitative design is approach to gathering data using narratives. In this study, the qualitative focused on explanations students gave for the choice of the answers. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combinations of both approaches provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2014). One of the major advantages of conducting a mixed method research is the possibility of triangulation, which is the use of several means to examine the same phenomenon. Triangulation allows one to identify aspects of a phenomenon more accurately by approaching it from different vantage points using different methods and techniques (Crotty, 1998). Combining both approaches provided detailed information of students' understanding of concord.

3.2 Location of the study

The school is situated at Nkawkaw, which is the capital town of Kwahu West Municipality. Nkawkaw Senior High School is located on a hill parallel to the Accra-Kumasi rail line south of Nkawkaw suburd, called Domeabra. The Municipality is bounded to the North by Kwahu South District, to the West by Asante-Akim South District. To the East, it is bounded by the Fanteakwa District and to the South by Birim North and Atiwa District. It has a total land area of 414km. The population of the Municipality according to 2010 population and housing census stands at ninety three thousand, five hundred and eighty four (93,584). Agriculture is the major economic activity in the Municipality and employs almost sixty percent 60% of the labour force

3.3. Population of the Study

Population is the entire group of individual or objects having common observable characters. According to Castillo (2009) research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of scientific query. The entire population of Nkawkaw Senior High School is about one thousand, five hundred and eighty-three (1583). However, the researcher focused on the Second Year students. The population of the study was therefore Second Year students. The choice of Year 2 students was motivated by the fact that they are on the threshold of entering their final year. This is the best year to examine their errors and strengths and have adequate time to correct errors and build on their strengths.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size refers to the actual number of members or individual selected from the target group. Sampling is defined as the process of selecting units from the large population (Bentil, 2001). The total population of the entire second year students in the school is estimated to be four hundred and seventy-two (472). A total of fifty (50) students, both male and female were

selected from Second Year classes of the school and ten (10) teachers of English Language. The 50 students were selected using random sampling. Random sampling is a process of selecting participants where each individual within the sampling group is given equal chance of being part of the study. This ensures that any individual differences among the participants are spread evenly in the selected participants. During the sampling process, in each class, the researcher countered all students and told them to note their numbers. Then, she asked all bearers of odd numbers to step aside and then randomly picked either the odd number bearers or even number bearers. Being an English tutor herself, the researcher had a fair idea about the problems of students with regard to concord.

3.5 Research Instruments

The researcher employed the use of tests, interview, observation and questionnaire to gather the data for this study.

3.5.1 Interview

As a research method, interview is a conversation carried out with the definite aim of obtaining certain information. It is designed to gather valid and reliable information through the responses of the interviewee to planned sequence of questions (Sarantakos, 2005). In obtaining the data the interviewees were asked questions which were in line with the research questions formulated to guide the study. This is mostly a set of questions written more or less like a questionnaire which helps the interviewer to ask questions on the actual issues in which she is interested in. The interview schedule was used at the pre-intervention stage. In order to ensure validity of the interview, the researcher confined her entire attention to one task at a time.

3.5.2. Observation

Peil (1982) observes that as a method for social scientists, observation involves more than looking at what is going on. Because our students can talk and explain their behaviour, observation includes listening and asking questions and often participating in the activities of the group to get first-hand experience of what daily life involves. The researcher used observation as one of the sources for data collection. The findings were crosschecked with the responses given during interview. Students in their normal learning environment were observed closely. Outside the classroom environment, the researcher also observed students' ways of interacting in the playground.

The researcher undertook a systematic observation of a grammar lesson taught by a teacher of English to ascertain the strategies he used in his lessons. The lesson involved imitating, repeating and memorizing the rules of grammar. The teacher's methodology did not generate any interest in the students, since students were not involved actively in the grammar lesson. In another development, the teacher wrote exercises on grammar on the board, students were asked to select the correct answers to complete each sentence. The teacher supplied the correct answers while the student did the marking of each other's book. Finally students were given back their exercise books for corrections to be done. The researcher used observation at the pre-intervention stage of the research.

3.5.3 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a tool used to collect data from diverse, large and widely scattered group. A questionnaire is a written document listing a series of questions pertaining to the problem under study, which the investigator requires to answer (Kahn,1993). Questionnaire was chosen because of the benefits it offers. The researcher is able to cover a large number of respondents within a

short period of time and also ensures the anonymity on the part of the respondents.

The questionnaire used for the study consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions. They were designed to collect information from the ten (10) English Language teachers at Nkawkaw Senior High School. The questionnaire was personally distributed by the researcher to the selected teachers for the study during school hours. To maximise response level, the researcher made follow-ups to re-emphasize the importance of the study and the value of the respondents' participation. The questionnaire was retrieved personally, all the 10 questionnaire distributed were retrieved, representing 100% of the total questionnaire distributed. The completed questionnaire was gathered for statistical analysis. The respondents were guaranteed of confidentiality and anonymity of the information given. The participants were given freewill to either be part of the study or not. The rate of co-operation was hundred percent (100%). The questionnaire for the teachers contained twelve (13) items, divided into sections 1 and 2.

Section1 contained questions seeking information on the personal data of the teachers. Section 2 questions included both the open-ended and close-ended types. A sample of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix A.

