

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**ANALYSING GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THE WRITTEN EXERCISES OF  
STUDENTS OF BOA AMPONSEM SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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**190011449**

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**OCTOBER, 2020**

**DECLARATION**

**STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

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

Signature: .....

Date: .....



**SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

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

Name: Dr. Kwaku Ofori

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my mother, Ms Safura Abu, and family, Vicky Vinyo Hermans and Jacqueline Sarpong for the moral support they offered me during the write-up of this work.



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To everything is time, and there is time for every event under the heavens. I first and foremost give glory and honour to God, the orchestrator of life for grating me mercy which strengthen me throughout this course. My next profound appreciation and sincere gratitude go to my ever-willing supervisor, who out of his busy schedule made out time to promptly vet my whenever submitted. I am also thankful to him for the encouragement, guidance, skills of vetting, and technical advice given me throughout the development of this research work. Dr Kwaku Ofori, I say may God richly bless you.

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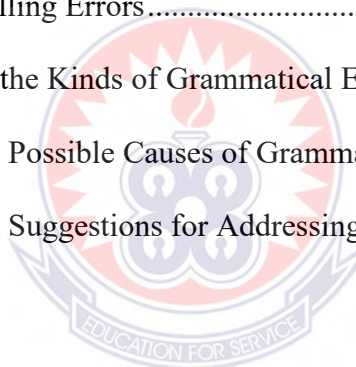
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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to help ascertain the grammatical errors students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School commit in their writing, the sources of these errors and how to remedy the problem. The researcher consulted various authorities who have written on grammar errors. He adopted the case study research design for the study and used sample population of four-hundred and forty (440) students who were randomly selected, and all the twenty (20) English Language tutors of the school to help collect the data. He also employed the research methods such as interviews, documents and observation to collect the data. Major findings from the use of these methods included: **agreement** errors, wrong use of **tense** (past/present, aspect, etc.), **singular-plural** errors, **prepositional** errors, **article** errors and **spelling** errors. The findings also looked at the sources of the grammar errors which were **mother tongue transference**, **overgeneralization**, **incomplete rule application**. The findings suggested strategies that can be used to curb this problem such as teachers' and students' exposure to English Language, differentiating grammar in English from native language, error identification and correction, and adequate time allocation for teaching grammar.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter looks at the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the research questions. It further captures the limitation of the study, delimitation of the study and the significance of the study. The study also mentions the organisation of the study. This presentation throws more light on what audience are to expect in this chapter.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Errors of grammar in learners' written exercises have drawn the attention of scholars around the globe to look into how best to tackle this huge confronted challenge. In the fifties, errors were considered forbiddance and were frowned upon by teachers in the classroom. By this assertion, in Brooks' (1960) book- 'language and language learning', he mentioned that errors have a direct connection to learning which he likened it to sin and virtue as in "like sin, error is to be avoided and its influence overcomes, but its presence is to be expected" (Hendrickson, 1978, p. 387); cited Brooks, 1960; p. 58). According to Hendrickson (1978), Brooks was of the view that teaching should help students to bring forward error-free utterance including written exercises. Later in the sixties, someone like Corder (1967) argued that there exist two schools of thoughts with regards to learners' error. The first school of thought believes that error-free written exercises wouldn't crop up in the face of perfect teaching methods hence, errors are as a result of deficient teaching methods. The other school of thought looks at errors as inevitable since reaching perfection is almost impossible in language acquisition regardless of every possible best effort and

that, “our ingenuity should be concentrated on technique for dealing with the errors after they have occurred” (Corder, 1967; p. 163).

Brown (2000, p. 216) asserts that “mistakes, misjudgments and erroneous assumptions form an “important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information”. One shouldn’t lose sight of the dynamism and legitimacy of interlanguage/learners’ language. All alludes to the act that errors occurring in grammar simply can’t be done away with when acquiring a second language. It also suggests that students continue to polish linguistic input at hand. Therefore, dealing with students’ errors after these errors are discovered is what our focus should be. This then leads us to how the syllabus could be structured to take into account learners’ needs as mentioned by Fergusson (1996) that we should take more account of the learners’ needs in planning our syllabuses.

Again, varying views are held by researchers as to what to do with grammar errors by learners. Birckbichler (1977) posited that error correction should be reserved for manipulative grammar practice and therefore errors should be rather tolerated more during communicative practice (Hendrickson, 1978; p. 390 cited Birckbichler, 1977). In recent years, a number of researchers have taken up Truscott’s challenge to study the effects of corrective feedback on written accuracy over time (i.e., on new texts rather than only revised ones). Using a controlled quasi-experimental approach with a pre-test/post-test/delayed post-test design, several studies have consistently showed that when corrective feedback was limited to several discrete categories (e.g., definite and indefinite articles), students receiving error feedback substantially outperformed those who received no feedback on both post-tests and delayed post-tests. Longitudinal studies of error feedback in classroom settings also yielded positive effects for error feedback, but in some cases the

studies did not include a no-feedback control group, and in others, the results were mixed across individual students, type/timing of writing task, and error type(s) considered (Ferris, 2011).

Truscott (1996) also termed error correction as “correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student’s ability to write accurately” (p. 329) but further mentioned that “students believe in correction . . . but that does not mean that teachers should give it to them” (p. 359) and that teachers should, rather than giving in to this student desire, help them adjust to the absence of grammar correction Truscott (1999). By this, he believes that error correction could turn sour.

In addition, Gyasi, Nartey & Coker (2011) wrote on a *Preliminary Report on First Year University Students’ Knowledge of Basic Grammar: A Case Study of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana*, it came out that students offering Communicative Skills had abysmally performed in the various word classes. Again, there was no clear difference among programmes of students and their performance in fishing out for parts of speech. These undergraduates obviously attended the various senior high schools in Ghana and thereby graduated with all this incompetence. It is therefore worth-mentioning that research has to be undertaken in senior high schools so as to ascertain the facts behind grammar errors by students and device appropriate measures to dealing with them.

According to the English Language Syllabus in Ghana for senior high schools (2007), English Language is the official language of Ghana. By implication, it is the medium of instruction in Ghanaian schools at all levels of our education. It is undoubtedly accurate that students become abreast with grammar rules at the SHS level. That is, students at this stage of the education are supposed to be conversant with the grammar rules of English



Language as their second language. In effect, it comes back to the students, it comes back to the students and teachers to look at diverse issues with regard to the acquisition of this second language.

Burt (1975) stated that there are no standards on whether, when, which or how students' errors should be corrected or who should correct them (Hendrickson, 1978; cited Burt, 1975, p. 53). Robinson (1971) mentioned that there are few widely accepted linguistic criteria of grammatical and lexical correction in foreign language teaching (Hendrickson, 1978; cited Robinson, 1971; p. 261). Finally, Brown (2000) mentioned that the issue of how to correct error is highly complex. All the above views conclusively point to the fact that there is the need to investigate grammar errors by senior high school students.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Grammatical errors in written exercises of students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School and other senior high schools are alarming and have been with us for a very long time now. Yankson (1994) mentioned that students face difficulty when dealing with tenses, spelling and concord (Gyasi, 2011; cited Yankson, 1994). Edu-Buandoh (1997) suggested that the abysmal performance of students in English Language could be attributed to time inadequacy allotted to the teaching of grammar as well as poor teaching attitudes in handling grammar. Also, the poor performance in English Language may be caused by lack of reading among students, and the very nature of the language curriculum (Gyasi et al., 2011; p.400 cited by Edu-Boandoh, 1997)

The Chief Examiner's report on the West African Senior High School Certificate Examination for July (2012) disclosed that there were numerous cases of grammatical lapses, especially with regard to the use of subject-verb agreement and tense markers.

Candidates also showed weaknesses in conjugation and the correct use of tenses. Some got confused in the use of the plural marker (s) and the possessive ('s). The story has not been different in the subsequent years.

Moreover, in the year 2017, the Chief Examiner in his report mentioned that candidates' knowledge of basic grammar, tense and sentence construction was poor. In some, cases one could not tell whether one was reading English or some other language. Those candidates who managed to present something readable to some extent had their work marred with **grammatical, tense and expressional** errors as in "*He would went*", "*He didn't goes*", etc. Also, as put out by The Head of National Office of The West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Wendy E. Addy-Lamptey said the performance in English Language dropped from 52.24% in 2017 to 46.79% in 2018 (JoyOnline, 2019). The chief examiner then remarked that, "Poor punctuation, poor spelling and wrong use of tenses were dominant in some of the essays" were some of the weaknesses exhibited by candidates.

Suggestions were made to remedy these weaknesses. In 2012, the Chief Examiner made these suggestions as remedies (1) The teaching of grammar should be intensified. Teachers of English Language should be encouraged to teach grammar, by making good reference to them in the textbooks they use in class. (2) Candidates should be made to go through a lot of dictation drills in class. This will help build their repertoire of vocabulary. Also, in 2018, the chief examiner recommended that (1) Teachers give more exercises especially on grammar and mark them in order to give feedback to the students, (2) Grammar teaching be intensified especially identifying grammatical names and functions and (3) Grammar and spelling drills be organised for the candidates in order to improve their writing skills.

With the Boa Amponsem Senior High School, a discussion with the Assistant Headmistress of Academics revealed that there is no cut-off point as to who should be admitted and as a result, all grades in English Language are accepted and subsequently offered admission. This points to the fact that, students who had both good and bad grades in English Language in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) were considered for admission. Students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School committed grammatical errors such as **agreement** errors, **tense** errors, **number** errors (plural-singular), **prepositional** errors, **article** errors, and **conjunction** errors. From every indication, grammar possess a great headache to students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School. In addition, teachers cannot be entirely exonerated when it comes to the challenges students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School are faced with in learning grammar which could be attributed to possible teachers' incompetence, time allotted for the teaching of grammar on the time table being inadequate among others.

However, the English Language Teaching Syllabus specifies the aspects of the language that is to be taught in all forms (1-3). The syllabus plainly spells out the topics to be taught, the objectives of teaching the topics, the contents in the topics, activities to be engaged in in the teaching and learning of the topics and the evaluation processes to be undertaken. Nonetheless, there are no provisions to cater for the shortfalls in the form of grammatical errors in writings of SHS students that may arise. Obviously, the challenge is that, the literature falls short of empirical work on how to remedy this problem of SHS student's grammatical errors in their writings. Hence, the task here is to ascertain the types of errors grammatically; and to fish out for reasons accounting for the rampant grammar errors made by students by evaluating the views of the teachers and the learners. The silence of the

syllabus on such key issues provides no theoretical approach to be considered with regards to dealing with grammar errors in student's writings. It may mean that the approach is *acquisition* than learning. If it is acquisition, we need not worry but if it is *learning*, then a lot needs to be done. The indication is that, the architects of the syllabus do not see grammar error remediation as pivotal but the above literature clearly is an indication that this problem is gargantuan and needs immediate attention and redress.

Moreover, in the studies of the following authors on error analysis and error correction regarding beliefs, preferences, feedbacks and expectations of learner's errors, the data alone came from learners alone but not both learners and teachers (Oladejo, 1993). This means that, finding from those studies on how to address grammar errors would be based on learners' views only. Obviously, these literature on these studies may not fully document the views of teachers and learners to help address grammar errors from the perspectives of teachers and learners together. This may help in developing a framework to curb grammar errors and hopefully eradicate. Thus, grammar errors abound in student's writings and continue to manifest. However, stakeholders in the education system are doing their best to help deal with this problem.

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

The purpose of this study is to delve into the types of grammatical errors that SHS students commit, to find out the basis for which they breach morphosyntactic rules of English Language in their writings and to propose some likely instructional ideas to help salvage this problem. The aim therefore is to discover an effective way to dealing with grammar errors in students' writings for future grammar in English Language teaching and learning.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine what grammatical errors Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit in their writing.
- ii. To ascertain the sources of the grammatical errors committed by Boa Amponsem Senior High School students in their writing.
- iii. To devise appropriate measures to remedy the problem of grammatical errors in their writing.
- iv. To use grammar effectively.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following are the research questions that this work seeks to answer:

1. What classes of grammatical errors do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students make in their writings?
2. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammatical errors in their writings?
3. How can the problem of grammatical errors be addressed in the writings of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students?

#### **1.6 Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses on a small sampling size of form three students to represent all form three students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School. Again, only two English Language teachers were to represent twenty teachers at the English Department. The small sample further represents all other senior high schools and their English Language teachers which

may not be a true reflection of pertaining issues in those jurisdictions. This study only uses from threes and not twos and ones since they are preparing and being prepared to write the English Language paper (West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination) and are potential senior high school graduates after completion. Additionally, students' writings are sometimes illegible making reading very difficult. Some exercises of students are in in good condition and the few available ones are found on sheets of papers.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on grammar errors in written exercises of form three students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School by concentrating on areas such as types of grammar errors, causes of these errors and how errors can be significantly reduced in their writings. With the research questions providing clear boundaries for this work, the study doesn't go beyond this.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The study is to essentially provide some new perspectives to the teaching and learning of grammar, help with additional improvement of the curriculum and help bring down the grammar errors in students' writings and utterances. This research work will have implications for the classroom English Language teacher.

### **1.9 Organisation of the Study**

This study comprises five chapters. Chapter one encompasses background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, limitation of the study, delimitation of the study, significance of the study and finally, the organisation of the study. Chapter two is the review of literature and among others takes into account linguistic principles- principles of obligatoriness and grammatical categories of nouns,

verbs and adjectives of English Language. It further talks about Corder's (1967) theory of error analysis, and reviews some related studies on second language acquisition plus error correction. In chapter three is the methodology of the study looking at research design, population, sampling technique and sample size, the research site, data collection strategies and data collection protocol. Chapter four provides summary of data gathered as well as data analysis. Chapter five is a summary of findings, conclusions, suggestions for reducing grammar errors and suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter takes into account two linguistic axioms; being the *principles of obligatoriness* and *the grammatical classification of the major word classes of English Language*. It further looks at Corder's (1967) *theory of error analysis*, and reviews some studies on *second language acquisition and error correction* plus existing literature related to the current study.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

According to Alroe (2011), for error correction to be effective, it has to be situated within a certain theoretical context. Also, that framework should be in position to aid, make and assess assumptions and to deepen the understanding of the theory as pedagogical. It is therefore pivotal investigating the types of grammar errors, why these errors are occurring in the write-ups of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students and come out with proposed grammar error remedies from the perspectives of learners and teachers.

This section therefore concentrates on various theories on error analysis that have been used to support the current study.

#### 2.2 Theory of Error Analysis

Another key area in terms of framework in trying to deal with grammatical errors in the written works of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students will be to look at the concept of Error Analysis. Areas like Meaning of Error Analysis, Differences existing in Error and Mistake, Identification/Description of Errors, Sources of Errors, Significance of Error Analysis and Criticism against Error Analysis will be looked at.



### 2.2.1 Meaning of Error Analysis

Being human, the inevitability of error cannot be overlooked in language acquisition since it makes humans unique hence, the students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School are not immune from making grammatical errors and subsequently get to understand why these errors are committed by these students. Therefore, it is mentioned that “Not only is to err human, but there is none other than human error” and that “animals and artifacts do not commit errors (James, 2013).” To him, “if to err and to speak are each uniquely human, then to err at speaking, or to commit language errors, must mark the very pinnacle of human uniqueness.” (p. 1). James (ibid) therefore looks at error analysis as “the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language.” Generally, as Keshavarz (1999, p. 11) stated, "There have been two major approaches to the study of learners' errors, namely Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis." He further discussed that, "Error Analysis emerged on account of the shortcomings of Contrastive Analysis which was the favoured way of describing learners' language in the 1950s and 1960s" (p. 42). Writing is a complex process even in the first language. Undoubtedly, it is more complicated to write in a foreign language. Consequently, lots of researchers have intended to identify the common errors students make in writing the second language. Of course, a better understanding of the errors and the origin of such errors will help teachers know students' difficulties in learning that language. Moreover, it will aid in the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies to help students learn better. Therefore, error can be considered as a fundamental tool in language teaching in order to reorganize teacher's point of view and readdress his/her methodology for fixing and fulfilling the students' gaps (Vásquez, 2007). In other words, as Corder (1967) defined, error analysis is a procedure

used by both researchers and teachers which involves collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes, and evaluating their seriousness. The purpose of error analysis is, in fact, to find "what the learner knows and does not know" and to "ultimately enable the teacher to supply him not just with the information that his hypothesis is wrong, but also, importantly, with the right sort of information or data for him to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language" (Corder, 1974, p. 170). Keshavarz (1997) therefore mentioned that error analysis can be in two branches namely, (i) **theoretical** and (ii) **applied**. Theoretically, he stated that error analysis deals with "the process and strategies of language learning and its similarities with the first language" (Erdogan, 2005; p. 263 cited in Keshavarz, 1997). He added that it consists of comparison between the errors in the target language and the target language itself. Errors are thus necessary because the occurrence of errors can be regarded as devices used by learners to learn. By implication, the theory of error analysis looks at learners' errors as something acceptable, then examined and categorized to show the processes that operate within the mind of the learner. Error analysis is therefore looking into what goes on in learners' minds in language acquisition so as to "make it possible to determine the areas that need reinforcement in teaching" (Corder, 1967).

In applied error analysis, it involves using the appropriate teaching/learning aids and devising appropriate teaching methods based on the results of the theoretical error analysis. Errors language learners commit "make it possible to determine the areas that need reinforcement in teaching" (Corder, 1967, p. 125). This, with regard to this work, means grammar errors of students must be analysed by the teachers so as to come up with error

remediation. By this, English language teachers have the responsibility of identifying the causative reasons behind grammar errors and remedy them as well.

### **2.2.2 Error as against Mistake**

Although errors and mistakes may relate to each other, Linguistics provides a distinction between them. Brown (2000) looks at errors and mistakes as different entities. To him;

*A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip' in that it is a failure to utilise a known system correctly but an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner* Brown (2000, p. 217).

Moreover, error is defined as 'the use of the linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards it as showing faulty or incomplete learning' (Erdogan, 2005; p.263). Ellis (1997) uses consistency of learner's performance as a basis to differentiate between errors and mistakes in

*If he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is a mistake. However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask the learner to try correcting his own deviant utterance. Where he is unable to, the deviations are errors; where he is successful, they are mistakes* (Erdogan, 2005; p.263 cited from Ellis 1997).

This is a clear indication that if one's attention is drawn to his/her mistake, he/she could self-correct that mistake. This is because, a learner is familiar with a linguistic item but for some reasons deviates from it or make a mistake which there is the possibility of the learner correcting himself/herself when prompted. On the other side of the coin, error is committed

due to learner's inability to know what is correct hence, unlike mistake, cannot self-correct himself/herself if even if his/her attention is drawn to it. That is, because error is as a result of learner's ignorance of a linguistic item, using it becomes problematic hence, almost impossible to figure out the correct use of the linguistic item. In effect, a learner must be corrected by the teacher if an error is made since it is almost impossible for the learner to self-correct the error but with a mistake, the teacher can draw learner's attention to it for a learner to make amends. Therefore, teachers of the Queen's language must draw clear distinctions between grammar errors and mistakes in writings hence, that of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students for right feedback.

### **2.2.3 Identification and Description of Error**

Corder (1967) came out with a three-stage model for error analysis. The first stage is the collection of the data, and it is basically about the recognition of the idiosyncratic language of the learners. The second stage is the description which is the accounting of idiosyncratic dialect of the learners. Finally, the explanation stage is the ultimate object of the error analysis. The third has to do with how learner's errors could be identified and analysed which the first step required the selection of a corpus of language, followed by the identification of the errors. Therefore, the errors are then classified and analysed grammatically. The final step has to do with explanation to the different types of the errors identified and classified.

In addition, when identifying and describing errors, Brown (2000) cited from Corder (1971) model for identifying errors or idiosyncratic speech that any spoken sentence by a learner can be written down and analyzed for idiosyncrasies. He discussed the distinction between overt and covert errors. For the overt errors in an utterance, they are

unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level while the covert errors in an utterance or at the sentence level will be well-formed grammatically. He argued that “*I’m fine, thank you*” is grammatically correct at the sentence level, but as a response to “*Who are you?*”, it is an absolute error. In effect, there is a ‘**sentence level**’ error and a ‘**discourse level**’ error.

Again, there are two areas of errors; the *domain* and the *extent*. Domain is considered as the rank or the level of linguistic unit i.e. from phoneme to discourse which must be taken as context so as to bring the error to the fore. The extent is also the level or rank of the linguistic unit that would have to be deleted, replaced, supplied, or recorded so as to repair a sentence. This axiom assists in operationalising Corder’s overt-covert distinction of errors mentioned earlier on (Brown, 2000). It is important to note that identifying and describing errors are necessary in the analysis of the learners’ error since it will provide clues to the researcher as to arriving at the causes of the errors and the necessary remediation activities to undertake in dealing this problem. This implies that if a teacher like myself is able to identify and describe the grammar errors made by Boa Amponsem Senior High School students, there is the likelihood that teaching and learning strategies would be strategised towards improving their grammar competencies.