3.5.4 Test

A test is a formal, systematic (usually pen and paper) procedure used to gather information about students' behavior (Owu-Ewie, 2018). One of the most common devices used to obtain measurement in education is test. The researcher also employed test as a research instrument to collect data on the topic under study. Two sets of test were administered to the students. These were used at the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages of the research work to collect data on the performance of form two students in their concord usage in the English Language.

The English exercises covered three main areas of grammatical concord namely subject-verb

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agreement, proximity concord and pronoun antecedent concord. The testing instrument was in line with the SHS English syllabus. This type of instrument was needed because the study hung specifically on the academic performance and the data needed should necessarily reflect learning. The tests were conducted after school with the help of one teacher of English. The learners were divided into two groups to ensure independent work. The results were compared to find out whether the performance of students at the post-intervention stage showed an improvement over the pre-intervention test scores. The results are presented in chapter four.

3.5.4.1 Interventions

Intervention is a set of strategies planned and implemented to solve a specific problem or improve an educational practice. It involves a step by step process which is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (Kumar, 2005). The strategies which were used as interventions for the research were meant to finding lasting solution to concord problems. Based on the findings made during the pre-intervention stage from observation, interviews with students, responses from questionnaire and the results of the class exercise(test), it was realized that the students had the following problems;

i) Concord with 3rd person number between subject and verb, the verb in its present tense. Example; * The woman cook well   instead of ''cooks''

ii) Inability to identify noun Headword in a complex noun phrase was also seen in the English exercise they answered. Example; * The handsome doctors has (have) nice cars.

iii) Proximity concord- the researcher noticed that the use of 'either….or , neither…..nor pose a challenge to students. Example; * Either the father or the children is to blame. They consider the subjects in the sentence as singular items and selected ´is´ instead of

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(are).

iv)   Wrong use of pronouns- Example; ∗we swept the compound themselves. (ourselves)

English lessons on concord were organized for the sampled students after school with the aim of helping them improve on their level of competency in the use of English Language. A period of four weeks in the month of January, 2018 was used for the intervention. Learners were taken through some teaching strategies which include;

3.5.4.2 Classroom situation

The researcher taught the students that grammatical concord is the term used to describe the agreement between subjects of sentences and the accompanying verbs. The rule states that singular subjects require singular verb forms and plural subjects attract plural verb forms. Here the researcher made use of situations available within and outside the walls of the classroom. They were asked to give examples of objects and they named nouns such as bowl, boy, desk, cup, bicycle and tree. Having mentioned these nouns, the researcher asked the learners to use them in a simple present tense. Some of the sentences they gave are;

The bowl **belongs** to my friend.

The tree **is** tall.

Students were asked to change the nouns and verbs into their plural forms.

The bowls **belong** to my friend.

The trees **are** tall.

The researcher took his time and explained to the students that verbs are in different word classes from nouns and as a result verbs are treated differently. The suffix –s or –es added to verbs in the simple present tense shows that the verbs should be used with the third person singular subject.

Singular verbs take –s or -es suffix and plural verbs do not take them.

The researcher went on to explain another grammatical rule which says; A verb must agree with its subject in number and in person. Through drills, they were introduced to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular/plural subjects. For instance 'I go' and 'She goes' are both singular but they are different in form because go in 'I go' is on the first person while goes in 'She goes' is in the third person.

However the researcher was quick to explain various exceptions to the rule that; a verb counts as singular if the first verb in the finite verb phrase has a singular form. This general rule is restricted in several respects;

Verbs do not show person or number of 3rd person in the past tense.

Example;   I *cooked* rice and beans.

She *cooked* rice and beans.

I *was* here last week.

She *was* here last week.

Apparent exception to the concord rule arise with singular nouns ending with the '-s' of the plural inflection (physics, mathematics, measles) or plural nouns lacking the plural inflection marker (people, cattle, sheep, aircraft).

Example;   Physics *is* very difficult to study.

My people *are* suffering.

The researcher saw it necessary to introduce students' to English noun modification before assisting students to identify noun headwords in complex noun phrases and that, any phrase that does the work a noun does in a sentence is a noun phrase. The noun phrase may begin with an article (a, an, or the), a determiner (some, this, one, each, both) or an adjective (beautiful,

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handsome, ugly) and must have a headword (mostly a noun). The researcher wrote a few complex noun phrases on the board and called students to identify the noun phrases as single subject or plural subject;

Two beautiful cars

My new dress

My textbooks

The researcher also added that within complex noun phrases, there are mandatory headwords which can be preceded or followed by modifiers. Modifiers that precede a headword are pre-modifiers and those that follow headwords are post-modifiers. The researcher wrote a few complex noun phrases on the board and asked learners to identify the pre-modifiers, headwords and post-modifiers.

Example; The old man behind the table

The beautiful baby in the cot

3.5.4.3 Practice drill

Through demonstration, the researcher explained proximity as the state of being near someone or something. On this premise, the researcher explained the principle of proximity concord to be the agreement of a verb with whatever noun or group that is immediately closed to the verb. The rule states that, if two subjects are joined by 'either…or', 'neither….nor', the verb agrees with the subject which is closer to the verb.

Example; *Either* the teacher *or* the students are eating

Either the teachers *or* student is eating

Neither the student *nor* headmaster was correct

Neither the headmaster *nor* students were correct

The discussion continued with lots of examples for learners to practise in order to grasp the rule.

3.5.4.4 Class discussion of indefinite pronouns

The researcher explained to learners that indefinite pronouns that are subjects and are singular go with singular verbs.