In addition, Fang et al. (2007) cited Burt (1975) who distinguished between “global” and “local” errors. They explained that global errors are preventive of comprehensive communication, that is to say it does prevent some aspects of the messages to be understood and that the local errors which occur at the sentence level do not hinder communication. Brown (2000) cited Hendrickson (1980) and stated that local errors need not to be corrected in the sense that the message is clear and that error correction interrupts the flow of speech communication. Moreover, global errors also need not to be corrected because what it is

said is believed to be true. The suggestion is that the teacher should not interrupt but allow free speech to promote fluency in a continuous speech. But, will it be wise to seek to correct grammatical errors whether “global” or “local” in SHS students’ writing? Does correcting grammar errors positively have an impact on students’ writing going forward?

Brown (2000) cited Lennon (1991) identified and categorised errors as; **addition**, **omission**, **substitution**, and **ordering**. The categorisations are exemplified below:

### **Omission**

Morphological Omission : \* *A strange thing happen yesterday*

Syntactical Omission : \* *Must say also the names?*

### **Addition**

In morphology : \* *The books is here*

In syntax : \* *The London*

In lexicon : \* *I stayed there during five years ago*

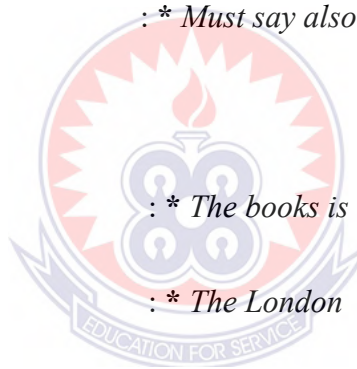
### **Selection**

In morphology : \* *My friend is oldest than I*

In syntax : \* *I want that he comes here*

### **Ordering**

In pronunciation : \* *fignificant* for “*significant*” *prulal* for “*plural*”



In morphology	: * <i>get upping</i> for “ <i>getting up</i> ”
In syntax	: * He is a dear to me friend
In lexicon	: * key car for “car <i>key</i> ” (Erdogan, 2005)

With the morphological and syntactical omission errors above, the past tense morpheme [-**ed**] has been omitted on the stem ‘**happen**’ as the subject noun phrase is also missing after the modal verb ‘**must**’ in both instances causing the errors. For morphological, syntactic and lexical errors of addition, the plural morpheme marker [-**s**], the article ‘**the**’ and the word ‘**during**’ having been added respectively resulting in errors. Concerning morphological and syntactic errors of selection in the examples above, the suffix morpheme [-**est**] is wrongly suffixed on the stem ‘**old**’ instead of the morpheme [-**er**]. The reason being that there is a comparison of only two things. Again, it would have been better for the learner to have used the word ‘**wish**’ than the word ‘**want**’ because it was clearly a desire of the speaker to have had the presence of someone. But for the errors of ordering, all of them are misordered. Under the syntax error, the error is seen in the ordering of the words in the sentence making it incorrect. It would have been accurate for the speaker to have uttered “*He is a dear friend to me*” than “*He is a dear to me friend*”

#### 2.2.4 Sources of Errors

As a teacher of the English Language faced with grammatical errors from writings of students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School, it is very necessary to get to know the causes of these grammatical errors from the writings of the said students so as to be better informed about the sources of errors at hand.

According to Erdoğan (2005), sources of errors can be categorised into (i) *interlanguage transfer*, and (ii) *intralingual transfer*. Erdoğan (ibid) posited that errors may occur at different levels of the language being it phonological, morphological, grammatical and semantics elements of the native language into the target language. He for instance mentioned that Turkish students intend to produce the “th” [θ] dental fricative of “*thank you*” the dental fricative is pronounced as the alveolar stop ‘t’ [t]. These fricatives [θ], [ð] are absent in any of our local languages here in Ghana.

#### **2.2.4.1 Interlingual and Intralingual Transfers**

Brown (2000) argued that **interlingual transfer** errors come about when the learner applies his/her knowledge of the first language onto the target language resulting in errors. Ellis (Ellis, 1997) argued that there are some errors which are universal or reflective of the learners’ effort to make the task of learning and using the target language easy. For instance, the use of the past tense morpheme [-ed] for all verbs in English will result in **simplification** and **overgeneralization**. Intralingual errors result from the faulty learning of the target language. These errors occur as a result of the learner trying to build up concepts and testing the hypotheses formed about the target language with the data available to the learner (Erdoğan, 2005; p. 266 cited from Ellis 1997). Hence, intralingual transfer errors result in the application of hypotheses or rules formed in the target language by the learner. It involves overgeneralization within the target language. This happens when a second language learner applies a grammatical rule across all members of grammatical class without making the appropriate exception (Brown, 2000). It was therefore observed that students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School overgeneralised



grammatical rules across board and simply applied their knowledge of the native language onto the target language thereby erupting grammatical errors in their writings.

#### **2.2.4.2 Context of Learning**

The context of learning can also be a source or cause of error, even though it overlaps with both types of transfer. Brown (2000) refers to the context as the classroom with its teachers and its methods in the case of school learning. He mentioned that, there is the possibility for the teacher or the textbook to mislead students into making faulty conclusions about the target language. He held strongly the view that “students often make errors because of a misleading explanation from the teacher or faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook or even because of a pattern that was rotely memorized in a drill but improperly contextualised” (Brown, 2000; p. 226). In short, the teacher and the teaching aids can trigger grammar errors as realised in the grammatical errors in writings of the students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School.

What a learner does with errors can be in stages namely: *random errors*, *emergent*, *systematic* and *stabilization*. Indications are that, at the random stage, the learner is “vaguely aware that there is some systematic order to a particular class of items” (Brown 2000; p. 227). It continued that there is development in consistency in language production in the learner’s language at the emergent stage. The learner is not able to correct errors when shown to them. At the third stage i.e. systematic stage, the learner is able to discern the rules and internalize certain system. Even through the rules may not be correct in the target language, the learner sees them as legitimate. This is basically an on and off situation. Again, there is more consistency at the third stage. That is to say not all forms are well formed; they are however approximate to the target language.

In the third stage, the learner could correct errors when his/her attention is drawn to them. With the stabilization stage, the learner usually commits relatively few errors and is able to reach near perfection or master the rules to the extent that fluency and decoding of meaning are not problematic. At this stage the learner is able to self-correct (Brown, 2000; pp.227-229). That is, corrections can be made by the learner himself/herself without any help from the teacher. The stages of error correction are indications that error correction is systemic from the point of view of the learner since at every stage, seeks to improve on the earlier stage. In this case, what stage do we place Boa Amponsem Senior High School students? Are they at the random, emergent, systematic or the stabilization stage? The implication is that, if teachers are able to place them on any of the stages outlined by Brown, it may help teachers to appropriately find solutions to the grammatical errors that exist in written works of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students.

#### **2.2.5. Why Error Analysis?**

Error analysis is very essential in second language learning since it reveals to teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers the problem areas of the language learners. Corder (1967) mentioned that errors are visible proof of learning taking place. He re-echoed that when errors are studied systematically, it can provide significant insights into how a language is actually learned by a foreigner. Moreover, he believed that studying learners' errors has immediate practical application for language teachers. "A learner's errors are significant in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language" (Brown, 2000; p.217 cited from Corder, 1967; p. 167). Also, language learning is not about acquiring a set of automatic habits, however it is a "process of discovering the

underlying rules, categories and systems of choice in the language by some sorts of processing by the learners of the data of the language presented to him by the teacher” Zhu, *ibid*; p. 127 cited from Corder (1973). It furthered that error making is one of the discovery stages and processes that learners go through which is inevitable. Again, learners’ errors actually tell the nature of the learners’ knowledge about the language. The teacher then gets to know what learners know and what needs to be taught. Through the errors students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School commit in their writings, the researcher is able to figure out their capabilities in terms of grammar and devise measures to dealing with their inabilities with respect to grammatical errors.

Additionally, Zhu (*ibid*) argued from Corder’s point of view that errors are important to the learner as they are means through which the learner uses to test hypotheses concerning the language being learned. And to the teacher, error analysis shows how effective the teaching aids and methods are. Through error analysis, the teacher gets to know of when to introduce a topic or to repeat a topic, and to plan and organize their teaching methods and select appropriate teaching/learning aids. Several authors had argued that error analysis helps to find out the level of language proficiency the learner has attained. It assists to obtain information about common difficulties in language learning and to find out how people learn a language (Nzema *ibid*; cited from Ancker, 2000; Weireesh, 1991; Sercombe, 2000). On what to do with the grammatical errors existing in the students’ writing of Boa Amponsem Senior High School, the teachers’ task is to identify these problems and then come up with a holistic approach to addressing them as mentioned by Zhang (2011) that:

An adequate understanding of what processes in which the learners engage themselves for the task of learning a second language, are attributed to the fulfillment of the learning tasks

by the learners as crucial significance to decisions making concerning development if teaching materials as input and providing conditions that are facilitative of the learning (Zhang, 2011; p. 87).

### **2.2.6 Criticism against Error Analysis**

On the contrary, error analysis concept regarding the description of the learners' errors has its shortfalls in that, the learners' language may be elusive and it is also dynamic in nature. Therefore, examining the learners' language in a sectional or horizontal way or at a particular point in time is very challenging. The assertion is that "his language is changing all the time, that his rules are constantly undergoing revision which is of course, true and rarely complicates the problem of description but does not invalidate the concept of a learner's language" (Zhang, 2011 cited from Corder, 1967). This makes it difficult to actually come into terms with what the features of the learners' language are at a point in time. But the question that arises out of this criticism is that, can there be a way of describing the learner's language within a certain stage of the learner? Probably, a description of the learner's grammar at the SHS level can be done to determine why grammar errors occur in their writings and to develop appropriate measures to dealing with it.

Another argument against error analysis has to do with the inadequacy of textual data that is to be analysed. According to Zhang (2011), Corder (1981) identified two constraints namely, *external* and *internal*. The argument is that the textual data does not adequately give a better view of the learner's language. With the external constraints, it is said that the textual data is not under pressure. Therefore, it does not put out any natural communicative needs of the learner. Then, regular exercises can be done in the form of oral examination

in addition to the textual data to get better impressions of the learner's language. This can help determine where the students' difficulties are and to respond appropriately. In effect, Boa Amponsem Senior High School students can be examined orally on grammar plus the written exercises in order to ascertain problematic areas on grammar and address them accordingly only if the goal of learning the language is learning.

With the internal constraints, "the learner himself will place limitation upon the data that teachers work with by selecting those aspects of knowledge which he has most confidence in" (Zhang, 2011; cited from Corder, 1981; p .60). In effect, what the learner has mastered will be presented as the learner may tend to dislodge the challenges being faced by him or her in the target language. Here, it is essential for teachers to ask appropriate questions to obtain a response suitable to their needs. For instance, a teacher after diagnosing the level of knowledge of his/her students on concord, must be able to devise a strategy to arrive at the facts. Teachers of the language must therefore ask students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School the right questions so as to appropriately tackle their grammatical errors.

## **2.3 Definitions and Concept**

### **2.3.1 Definition of Grammar**

Herring states that, "Grammar refers to the way words are used, classified, and structured together to form coherent written or spoken communication." (Herring, 2016, p. 11). This is an indication that when talking about grammar, morphology and syntax play a very important role. This assertion is further buttressed as "Grammar = morphology (how words are made up) + syntax (how sentences are made up)" (Berry, 2012, p. 3). The grammar of English therefore consists of all rules that govern the formation of English sentences.

On morphology, according to Herring (2016), “Although the parts of speech provide the building blocks for English, another very important element is inflection, the process by which words are changed in form to create new, specific meanings.” He furthered that there are two main categories of inflection which are **conjugation** and **declension**. Conjugation refers to the inflection of verbs, while declension refers to the inflection of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Whenever we change a verb from the present tense to the past tense, for example, we are using conjugation. Likewise, when we make a noun plural to show that there is more than one of it, we are using declension. Morphology is extensively dealt with below.

### 2.3.2 Principles of Obligatoriness

While spelling errors are not usually considered grammatical errors, some classes of spelling errors, we argue, are. Some language learners’ spelling errors involve a violation of syntactic and/or morphological regularities, and should be covered under the umbrella of grammatical errors (Leacock, Chodorow, Gamon, & Tetreault, 2010, p. 1). For example, the ‘*writed*’ contains a word that does not exist in English. Technically, according to Leacock et al (2010), it could be considered a spelling or even a typographical error, especially if a native speaker of English produced the text. However, Heift & Schulze (2007) point out, language learners can produce misspellings based on either a misapplication of morphological rules or other influences from their native language (L1), or from their incomplete knowledge of the morphology and phonology of the language being learned (L2). In the example of a learner using ‘*writed*’, we can hypothesize that this form is influenced by an incomplete knowledge of English irregular verbs. Most likely, the learner added the regular past tense morpheme [-ed] to the verb stem [writ-] instead of

using the irregular form '**wrote**'. As a morphological error, we consider this type of misspelling a grammatical error Leacock et al (2007).

Considering the grammatical errors made by Boa Amponsem Senior High School students in their written exercises and sometimes in their speech, it is evident that their knowledge in morphology is nothing to write home about and that leads them into committing grammatical errors when writing. Due to this, the study seeks to go into the domain of affixation as well explained below.

According to Katamba (1993), inflectional morphology is about the influence syntax has over word-formation. In addition, it deals with **syntactically determined affixation processes** Katamba (1993). This means that for an affix to be attached to a stem, the **position** a word occupies in a clause or sentence is key. Katamba (1993) stated that Greenberg (1954) proposed the principles of obligatoriness to explain the phenomenon of inflectional morphology that, "inflections occurs, when at different points in sentence, syntax imposes obligatory choices from the menu of affixes" (Katamba, 1993; p. 206 cited from Greenberg, 1954). It went on to talk about the fact that, if the appropriate choice is not made, it results in ungrammatical sentence structures. Moreover, he stated that such is not the case with regard to derivational morphemes. This implies that, syntax does not impose the choice of a specific affix in order to ensure how well the grammar of a sentence is. For instance, looking at the English derivational nominal suffix [-er], it syntactically does not require to be suffixed to a noun thus, nouns that do not have such a suffix can syntactically occupy the subject noun phrase position without rendering a sentence ungrammatical. For example;

1a. The **banker** sits in the bank.

1b. The **bank** has collapsed.

Here, the absence of the [-er] derivational morpheme in *Ib* does not make the sentence ungrammatical hence the addition of [-er] in *Ia* to the word '**bank**' only creates a different word.

Another angle to be looked at is that at certain times, syntactical correctness demands the presence of a particular derivational morpheme. For instance;

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2a. *Being late, he entered the classroom <b>calm</b> . | 2b. *The <b>teach</b> is marking exercises. |
| Being late, he entered the classroom <b>calmly</b> .    | The <b>teacher</b> is marking exercises.    |

From the sentences above, if sentence 2a has to be appropriate, the derivational morpheme [-ly] has to be suffixed to the adjective '**calm**' to get the adverb '**calmly**' since syntactical position of the word has to be that of an adverb but not an adjective. In 2b, sentence appropriateness requires that the headword (**teach**) in the subject noun phrase [**\*The teach**] is incorrect, and thus has to be suffixed [-er] as in [**The teacher**] for correctness. Generally, those suffixes have to be added to those base forms in ensuring accurateness of the sentences. Katamba (1993) mentioned that "the claim that some affixes are syntactically more pertinent than others is well-founded" and that inflectional morphology is about "whatever information about word-structure that is relevant to the syntax" (p. 207). That is, the inflectional elements of words are determined by the positions of the words in sentences, and which also rest on how the various words constituting the phrase, clause or sentence interact with each other in such an environment.

Sundaresan (2008) stated that inflectional affixes as morphemes have "a purely grammatical effect on the stems they attach to" (p. 2). Sundaresan (2008) alluded that "no native speaker would leave out these affixes in the relevant context because doing so would



mean producing ungrammatical sentences” (p. 2). In effect, a sentence without the right affix if needed in a syntactic structure will render such a sentence ungrammatical. This claim is substantiated in the following constructions;

- 3a. This **lecturer**      These **lecturers**      3b. \*This **lecturers**      \*These **lecturer**  
 That **lecturer**      Those **lecturers**      \* That **subjects**      \*These **subject**

In 3a, the syntactic environment of the noun phrase houses the demonstrative adjectives – *this, that* (singular) and *these, those* (plural) which then determines the number of the noun that is to follow as in *lecturer* or *lecturers*; and these phrases are grammatically correct. On the other hand, the reverse is the ones in 3b which are incorrect phrases due to inaccurate agreement between the demonstratives and the nouns being singular or plural.

Additionally, Sundaresan (2008) explained the same phenomenon as follows;

- 4a. Jacqueline **needs** a better education.      4b. Some journalists **report** [Ø] stories.

In 4a, the stem – **need** is suffixed with the inflection [-s] so as to agree with the singular subject – **Jacqueline**. In 4b, the stem – **report** has a zero inflectional morpheme [Ø] due to its plural subject – **journalists**. That is, “inflectional morphemes are used for grammatical purposes” (Afreh, 2006, p. 10). The implication therefore is that, the presence of an inflectional morpheme if it is to be present, results in correct grammatical sentences and vice-versa. Moreover, it will be ungrammatical for an English Language native speaker to utter or write;

- 5a. \*She **read** a lot.      5b. \*They **reads** a lot.

In 5a, '*she*' as a third person singular subject pronoun requires the third person singular inflectional morpheme [-s] is absent, hence making it ungrammatical. With 5b, the presence of the morpheme [-s] is ungrammatical since the third person plural subject – '*they*' doesn't require the morpheme. Both seek to convey the same information.

In totality, inflectional morphemes do not change the grammatical category of words but alter the number (singular/plural) of nouns, persons, tense and aspect of verbs, adjectives (comparison), etc as in the following;

- 6a. The **interaction** was successful.      6b. The **interactions** (plural) were successful.  
6c. Students **walk** to school always.      6d. Students **walked** (past) to school yesterday.  
6e. The Law Faculty is nice but the Linguistics Faculty is **nicer** (comparative).

Here, the singular noun '**interaction**' in 6a becomes plural in 6b with the inflectional morpheme [-s]. With the addition of the inflectional morpheme [-ed] to the verb '**walk**' in 6c, it changes the word from the being present to past. In 6e, the adjective '**nice**' is inflected with [-er] to make comparison. The various word classes of the words remain unchanged. Relating this to grammar, it will mean that syntax determines any of the morphemes above in a sentence.

In English Language, grammar does not always demand the use of agentive or nominalizer morpheme [-er] in all situations as in;

- 7a. Dr. Ofori is a **teacher**. This can still be conveyed as      7b. Dr. Ofori's profession is **teaching**.

In the two sentences, the noun forming derivational morpheme [-er] suffixed to the stem – **teach** in 7a is realised differently in 7b as a gerundive derivational morpheme [-ing] on the same stem – **teach** in 7b due to syntax since one cannot say

\*Dr. Ofori’s is a **teach**.                      or                      \*Dr. OFori’s profession is **teach**.

It is key to note that both [-er, -ing] are derivational morphemes and can be used alternatively to express the same proposition.

Moreover, Afreh (2006) mentioned that “derivational suffixes help us to derive words from other words classes” and that “they change the classes of words to other classes” (p. 11). By implication, derivational morphemes are mostly class-changing since the addition of a derivational morpheme to a root will mostly change the word class to a different word class. For instance, the roots [**faith**, **act**] as noun and verb respectively become an adjective and a noun respectively in the following are

8a. His **faith** saved him.                      8b. He is a **faithful** believer.

8c. They **act** well.                      8d. Kojo Nkansah is an **actor**.

In 8a, **faith** as a noun (subject) is attached to the derivational morpheme/suffix [-ful] in 8b to become an adjective – **faithful** (qualifying the noun ‘believer’). In 8c, **act** syntactically is a verb and after gaining the derivational morpheme/suffix [-or], syntactically becomes a noun **actor** (serving as a complement) in 8d. In a nutshell, syntax influences affixation of the morphemes stated above in the sentences. It is worth-mentioning that where the root/base/stem like ‘**economy**’ occurs in a syntactic structure, the derived form i.e. ‘**economic**’ cannot occur. It is therefore grammatically correct and incorrect to say or write

9a. The **economy** is distressed.

9b. \*The **economic** is distressed.

9c. His **economic** prowess is commendable.

9d. \*His **economy** prowess is commendable.

Here, 9a and 8c are correct but 9b and 9d are incorrect. However, where a typical verb stem like ‘**dance**’ is functioning as a noun, the derived form with [-er] morpheme ‘**dancer**’ can syntactically occupy the same position but with different propositions as in the following sentences

10a. The **dance** is local.

10b. The **dancer** is local.

It is also worth-mentioning that at certain times, the affixation of a derivational morpheme like [-un] does not change the grammatical category of a stem as in

11a. He is an **intelligent** undergraduate.

11b. He is an **unintelligent** undergraduate.