Singular indefinite pronouns include; someone, somebody, something, everyone, everybody, nobody, nowhere, anyone, anybody.

Plural indefinite pronouns include; all, many, several, few, and both.

The researcher also added that indefinite pronouns can only be classified as pronouns if they are used alone. When they are used with a noun, then they become adjectives. Example;

Both teachers agreed that suspension was the only solution

'Both' becomes indefinite adjective and not pronoun.

Indefinite pronouns are written as one word except (no one)

3.5.4.5 The use of integrative approach to grammar teaching

This approach involves the systematic and detailed analysis of the stylistic features of a text; vocabularies, structure, register, etc. in order to find out not just what a text means but also how it comes to mean what it does (Short, 1996). The researcher bearing in mind this integrated approach allowed students to use the concord rules appropriately in a variety of contexts in the class at all times. Learners' grammatical errors especially concord ones were instantly corrected with a level of diplomacy in order not to discourage learners.

3.6 Conclusion

There was tremendous improvement over the marks they got in the pre-intervention exercises, after the researcher took them through the topics. It was identified that students had understood the concept and many could apply the rules correctly. The results could be seen in chapter four. This chapter has provided the details of the methodological processes and procedures for gathering data for the study as well as procedures for analyzing the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the main findings of the study. The data for this study were drawn from various sources; questions and tests administered during the research process.

The data gathered for this study were analyzed using tables and figures. The results have been analyzed in line with the research questions. These research questions are stated below:

- What difficulties do form two students of Nkawkaw SHS encounter in studying concord in English?

- Why do form two students of Nkawkaw SHS encounter difficulties in studying concord in English?

- How can form two students of Nkawkaw SHS be helped to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English?

4.2 Analysis of Questionnaire for teachers

In this section, the questionnaires filled and returned by teachers were analyzed in line with the assumption underlying the study. There were ten (10) teachers selected as respondents for this investigation. Questionnaires were distributed to the ten teachers to respond to them. Teachers were expected to make a cross on the blocks they felt were appropriate for them and they were also expected to comment on certain questions. All questions were returned to the researcher on time. Which made analyzing the questionnaires very easy.

The following tables reflect the status and the manner according to which the teachers responded to the various questions as they appeared in their questionnaire.

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Table 4.1: Distribution According to Gender of Teacher

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	6	60%
Female	4	40%
Total	**10**	**100%**

The above table shows the gender of ten (10) teachers involved in the research. The data indicates that six (6) teachers representing sixty percent (60%) of the teachers were males and four (4) teachers representing forty percent (40%) were females. This is important for this study in order to know as much as possible the type of respondents to deal with.

Table 4.2; Distribution According to Age

1	2	3	4
20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
1	6	3	-

Table 4.2 shows that the majority of the teachers fall between 30-39 years. From this, the researcher concluded that the majority of the teachers are young and they do not belong to the old school of thought.

Table 4.3: Teaching Experience in English

Number of years	Number of Teachers	Percentage
0-4	2	20%
5-9	3	30%
10+	5	50%
Total	**10**	**100%**

Table 4.3 shows the number of years the teachers have been teaching English Language. Among the ten (10) teachers, the least experienced was between 0-4 years; while the other three (3) and five (5) were between five (5) to ten (10) years respectively. This shows that the teachers have high level of experience in teaching English Language. But failed in their quest to teach concord appropriately to students.

Table 4.4: Highest Qualification

Level	Respondents	Percentage
2nd Degree	3	30%
1st Degree	7	70%
Total	**10**	**100%**

From Table 4.4, it is clear that seven (7) teachers representing seventy percent (70%) have degrees while the remaining three (3) of thirty percent (30%) are with a second degree. This is an indication that all the teachers are qualified to teach at the secondary level of education. Hence students should not have had problems with concord usage.

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Table 4.5: Teachers' disposition in the teaching of aspects of English Language

Number of items	Response	Percentage
All aspects	3	30%
Some aspects	7	70%
Total	**10**	**100%**

In response to the question, the study has revealed that seven teachers representing seventy (70%) do not teach all the aspects of English. Most of the teachers often teach grammar because they claim grammar is much easier to mark and score. Most of the grammar exercises are in objective forms in which students only have to guess without much mental exercises even though most students claimed that grammar was difficult to learn because of the numerous rules and exceptions as in concord.

Many teachers have a rather escapist attitude towards the teaching of English language. They see English as a tedious activity and therefore look for easy ways of going round the problem hence the high tendency to resort to teaching students more grammar than the other aspects. Marking essays is seen as a tedious exercise.

 In an answer to the question item (7); what aspect of English is more difficult to teach? Teachers responded that they teach grammar more often. Essay writing is perceived to be the most difficult among the three.