In 11a, both ‘**intelligent**’ and ‘**unintelligent**’ syntactically belong to the adjective category although the latter is prefixed with the derivational morpheme [-un]. In the arena of productivity, inflectional morphemes outweigh that of derivational morphemes. That is, inflectional morphemes can be affixed to almost all members belonging to a certain class. For example, the plural marker/morpheme [-s] can be added a lot of nouns to form their plurals as in

<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Plural [-s]</b>
12a. girl	girls
12b. phone	phones
12c. minister	ministers

Also, the third person singular morpheme [-s], the progressive morpheme [-ing], the perfective morpheme [-en] and the past morpheme [-ed] can be affixed to most verbs as in the following verbs respectively

13a. He **listens** to music always.

13b. Merchix is **reading** English.

13c. The man has **taken** to smoking.

13d. The president **addressed** the people against hate speech.

But with derivational morphemes, its unproductivity is seen from the point that it even selects the stem it wants to be attached to even with the same grammatical category. For instance, the derivational morpheme [-in] cannot be attached to all adjectives but some. For example, the following are acceptable

14a. **inappropriate**

14b. **inaccurate**

14c. **ineffective**

But unacceptable in the following

15a. **\*inhappy**

15b. **\*infortunate**

15c. **\*inpredictable**

Blocking is responsible for such unacceptable forms in English Language. Blocking therefore is “due to the prior existence of another word with the meaning that the putative word would have” (Katamba, 1993; p. 73 cited Aronoff, 1976). Katamba (1993) looked at blocking with the word **thief** in that when **steal** is suffixed with the derivational morpheme [-er], **\*stealer** is blocked making it ungrammatical. Thus, saying **he is a stealer** is inaccurate but **he is a thief** is grammatical. Katamba (1993) also reiterated that in a situation where there exists “two semantically similar morphemes, one of which is more productive than the other, the more productive a morpheme is, the less susceptible to blocking than its less productive counterpart” (p.73). He then cited Aronoff (1976) to

indicate that the derivational morpheme [-ness] is more productive than that of [-ity]. Also, the dormant nature of derivational morphemes does not mean that they always come with predictable or compositional meaning with the root they are attached to. For example, the morpheme [-hood] in ‘**motherhood**’ means “**the state of being a mother**” but ‘**neighbourhood**’ in the sentence “**He lived in our neighbourhood**” doesn’t mean the state of being neighbours but “**a particular area in a city or town**”.

Another key difference between a derivational and an inflectional morpheme lies in affixation. That is, in English Language, the inflectional morphemes cannot be used as prefixes but only as suffixes while derivational morphemes can play both roles as prefixes and suffixes. This is exemplified below

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 16a. eaten         | (have) <u>eat</u> <b>en</b> (inflectional)               |
| 16b. undergraduate | (plural) <u>undergraduate</u> <b>s</b> (inflectional)    |
| 16c. significant   | (negativity) <u>in</u> <b>significant</b> (derivational) |
| 16d. type          | (noun) <u>typ</u> <b>ist</b> (derivational)              |

Moreover, inflectional morphemes if they have to occur with derivational morphemes, usually come after the derivational morphemes. For example, the inflectional morpheme [-s] comes after the base ‘**nation**’ and derivational morpheme [-al] in ‘**national**’ to form ‘**nationals**’.

The morpheme [-ing] can be both derivational and inflectional. This is exemplified in the following sentence constructions

- 17a. The finance minister is read**ing** the budget.

17b. The **reading** of the budget is done by the finance minister.

In 17a, the morpheme [-ing] is inflectional and is required as a progressive aspectual marker to arrive at grammatical accurateness. However, in 17b, the morpheme [-ing] as gerundive suffix is derivational in nature. It is therefore conclusive that the grammatical category and meaning of the word ‘**reading**’ are not the same since in 17a, ‘**reading**’ is a verb and in 17b, ‘**reading**’ is a noun functioning as subject. They can therefore be said to be two different [-ing] morphemes although they seem to be the same. Grammatically, the stem in both sentences must be inflected with the morpheme [-ing] due to the syntactic make-up of the sentences.

In the area of affixation, the plural inflectional marker/morpheme [-s] is only attached to the grammatical category, nouns alone. For example,

18a. parliament (singular) **parliaments** (plural)      18c. laptop (singular) **laptops** (plural)

18c. sick                      \*sicks                      18d. nice                      \*nices

Here, the inflection [-s] in 18a and 18b are grammatical because the roots ‘**parliament**, **laptop**’ are nouns but [-s] in 18c, 18d are ungrammatical since they belong to the grammatical category of adjective. Likewise, these morphemes [-ed, -en, -ing] belong mostly to verbs and in some exceptions, adjectives as in the following sentences;

19a. The crowd **gathered** to protest against prevailing economic hardship. (verb)

19b. The **gathered** crowd embraced one another. (adjective)

19c. The meat has **frozen** in the fridge. (verb)

19d. The **frozen** meat is in the fridge. (adjective)

19e. Sarah is **nursing** the baby. (verb)

19f. Sarah is a **nursing** mother. (adjective)

Affixation/morphology is therefore very key in determining how grammatical an English sentence will come out and it is relevant to the study since the grammatical errors found in writings of Senior High School students of Boa Amponsem were violated syntactical and/or morphological regularities sometimes the absence of it due to misapplication of morphological rules, influences from their native language (L1), and from their incomplete knowledge of the morphology and phonology of the target language- English Language (L2).

### 2.3.3 Principle of Grammatical Categories

In investigating the grammatical errors committed in the writings of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students, it became appropriate to touch on the key major word classes like nouns, verbs, adjectives etc with how these word classes are assigned. It came out that the mentioned students were committing grammatical errors because of their inability to clearly stick to rules governing the use of these major word classes in given sentences.

“A word category, or part of speech, is just a name given to a group of words that have something in common, such as where they can go in a sentence” (Altenberg & Vago, 2010, p. 1). According to (Barrett, 2016), “Parts of speech are categories of words sorted by their roles within the structure of the language.” He goes on to reiterate that “Most of us learn about parts of speech when we first learn to write. But what often escapes us is that these boundaries between parts of speech are fluid.” And that “Verbs can behave like nouns. Nouns can behave like adjectives. Adjectives can behave like adverbs. Many parts of



speech can act as interjections. Sometimes, a word in a particular part of speech transforms into a new word permanently, and becomes another part of speech.” Therefore, the grammatical categories are the categories to which different words are assigned, based on their meaning, structure, and function in a sentence.

In addition, syntax plays a very important part to arriving at a grammatically correct sentences as stated by Berry (2012). Herring (2016) puts syntax as, “the rules and patterns that govern how we structure sentences.” It is worth-mentioning that words belonging to different grammatical categories come together to form phrases, clauses and sentences. According to (Tallerman, 2015), there are three categories that are associated with the major word classes; nouns, verbs and adjectives. The categories mentioned are **Inherent**, **Agreement** and **Relational**. Inherent is those properties that a word has intrinsically or has not. Agreement category has to do with the syntactic links existing among words: an example is concord. Relational category is the relationship between a word/phrase and the entire sentence.

### **2.3.3.1 Grammatical Categories for English Nouns**

Noun or nominal group according to (Downing, 2015, p. 361) “refer to the participants in situations.” He further explained participants as “not only persons, places, objects, institutions and other collectives, but also activities (swimming), abstractions (thought), qualities (beauty), emotions (anger) and phenomena (thunder, success).” Structurally, Downing (ibid) mentioned that a noun or nominal group “can be realised basically by a noun or pronoun acting as the head of the NG: gardens, children, winter, food, news, they. On the other hand, nominal groups can be long and complex.”

**Number:** In the area of number, regular and irregular forms of the noun determines how a particular plural of a noun is formed. Regular plurals according to Downing (ibid, p. 364-365) are formed by the addition of a suffix: /ɪz/ after a sibilant, as in *kiss – kisses, church – churches* (with the spelling **-es**); /s/ after a voiceless consonant as in *books, cakes*; or /z/ after a voiced consonant, as in *pole – poles, streams – streams*, or a vowel *eye – eyes, cry – cries* (the spelling is **-s**, with **y** becoming **i** after a consonant, but not after a vowel: *day – days*). A number of words of classical origin retain their original plurals, for example: *phenomenon – phenomena; criterion – criteria*. Most common irregular plurals are however formed by a change of vowel (or of two vowels): *woman – women, man – men, tooth – teeth. Child – children* has developed a ‘double’ plural, having both a vowel change and a suffix. Another group marks the plural by a consonant change: *half – halves; calf – calves; loaf – loaves*. A third group of nouns have the same form for both singular and plural. This is known as ‘**zero plural**’: *trout, salmon, sheep, deer, series, species, aircraft*. In English, the main major grammatical distinction between nouns according to Downing (2015) is whether they are countable or uncountable. Count nouns unlike mass nouns refer to items that can be counted. Count nouns are the largest category and are characterised by having number contrast (i.e. having both singular and plural forms) according to Downing (2015).

**Definiteness:** Nouns can be looked at from the perspectives of definiteness as being definite or indefinite through the use of the articles ‘**the-definite** article’ and ‘**a, an-indefinite** articles’ as in

- 20a. **The** research (definite)    20b. **A** research (indefinite)    20c. **An** article (indefinite)

Downing (2015, p. 363) states that “The determiner particularises the noun referent in different ways” and as a result, the articles as determiners “establish its reference as definite (the man) or indefinite (a man).” This implies that, articles “**the, a, an**” are only added to nouns and no other word class. Hence, the presence of any of the articles is an indication that there is a presence of a noun. That is, an article added to any other word class aside a noun is ungrammatical as exemplified below;

21a. \***The** nice (adjective)      21b. \***A** slowly (adverb)      21c. \***An** teach (verb)

Moreover, the presence of any of the articles to prototypical adjective will change the class into a noun as in the following;

22a. The **sick** (*noun*) are suffering.      22b. The **poor** (*noun*) are neglected in society.

Aside the articles as determiners, other determiners can be put in the syntactic slot before a noun in English Language as in

23a. **Demonstratives**: this book; these books; that hairstyle; those hairstyles

23b. **Wh-determiners**: what choice(s); which sanction(s)

23c. **Quantifiers**: some salt/oranges; each chapter; every president; all laws; no response; most women; few answers; much time; any questions

23d. **Possessive determiners**: my thesis; her/his thesis; our thesis; Merchix’s thesis

23e. **Pronouns**: we/us students; you lecturers

**Case**: Tallerman (2015, p. 54) remarked that a case “indicates the grammatical relation (or grammatical function) of an NP in a phrase or sentence.” He further stated that a case “marks, for example, whether a noun phrase is a subject or an object of a verb” and “it

denotes the relationship the NP has to that verb.” She wrote that English has very little morphology with respect to case. It is only pronouns that are able to undergo some changes when they fulfil the grammatical relation ‘**subject**’ of a finite verb but even with pronouns, the forms ‘**you**’ and ‘**it**’ have no distinctive case-marking. For instance, in the following examples

24a. **He** kicks **him**.      24b. **They** consult **them**.      24c. **It** swallowed **it**.

The ‘**he**, **they**’ are all subject pronouns since they can only be used grammatically subject while ‘**him**, **them**’ are object pronouns and must be used as such and cannot be used either way. The implication here is that, ‘**he**’ and ‘**they**’ as subjects change forms to ‘**him**’ and ‘**them**’ respectively to become *objects* since they are occupying the *syntactic* positions of objects in the two sentences. However, in 24c, ‘**it**’ as a pronoun remains the same whether used as subject or object. Moreover, the subjects ‘**he**’ and ‘**they**’ agree in number with their respective verbs ‘**kicks**’ and ‘**consult**’. It would be ungrammatical to write or say the following sentences

25a. \*He kick him    25b. \*They consults them    25c. \***Them** consult **they**

25d. \***Him** kicks **he**

Here, the subject ‘**he**’ in number denotes one (*singular*) and per the rules of concord, requires the base forms of verbs *with* inflection [-s] while ‘**they**’ as a plural pronoun requires the base forms of verbs *without* the inflection [-s] as in 25a, 25b. In 25c and 25d, the syntactic position of a subject cannot be occupied by ‘**them**’ and ‘**him**’ while the syntactic position of an object cannot be occupied by ‘**they**’ and ‘**he**’ making those constructions ungrammatical.

### 2.3.3.2 Grammatical Categories for English Verbs

Downing (2015, p. 287) looked at verbs as “the grammatical unit by means of which we most typically express our perception of events.” She further described ‘**events**’ as “all types of process in the transitivity structure, whether events, activities, states or acts of consciousness.” According to Tallerman (2015, p. 40), “The major function of verbs is to express what is known as ‘**predication**’ and by predication would mean “an ‘event’ in the sentence, which may be quite literally an event (such as collapse or explode) but also includes actions, processes, situations, states and so on.” Verbs or verbal group could be realised in the following classes and forms;

- **Lexical verbs:** wait, come, rain, bring, etc.
- **Primary verbs:** be: am, is, are, was, were, being, been; have: has, had, having; do: does, did
- **Modal auxiliaries:** shall, should, will, would, can, could, may, might, must, ought to
- **Semi-modals:** need, dare, used to (modals in certain uses)
- **Lexical auxiliaries:**
  - (1) be able to, be about to, be apt to, be bound to, be due to, be going to, be liable to, be likely to, be certain to, be sure to, be to, be unlikely to, be supposed to
  - (2) have to, have got to
  - (3) had better, would rather, would sooner

**Tense and Aspect:** Tallerman (2015, p. 43) stated that morphologically speaking, there are only two tenses in English Language, being *present* and *past*. According to Downing

(2015, p. 318), “English has no verbal inflection to mark a future tense,” hence, “The forms shall and will are not verbal inflections but modal auxiliaries which, when reduced, are attached to pronouns, not to the verb root (I’ll wait out- side)”

26a. Dr. Ofori **supervises** my work. (Present)      26b. Dr. Ofori **supervised** my work.  
(Past)

Here, in 26a, the verb which is in the present tense is inflected with [-s] to indicate the third person and number - singular to agree with the subject which is also singular. The Present tense is the unmarked tense. Morphologically, it uses mainly the base form. It is marked only on the 3rd person singular (with the exception of be, which has three forms - **am**, **are** and **is**). In the sentence “I come to school,” the base form of the verb ‘**come**’ has not been suffixed. This is called a ‘non-past’ since like many other ‘present’ tense verbs do not represent something that is happening now. In 26b, the inflection [-**ed**] added to the base to change the tense from simple to past. The past tense in English is the marked form. Morphologically, the vast majority of verbs in English have a distinctive past form, (played, saw, flew) Downing (2015, p. 319). Semantically, the past tense basically refers to a situation that is prior to the present. These [-s] and [-**ed**] endings are the only pieces of regular verbal morphology that represent tense in English, although [-s] actually has a dual role.

**Aspect:** Another category of the verb has to do with aspect. Under aspect, English verbs can indicate an action that is ongoing or completed. For instance;

27a. The teacher **was teaching** the students.      27b. The teacher **has taught** the students.

In example 27a, the verb ‘**was**’ is in the past time; however, the action expressed in ‘**teaching**’ is not over. This is the **progressive aspect** and it is marked by adding the inflection [-**ing**] to the base plus the auxiliary verb form ‘**be**’ as in

28a. The students **are staying** in class.

The **perfective aspect** is an indication that an action is completed. In this, there is a change of verb. The forms of the ‘have’ verb is added to the main verb with perfective marker [-**ed**] in different forms as in

29a. He **had taken** his money.

29b. The ladies **have listened** to every advice.

29c. **Has** he **read** it.

A deviation from these rules would render syntactic structures ungrammatical.

**Mood:** According to Tallerman (2015, p. 45), “Mood is a grammatical category which marks properties such as possibility, probability and certainty.” English like any other language distinguishes between actual events, as in (30a), and hypothetical events, as in (30b):

30a. The student leaves for Kakum tomorrow for excursion.

30b. The student would leave for Kakum tomorrow for excursion.

The mood for 30a is **indicative**. Mood therefore is different feature from tense. In the **hypothetical** event as in 30a, it comes with a separate auxiliary verb ‘**would**’ plus additional bare main verb ‘**leave**’. These auxiliaries like “would, could, might, should, must, etc.” are referred to as **modal auxiliaries**. Tallerman (2015) opined that English has

a specific verbal morphology which is used for hypothetical events, and which is termed the **subjunctive mood**. Below are examples;

31a. ...If he **were** wise enough.

31b. I demand this conversation **end/be ended** at once.

Here, the use of the past tense indicative form of the verb ‘**be**’ in standard English would be “*He was wise enough,*” and not \**he were*. But the past tense subjunctive form ‘**were**’ is used for all persons and numbers, including first person singular as in: **32a.** *If I were you.* (speakers who don’t use the English subjunctive rather use *If he was wise enough, If I was you*). The present tense subjunctive, in (b), uses just the bare uninflected form of the verb: **end, be**. This contrasts with the third person singular of the indicative verb forms, **It ends/is ended**: and that the subjunctive forms lack verbal agreement, such as the [-s] ending.

Tallerman (2015, p. 46) looked at valency-changing processes or voice as having something to do with English verbs. This process alters the ‘**argument structure**’ of the verb, changing its basic syntactic requirements for certain arguments. For instance, a transitive verb can become intransitive. In English Language, there are two voices namely, **active** and **passive**. In English, the passive affects the arguments of the verb, and also the form of the verb itself. In the following examples;

33a. The poachers **cut** the elephant’s tusk.

33b. The elephant’s tusk **was cut** by the poachers.

The noun phrase ‘**the elephant’s tusk**’, is the direct object in active (33a) and becomes the *subject* in the passive (33b) thereby getting changed to subject position. The subject of the active sentence, ‘**the poachers**’, is demoted in the passive to become the object of a preposition ‘**by**’, or it can be omitted entirely. The valency of the verb ‘cut’ is altered in



the passive. That is, in (33a), it takes two core arguments, a subject and a direct object, while in (33b) it has only one core argument which is '*the elephant's tusk*'. The phrase '*by the poachers*' is not a core argument hence, can be omitted entirely. The passive in English is characterized by an auxiliary '**be**' or '**get**' as in "*It got stole*" plus the *past participle* form of the main verb (*stolen, cut, killed*) but there's no specific passive affix.

**Agreement:** By this, a verb form must '**agree with**' the subject noun group. This means that, for a sentence to be rendered grammatical, the inherent *features* of the subject nominal group should also be realized on the verb. These features are *number* and *person*. However, English has very little verbal agreement and that, only the third person singular in the present tense is overtly marked as exemplified below;

34a. He writes well

34b. They study hard

34c. You eat a lot.

34d. I read always.

### 2.3.3.3 Grammatical Categories for English Adjectives

The only category that we can lay hands on when talking about of adjectives is *comparison*. In English, comparison of adjectives can be in two different ways. The first is *morphological*, through changes in the form of the adjective itself as in, in *dark, darker, darkest*, the base form of the adjective '**dark**' takes a *comparative suffix* [-er] or a *superlative suffix* [-est]. In the following sentences;

35a. Jacqueline is *darker* than Yaw.

35b. Jacqueline is the *darkest* in her class.

The comparison in 35a is between two persons only hence, the *comparative* degree used; but in 35b, Jacqueline is compared with many other pupils in her class hence, the use of

the *superlative* degree. In effect, the comparative form compares only two entities but the superlative form compares more than two entities.

With the knowledge about the various grammatical categories, the students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School can figure out what needs to be done in using the various major word classes in English sentence constructions so as to arrive at grammatical correctness and reduce grammatical errors found in their written works.

## **2.4 Related Studies**

Many researchers have delved deep into how grammatical errors are committed by learners of the target language (English) and what needs to be done to address this challenge. Below are some reviewed related studies on the problem.

In a related study, Kōrkgöz (2010) examines errors in a corpus of 120 essays produced by 86 adult Turkish learners, who were beginners in their language proficiency in Çukurova University. The corpus was examined to identify and classify written errors in terms of the possible sources of errors. Errors were classified in accordance with two major categories: interlingual errors and intralingual errors, and some sub-categories were identified. It has been found that most written errors students produce result from the interlingual errors indicating interference of the first language. Errors are inevitable during the process of learning a foreign language.

The source of data for this study was 120 student essays written on three different topics. Each of these essays was between 150-250 words. Data was collected over two months. All of the errors in the essays were identified by the respective language instructors. Then, the identified errors were classified into Interlingual errors as

### 1. Grammatical interference

With this, he posited that native and the target languages have different grammatical rules so when the learner transfers grammatical element from his/her native language to the target language he/she makes errors. Under pluralisation, he mentioned that Turkish students applied a grammatical rule in their native language onto the target language. The Turkish see no need pluralizing nouns in English Language like “*three cups of coffee*” “*three dogs*” because in Turkish grammar rules, nouns are not to be pluralized hence, made errors like \* *He is drinking three cup of coffee.* \* *We have a big garden and three dog.*

### 2. Verb Tense

Grammatical errors were committed in the area of verbs in that in English language, simple present tense is used to express these situations ‘*They love their children*’, ‘*He wants his mother to buy him a book*’ making them grammatical, whereas in Turkish, the present continuous tense is employed ‘*They are loving their children*’, ‘*He is wanting his mother to buy him a book*’ which are ungrammatical.