A pie chart showing preference of Teacher in Teaching English
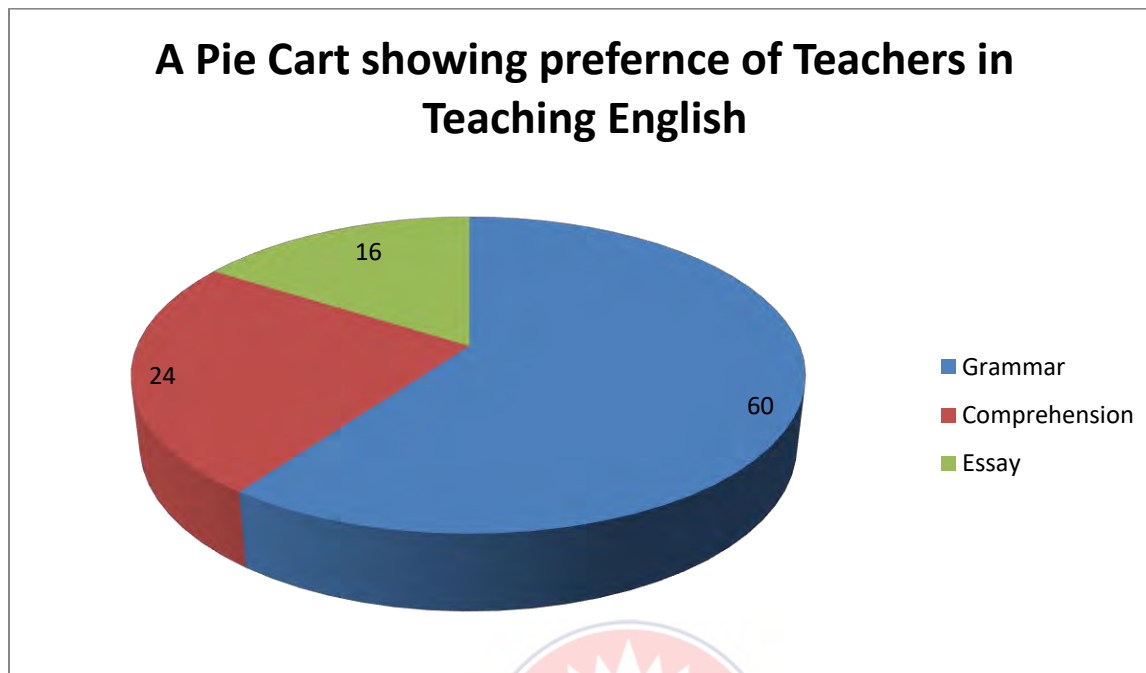
Figure 1: preferences of Teachers in Teaching English

The findings above generally portray a pattern in which grammar is the aspect of English most frequently taught by teachers. Very little attention is given to essay writing through which students' knowledge of grammar can be exposed and assessed. This is probably due to the deliberate attempt by teachers to avoid having to read students' essays and mark, a task they consider cumbersome. Consequently, other aspects of English such as writing and speaking are comparatively less emphasized or ignored.

Though grammar is the aspect most often taught in class, this did not reflect in their exercises and spoken language. Interactions with respondents revealed a lot of grammar errors in their spoken language especially concord.

Item (8) of the teachers' questionnaire seeks teachers' personal views about the standard of English language in their schools. Here teachers expressed worry about the poor level of spoken and written English among students in the school. The majority of the respondents (the teachers)

blamed students for preferring to communicate in their local language to English. The general complaint is that students' performance in English is bad.

Responding to the question item (9): what are the reasons for the use of non-standard English? Teachers mentioned absenteeism and lack of reading on the part of students, and parents' inability to buy books for their children due to poverty. In addition, teachers admitted that some technologies have not helped the learners to improve upon their ability to write and speak Standard English.

Teachers cited watching of foreign movies which are translated into the local language popularly known as (twinovelas), and the use of mobile phones have not helped much since learners' abuse its usage. Teachers explained that a large number of students possess mobile phones in school, though the school outlaws the use of mobile phones by students while in school. At odd times students are sometimes seen 'whatssapping' and making calls in their local language. Though mobile phones have advantages students do not make use of that.

The last four of these responses are particularly useful for the purpose of this study. They are related to data collected on the research questions.

Question numbers (10, 11, 12, and 13)   were designed to seek views from teachers on whether the students under study have concord difficulties. For data reporting reasons, the responses were grouped according to categories, because the survey questions provided multiple answers for each question.

4.4: analysis of Data Collected on the Research Questions

Research Question 1 (item 10 of the questionnaire for teachers)

- What difficulties do students encounter in studying concord in English?

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The study focused on three key areas of concord namely: subject – verb agreement, proximity concord and pronoun-antecedent concord. The research question aimed at investigating why grammatical concord continues to pose a challenge to students of Nkawkaw S.H.S

Table 4.6: Teachers response to whether form two students of Nkwakwa S.H.S have concord difficulties?

Response	No. of teacher	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	100%
No	0	0%
Total	**10**	**100%**

The data above shows that all the ten (10) teachers representing hundred (100%) unanimously affirmed the fact that students surely have difficulties dealing with concord in English, as such students do not do well in using the language. The researcher also noticed this during the observation period and also from the test she conducted.

Item 11: How does difficulty in concord usage affect your students' academic performance?

Table 4.7: Effect of wrong concord usage on students' academic performance

Effect	No. of teachers	Percentages
Discourages students' interest in learning	7	35%
Inability to communicate effectively	10	50%
Low marks score in exercises	3	15%
Total	**20**	**100%**

The question sought to ascertain problems that are created when students violate the rule(s) of concord in English Language. From the data analysis, it is obvious that all the ten (10) teachers

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identified the inability of students to communicate confidently as one main effect. Seven teachers representing (35%) pointed out that, this discourages the students from learning. Three teachers' representing (15%) were of the view that students score low marks mostly in grammar exercises. These effects affect the students in diverse ways. Therefore, it is important for students to grasp concord rules in order to overcome these effects.

Research questions 2 (item 12) why do form two students of Nkawkaw SHS encounter difficulties in studying concord in English?

Table 4.8: Views of teachers on why students encounter difficulties in studying concord?

Reasons	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Negative attitude towards learning of English	2	10%
Inadequate qualified teachers of English at the basic level	10	50%
Non-standard forms of English such as pidgin	4	20%
The inability to understand what they read	4	20%
Total	**20**	**100%**

The table 4.8 shows views of teachers on factors responsible for the poor concord ability of the students under study. All the ten (10) teachers identified inadequate qualified teachers of English at the JHS level, as a result, most of the students were taught by teachers with no English background which in turn affected the way they handle the topic at the JHS level. Four teachers in each case named the use of pidgin in students' communication and their inability to comprehend most of the things they read. Two teachers indicated the negative attitude students' exhibit towards the learning of English language, grammar to be precise as other additional

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reasons for students encountering difficulties with regard to concord. For students to overcome their difficulties.

• Research question 3 (item 13 of the questionnaire)

How can students be helped to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English?

Table 4.9: Teachers views on how to help students to overcome their concord difficulties

Strategies	No. of teachers	percentage (%)
Provision of personal reading materials for students.	6	30%
Using practical ways to teach grammar	4	20%
Teachers should teach all aspect of English	7	35%
Use prudent ways of correcting concord errors	3	15%
Total	20	100%

 The information in Table 4.9 represents views of the teachers of English on how to help students overcome their difficulties. It is very clear from the table that seven teachers indicated the importance of teaching all aspects of English, six teachers also indicated the need to provide personal reading materials for students, while four teachers indicated that making language teaching more practical will ensure students participate fully in grammar lessons. Three teachers added that, teachers should use prudent ways of correcting concord errors in order not to discourage students. This notwithstanding, there is a strong signal among the teachers that all the strategies are very important and should be incorporated into all aspects of English lessons.

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4.5 Analysis of Pre-Intervention Test Scores

During the pre-intervention stage, the researcher went through the students' exercise books and recorded the range of scores they obtained in the observation test he conducted.

Table 4.10: Marks obtained by students in the Pre-intervention concord test

Range of marks	percentage	No. of students (tally)	Class %
0 – 5	0 – 25	25	50%
6 – 10	30 – 50	10	20%
11 – 15	55 – 75	15	30%
16 – 20	80 – 100	-	-
Total 20	**100**	**50**	**100%**

The data in the table 4.10 above represent the raw marks and their percentage equivalents obtained by the fifty (50) students in the pre-intervention concord test. Based on the data in the table, twenty-five (25) students representing fifty percent (50%) of the students scored marks ranging between zero to five (0-5) which represents zero to twenty five percent (0-25%) of the total marks.

The table also indicates that ten students (10) representing twenty percent (20%) of the students obtained marks from six to ten (6-10) which represents thirty to fifty percent (30 – 50%) of the total marks. Fifteen students representing thirty percent (30%) of the students scored marks which ranged from eleven to fifteen (11-15) representing fifty- five to seventy-five percent (55-75%) of the total marks.

None of the students scored a mark above fifteen, which represents eighty to hundred percent of the total marks. The researcher set the pass mark at fifty-one percent (51%) so it is obvious from

the table that thirty-five (35) students did not pass. They scored marks between zero to fifty percent (0 – 50%) only fifteen students representing thirty percent (30%) of the students passed. The results have confirmed that the students of Nkawkaw S.H.S had difficulty dealing with concord in English.

4.2 Difficulties senior high school students encounter in studying concord in English

The test exercise yielded very relevant data in answer to research question one. The areas where students encountered difficulties in studying concord at the SHS level are explained below.

4.2.1 Grammatical concord and proximity concord

Firstly, the data in the use of the intervention test indicated that the students did not fully internalize the formation rules. This rule states that a singular verb requires a singular subject. A verb should, therefore, agree in an English sentence with the subject in number, person and gender. For example, under this category of concord, some students committed errors such as:

1) * Dakurah know where to go tomorrow.

2) * She make us happy always.

3) * Her uncles teaches her morals.

4) * He understand Twi.

This shows that the concord system had not registered on the student's memory firmly.

Secondly, in the area of proximity concord, the verb agrees with the noun that is closer or nearer to it (i.e. the verb). The researcher realized however that the use of "either…..or" and neither….nor" posed a lot of problems to most students. They thought "either…..or" and "nether……nor" are always singular and so needed singular verbs.

The data used in the pre-intervention test, showed students committing these errors. Some students committed the following errors:

1. *Either the president or his ministers has come here. The verb 'have' should have been used instead of 'has' because of the plural noun "ministers" which is closer to the verb.

2. *Neither the pastor nor his congregants is criminal. The verb "is" is used instead of "are" in the sentence. It should have read: Neither the pastor nor his congregants are criminal.

3. *Either the children or their father are doing the cleaning.

In sentence (3), the verb should have been a singular verb "is" because it comes immediately after a singular subject "their father". The sentence, therefore should have read: "Either the children or their father is doing the cleaning.

The students obviously did not know that when one of the nouns in a coordinate subject is singular and the other is plural, the problem is resolved by resorting to what is known as proximity concord. That is the noun that comes last determines the number of the verb. In other words, if the second subject or noun is singular, the verb will be singular and vice versa.