### 3. Prepositional interference

According to him, errors committed under prepositions were adding the wrong preposition- \**I am going to home*, omitting the preposition- \**I am interested music*, and misusing the preposition- \**The plane is flying in the city (over the city)*.

### 4. Lexical Interference

This type of interference is observed when a language item in the student’s native language interferes with a corresponding language item in the target language as in, \**I will open the*

*TV* instead of (*I will **turn on** the TV*). That is, in interlingual errors, if a student does not know the appropriate word, structure or expression to use, he falls back on his mother language as exemplified above Yasemin (ibid).

Under intralingual errors, a total of 179 intralingual errors were identified, resulting mainly from overgeneralization, that is, negative transfer of language items and grammatical rules in the target language, incomplete application of rules, resulting from learner's failure to apply rules of the target language under appropriate situations Yasemin (ibid). He therefore suggested that the teacher should prioritize which errors to correct in students' writings; and suggested remediation in the form of a teacher correction, peer correction, and self-correction. In conclusion, this study investigated the types of written errors produced by Turkish students in their level of English proficiency and the findings indicated that the early stages of language learning are characterised by a predominance of interlingual errors and intralingual ones. It is suggested that errors of a student should not be regarded as a failure, but as a real progress the student is making in attaining the knowledge of the target language, in particular, as errors provide to the teacher or the researcher evidence of how language is being learned or acquired, what strategies the learner is employing in the discovery of the language and equipping teachers to help students minimize or overcome their learning problems. Errors are indispensable to the learner because they may, in turn, benefit from various forms of feedback on these errors Yasemin (ibid).

In another related study, the researchers, Abbasi & Karimnia **Invalid source specified.**, wanted to know the grammatical errors in the translation of junior and senior students at Islamic Azad University and Payame-noor University, English Translation Department and compare grammatical errors produced by juniors and those of seniors to see if there was

any progress in their English grammar. The underlying assumption was that students' errors made in grammar were systematic and classifiable hence, carried out a systematic research in the field of error analysis to investigate a number of grammatical errors produced by junior and senior Iranian college students of English Translation Department in their translation assignments wanting to know which grammatical errors were mostly produced by students. Aside frequency of errors, another aim of the study was to compare the grammatical errors of juniors and seniors to be aware of the dominant errors which have not been remedied during the years of study in the university. Since the aim of the study was to compare the errors of seniors and juniors, eighty students from Islamic Azad University of Shiraz and Payam-e-Noor University of Jahrom took part in the present study randomly; forty students from each university, twenty juniors and twenty seniors. After collecting and analyzing the data, the researchers found that there were a lot of grammatical errors which they were classified based on Keshavarz (1994) model. There were 14 classifications of the errors, all into two main categories namely; ***Lexico-Semantic Errors*** and ***Syntactico-Morphological Errors***.

Under Lexico-Semantic Errors in the students' translation, a total of two subcategories, 79 individual errors were identified; 45 errors in juniors' translations and 34 errors in seniors' translations. It came out that errors related to language switch were higher than lexico-semantic errors and that there has been little progress in students' lexico-semantic competence; since the percentage of the number of lexico-semantic errors in the translations of juniors and seniors were almost the same. Under Syntactico-Morphological Errors in the students' translation, in a total of twelve subcategories, 1192 individual errors were identified; 702 errors in juniors and 490 errors in seniors. As the percentage of

different kinds of errors indicates the most dominant problem in the translation of both juniors and seniors is the use of typical Persian structures, which is due to the interference of the mother language. The study concludes that the target language learners commit errors largely because their language proficiency is not good enough for them to use this language at will and that in order to fill the gap between inadequate proficiency and tough requirements of a task, language learners draw on different strategies, such as ignorance and avoidance, mother tongue transference, incomplete rule application, overgeneralization in their L1 forms, which cause different types of errors and in the most occurring errors, four categories are more common in the juniors, use of typical Persian structures, errors in the use of tenses, errors in the use of preposition and errors in the use of articles respectively. The same results happened in the analysis of seniors' high frequency errors.

A study by Watcharapunyawong & Siriluck Usaha (2013), analysed writing errors caused by the interference of the Thai language in three writing genres, namely narration, description, and comparison/contrast. 120 English paragraphs written by 40 second year English major students were analysed by using Error Analysis (EA). The results revealed that the first language interference errors fell into 16 categories: *verb tense, word choice, sentence structure, article, preposition, modal/auxiliary, singular/plural form, fragment, verb form, pronoun, run-on sentence, infinitive/gerund, transition, subject-verb agreement, parallel structure, and comparison structure*, respectively, and the number of frequent errors made in each type of written tasks was apparently different. The study furthered that in narration, the five most frequent errors found were *verb tense, word choice, sentence structure, preposition, and modal/auxiliary*, respectively, while the five

most frequent errors in description and comparison/contrast were *article*, *sentence structure*, *word choice*, *singular/plural form*, and *subject-verb agreement*, respectively. Interestingly, in the narrative and descriptive paragraphs, *comparison structure* was found to be the least frequent error whereas it became the 10<sup>th</sup> frequent error in comparison/contrast writing. It was apparent that a genre did affect writing errors as different text types required different structural features. The study concluded that to enhance students' grammatical and lexical accuracy, a second language (L2) writing teacher should take into consideration L1 interference categories in different genres.

In a related study conducted by Phuket & Othman (2015), to ascertain the major sources of errors that occurred in the writing of EFL students and also investigate the types of errors and the linguistic level that presents the most errors in their writing, they posited that, writing is the most difficult skill in English, so most EFL students tend to make errors in writing and that assisting the learners to successfully acquire writing skills, the analysis of errors and the understanding of their sources are necessary. Forty narrative essays composed by Thai university students were collected and analysed and results showed that the most frequent types of errors were *translated words* from Thai, *word choice*, *verb tense*, *preposition*, and *comma*. The errors came out two sources namely; *interlingual* and *intralingual*. Interlingual or native language interference was found to be the dominant source of errors. In conclusion, the study mentioned that, 'most of EFL students have learned English since they were in primary school; however, their English proficiency, especially writing, is still unsatisfied' and that 'the results suggested that EFL students had grammatical difficulties in writing' Phuket & Othman (2015). The results of this study also confirmed that learners' native language played a key role in English learning among Thai

students and that, ‘Instructors should pay attention to the influence of learners’ native language’ Phuket & Othman (2015).

Errors especially, spelling errors in written grammar form a distinct problem that may retard a learner’s overall performance, especially in English language (Dadzie & Bosiwah, 2015). This implies that, a learners’ lack of how a particular word is spelt is adversely going to affect the grammar in his/her English sentence constructions. A total of sixty samples were collected from three schools and used for the study. Thus, twenty (20) samples were collected from each of the schools mentioned earlier and in order to ensure reliability and accuracy of information, the random sampling method was adopted to determine the number of students selected from each class. The study adopted test tools (essay questions and dictation), questionnaires (close ended) and interview (unstructured) plus fifteen (15) words that were used for a dictation or spelling drill. The findings were that, the major error types identified from students’ marked scripts were categorised under six areas namely: **Addition**-\*writing for writing, **Omission**-\*comitee for committee, **Inversion**-\*foreign for foreign, **Substitution**- \*no for now, **Pronunciation Errors**- \*yogot for yogurt and **Miscellaneous**-\* jueary for jewellery. The study showed a generally low level of proficiency in the written essays of Junior High School students as some of them found it difficult to even write a single error-free sentence due to **L1 interference, ignorance, transfer, false analogy, lack of interest in reading wide among students** and **exposure** (that is post school activities, parent’s educational background, major language spoken at home) and **carelessness** (Dadzie & Bosiwah, 2015).

Owu-Ewie & Williams ( 2017), aimed at finding the lexical and grammatical errors students of three Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana commit in their essay



writing and again examine the frequency of the errors and what can be done to improve the teaching of L2 (English) writing in the Senior High School. The study used 150 students made up of 88 females and 62 males in the three senior high schools. The corpus for the study involved two essays written by the selected students. In all, 300 essays were analysed through content approach. The analysis of the grammatical errors indicated that 411 (29.8%) were *agreements errors*, 182 (13.2%) were *article errors*, 441 (32.0%) were *tense errors*, 161 (11.7%) were *preposition errors*, and 184 (13.3%) were *number errors*. From the analysis, tense errors were the most frequently committed, followed by agreement errors, number errors, article errors, and preposition errors in that order and concluded that the grammatical errors were more frequently committed than lexical errors. The implications of these findings to the teaching of English writing are that teachers where possible should have understanding of both the L1 and L2 of the students and teachers should explicitly teach for transfer, have adequate knowledge of how to identify students' writing errors, and use effective teaching strategies to improve students' English writing. Additionally, teachers should serve as models of using appropriate English for students to emulate and also create a conducive classroom environment for students to participate in class activities. Lastly, teachers should create more opportunities for students to write. The assertion was that, an effective and appropriate writing is teachable and learnable, but before this can be achieved, both teachers and students have a pivotal role to play in improving the students' writing skills in relation to grammatical and lexical errors.

## **2.5 Error Correction Techniques**

Studies have shown that there exist several error correction techniques for error correction that teachers have to resort to in the classroom. Walz (1982) listed various techniques for

error correction in his publication ‘Error correction Techniques for the Foreign Language classroom’. Walz (1982) cited Wingfield (1975) and stated five ways that can be used to approach the correction of written compositions as; (1) *providing clues for self-correction*, (2) *correcting the text* (3) *making marginal notes-comments and footnotes* (4) *explaining errors orally to students*, and (5) *using errors as an illustration for class discussion*. But in all of these, Wingfield subscribed to self-correction by students. He was of the view that there is virtually no difference correcting composition and oral errors and that students “correction can precede teacher correction” Wingfield (1975). Philips (1968) argued that it has been a dilemma if the mere provision of correct forms to students will benefit them in the long run. He continued that presumably, students may find it difficult remembering the input or sometimes not even bother to read written correction (Walz, 1982; p.27 cited from Philips, 1968). In this study, error correction techniques have been discussed under three main perspectives as (a) *self-correction*, (b) *peer correction*, and (c) *teacher correction*.

### 2.5.1 Self-correction Techniques

***Symbols alongside Abbreviations:*** This type points out error by writing a symbol at the margin close to the error for students to locate the error and correct. This is to motivate students to correct their own errors of grammar. This self-correction technique requires that the student rewrites the work and turns it in with the original script. Hendrickson (1980) suggested a standardized set of symbols for the indirect corrections. He talked of *underlining the incorrect spelling*, *a circle around inappropriate words*, *arrow for a missing element* and *a question mark for a confusing phrase*. This meant that the teacher prepares the standardized set of symbols with its possible interpretations and hands over

the symbols and the abbreviation to the students before the beginning of the class (Walz, 1982; p. 28 cited Hendrickson, 1980).

***Reference to Grammar Rules and Checklist:*** With this, rules of grammar are written in the form of a textbook for learners to refer to if the need arises. A learner can refer to the book whenever one breaks any grammar rule in a written work (Walz, 1982, cited from River, 1975 & stack, 1978). For instance, The Glenco Grammar and Composition Handbook: Middle School can be a good source of reference to grammar rules. Cohen (1975) proposed a checklist that can be referred to by learners when dealing with grammar errors in the learners' written work. It is suggested that a checklist can be prepared for a learner or group of learners if the teacher knows that learners or some group of learners have a difficulty in may be adjective agreement (Walz, 1982; cited from Cohen, 1975). By implication, the teacher can prepare a checklist on the most frequent grammar errors made by learners as a source of reference for grammar error correction.

### **2.5. 2 Peer Correction Techniques**

According to Sultana (2009), peer correction is a form of self-correction and is closely tied with the learner's autonomy with the saying "Tell us, we forget; show us, we remember; involve us, we learn" (p.11). Sultana (2009) mentioned that self- correction is a technique which makes it possible for students to correct their own errors. It continued that, peer correction is done in the classroom to enhance learner autonomy, cooperation, interaction and involvement. Peer correction can "foster the development of skills needed to regulate their own learning, and it places more responsibility for learning on the students" (Sultana, 2009; pp .11 -12 cited from Rief 1990; & Harmer, 2007). Sultana (2009) stated that "the involvement of peers in the correction process makes the classroom atmosphere more

supportive and friendlier” (p.12). Obviously, the use of peer correction in the classroom have been criticized even though it has cognitive, social and affective values. Sultana (2009) argued that some learners might feel reluctant to correct their friends’ errors for fear that correcting friends “errors might harm their relationship”. Harmer (2004) also made the assertion that students may feel inferior to their peers after getting corrected by a peer. In such cases students prefer to be corrected by the teacher gently (Sultana 2009; cited from Harmer, 2004).

**Projection:** In this technique, a learner gets his/her work projected on a screen for the entire class to correct. Hagel (1978) mentioned that there has been a successful exercise on this at the secondary school level with the use of an opaque projection. The suggestion is that two or more students’ work are selected the day before the due date for the writing of composition, and are made to write on transparencies. In this case, there is anonymity of learners or authors. Thereafter, the work will be projected on the screen for the errors to be corrected by the class (Walz, 1982; cited from Hagel, 1978). It is argued that it may be a platform to provide some group of learners with evidence of concrete grammar errors for correction of which learning may take place. The negative side of this is that the author gets distracted as only fewer learners may dominate the class discussion (Walz, 1982; cited from Witbeck, 1976).

**Group Composition:** In this situation, learners are put into groups to write compositions. This provides an opportunity for dealing with the learners’ written works. This seems to work for teachers with large classes who find it difficult grading learners frequently. The positives of this strategy are that the teacher workload is reduced since fewer pages and fewer errors are expected to be dealt with. It is also an opportunity for learners to get oral

practice through discussion on the written work in the target language (Waiz, 1982; cited from Vallete, 1973).

***Exchanging of Composition and In-Class Editing:*** With this, each student looks for a partner and swaps his/her written exercise with him/her for corrections. Here, the teacher may guide learners by selecting specific types of grammar errors for learners to look for. Moreover, the teacher may retype the work by eliminating the grammar errors and ask the learner to evaluate and improve on the written work (Waiz, 1982; cited from Witbeck, 1976). But, in-class editing encompasses editing approach that involves self and peer (Waiz, 1982; cited from Gaudiani, 1981). The suggestion is that learners rewrite their composition early in their homes and correct their grammatical errors. They then rewrite them in class as classmates while the teacher guides them. Here, the class reads the work and discusses the essays by correcting grammatical errors and noting the elements of style and organizational strategies using the L2.

### **2.5.3 Teacher Correction Techniques**

***Direct Correction:*** This applies when learners unable to make meaning out of an indirect correction. The general technique is for the teacher circle around the error or underline the portion where the error is in order to draw the attention of the learner. For example, a misplaced word can be bracketed and put in its right order with an arrow. Superfluous or bad words are crossed out entirely. For semantic errors, it should be corrected in a direct manner as possible, by providing the exact answer (Waiz, 1982; cited from Hendrickson, 1980).

***Charting Errors:*** Hendrickson (1980) mentioned that many language educators usually supply the learners with the correct forms or structures of their written language; however,

other teachers assert that the procedure is ineffective when assisting students to learn from their mistakes (Hendrickson, 1980; cited from Corder 1967; Gorbet, 1974; & Valdman, 1975). In the view of Hendrickson (1980), other scholars have proposed the discovery approach to error correction. The essence is to assist learners to make inferences and formulate concepts about the target language. This can go a long way to help learners to fix the problem with the information provided.

Hendrickson (1980) asserted that several scholars recommended that teachers record their students' error on diagnostic charts in order to show the causes of the problem areas of the learners (Lee, 1957; Corder, 1973; Cohen, 1975; Cohen & Robbins, 1976). Hendrickson (1979) opined that the grid allows errors to be categorised along two scales (Sander, 1991; cited Hendrickson, 1979; p. 363). On the horizontal scale, the categories are; (1) lexicon mean vocabulary, semantics, or errors of meaning, (2) syntax also means grammar, including word order, verb phrase and other elements of structure, (3) Morphology includes grammatical agreement of various kinds, such as subject-verb agreement, plurals etc. and (4) Orthography spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Also, on the scale of vertical, 'global' refers to errors that affect the entire organization of the sentence, for instance, missing subjects or main verbs. Sanders (1991) said that Hendrickson's grid is intended to characterize writings in the English Language.

Hendrickson (1979) mentioned the usefulness of the diagnostic chart as "developing individualized instructional materials for building a hierarchy of error correction priorities, and providing more about the process of second language acquisition" (p.394). He concluded by indicating that teachers use various techniques in dealing with the learner's error, however, there is no evidence of a particular technique to substantiate whether indeed

it helps in reducing learner's error significantly. Once again, this makes it possible for one to posit that it may be difficult in arriving at a particular technique for grammar error correction since each learner or group of learners may prefer certain technique(s) at some points and at other time.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

It is essential to conclude by relating the two linguistic principles and the error analysis theory expounded above to indicate how the data gathered will be analysed. The two principles provide the structures for pointing to the grammar errors in the learners' writings. The error analysis theory paves way for errors to be described, identified and also get to know the sources of the grammar errors in learners' writings. Similarly, the review of related studies on error analysis and error correction procedures will also facilitate in discussing the problem of grammatical errors. That is, the linguistic principles and the error analysis theory will be used wholly in appreciating the types and causes of the learners' grammar errors plus some means of remedying the problem.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

Research methodology according to (Dawson, 2002), ‘is the overall approach to studying your topic and includes issues you need to think about such as the constraints, dilemmas and ethical choices within your research’ (p. 14). This chapter therefore delves into the research design, methodology and procedures taken to obtain the data for analysis. In addition, population, sampling techniques and data gathering strategies were also discussed. It takes into account the way in which the information gathered had been presented plus the method through which the data were analysed. The research method was founded on the basis of the research questions since ‘the design sets forth how you will fulfill your purpose and answer the questions you’ve identified’ (Patton, 2015, p. 372).

#### 3.1 Research Approach and Design

Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2018, p. 43), qualitative research involves “the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-**case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, and cultural texts and productions**, along with **observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts**-that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives”. They further mention that, “qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand” Denzin &



Lincoln (2018, p. 43). To Patton (2015, p.47), “Qualitative Research Approach often inquiries into the stories of individuals to capture and understand their perspectives, as just discussed. But often the answer to why people do what they do is found not just within the individual but, rather, within the systems of which they are a part: social, family, organizational, community, religious, political, and economic systems”. On this basis, getting to the root of grammatical errors committed by students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School to ascertain the problem at hand and come up with the right remediations, the study had to fall on this **case study design** within the **qualitative approach**. For the purpose of this study, the methodology that was employed was the **qualitative approach** and **case study as design**.

The study settled on qualitative approach based on the varied and extensive methods used in qualitative research. It was said that “qualitative methods employ observations, interviews, and/or the analysis of some type of text” (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 169). They further explained that the term text is ‘broadly defined in qualitative research to include spoken word (people’s stories, conversations, or speeches), visual representations (photos, films, video, visual art), written texts (historical documents, books, newspaper articles, reports, prose or poetry), artifacts of a culture (monuments, buildings, roads, malls), or a cultural group (homeless people, gangs, residents in AIDS communities). In looking into grammatical errors in written works of students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School, a wide range of methods needed to be employed so as to come up with undiluted fact since according to Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009, p. 169), “Qualitative researchers let the data *‘speak’* to them and try to avoid going into a study with a preconceived idea of what they will find”.

According to Hancock & Algozzine (2006, pp. 10-11), “Case studies represent another type of qualitative research. They are different from other types in that they are intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time. Topics often examined in case studies include individuals, events, or groups. Through case studies, researchers hope to gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved”. A case study therefore “may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)” (Gerring, 2007, p. 20). Therefore, a study of grammatical errors by students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School had to be approached holistically as in uncovering the types of grammatical errors committed by these students, what breeds these errors in their writings plus what to do to remedy such problem and also provide grounds for further research. With this in mind, fallen on this design in investigating grammatical errors of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students was appropriate since the researcher needed to know unravel issues surrounding the problem of grammar. In the context of this work, it was an enquiry into grammatical errors in order to get a clearer picture of what the issues were among teachers and students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School at Dunkwa-on-Offin in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality in the Central Region.

Moreover, it is suggested that “insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, procedures, and future research” (Hancock & Algozzine 2006, p. 11 cited Merriam, 2001). On this backdrop, a study into grammatical errors in the writings of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students could be adopted by stakeholders in the education sector as to what policies to undertake, and the research to be pursued since grammatical errors are not only peculiar to the students of this study.