Next to grammatical and proximity concord, the data also showed that students had serious problems with headword identification in complex noun phrases.

4.2.2 Headword identification in complex noun phrases

It was observed that students were unable to identify the headwords in complex noun phrases during the pre-intervention test. This caused the errors they committed in the exercises. For instance, some students committed these errors:

i) *Indiscipline among students are on the increase. The correct sentence is indiscipline among students is on the increase.

ii) *All the members of my family is rich. Instead of: All the members of my family are rich.

iii) *A box full of pens were found outside the classroom. The correct construction is rather; A box full of pens was found outside the classroom.

The researcher observed that students failed to realize that it is the headword in a subject of a noun phrase which determines the verb. The researcher also noticed that it is very necessary, therefore, for the teacher of English to introduce her students to English noun modification before she teaches them concord.

4.2.5 The indefinite pronouns "all" and "some" and intervening prepositional phrases

Data generated from the study also showed that most students thought "all" and "some" are always plural. These examples can be seen in the appendix B. Some students committed these errors:

1. *All the kerosene are in the room. Instead of: All the kerosene is in the room.

2. *All the water in the barrel are finish. Instead of: All the water in the barrel is finish.

3. *Some of the kerosene are here. Instead of: Some of the kerosene is here.

Whilst "some" and "all" were problematic for most students, it seemed that challenges with the use of inflectional concord and some indefinite pronouns were even more serious. Indeed, it was also noticed in this research that some subjects with the plural inflection mark "s" are often confused for plural subjects. Thus, some students wrote;

1. *Emphasis was laid on the "verb".

2. *Statistics show that women live longer than men.

In (1) the verb "were" should be "was" and in (2) the verb "show" should be "shows".

4.6 Analysis of Post-Intervention Test Scores

A concord test was administered to the students after they had been taken through the intervention strategies. The scores are presented in the table below.

Table 4.11: Marks obtained by students in the post-intervention test

Range of marks	% score	No. of student (tally)	Class %
0-5	0-25	-	-
6-10	30-50	09	18%
11-15	55-75	26	52%
16-20	80-100	15	30%
Total 20	**100**	**50**	**100%**

In Table 4.14 on post-test, no student scored marks ranging from zero to five (0-5) which represent zero to twenty-five percent (0-25%) of the total marks of twenty.

It is also evident from the data that nine (9) students representing eighteen percent (18%) of the students scored marks ranging from six to ten (6-10) which accounts for thirty to fifty percent of the total marks. Twenty-six (26) students representing fifty-two percent (52%) of the students scored marks ranging from eleven to fifteen (11-15) of the total marks; while fifteen students (15) representing 30% of the students scored marks between sixteen to twenty (16-20) representing eighty to hundred percent (80-100) of the total score.

These scores showed improvement over the pre-intervention test scores of the students. Only nine (9) students representing eighteen percent (18%) of the students failed as against the thirty-five students who failed in the pre-intervention.

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We can say there was improvement in their ability to overcome their concord difficulties. This improvement could be attributed to the teaching techniques the researcher used in the intervention.

4.7 Discussion on Findings

The main aim of the study among others was to determine why the students of Nkwakwa S.H.S have difficulties studying concord and to investigate the reasons that lead to these difficulties.

An effort was made to identify, describe and explain possible causal reasons of those errors. For the investigation to achieve its objectives, it was important to review literature in the nature of theories of concord. Literature review provided the conceptual framework for investigation among learners. The analysis of the data produced many varied results which were both positive and negative.

4.7.1 The Finding with Regard to Students

The finding based on the pretest observation revealed that all the students committed the following errors: subject verb agreement, verb inflection and pronouns. Students had inadequate or no idea of concord at the basic level. This made building on that foundation at the senior high level difficult for both teachers and especially students.

This reveals that students are not fully exposed to concord at their formative stages in academic life. This issue of difficulties in concord usage among students has to do with inadequate grammar, poor reading and writing habits, which can also be attributed to inadequate qualified teachers of English at the basic level. These teachers do not have the technicalities of teaching the English language. Also, most students preferred to use mobile phones as a medium of communication instead of writing letters to friends and families. It is obvious from the survey data that students had negative attitude towards the learning of concord and grammar in general.

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The research also identified students' lack of interest in reading which hindered the competence of students in English grammatical concord. Reading is one of the effective means to gaining command over English as a language. This is because any acceptable written material in English language takes cognizance of the rules of grammar. Reading good Standard English materials is therefore a sure way of learning grammar. When students inculcate the habit of reading, this would go a long way to enhance effective usage of English language. The learners' readiness influence the efficiency of a learning process and often determine whether a given intellectual skill or type of school material is learnable at all.

Another factor which was identified to be responsible for the difficulty in concord ability of students was the fact that students perceived rules governing concord as too many to grasp. They sometimes get confused as to which rule to apply at a given time. This factor was evident in the test results of the pre-intervention concord test, the interview the researcher had with the student and the positive responses to the research questions from teachers as to whether there were concord difficulty among the students.

Evidence from the study also confirmed how poor concord use has adversely affected the general performance of students in other subject areas. They are often not been able to read and understand questions even in subjects that do not need much reading.

In Akuapim, the first language of the students, "ɔno" means she/he in English. Errors in subject-verb agreement in the study might be attributed to intra-lingual transfer as learners lack English rules of the third person in simple present tense which add 's' or 'es' suffixes at the end of the verb. Example;

Tawa **eats** chocolate.

Tawa and Nawaaz **eat** chocolate.

In Akuapim the sentences are written as; Tawa adi chocolate;

eat

Tawa ne Nawaaz adi chocolate

and **eat**
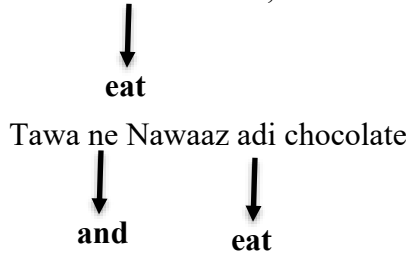
From the above examples, verbs in Akuapim remain the same whether in number or person in simple present. So learners transfer from their L1 to their L2, therefore committing errors such as; ∗'Tawa **eat** chocolate.

∗Tawa and Nawaaz **eat** chocolate.

To apply the correct subject-verb agreement was difficult since they have tense difficulties.

Yankson (1994) confirmed the above situation by indicating that concord errors that border on language transfer are traceable to interference of the mother tongue with the second language. There is therefore the tendency for students to make generalization about the target language system and produce utterances that are grammatically incorrect.

4.7.2 Findings with Regard to Teachers

The study brought to light that majority of teachers investigated showed interest in teaching only some aspects of grammar. Hence the conclusion is that they partly do not help students to deal with all their difficulties.

Inadequate qualified teachers of English at the basic level are one of the major reasons students encounter concord difficulties. English language, as a subject in the basic level is mostly been handles by teachers who do not have the educational background to teach the language. This has also contributed to the problem since the subject is taught anyhow by the improvised teachers who do not have the required skills to teach all the aspects of the language.

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Another factor was the use of inappropriate teaching methods and teaching/learning material that could arouse students' interest in learning concord by teachers. They fail to make grammar lessons practical and interesting, for instance, using grammar games and learner-centered activities such as communicative language teaching approach to improve students understanding of concord as advocated by Littlewoods (1981).

It also come to light that teachers' knowledge of the fact that students' poor concord usage could cause them embarrassment and ridicule. The teachers cited students' inability to communicate confidently either orally or in written form. Poor performance in almost all other subjects as a result of students' concord difficulties. They are often not able to read and understand questions even in subjects that do not need much reading.

Another astounding revelation from the researcher was that a good number of students admit that they speak the local language more often in school than English and that they do that during conversations with friends. Learners are only forced to speak English if they want to communicate with their teachers or if there is a strict law at school which forces them to speak English.

In spite of the negative results outlined above, there were positive findings too. Some of the strategies that promote effective concord usage of students identified by the research findings include:

• Involving students' activity in grammar lesson, using appropriate teaching methods and developing positive reading skills among others.

• Using appropriate error correction methods by teachers and providing personal reading materials for students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This fifth and last chapter is organized under sub-headings: summary, conclusion and recommendation.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The major findings of this research are listed below. The research findings have revealed that factors responsible for wrong concord usage of students can be grouped under the school environment, the learner's background and strategies that could improve the concord ability of students.

1. School Environment

- Poor teaching methods of teachers of English.

- The most common method of teaching grammar is the grammar translation method.

- The failure to involve students actively in grammar lessons.

- Lack of students personal reading materials.

2. Learners' Education Background

- Lack of concord knowledge at the basic level.

- Inadequate of qualified teachers of English.

- Perception that concord rules are many and confusing

- Intra-lingual and inter-lingual transfer.

3. Ways to help students to overcome their concord difficulties. Some of these are:

- Provision of personal reading materials for students.

- Teaching should be child-centered with application of activities such as language games, drills in teaching grammar.

- The need to teach all aspects of grammar.

5.3. Recommendations

Concord errors in English of our students would be reduced drastically if the following suggestions are made use of:

- All second language teachers should receive in-service training on a regular base. To achieve this, provision should be made for teachers of English to attend seminars, workshops and conferences to acquire more knowledge and skills that will enable them meet up with the difficulties and innovation in teaching English language.

- Students should be taught the appropriate transfer strategies which will facilitate their language learning as their first language can play a vital role in learning the L_2. Teachers are expected to help learners conquer negative transfer and to guide learners to make use of positive transfers such extensive reading of different materials and texts English Language.

- Governments need to train and employ qualified teachers of English at the various levels of learning English language.

- .Learners should make sure that they use English language as a medium of communication with both their teachers and colleagues.

- Teachers should motivate their students so that the students can develop the needed attention in the classrooms.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the key findings in the study. The concord learning problems of students, the reasons why students make concord errors and feasible ways by which the student could be assisted to surmount these problems were the focus of the discussion. The main challenges include L1 interference, subject-verb concord as well as peculiar challenges in identified areas of concord. As to why students encounter concord learning problems, generally poor reading habit of students due to lack of personal textbooks, lack of constant practice of the rules of concord, difficulty in identifying subjects in sentences, rule exceptions and difficulty in mastering the rules of concord. And finally, the question of how students could be helped to overcome their concord learning problems was answered with the following data: training of more qualified English tutors, encouraging students to do extensive reading, provision of adequate quality teaching/learning resources, teachers making grammar lessons practical.