According to Gillham (2000), qualitative research methods seeks to

1. To carry out an investigation where other methods - such as experiments - are either not practicable or not ethically justifiable.
2. To investigate situations where little is known about what is there or what is going on. More formal research may come later.
3. To explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more 'controlled' approaches.
4. To 'get under the skin' of a group or organization to find-out what really happens - the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside.
5. To view the case from the inside out: to see it from the perspective of those involved.
6. To carry out research into the processes leading to results (for example how reading standards were improved in a school) rather than into the 'significance' of the results themselves. (p. 11)

The case study design was deemed suitable for the study because of its numerous positives.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

Dawson (2002, p. 47) posits that sampling as one continues planning his research project, one needs to think about how he is going to choose his participants. She further opined that if there will be only a small number of people within one's research population for some research projects, it might be possible to contact everyone. However, she stated that due to huge budget, limitless timescale and large team of interviewers, it will be difficult to speak to every person within your research population and that researchers overcome this problem by choosing a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in their

research which she called sampling. Sampling thus deals with the process or technique of choosing people or things out of a larger number to represent the entire group.

The school has a student population of about two thousand, six hundred (2,600) which constitutes thousand two hundred and twenty-six (1226) females and thousand three hundred and seventy-four (1374); and a teacher population of one hundred and twenty (120) of which twenty are in the English Language Department. The female teachers are thirty (30) and the male teachers are ninety (90).

After the exercise, four hundred (400) students out of seven hundred and forty-six (746) form two's offering different courses who picked **YES** were selected as the sample size for the study. Concerning teachers ten (10) out of the twenty (20) English Language tutors were selected based on their ages and number of years in the service.

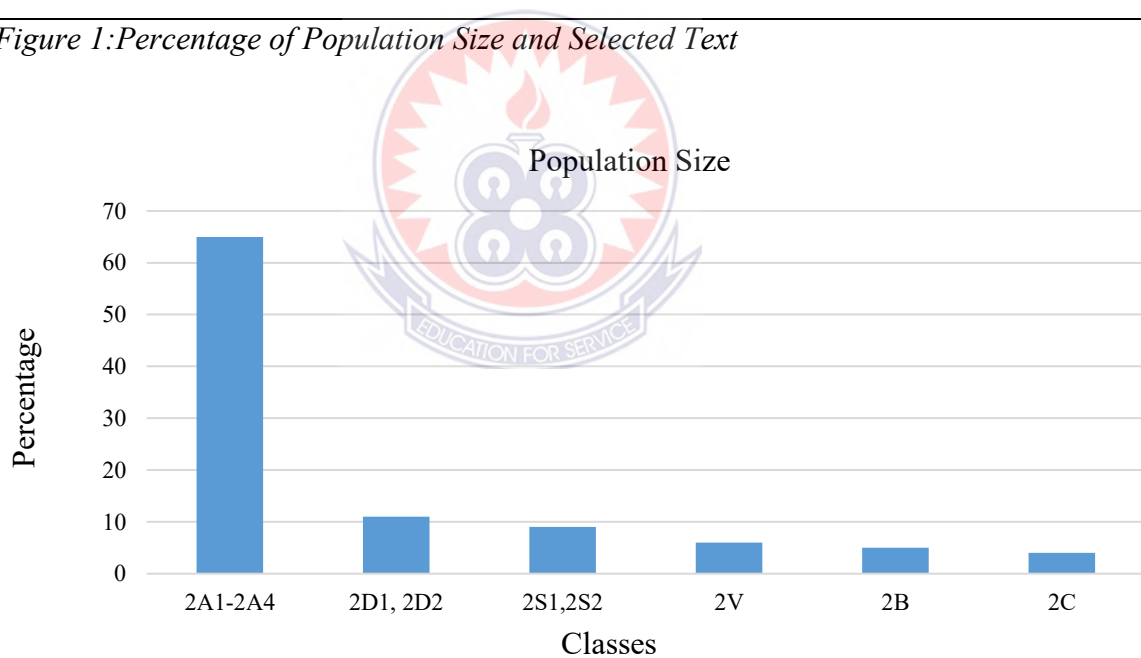
### **3.3 Summary of the Population Size Selected for the Study**

Table 1 below shows the number of classes and the total number of students in the research site. The total number of students are 746 and out of that, four hundred and forty (440) which is about three-fourth ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of the students in form two (2) whose texts were randomly selected. To further break it down, 285, 50, 40, 25, 23 and 17 students offering General Arts, Home Economics, General Science, Visual Arts, Business and General Agriculture were selected respectively as represented in the table and figure below. Concerning teachers, all the twenty (20) English Language tutors were selected for the study.

Table 1: Population Size

Class	Number of Students	Number of Tests Selected
2A1-2A6	454	285
2D1, 2D2	97	50
2S1, 2S2	66	40
2V	51	25
2B	48	23
2C	30	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>440</b>

Figure 1: Percentage of Population Size and Selected Text



From table 1 and figure 1, the researcher selected the population based on class sizes hence, the larger the class size, the larger the population. Out of 440 students in the population, 285 representing 65% were from the General Arts Class. 50 students representing 11% were from Home Economics Class. 40 students which represent 9% were from General Science Class. 25 students representing 6% were from the Visual Arts Class. 23 students

which represent 5% were Business students and 17 students representing 4% were from General Agriculture Class.

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

There are many different ways to choose a sample, and the method used will depend upon the area of research, research methodology and preference of the researcher as posited by Dawson (2002, p. 48). She further stated that there were two main types of sample namely *probability* samples and *purposive* samples. Within the probability and purposive categories there are several different sampling methods and simple *random sampling technique* from the probability category was employed since it allows each unit in the population the chance of being selected for the study since ‘In probability samples, all people within the research population have a specifiable chance of being selected’ Dawson (2002), and is also bias-free. The researcher wishing not to be bias in selecting the four hundred (400) participants for the study, cut seven hundred and forty-six (746) pieces of papers and wrote **YES** on four hundred (400) and **No** on the remaining three hundred and forty-six (346), folded and shuffled them into a container and asked each student to pick one.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Data allows us to look over the researcher’s shoulder and see what he saw. Data makes research empirical, and empirical research is highly valued because it represents something outside our opinions and ourselves. The researcher therefore set the boundaries for the study through sampling and recruitment; collected information using observations, interviews, and documents.

### 3.5.1 Interview

Interviews according to Cresswell & Cresswell (2018), involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. They further stated that, in qualitative interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group.

Similarly, it was opined by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018, p. 506) that ‘interviews enable participants-interviewers and interviewees-to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.’ Dawson (2002, p. 27) mentioned that the most common types of interviews are *unstructured*, *semi-structured* and *structured* interviews. Interviews can therefore be done in focus groups or individually as posited by Dawson (2002).

The researcher adopted the semi-structured interview through a face-to-face interaction with the teachers in the English Language Department. In the execution of the interview, the researcher prepared an interview guide, which are outlined lists of questions on specific issues to be covered in the study for the teachers to respond to them. Sample is found in appendix A.

The interview was conducted within two hours after normal class hours each day so as not to interrupt contact hours. The researcher in conducting the interview with teachers invited the participants one after the other and spent ten (10) minutes with each person. Five (5) participants were interviewed in a day and thus, taking the researcher three (4) days to finish interviewing the twenty (20) interviewees, teachers. Concerning the teachers, during

their free periods and after prior information, the researcher spent thirty minutes with each teacher and thus, using two days for this.

In the course of the interview, the researcher made the questions less cumbersome and understandable by adjusting the wording of the questions to the level of the participants when the need arose so that other important information could still come up. He also answered questions from participants and made clarifications so as to enable them provide valid information.

The researcher opted for this data collection strategy due to its numerous advantages such as the following

- It provides first-hand information.
- It can be adjusted to meet diverse situations due to its flexibility.
- It is an opportunity to observe behaviours when participants cannot be directly observed.
- It can be used for both intelligent and not too intelligent students in this case.
- The interviewees have the opportunity to freely express their views.

The researcher therefore seized the opportunity of these advantages of interview to draw out relevant, detailed and reliable information from participants for this study.

However, this strategy has its accompanying demerits which are;

- It is time-consuming.
- It is expensive.
- It can breed bias since the interviewees can be influenced by the interviewer.



- It sometimes inconveniences participants.
- Participants may hesitate to come up with exact information for fear of being exposed.

The researcher having in mind these setbacks readjusted his activities well for time adequacy, minimized expenses, was cautious not to be biased, administered effective ice-breakers to establish a friendly atmosphere for participants who felt inconvenient, firmly re-assured those who feared being exposed of total anonymity.

### **3.5.2 Observation**

According to Cresswell & Cresswell (2018), ‘a qualitative observation is when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site’ and thus, ‘in these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or semi-structured way (using some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know), activities at the research site’. They further stated that qualitative observers may also engage in roles varying from a non-participant to a complete participant. They asserted that these observations are open-ended in that the researchers ask general questions of the participants allowing the participants to freely provide their views. This means that, the researcher takes the role of an observer watching, listening and recording pertaining behaviours of the group or individuals under study in an unstructured or semi-structured way.

The researcher in a prepared observation checklist conducted observation which sample can be found in appendix A. Students’ preparedness towards English grammar lessons in terms of attitude and their participation in class discussions during grammar lessons in terms of their contributions, responses to questions plus teachers’ delivery of English grammar lessons were observed. He also went through their written works on grammar and

recorded his finding. Moreover, the researcher observed students' regularity and punctuality to class in connection with English grammar lessons. The researcher settled on the participant observation which was employed before, during and after the implementation of the intervention for two (2) weeks. This enabled the researcher to have a feel of the grammar classroom.

The following merits informed the researcher's decision to settle on this strategy;

- The researcher deliberately immerses himself into the community with the intension of adding to his knowledge and not rely heavily on reports of others.
- It is relatively less expensive and less complicated.
- It provides direct information.
- Data collected is on non-verbal behaviours.
- The researchers' attention is drawn to things people have no knowledge about.

The researcher therefore used this strategy to discover things for himself that remained hidden during the other execution of the other strategies.

This strategy can never be said to be perfect because;

- It is time-consuming since much time has to go into observing participants to fully get to know actual behaviours.
- It becomes extremely difficult when large groups of participants are being observed.
- Actual behaviours of participants might not be discovered since all behaviours of a participant may not be shown at that particular time.

- It is impossible for this strategy to provide information about the past, future or unpredictable situation since it aims at observing the present.

Despite these demerits, the researcher did his best to obtain reliable information by freely mingling with participants and having enough time.

### **3.5.3 Documents**

Documents are information about an event or phenomenon which people have prepared which are written accounts that describe or explain phenomena that have taken place (Owu-Ewie, 2011, cited Turkman, 1999). They again provide dimensions to observations and interviews, and sometimes hold the keys to hidden information which interviews and observation cannot reveal (Patton, 2015). Some examples of educational documents include: textbooks, attendance registers, curriculum timetable, exercise books, etc. These documents were consulted within the period of observation. The attendance register was observed to get to know how regular and punctual students were at class and especially, the English grammar class. The timetable was also observed to see how periods were allocated for the subject under study, having in mind students' written works on grammar which findings were recorded.

This strategy has a number of positives as in;

- It represents data to which participants have given attention.
- As documented evidence, it saves the researcher the time and expense of transcribing.
- It allows the researcher to obtain participants' words and language.
- It can be conveniently accessed by the researcher at any given time.

This like any other strategy has its weaknesses which have been stated below;

- The researcher may have to find the information in hard-to-find places.
- Information has to be transcribed or optically scanned for computer entry which is tedious.
- Documents may be inauthentic and inaccurate.
- Documents may be protected information unavailable to the public or private access.

These shortcomings were managed so as to have accurate information through the use of this strategy by consulted these documents when they submitted them to teachers for marking.

### **3.6 Research Site**

The research site was Boa Amponsem Senior High School. Boa Amponsem Senior High School is one of the elite schools established in 1961 and is located in the Upper Denkyira East Municipality in Central Region, Dunkwa-on-Offin to be precise.

The school which lies on a hill has every infrastructure every school can boast of - dormitories, well-equipped library, spacious classrooms, assemble hall, infirmary, etc.

Academically, the school recently dropped from being a category B school to a category C one due to a drop in students' performance in the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Karma (1996) defines data analysis as the compilation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationships that exist among data groups. In a related study, Yin

(1993) stipulates that a number of closely related operations are performed with the purpose of summarizing the data collected and organising them in such a manner that they answer the research questions. From the above, data analysis may be defined as the breaking down and ordering of data into meaningful groups while searching for patterns of relationship among the data groups.

The researcher took various steps in analyzing the various forms of data collected so as to make sense out of the data by segmenting and taking apart the data as well as putting it back together. The researcher therefore sequentially took the following steps;

- Organized and prepared the data for analysis by transcribing interviews, optically scanning materials, cataloguing all of the visual material, and sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information.
- Coded every data collected.
- Used the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.

### **3.8 Data Analysis Procedure**

The obtained data were edited for consistency and the results were processed and analysed. Responses were put into definite categories for easy and adequate analysis. Also, responses were tabulated and percentages worked out, analysed and compared. These grammar errors are defined as mechanical inaccuracies and they occur as a result of wrong use of **tenses, concord, spellings, and prepositions**. The grammatical errors therefore were classified as **agreement** errors, **tense** errors, **number** errors (plural-singular), **prepositional** errors, **article** errors, and **conjunction** errors. The frequency of every error was converted into percentage and then presented on a bar graph.

### **3.9 Ethical Issues**

Ethics is defined as ‘a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or a group and is subsequently widely accepted as rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and students’ (Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2005).

Lune & Berg (ibid, p. 43) mention that, ‘Social scientists, perhaps to a greater extent than the average citizen, have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study populations, and the larger society’ since they ‘delve into the lives of other human beings’ and that ‘from such excursions into private social lives, various policies, practices, and even laws may result’ and ‘thus, researchers must ensure the rights, privacy, and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies.’

In this regard, permission was sought from the school head to even gain access to the research site before the data collection began. The research topic was read to the participants and their consent was sought. This was to ensure voluntary participation. The students’ and teachers’ identity were not disclosed hence, listings of real names and pseudonyms for people and places were used so as to achieve confidentiality and anonymity. Precautions were also taken to avoid carelessly discussing research-related information. Dawson (2002, p. 146) makes the assertion that ‘Many people are willing to disclose a lot of personal information during our research so we need to make sure that we treat both the participants and the information they provide with honesty and respect’.

### **3.10 Validity**

Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures (Gibbs, 2007). Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative

research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller., 2000). Terms abound in the qualitative literature that address validity, such as *trustworthiness*, *authenticity*, and *credibility* Creswell & Miller (2000).

The researcher in this regard relied on the eight primary strategies outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2018) to achieve validity.

- Triangulate different data sources by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes.
- Use member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate.
- Use a rich, thick description to convey the findings.
- Clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study.
- Present negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes.
- Spend prolonged time in the field.
- Use peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account.
- Use an external auditor to review the entire project.

### **3.11 Reliability**

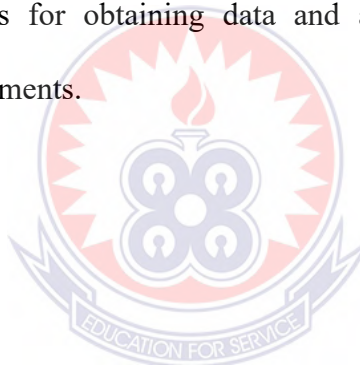
Qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and among different projects Gibbs (2007).

The researcher therefore relied on Gibbs' (2007) suggested qualitative reliability procedures as outlined below to achieve reliability:

- Check transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription.
- Make sure that there is not a drift in the definition of codes, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding.
- Cross-check codes developed by different researchers by comparing results that are derived independently.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

The chapter looked at qualitative research approach and action research design with their advantages and disadvantages. The chapter further captured interviews, observation and documents as instruments for obtaining data and also looked at the strengths and weaknesses of these instruments.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The study intended to ascertain what classes of grammatical errors Boa Amponsem Senior High School students make in their writings, causes of these errors and how the problem of grammatical errors could be addressed in the writings of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students, the researcher obtained accurate findings through the use of interview, observation and documents as mentioned in the preceding chapter. This chapter therefore presents the results, findings and discussions of data collected. Comprehensive analyses of the findings have been discussed in relation to the research questions.

#### 4.1 Classes of grammatical errors in students' writings

This question was posed to teachers in the Language Department through a structured interview to find out the various grammatical errors students in the study committed in their writing. In response to this question, all twenty interviewees pointed out the kinds of grammar errors their students commit in their writings.

*Table 2: Tutors' Views on the Kinds of Grammatical Errors Committed by Students*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agreement errors	20	33
Tense errors	20	30
Singular-plural errors	20	13
Prepositional errors	20	10
Article errors	20	7
Spelling errors	20	71
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table, all twenty respondents admitted their students committed at least one or all the identified grammatical errors in which they collectively placed **Agreement** errors at 33%, **Tense** errors 30%, **Singular-plural** errors at 13%, **Prepositional** errors at 10%, **Article** errors at 7% and **Spelling** errors at 7%. This is an indication that the errors committed by students were arranged in order of highest to lowest.

After the interview, the researcher, in order to find enough grounds to buttress the views expressed by the teachers, proceeded to the use of observation and recent tests conducted for students. Based on the identification and description of errors in the literature, the researcher categorized the errors based on the data collected. However, there were difficulties in making these categories because sometimes some of the errors cut across all categories. In response to this question, grammatical errors were classified as **agreement** errors, **tense** errors (past/present, aspect, etc.), **singular-plural** errors, **prepositional** errors, **article** errors and **spelling** errors. The following are the discussions and responses to the research question asked earlier.

#### **4.1.1 Agreement Errors (Subject-verb and Noun-pronoun Agreements)**

The subject of a sentence can be any sort of entity: a person, a place, an object either concrete or abstract-in short, a noun (Stilman, 1997). It can also be a pronoun that refers to an entity identified elsewhere, or a verb form (a gerund or infinitive) functioning as a noun Stilman (1997, p. 205). The subject is the focus of the sentence: the actor or the center of interest. It either does something, has something done to it or is described in some way Stilman (1997). Thus, it is always tied to an accompanying verb Stilman (1997). Subject-verb agreement is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural) (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002). The verb agrees with

its subject in number and person. **Number** can be **singular** or **plural** (Hill, 2005). Singular words indicate one and take a singular verb Hill (2005). Plural words indicate more than one and take a plural verb Hill (2005). The agreement applies whenever the verb displays **distinctions in person and number**. For all verbs other than *be*, the distinctions are found **only** in the present tense, where the third person singular has the **-s** form and the third person plural - like the first and second persons - has the base form Greenbaum & Nelson (2002). However, they state that, the verb *be* makes further distinctions in the present and introduces distinctions in the past. **Pronouns** should also agree with their antecedents in number (singular, plural), person (first, second, third), and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) Greenbaum & Nelson (2002). Most nouns, pronouns and verbs have singular and plural forms, and English speakers are instinctively aware that when a noun or pronoun is singular, the verb that applies to it is singular; and when the noun or pronoun is plural, the verb is plural Stilman (1997). This is known as agreement between subject and verb. However, their proper use is sometimes violated by the students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School leading to grammatical errors.

In the sentences below, there are violations of subject-verb agreement principle and the noun-pronoun agreements. The suggested correct forms of the sentences below are in parenthesis. The following are a few examples of the errors taken from the data:

- 1) BOASS **have (has)** been selected as one of the best schools in our region and district we find ourselves.
- 2) If one **do (does)** not partake, the person gets to face the music.
- 3) One **do (does)** not have to build castles in the air.
- 4) This **have (has)** helped the students in learning.

- 5) We have been given intelligent teachers who **teaches (teach)** to the understanding of the students in the school.
- 6) Some of them **is (are)** forced to teach a particular subject.
- 7) We **was (were)** in the class.
- 8) All the things in the dormitory **has (have)** gotten burnt.
- 9) My school has qualified teachers who **knows (know)** what they are teaching.
- 10) The lessons **is (are)** over.
- 11) Mr. Chairman, how can the individual **knows (know)** that?
- 12) Many people join bad friends or groups through social media which **affect (affects)** the moral values.
- 13) The health services in the municipality **is (are)** very poor.
- 14) If a team **get (gets)** maybe a penalty, he won't give it to them.
- 15) Intelligent teachers **teaches (teach)** to the understanding of the students in the school.

The agreement affects the first verb in the verb phrase, whether it is a main verb as in or an auxiliary Greenbaum & Nelson (2002). Modal auxiliaries, however, do not make distinctions in number or person Greenbaum & Nelson (2002). For instance, in *(the dissertation/the dissertations) can solve grammatical challenges of students*, the modal auxiliary **can** did not make distinctions in the number or persons.

In sentence 1, concord error is committed by a student of Boa Amponsem SHS when he writes, “*BOASS (Boa Amponsem Senior High School) have been selected as one of the best schools in our region and district we find ourselves*” instead of “*BOASS (Boa Amponsem Senior High School) has been selected as one of the best schools in our region and district*”

*we find ourselves.*” On another score, in sentence 9, the student wrongly puts, “*My school has qualified teachers who **knows** what they are teaching*” which should have read, “*My school has qualified teachers who **know** what they are teaching.*”

A possible explanation to such concord errors could be attributed to overgeneralization of the rules. That is, students overgeneralize the plural nouns ending in [s] thinking that by adding the plural marker [-s] when added to the verb makes it plural whilst omitting the marker [-s] in the verb makes it singular which is rather the vice versa as seen in sentence 14, “*If a team **get (gets)** maybe a penalty, he won't give it to them*” and sentence 15, “*Intelligent teachers **teaches (teach)** to the understanding of the students in the school.*” The centre stage of this problem has to do with most ESL learners confusing the third person singular marker [-s] and the plural marker [-s]. They tend to add [-s] to the verb if the subject is plural and omit [-s] if the subject is singular which is a clear violation of the basic rules.

From the data, the students who have knowledge of this rule misapplied in some cases without paying attention to the exceptions. For instance, in sentence 11, “*Mr. Chairman, how can the individual **knows (know)** that?*” respondent chooses **knows** rightly because **individual** as singular subject needed a singular verb: but less pays less attention to the fact that when modal auxiliary verbs like **can** is introduced into a verbal group, the rule of singular subject equaling singular verb ceases to operate.

#### 4.1.2 Pronoun Errors

16) We want you people to supply **as (us)** with computers.

17) The teachers are going to teach you whiles **he or she (you)** are in the house.

18) The school only has 12 male teachers and 18 female teachers **which (who)** teach in the school.

19) Anytime students have ICT lesson, **you (they)** feel good.

20) This helps **^ (us)** to learn more and read more books.

21) The boy didn't pass because **she (he)** didn't learn.

Pronouns share several characteristics, most of which are absent from nouns (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). Their name implies that they 'replace' nouns, but we have already seen that this is to a great extent a misnomer Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, (1985). They posit that it is best to see pronouns as comprising a varied class of closed-class words with **nominal function**. By '**nominal**' here we mean '**noun-like**' or, more frequently, '**like a noun phrase**' Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, (1985). On the other hand, is the direct correspondence of a pronoun with its antecedent in number (singular, plural), person (first, second, third), and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter). The noun being replaced is known as the antecedent of the pronoun (Herring, 2016). According to Stilman (1997), the subject can also be a pronoun that refers to an entity identified elsewhere. However, indefinite pronouns sometimes complicate matters. Most indefinite pronouns take singular verbs Greenbaum & Nelson (2002, p. 145). Such errors were found in the data collected.

In sentence 19, "*Anytime students have ICT lesson, **you** feel good*", the **you** pronoun has no bearing on the subject **students** instead it would have corresponded well with **they** as in "*Anytime students have ICT lesson, **they** feel good.*" In sentence 21, "The boy didn't pass because **she** didn't learn", the pronoun **she** is a feminine which doesn't correspond with its

referent *boy* which is a masculine noun. Instead, it should have read “*The boy didn’t pass because he didn’t learn*”.

In some occasions, students omitted pronouns where they were mandated to provide as seen in sentence 20, “*This helps ^ to learn more and read more books*” instead of “*This helps us/them/him/her to learn more and read more books*”. In addition, some mistook conjunctions for pronouns in the case of *as* for *u* in sentence 16, “*We want you people to supply as with computers*” instead of “*We want you people to supply us with computers*”

The percentage of frequency of concord error is represented in the table below. The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency of the type of errors committed (see Table 3 & Figure 3):

*Table 3: Frequency of Concord Errors*

<b>Types of Concord Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Plural subject with singular verb	123
Singular subject with plural verb	118
Mass nouns that do not take plural verb	106
Noun-pronoun agreement	93
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>

Figure 2: Percentage of Concord

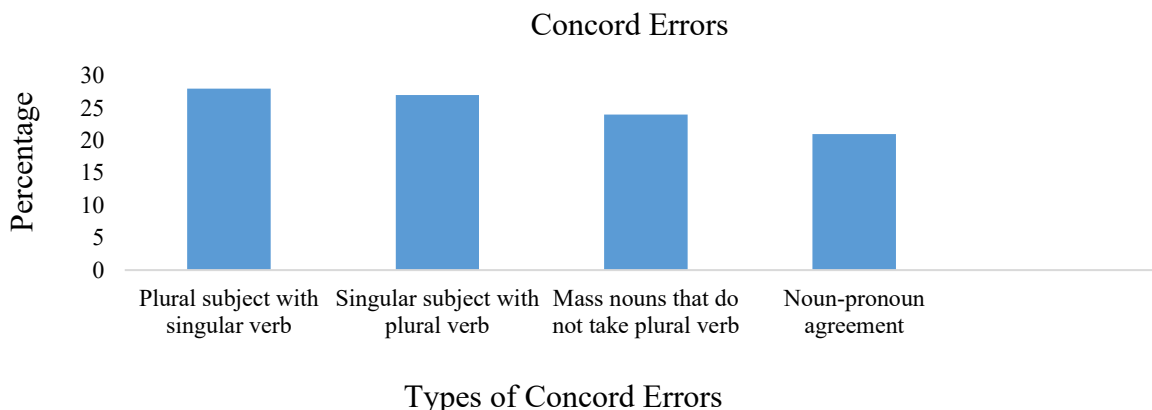


Table 3 and Figure 3 show that out of the 440 students, **each** student committed at least a concord error. Out of the 440 students, 123 students which represent 28% committed concord errors relating to singular subject with plural verb. 118 students representing 27% also committed concord errors relating to plural subject with singular verb. 106 students representing 24% committed concord errors relating to noun-pronoun agreement. Finally, 93 students which represent 21% committed concord errors relating to mass nouns that do not take plurals. It can be therefore ascertained that most of the concord errors that students committed according to the data was perching singular subjects with plural verbs and vice versa, followed by mass nouns with plural verbs (which shouldn't have been so) and wrong noun-pronoun agreement being the least occurring concord error.

In the study, concord errors proved to be a torn in the flesh of Boa Amponsem SHS students since it was the highest. In a similar qualitative study conducted by Charles Owu-Ewie and Miss Rebecca Williams aimed at finding the lexical and grammatical errors students of three Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana commit in their essay writing, where in the analysis indicated in the methodology section, the grammatical errors indicated were 411 (29.8%) were agreements errors, 182 (13.2%) were article errors, 441



(32.0%) were tense errors, 161 (11.7%) were preposition errors, and 184 (13.3%) were number errors. occurring error hence, the need for the principles governing concord to be critically addressed.

#### 4.1.3 Tense Errors

Grammatical tense refers to the conjugation of a verb to reflect its place in time- that is, when the action occurred Herring (2016, p. 646). There are technically only two grammatical tenses in English: the past and the present Herring (2016). He then posits that verbs in their basic form inherently describe the present time, and they can be conjugated into a unique form that describes the past. However, verbs do not have a specific conjugated form to reflect the future, and, for this reason, English is considered not to have a true future tense (2016). According to Herring (2016), we can then use **auxiliary verbs** and **verb participles** to create different **aspects** of the past and present tenses, which describe if an action **is** or **was continuous**, or if it began **at an earlier point in the past**. For all verbs except **be**, there are two forms for the present: the [-s] form and the **base** form. The [-s] form is used for the third person singular, that is with **he, she, it**, and singular noun phrases as subject.

Verb tense errors therefore happen when one uses the wrong verb tense. They are common grammatical errors among ESL learners. As said earlier, the verb tense is to signal the reader when the action expressed in the sentence is taking place - in the past, the present, or the future. Consistency between when the action happened and the type of verb used is key to achieving error-free tense. In the study, it was realized that most students violated this fundamental tense rule thereby leading to ungrammatical sentences. The following are extracts of such errors from the data:

22) In junior high school, I **don't (didn't)** joke with my academic activities.

23) When they came back, the fire **was (had)** finished burning.

24) I haven't **see (seen)** you again.

25) It was a bright day when we all **come (came)** to school.

26) This has also **retard (retarded)** the development of the school.

27) When she came to the place, she **feel (felt)** pity for us.

28) We **shooted (shot)** down the suggestions he made.

In sentence 22, “*During junior high school, I \*don't joke with my academic activities*” the verb **do** was wrongly used since the idea expressed is in the simple past and not the present tense hence should have read, “*During junior high school, I **didn't** joke with my academic activities*”. The violation of the rule could be attributed to the fact that the student has not fully grasp the mechanics of the English Language. With sentence 27, “*When she came to the place, she \*feel pity for us*” the verb **came** in the subordinate clause is in the simple past so for consistency sake, the verb **feel** in the main clause must also be in the simple past tense and vice versa. That is, the correct form of the sentence is, “*When she came to the place, she **felt** pity for us*”. The problem of tense error intensifies when tense is inflected to mark the perfective or future time. The main or action verb is inflected with the particles, **have, has** and **had** to communicate an idea that has occurred in the immediate past. So, the lexical verb in sentence 24, **see** should rather be a participle **seen** and same can be said about **retarded** in sentence 26 because both **have** and **has** must accept the perfective form of the verb. In sentence 23, “*When they came back, the fire \*was finished burning*” the speaker refers to two actions but the first action “*the fire \*was finished burning*” ended before the commencement of the second action “*When they came back*” therefore, the verb,

*was*, is wrongly used. The correct form is the perfect *had* as in, “*When they came back, the fire had finished burning*”. In last sentence, the student’s lack of rule guiding *used to* as always past tense to denote what used to occur frequently in the time past cannot be used in the present.

The percentage of frequency of tense error is represented in the table below. The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency of the type of errors committed (see Table 4 & Figure 4):

*Table 4: Frequency of Tense Errors*

<b>Types of Tense Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Past tense	145
Present tense	121
Perfective	85
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>351</b>

*Figure 3: Percentage of Tense Errors*

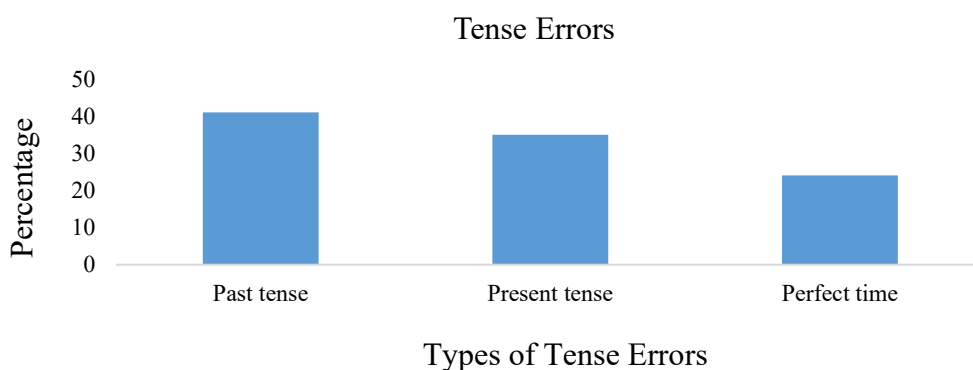


Table 4 and Figure 4 show that out of a total number 440 students, 351 of them committed tense errors which means 89 students did not commit any tense error. Out of the 451 students, 145 students which represent 41% committed tense errors relating to past tense.

The students find this challenging because of the presence of irregular verbs. In marking the simple past verbs, students overgeneralize as they ignorantly add the morpheme, [-d] or [-ed] to every verb they come across disregarding what should go into **regular** verbs as against **irregular** verbs. That is, while a regular verb inflects its base with the morphemes, [-d] or [-ed] in forming the past, an irregular verb does not. For instance, sentence 28, “*We **shooted** down the suggestions he made*” has a wrong verb **shooted** because **shoot** as an irregular verb should not be inflected with [-ed] but **shot**. The correct sentence should therefore read, “*We **shot** down the suggestions he made*”.

Again, 121 students which represent 35% committed tense errors relating to present tense. This means that this tense type posed a lot of challenges to the students in their writings since it is the second highest occurring tense error after past tense error. This problem largely depended on wrong base forms used by students since they were confused as to whether to add the marker [-s] to a base or not in the simple present and in some instances had difficulties handling the present progressive.

Finally, 85 students representing 24% committed tense errors relating to the perfect time. Comparatively, this suggests that a few students used the perfect time in their writings. At least, one of out every 5 students that used the perfect time committed errors. This could be because they have little knowledge of the perfect time and therefore hardly used it at all. This goes a long way to indicate how they are confused to go in for the simple past tense when they are actually referring to actions that are situated in the perfect time.

The second highest percentage of student errors was **tense errors** with a frequency of occurrence of 24% hence has to be attended to.

#### 4.1.4 Number (Singular-Plural) Errors

English, like in many languages, has singular and plural phenomenon. In English, only count-nouns actually have plural forms, while non-count nouns represent items existing as a mass and barely take plurals. In the study, most students had difficulty with singulars and plurals. Students unnecessarily used plurals and vice versa. The following are some examples identified from the data:

- 29) This tangible **reasons (reason)** has made our academic performance go up in these past years.
- 30) Some of the **student (students)** sleeps at the corridor.
- 31) The education director and his **member (members)** should come to our aid.
- 32) I want to tell you three **reason (reasons)** why my school has been performing well in the academic work.
- 33) In about ten **minute (minutes)** later, I heard sounds.
- 34) This has caused more **problem (problems)** for the school.
- 35) We have more teachers and more **book (books)** in the school.
- 36) He is a good **teachers (teacher)**.
- 37) The **teacher (teachers)** are always in class teaching.
- 38) We have a lot of **computer (computers)**.
- 39) Each of the **student (students)** uses one computer.
- 40) Lack of library is one of the **factor (factors)** leading to the problem in my school.
- 41) During the first and second **week (weeks)**, they may solve some problems.
- 42) Because of this, the two **school (schools)** a case.
- 43) The offices have nice **furnitures (furniture)**.

44) The **informations (information)** reach everyone.

Most of the errors under **number** as seen in the examples here given were as a result of the use of pre-modifying determiners that did not match the modified noun. That is, sentence 29, “*This tangible \*reasons has made our academic performance go up in these past years*” grammatically fell short of being a good sentence since **this** is a singular demonstrative adjective which needed a singular noun **reason** to read, “*This tangible reason has made our academic performance go up in these past years*”.

Another noticeable error was when noun phrases containing singular nouns post-modified subjects like **each, one, none** etc. For instance, in sentence 39, “*Each of the \*student uses one computer*”, the noun phrase *of the student* contains the noun **student** instead of **students** since we are considering **individual** (each) student among the **many** (of the) students. Students commit this error specifically because they are led into thinking that the subject is rather the noun in the noun phrase and not the pronoun. But, the noun phrases only post-modify their various **subjects- each, one, none** etc.

Finally, students pluralized many mass nouns which they were not supposed to do. In the last two sentences, the nouns **\*furnitures, \*informations** cannot be given the plural marker [-s] because they are mass non-count nouns. Therefore, the sentences should have been, “*The offices have nice furniture*” and “*The information reach everyone*” respectively without the plural marker [-s]. This is clearly the problem of overgeneralization of the application of forming the plurals of nouns.

The percentage of frequency of tense error is represented in the table below. The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency of the type of errors committed (see Table 5 & Figure 5):

*Table 5: Frequency of Number Error*

<b>Number Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Error due to Pre-modifier	51
Post-modifier (Noun phrase) error	37
Mass noun error	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>

*Figure 4: Percentage of Number Error*

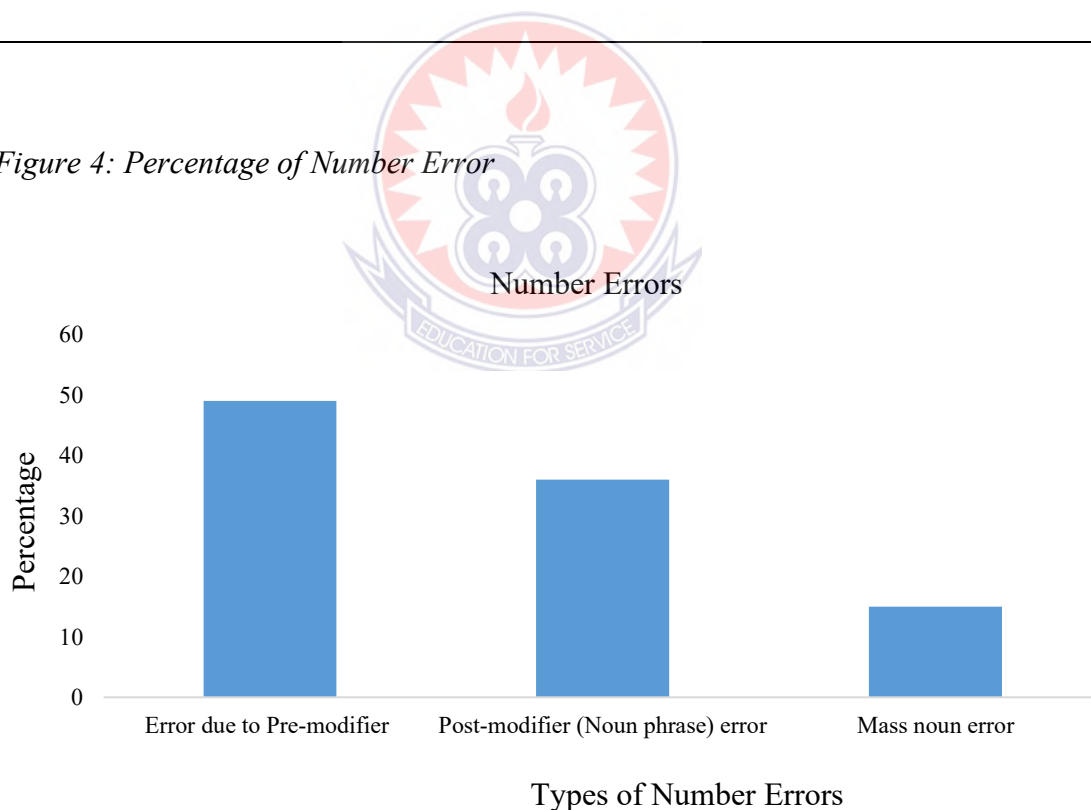


Table 5 and Figure 5 show that 103 students committed **number** error with 51 representing 49% committing errors due to pre-modifier. Students are unable to determine the plural or singular nature of pre-modifiers hence, choose any singular subject for it. Post-modifier

error accounted for 36% with 37 students committing such error. This means students do not know that a noun phrase post-modifying subjects like **each**, **one**, **some**, and **none** should contain a plural noun. The least occurring error in this category was mass noun error with 15 students representing 15% committing such error. Students unnecessarily give the plural marker [-s] to mass nouns. Some attention must be given to it this because it is the third highest occurring error.

#### 4.1.5 Prepositional Errors

Prepositions are essential to the meaning of a sentence. They connect words and show the relations between them (Bruckfield, 2012). Prepositions are words that typically indicate information about direction, location, or time (Altenberg & Vago, 2010). They then mention that there is only a small number of prepositions in English. Prepositions introduce a prepositional phrase, and are followed by a prepositional complement Greenbaum & Nelson (2002). According to Greenbaum & Nelson (2002), the preposition links the complement to some other expression and if it links the complement to the rest of the sentence or clause, the prepositional phrase may be placed in any of various positions. Compulsorily, some constructions must have prepositions while others must not. The errors in this category were discussed under **missing** preposition, **wrong** preposition use, and **redundant** preposition. The following are selected examples from the data.

##### 4.1.5.1 Missing Preposition

Under **missing preposition**, students were unable to use prepositions when in actual sense they were compulsory and not optional. Examples from the data include the following:

45) I did think the teacher was about to punish me for sleeping ^ (**in**) his class.

46) The headmistress talked ^ (**about**) the use of un-prescribed gadgets.



47) The fire service personnel came ^ (**after**) the fire had destroyed everything.

#### 4.1.5.2 Wrong Preposition Use

Under **wrong preposition use**, sentences required prepositions but students used wrong forms. The following are some examples:

48) It is opposite **with (to)** Atechem.

49) Our students are different **than (from)** your students.

#### 4.1.5.3 Redundant Prepositions

**Redundant prepositions** imply that prepositions were used when they were not required hence their presence in the sentences made the sentences ungrammatical. The following are examples:

50) The committee discussed **\*about** the causes of the fire. (The committee discussed the causes of the fire).

51) We now have to collaborate **\*together** to make our stay safe. (We now have to collaborate to make our stay safe).

Such errors are due to the fact that students do not have mastery over use of prepositions hence, wrongly use them, and omit prepositions when they are needed. For example, in sentence 48, “*It is opposite **with** Atechem*”, the student committed this error due to little knowledge of complex prepositions. Some of these complex prepositions have fixed prepositions attached to certain words such that, a change in the preposition will result in ungrammatical sentences. A word like **opposite** has a fixed preposition **to** hence, “*It is opposite **to** Atechem*” is rather correct. Same can be said about sentence 49.