5.5 Suggestion for Future Research

The purpose for conducting research in an academic field is to get some theories and methods to aid in teaching and learning. The researcher has researched into one sensitive area of language study which poses a lot of problems to students; concord. It does not however, claim to have answered all the questions that have to do with all aspects of concord like verb-verb concord and semi-conjunctions. Improvement on the study is still possible by researchers finding out which other methods will be useful in teaching concord in English.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

SCHOOL OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

M.ED TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN NKAWKAW SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, KWAHU WEST

TOPIC

HELPING PUPILS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS TO OVERCOME THEIR CONCORD PROBLEMS

This questionnaire is designed to collect data on the above topic for an academic research in partial fulfilment for the award of M.Ed Degree in English. Kindly respond to the following questions in all sincerely. Your efforts are appreciated.

SECTION A (Personal Data)

Please indicate your response by ticking or writing (where appropriate in the spaces provided)

1. Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Age in years: 20-29 ☐

                             30-39 ☐

                             40-49 ☐

                             50+ ☐

3. Teaching experience   0-4 ☐

                                   5-9 ☐

                               10+ ☐

4. Teacher's Academic Qualification

    i. 2nd Degree ☐

    ii. 1st Degree ☐
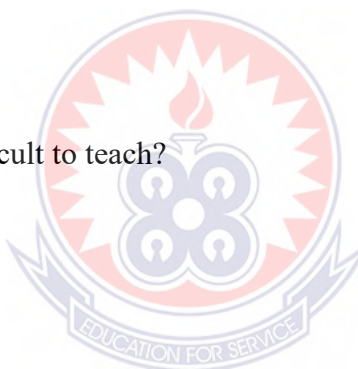
SECTION B

5. What subject do you teach?

6. What aspect of English language do you often teach?

    i.   All aspects ☐

    ii.   Some aspects ☐

7. Which aspect is more difficult to teach?

    Grammar ☐

    Comprehension ☐

    Essay writing ☐

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

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

10. What problems do students have in dealing with concord?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………..………………………….

11. How do poor concord problems affect your student's academic performance?

    i.   …………………………………………………………………………..

    ii.   …………………………………………………………….………………

iii.   ……………………………………………………………………………

iv.   ……………………………………………………………..……………….

12. What are the factors responsible for the wrong concord usage among the students?

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

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

13. Suggest remedies to help solve the problems in question. Indicate your response in the columns provided.

Item	Column
Provision of personal reading materials for students	[ ]
Use prudent ways of correcting concord errors	[ ]
Teachers should teach all aspect of English	[ ]
Using practical ways to teach grammar	[ ]
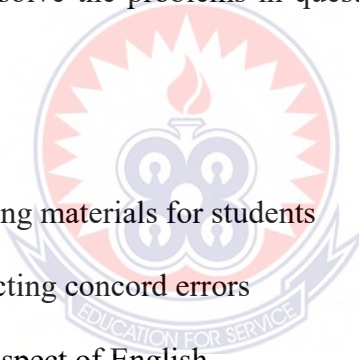
APPENDIX B

TEST ONE

Name: Abayateye Mavis Class: Science 2

School: Kwasec

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

1. Dakurah (know/knows) where to go tomorrow.
2. She (make/makes) us happy always.
3. Her uncles (teaches/teach) her morals.
4. He (understands/understand) Twi.
5. Either the president or his ministers (has/have) come here.
6. Neither the pastor nor his congregants (is/are) criminal.
7. Either the children or their father (is/are) doing the cleaning.
8. Neither Ama nor her classmates (comes/come) to school.
9. Indiscipline among students (is/ are) on the increase.
10. All the members of my family (is/are) rich.
11. The death of two students of our school (have/has) made the district director come to the school.
12. A box full of pens (was/ were) found outside the classroom.
13. All the kerosene (was/were) sold.
14. All the water in the barrel (has/ have) finished.
15. Some of the kerosene (is/are) here.
16. These (is/are) my books.
17. Emphasis (was/were) laid on the "verb".
18. Statistics (show/shows) that women live longer than men.
19. Boys (like/likes) playing football.
20. I (tells/told) him to give it to you.

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TEST ONE

Name: Sandra Aye Class: Business 2
School: KWASEC

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

1. Dakurah (know/knows) where to go tomorrow.
2. She (make/makes) us happy always.
3. Her uncles (teaches/teach) her morals.
4. He (understands/understand) Twi.
5. Either the president or his ministers (has/have) come here.
6. Neither the pastor nor his congregants (is/are) criminal.
7. Either the children or their father (is/are) doing the cleaning.
8. Neither Ama nor her classmates (comes/come) to school.
9. Indiscipline among students (is/ are) on the increase.
10. All the members of my family (is/are) rich.
11. The death of two students of our school (have/has) made the district director come to the school.
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13. All the kerosene (was/were) sold.
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15. Some of the kerosene (is/are) here.
16. These (is/are) my books.
17. Emphasis (was/were) laid on the "verb".
18. Statistics (show/shows) that women live longer than men.
19. Boys (like/likes) playing football.
20. I (tells/told) him to give it to you.

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APPENDIX C

POST-TEST

Name; Owusu Mensah

Underline the correct to agree with the subject in each sentence

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

17/20

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POST-TEST

Name; Garner Mike

Underline the correct to agree with the subject in each sentence

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

15/20

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