The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency of the type of errors committed (see Table 6 & Figure 6):

*Table 6: Frequency of Preposition Errors*

<b>Prepositional Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Missing preposition	40
Wrong preposition	34
Redundant prepositions	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102</b>

*Figure 5: Percentage of Preposition Errors*

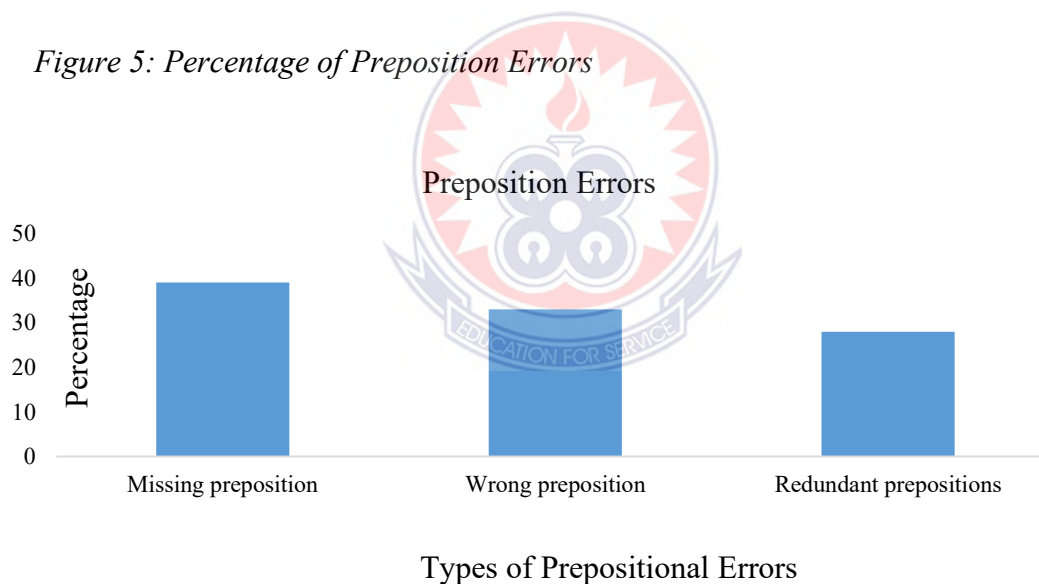


Table 6 and Figure 6 show that out of a total of 440 students, 102 of them committed errors of preposition. Out of the 100 students, 40 of them which represent 39% committed preposition errors relating to missing preposition. 34 of the students which represent 33% committed errors relating to wrong use of preposition. 28 of them representing 28% committed preposition errors relating to redundant use of preposition.

#### 4.1.6 Articles Errors

Articles identify whether a noun is definite (specific or particular) or indefinite (general or unspecific) Herring (2016). For this reason, articles are divided into two categories: the definite article, *the*, and the indefinite articles, *a* and *an* Herring (2016). The use of articles in English depends on some basic rules. In English, a singular common noun must have an article Herring (2016). Additionally, Unlike *the*, *a/an* can **only** be used before singular nouns Herring (2016). Moreover, the definite article “*the*” is used with adjectives in the superlative form, while a proper noun does not usually take an article Herring (2016). We use the indefinite article *a* when it precedes a word beginning with a **consonant sound**, and we use *an* when the article **precedes** a word beginning with a **vowel sound** Herring (2016). Note that this rule applies to the **sound** of the **noun**, rather than the specific **spelling** Herring (2016). However, as observed in the study, students closed sight of these basic rules regarding the use of articles. These include **missing articles**, **wrong article use**, and **redundant article** errors. Some article errors extracted from the data based on the three categories are as follows:

Under **missing articles**, articles were left out by the students in the following sentences. This happened to be the most frequently committed in this category of errors. Examples from taken the data are:

60) Each of ^ **(the)** students occupies one computer.

61) He is ^ **(a)** good teacher.

62) Government has promised to do something but because of ^ **(the)** economy, it hasn't been done.

In the category of **wrong article use**, the students used articles but wrongly. They resorted to using inappropriate articles. This type of article errors was the highest in the category.

The examples below were taken from the data collected:

63) Our school has **a (the)** best facilities.

64) The school has **a (an)** outstanding dormitory.

65) I am always in **an (a)** bed.

In **redundant article** use, students unnecessarily used articles. This means an article was not to be used in the construction but found its way there. The following were examples from the data:

66) We have been given **an** intelligent teacher. (**We have been given intelligent teachers**)

67) When I went there, I saw **a** plenty of students. (**When I went there, I saw plenty of students**)

68) The school has **a** nice classroom. (**The school has nice classrooms**)

Students' difficulty in using the articles could be attributed to their inability to understand correctly what goes into the choice of articles since according to Ferris (2011), the differences in students' levels of L2 proficiency will affect both the number and type of errors that students make.

The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency of the type of article errors committed (see Table 7 & Figure 7):

*Table 7: Frequency of Article Errors*

<b>Article Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Missing article	33
Wrong article	32
Redundant article	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>

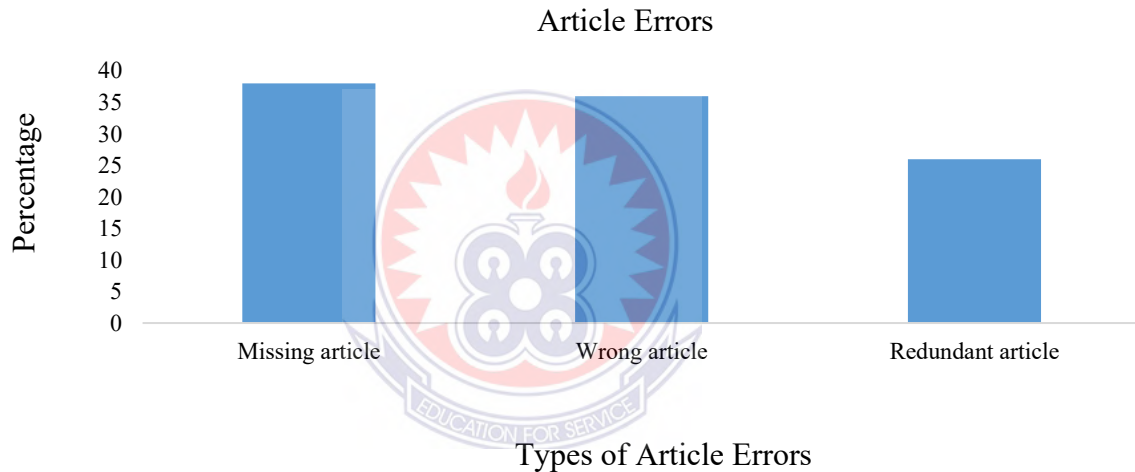
*Figure 6: Percentage of Article Errors*

Table 7 and Figure 7 indicate that out of a total of 440 students, 88 of them committed errors of article. Out of the 88 students, 33 of them which represent 38% committed article errors relating to missing article. 32 of the students which represent 36% committed errors relating to wrong use of article. 23 of them representing 26% committed article errors relating to redundant use of article.

#### 4.1.7 Spelling Errors

According to Hernandez (2011), lexical errors are mistakes at the word level, which include, for example, choosing the wrong word for the meaning the writer wants to express. Llach (2015, p. 109) indicated that, “When inappropriate lexical choices are made they can lead directly to misunderstanding of the message, or at least to an increase in the burden of interpreting the text”. It was evident in this study that grammatical errors uncovered included wrongly-spelt words by students of Boa Amponsem SHS.

In all the sample essays, the least percentage of students’ error was spelling. The spelling errors were riddled with morphological inaccuracies where students unnecessarily added or omitted some letters and even wrote different words from the intended words.

##### 4.1.7.1 Spelling Errors due to Incorrect Pronunciation

69) Every student has a **row (role)** to play.

70) We were **fool (full)** of tears.

71) It killed our **so (soul)**.

72) The **order (other)** students were shouting.

From the sample above, it could be deduced that, these spelling errors were committed due to students’ inability to correctly pronounce the words hence, spell them wrongly. Instead, students spelt or wrote these words in the manner they pronounced the words. For instance, contextually, in sentence 68, “*Every student has the rite to use the school computer*”, **rite** complimenting the verb **has** was not right looking at the phrase, “*to use the school computer*”, but the student used it because both **rite** and **right** are homophones- sound the

same hence, instead of *right* to mean *privilege*. This is a phonetic deviation which is attributed to **interlingual** factors.

#### 4.1.7.2 Spelling Errors due to Confusion between Homophones

73) That **faithful (fateful)** Friday was so bad.

74) The **whether (weather)** was too hot.

75) The **hole (whole)** block was burnt to ashes.

76) Someone **steel (steal)** my provisions.

Homophones are words that sound the same but possess two or more different meanings (Biedermann, Blanken, & Nickels, 2002). For instance, *cricket* the **animal** and *cricket* the **game** are homophones. They posit that homophones can be **heterographic** eg. *flower* and *flour* or **homographic** as in *ball* the **game** and *ball* the **dance**. In speech perception, homophones are semantically ambiguous whereas in speech production, no ambiguity occurs: when a homophone is heard or read it can only be disambiguated by the listener with the help of **context** Biedermann, Blanken, & Nickels (2002). Therefore, due to the **contexts** above, the words **boldened** were among the words that were wrongly spelt by the students. For instance, in sentence 75, “*Someone **steel** my provisions*”, the syntactic slot after the subject- someone should be occupied by a verb *steal* and not a noun *steel* and also because the **object** noun phrase, “*my provisions*” hence should read “*Someone **steal** my provisions*”. The confusion had to do with the sameness of the words in terms of pronunciation.

#### 4.1.7.3 Spelling Errors due to Confusion over Double Letter and Non-double Letter Words.

##### *a. Confusion due to Double letters*

77) The **comitee (committee)** investigated the cause of the fire outbreak.

78) We were **acomodated (accommodated)** in the ICT lab.

79) The fire service **personel (personnel)** arrived very late.

These spelling errors occur when students wrongly omit some letters when in actual fact, the words must have some letters doubling. This error type can also be attributed to **intralingual** factors.

##### *b. Non-double letters*

80) This **habbit (habit)** is bad.

81) The **resservoir (reservoir)** was empty.

82) I am sad **writting (writing)** this letter.

83) We were **dinning (dining)** in the evening.

84) You will **ccross (cross)** the river.

On the other hand, this spelling error happens when students wrongly double some letters in words when in actual fact, the words do not accept double letters. Sentence 83, “*You will ccross the river*”, the addition of the letter *c* makes the word wrong thereby affecting grammar. The correct form should have been “*You will cross the river*” with just a *c*.



#### 4.1.7.4 Spelling Errors due to Lack of Firm Grasp of Word Division/Amalgamation

In English Language, while some words are separated, others are amalgamated. Some students ignorantly separated words when in fact, were to be combined or amalgamated which affected grammar. The following is an example taken from the data:

*a. Wrong Division of Words*

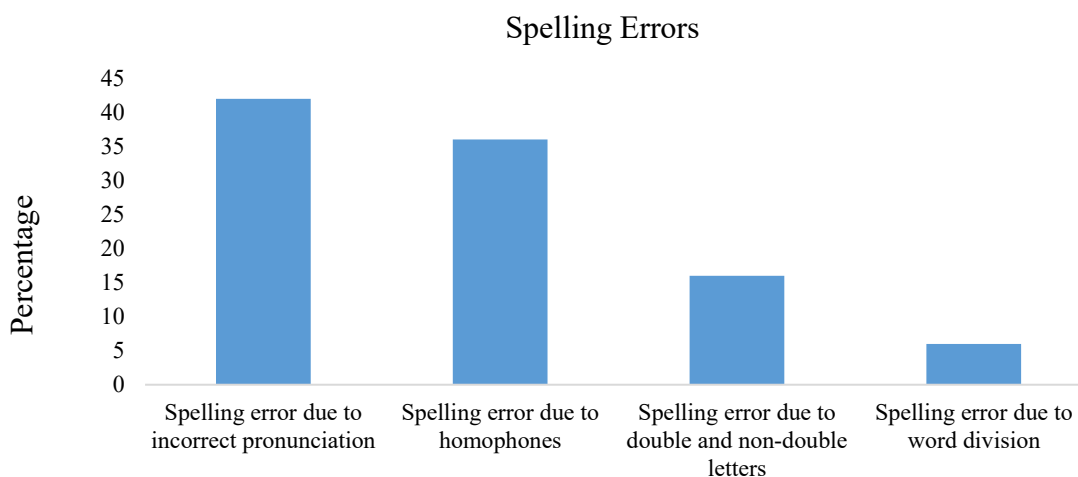
85) **Every body (everybody)** must listen to the advice.

In the sentence, it was wrong to spell the word above dividing them because the contextual meaning of the sentence required the word being amalgamated.

The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency of the type of article errors committed (see Table 8 & Figure 8)

*Table 8: Frequency of Spelling Errors*

<b>Types of Spelling Errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Spelling error due to incorrect pronunciation	37
Spelling error due to homophones	31
Spelling error due to double and non-double letters	14
Spelling error due to word division	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87</b>

*Figure 7: Percentage of Spelling Errors*

#### Types of Spelling Errors

Table 8 and Figure 8 show that, out of a total number of 440 students, 87 of them committed spelling errors. Out of the 87, 37 students representing a percentage of 42% committed spelling errors due to incorrect pronunciation of some English words. 31 students which also represent 36% committed spelling errors due to confusion between homophones. 14 students which represent 16% committed spelling errors due to confusion over double letters and non-double letters. 5 students which represent 6% and the least percentage committed spelling errors due to wrong amalgamation of words. This means that a quarter of the students committed spelling errors. The reason is that the students do not have control over the English Language. The spelling errors could be due to the sources enumerated above with examples identified from the corpus provided.

#### **4.2 Results of Interview with Tutors on why Boa Amponsem SHS students commit grammatical errors in their writings?**

An eight-item interview guide was designed and administered on the English Language tutors to draw information from them as to the reasons behind the classes of grammatical

errors Boa Amponsem SHS students commit in their writings. All questions were open-ended in that interviewees were required to respond in their own words.

**Question 1: What grammar errors can you point out in the writings of your students?**

In response to this question, all twenty interviewees pointed out the kinds of grammar errors their students commit in their writings.

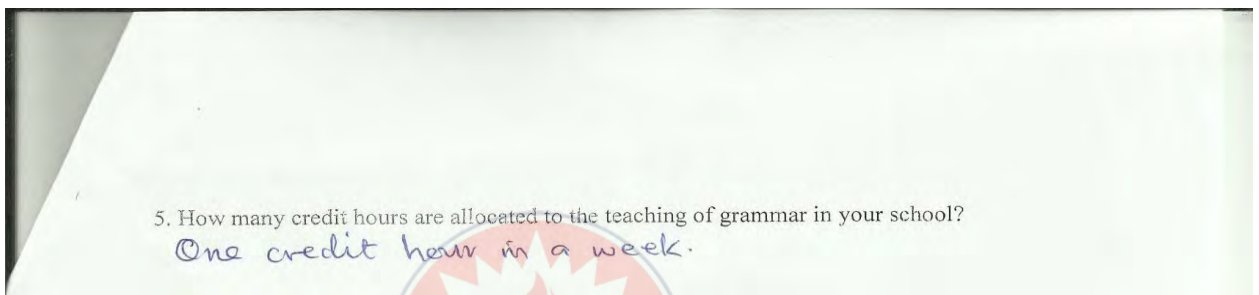
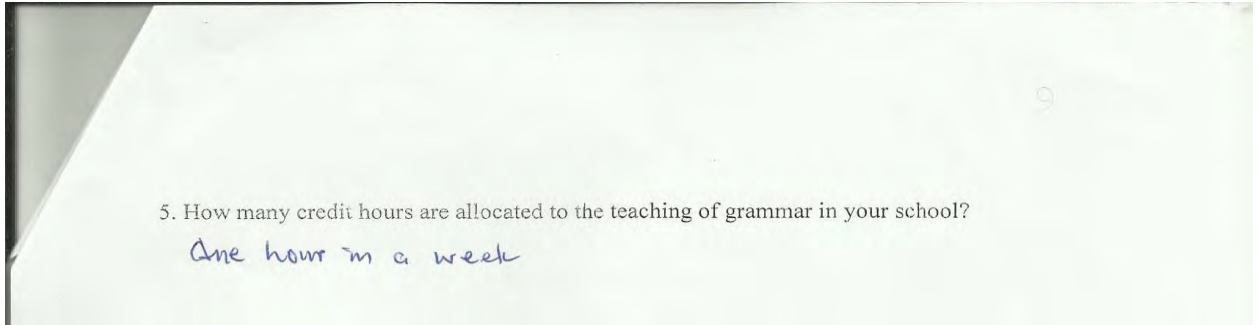
*Table 9: Tutors' Views on the Kinds of Grammatical Errors Committed by Students*

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Agreement errors	20	33
Tense errors	20	30
Singular-plural errors	20	13
Prepositional errors	20	10
Article errors	20	7
Spelling errors	20	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

From the table, all twenty respondents admitted their students committed at least one or all the identified grammatical errors in which they collectively situated **Agreement** errors at 33%, **Tense** errors 30%, **Singular-plural** errors at 13%, **Prepositional** errors at 10%, **Article** errors at 7% and **Spelling** errors at 7%. This is an indication that the errors committed by students were arranged in order of highest to lowest.

**Question 2:** On how many credit hours were allocated to the teaching of grammar, all the twenty interviewees said two (2) credit hours per week which they agreed was inadequate to enable effective teaching and learning of grammar.

Figure 8: Tutors' Responses on Credit Hours for allocated to Teaching Grammar



## 2. Why do Boa Amponsem SHS students commit grammatical errors in their writings?

The study reveals that there are some variables that trigger grammatical errors in the writings of Boa Amponsem SHS students. The following explains this question:

Table 10: Tutors' View on Possible Causes of Grammar Errors

Responses	Respondents
Mother tongue transference	8
Overgeneralization	7
Incomplete rule application	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Figure 9: Percentage of Tutors' View on Possible Causes of Grammar Errors

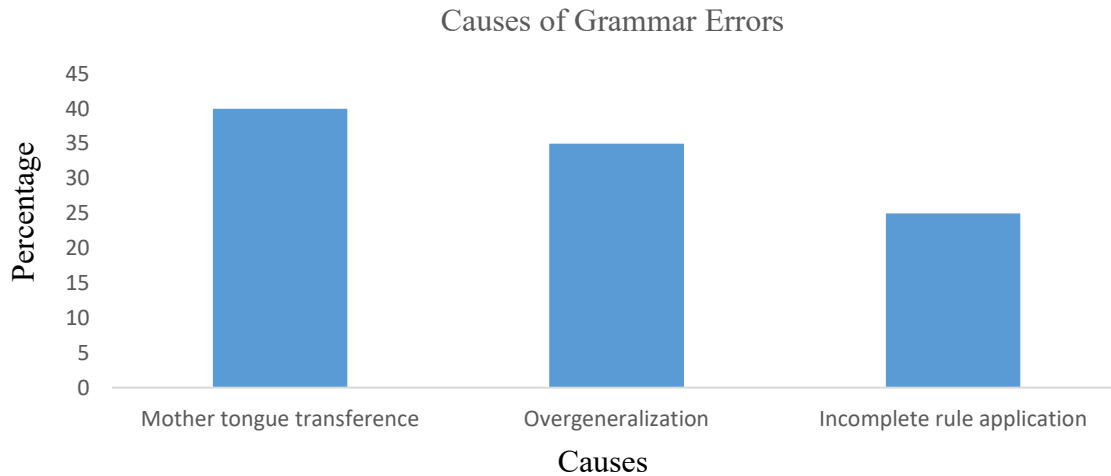


Figure 10: Tutors' Responses on Possible Causes of Grammar Errors

1. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammar errors?

a) Because they translate grammatical items from local languages into English language.  
 b) They apply rules by overgeneralising paying less attention to peculiarity of items.  
 c) They don't read hence, are unable to fully apply rules.

2. On what grounds do you say that your response in 1 can cause grammar errors in your

1. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammar errors?

- Their L<sub>1</sub> interfere with the L<sub>2</sub>.
- They directly transfer rules from their native languages into the English language.
- They overgeneralise grammatical rules leading them to make errors.

2. On what grounds do you say that your response in 1 can cause grammar errors in your

1. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammar errors?

- a. They were not taught grammar properly at their basic level
- b. They don't read novels
- c. They speak in pidgin even though they can't speak proper English
- d. Most students hail from rural areas and therefore they only use their local language at home.

Clearly, interviewees pointed out **mother-tongue transference**, **overgeneralization** and **incomplete rule application** as the causes of their students' errors. With mother-tongue transference being the highest, thus, 8 teachers representing 40% made the assertion that many grammar errors committed by students were as a result of transferring grammatical rules from their own language (L1) into the target language (English) since they were not fully familiar with English Language rules. That is, the only language they are familiar with and can readily lay hands on is their native language hence, lead them into making grammar errors. For instance, Twi unlike English, subjects do not alter verbs in the present (*subject-verb agreement*) so a student is likely to pay less or no attention to *subject-verb agreement* as seen in example 10, "*The lessons is over*". These are **Interlanguage** transfer errors which are attributed to the native language. **Interlingual** errors therefore occur when learners are unable to comprehend rules of the target language, and then erroneously apply the rules of their native language. "These kinds of errors occur when the learner's habits (patterns, systems, or rules) interfere or prevent him or her, to some extent, from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language" Corder (1967, p. 37). This has negative influence when students are learning English Language. That is, "Interference (negative transfer) is negative influence of the mother tongue (L1) on the performance of the target language (L2)" (Lado, 1964, p. 40).

In addition, 7 respondents representing 35% raised the issue of overgeneralization as being the cause of their students' grammar errors. Under this, the respondents put out there that the learners tried to derive the rules behind the data to which they had been exposed, and might develop hypotheses that corresponded neither to the native language nor to the target language. For example, in sentence 28, "*We **shooted** down the suggestions he made*", the

student overgeneralized the simple past tense thinking that every verb in the simple past form must be inflected with [-*ed*] morpheme and had no idea of the how to go about regular and irregular verbs in the past. Another, example is the formation of plurals whereby students add the morpheme [-*s*] to even irregular plurals.

Last but not least, 5 respondents which represent 25% gave incomplete rule application as a cause of grammar errors committed by their students. Under this, students fail to learn the more complex types of structure because they have in mind they can achieve communication by using relatively simple rules. The learners fail to use a fully developed structure. That is, a statement form may be used as a question, one of the transformations in a series may be omitted, or a question word may simply be added to the statement form. The incomplete information therefore leads students into logically drawing inaccurate conclusions.

Overgeneralization and incomplete rule application are **Intralingual** errors. Intralingual errors are the ones resulting from the language being learnt (target language) itself, independent of the native language (L1) Richards (1970, p. 3). In general terms, “they refer to the deviations from the norms of the target language which, derive from the strategies employed by the learner in language acquisition and the mutual interference of items within the target language” Richards (1970, p. 3). Most of the time, these Intralingual errors are called developmental errors.

In a nutshell, all causes of grammatical errors can be categorized under these broad areas namely, **interlingual** and **intralingual**.

### 4.3. How can the problem of grammatical errors be addressed in the writings of Boa Amponsem SHS students?

The following is the diagrammatic representation of the frequency, percentage of suggestions to remedy grammar errors committed by students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School. (see Table 11 & Figure 12).

*Table 11: Tutors' View on Suggestions for Addressing Grammatical Errors*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Teachers' and students' exposure to English Language	8
Differentiating grammar in English from native language	5
Error identification and correction	4
Adequate time allocation for teaching grammar	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Figure 11: Percentage of Suggestions for Addressing Grammatical Errors

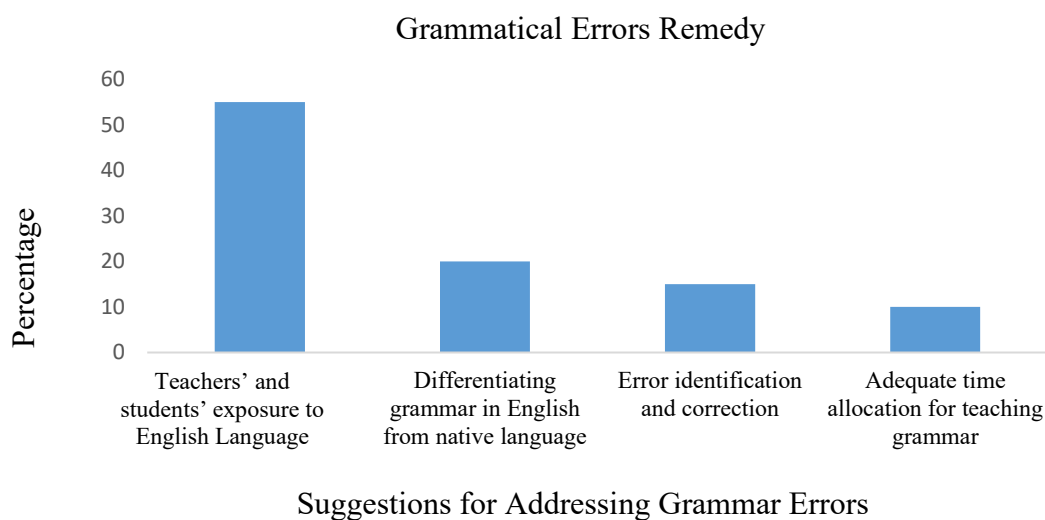
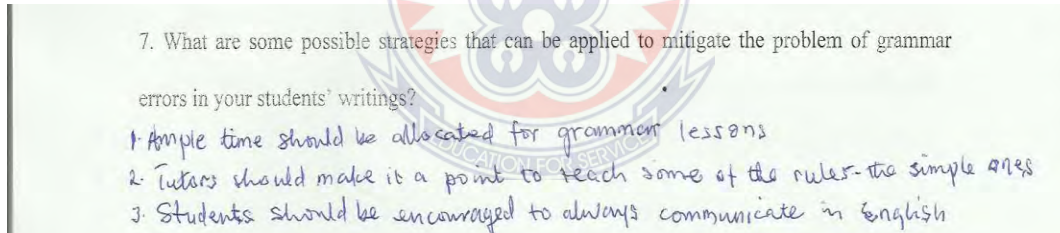
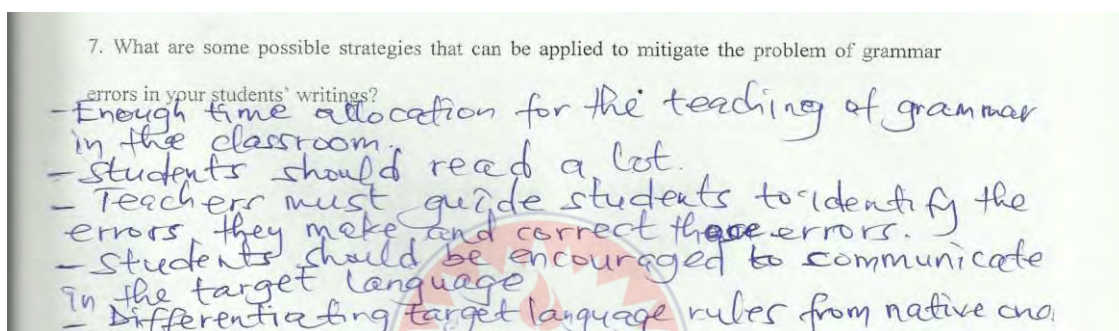
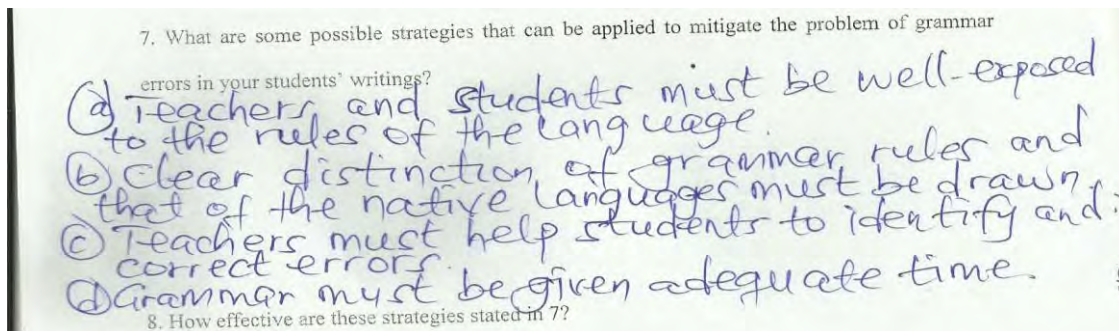




Figure 12: Tutors' Responses on Remediating Grammar Errors in Students' Writing



To eradicate or minimise grammar errors in writings of Boa Amponsem Senior High School students, students need more exposure to the English Language. In the English Language learning and teaching environment, there is the need for students and teachers to be exposed to the mechanics of the language. The best way to analyse errors produced by a language learner is by assessing their writing or speaking because those skills are productive skills in which the learners produce language with errors. Students can therefore gain exposure through reading and writing. Students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School commit errors due to their inadequate grammatical knowledge. To solve this, the

students should be encouraged to read widely. This is because, one is only educated when one reads throughout one's life. Again, students should be advised to visit the library to read both fictitious and non-fictitious books and even borrow some books to go and read them outside the school environment at their leisure times and this would build their vocabularic capacity and enhance their spelling as well. Other reading materials like newspapers and magazines can also be read by students. That is, the syllabus recommends to students to read "five books on different topics each term" (p. xviii). Through writing, students get exposed to the mechanics of the language. Writing is the ability of arranging ideas and/or information into sentences or paragraphs and making efforts to connect ideas cohesively and coherently from one paragraph to another by following specified language rules. Writing and its subsequent effect on grammar is never in doubt since "In teaching a language, writing is also intended to help learners in learning because it enhances grammar skills and lexical skills, and also provides opportunities to produce language in addition to speaking skills (Harmer, 2004, p. 25). Producing good writing is a challenging task for all language learners and even for native speakers of the language. Therefore, Grenville (2001) proposes six processes of writing which can be used for any kind of writing which include *getting ideas or information, choosing ideas or information, outlining, drafting, revising* and *editing*. The activity of getting ideas or information can be done through brainstorming techniques such as listing, mind mapping or free writing. *Listing* is an activity where all ideas are listed without rejecting any of them, even crazy ones, because they might turn out to be useful later on. *Mind mapping* is an activity where an idea or concept is linked to related information by drawing lines and finally, *free writing* is an activity of writing down all thoughts continuously without worrying about organisation or grammar. After all the

ideas are written down, the list will contain scrambled words, phrases, and sentences which will confuse students if they are to make a composition based on the list. Therefore, related ideas are selected and the others, which definitely cannot be used, are discarded. For this reason, Grenville (2001) suggests what could be considered to make this activity easy which are, to keep in mind about in what area this writing will be used and what is the purpose of this writing. Based on this framework, only ideas related to the area and purpose of the writing are kept so as to tidy list. When the list becomes clean and neat, the students are ready to outline the areas on the list. In outlining, the students arrange all ideas chosen into an in-order list. Therefore, all they need to do next is only to keep their writing going without worrying about the structure but just concentrate on getting each sentence written Grenville (2001). There are basic kinds of order needed by a writer to concern before outlining which are, a beginning which contains the introduction of a topic and its setting, a middle which contains the main content of writing, last is an end which gives the last information needed Grenville (2001). In more detail, the outline should follow the genre of the writing because each genre has its own specific generic structure. After the students are ready with the outline, they can proceed to the stage where they initially try to develop the chosen ideas into longer sentences. This stage is the *drafting stage*. As it is going to produce a draft of the writing, the students should not be worried about making mistakes and producing errors because the aim of drafting is to develop and connect each idea obtained from brainstorming and idea selection. It is “all about being pulled into your topic and letting it carry you along right behind” (Peha, 2002, p. 5). Teachers should not score the writing drafts of the students, nor should they be used as the final stage of the writing process Grenville (2001). The first draft produced by the students needs to be **revised**, so

the draft needs to be assessed by the students themselves or by others such as classmates or teachers. This activity includes *cutting*, *adding* or *moving* parts of the draft if required Grenville (2001). According to Peha (2002), this stage is very difficult for the students because it involves making clear their ideas and ensuring that each sentence belongs where it is written. In as much as it is very challenging for students, it is a very essential process because, according to Hedge (2005, p. 121), “it gives the students feedback right after they finish the writing, which will help them write a better draft in the future”. After the students receive feedback from the revision process, the last stage of producing good writing has to do with is, **editing**, where the students make changes and corrections according to the feedback. In addition to revising the draft with respect to coherence and cohesion, Grenville (2001) proposed some other steps in revising a written draft, which include revising grammar, punctuation and spelling, and paraphrasing. After the editing process, the writing is expected to be error free, so readers can easily understand every point the students make in their writing. Teachers can therefore enhance students’ writing, specifically by providing some feedback after marking their essays and also making the students rewrite the essays after corrections. The teacher must learn to focus primarily on content; isolate and explain the most significant errors first and limit the number and types of corrections per paper. Not only do students need more exposure to the language, but also teachers too need to be well exposed, since the majority of teachers of English are non-native speakers hence, need to keep themselves abreast of the current issues by reading books and journals related to their profession. It was therefore observed that some teachers lack the confidence that would have propelled them for executing some grammar lessons in their various classrooms. A survey of teachers in England in 1998 (Authority, 1998) revealed

considerable lack of confidence, in particular with clause structures and syntax. The report noted a “significant gap... in teachers’ knowledge and confidence in sentence grammar and this has implications for... the teaching of language and style in texts and pupils’ own writing” QCA (1998, p. 38). Cameron (1997) argued that the literature degree qualifications of most English teachers not only leaves them ill-equipped to cope with grammar teaching, but also generates anxiety, hostility, and lack of confidence towards grammar. This lack of confidence plays out in English classrooms through inaccurate teaching of grammar points (Myhill, 2000) and insecurity in dealing with students’ questions (Burgess, Turvey, & Quarshie, 2000). Hudson (2004) argued that without adequate grammatical knowledge teachers cannot make the analysis of texts explicit, nor can they structure the teaching context effectively. Teachers must analyse virtually all of English grammar at the discourse level in order to be able to teach our students rules of grammar that will serve them when they read and write English for academic or communication purposes; and this is only possible when teachers have mastery over what they teach. Teachers can integrate grammar instruction with writing instruction and this can help students understand and apply grammar purposefully to their own writing.

Language interference is apparently a common problem for beginning EFL learners hence, clearly drawing a line between the grammar of a native language and that of an English Language is pivotal. From the interview and observation, some teachers believe that the mother tongue language poisons EFL learners in learning English Language but professionals in second language acquisition believe that the mother tongue language plays an important role in the EFL classroom since moderate and judicious use of the mother tongue can aid and facilitate the learning and teaching of the target language, English.

English teachers can help beginning EFL students reduce language interference by specifying the differences between students' native languages (L1) and English, in order to make English grammar and lexis instructions more effective. When the differences are struck out, students can make clear distinctions between the rules pertaining to their native languages and that of the target language, English so as to avoid grammar errors. Since acquiring L1 prepares learners to learn any additional language, the teachers' attention should be on how effectively L1 can be used in L2 development. This goes a long way in addressing negative transfer of knowledge from a native language into the target language, English Language.

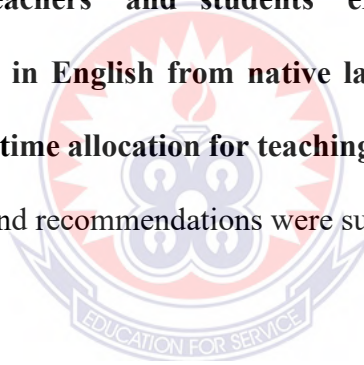
Moreover, one ought to discuss with his/her students how to identify their errors and what the possible causes are. This would bring about a greater understanding of the pedagogical and psychological factors that contribute to grammatical errors. The process of identifying, correcting and discussing grammar errors is key as seen in this research as it ranks third with four responses representing 15% of the total responses. This response advances the argument that students must be fully aware of the correct forms of their grammar errors they commit through the use of error identification and correction. Walz (1982) argues that teachers must correct in a positive manner. Again, it was discovered that "predominantly negative feedback discourages students' participation" (Walz, 1982; p. 16 cited Vigil and Oller, 1976). Also, teachers' correction should be gentle and come with respect (Walz, 1982; p. 16 cited Vigil and Oller, 1976). In a nutshell, grammar errors in students' writings should be identified and corrected. Besides, the respondents suggest that students' grammar errors should be corrected through "class approach" and "teacher direct" corrections. This means both the teacher and the students should be identifying and discussing grammar

errors together in class. Some students can be mentored by teachers to attend to the needs of their colleagues since this sometimes provides comfort to students because they can freely ask these student-teachers questions during discussions. This effectively can resolve the problem of grammar errors in Boa Amponsem Senior High School students' writings.

Finally, the teacher should devote substantial time and space to these problematic areas as it occurred as the least suggestion to remedying grammar errors with two (2) respondents. It is understood that, the time allocated to the teaching of grammar in the school is inadequate. In teaching English related to its grammar, the teacher should give more easily understood explanation in order to make the students more interested in learning English, especially the grammar and that can only be achieved when the teacher has ample time to deliver his lessons. That is to say that, all other factors that can help remedy the grammar errors made by these students like exposing students to the grammar rules, identification of the their grammar errors and others would only thrive within ample time frame. Other aspects of the teaching of English Language compete with grammar when it comes to time allocation and thereby resulting in sharing among these aspects the available time allocations hence, making sure that all aspects get their small share of time which is inadequate. In a nutshell, without adequate time in teaching and learning grammar, not enough can be done to address the grammar errors that confront students especially, Boa Amponsem Senior High School students. However, all respondents believed that even in the absence of adequate time allocated to the teaching of grammar, there still could be a way out in addressing grammar errors effectively.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the data obtained from class tests, teachers' interview and class observation in ascertaining the areas captured under research questions in the quest to identifying the grammatical errors that occur in the writings of students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School, specifically, the second-year students. The data were analysed through the use of the narrative technique and some of the errors collated were **agreement** errors, **tense** errors, **number** errors (plural-singular), **prepositional** errors, **article** errors, and **conjunction** errors. **Mother-tongue transference, overgeneralization** and **incomplete rule application** were settled on as the causes of students' errors. The suggested remedies to these errors were **teachers' and students' exposure to English Language, differentiating grammar in English from native language, error identification and correction and adequate time allocation for teaching grammar**. Based on the findings, educational implications and recommendations were suggested in the next chapter.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the summary of the findings. Conclusions are made out of the findings. Suggestions are also offered to help address the problem of grammar errors in the writings of students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School. Moreover, suggestions are also provided for further research into grammar errors in the writings of SHS students for other researchers.

#### 5.1 Summary of findings

The research was conducted to help find out what grammar errors were likely to be committed by the students of Boa Amponsem Senior High School, Dunkwa-On-Offin, where the grammar errors emanated from and how grammar errors could be avoided. In his bid for information, the researcher consulted various related literature on grammar errors which provided him adequate information on the basics of grammar errors and grammar.

The researcher resorted to the qualitative research design, and selected a sample population to help collect data. He employed a couple of procedures such as interviews, tests and observation as methods of obtaining data for the study so as to have a fair view of the problem at hand and subsequently, arrive at accurate information.

The findings revealed that students encountered difficulty in grammar in their writings and as a result committed concord errors, tense errors, number errors, prepositional errors, article errors and spelling errors. The findings also revealed that the students' difficulty in grammar was due to number of factors such as mother-tongue interference,

overgeneralization and incomplete rule application which were classified under interlingual and intralingual sources respectively.

The findings further indicated the measures that could be put in place to remedy the problem of grammar errors in students' writings. Some of the measures included teachers' and students' exposure to English Language, differentiating grammar in English from native language by way of making sure students do positive and not negative transfer of learning from the native language into the English Language, error identification and correction and adequate time allocation for teaching grammar. How grammar errors could be tackled through these measures were spelt out by the researcher.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

In view of the results of this study, it can confidently be concluded that students' difficulty in grammar will significantly be minimized or even be eradicated if they are well taken through the basics of grammar of the English Language.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

In spite of the successful outcome of the study, the researcher wishes to make a number of recommendations that are worth considering. The findings of the study have implications for the teaching and learning of English writing with reference to grammatical errors in the SHS and in Boa Amponsem Senior High School. The study therefore implies that the teaching and learning of English grammar at the SHS level need some facelift. The following are some recommendations:

First and foremost, English Language teachers should employ better and modern approaches and methods to the teaching of grammar in order to improve their students' writing skills.

Secondly, since some of the above errors committed were as a result of students' transfer of their grammatical knowledge from their L1 into the L2, therefore English Language teachers at the SHS level, where possible, should have an understanding of both the L1 and L2 of the students and explicitly teach for positive transfer.

In addition, English Language teachers should be well equipped with adequate knowledge of how to identify students' grammar errors and use effective teaching strategies to treat them.

Again, it is no doubt that second language acquisition thrives in an environment where students can take risks without fear of intimidation from both teachers and students. It is therefore the work of English Language teachers to create conducive classroom environment for students to actively participate in class writing activities so as to improve their grammatical competence.

Moreover, error identification is key in error study hence, error sources and correction should be an integral part of the English Language teacher's training for him to effectively apply them in the classroom.

Furthermore, English Language teachers should be adequately trained in terms of content and pedagogy of the L2 for them to execute their task effectively in the classroom.

Besides, role modelling in language learning is essential and that English Language teachers should serve as models the use of appropriate English in their speech and writing for students to emulate.

English writing teachers should make provision for ample amounts of language input and instruction for students as well as create more opportunities for students to write and read to reach perfection.

English Language teachers should place much emphasis on the process approach to writing to help students do self-editing of their writings.

In the English Language teaching process, students be exposed to substantial input and examples by the teacher so as to help them understand grammatical concepts taught.

Finally, in the training of English Language teachers for the Senior High School level, more emphasis should be put on how to help them cope with the time-consuming and painstaking task of error identification and correction.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

Going forward, the researcher recommends that a future research should be conducted by replicating the study in a different setting because it can be beneficial. For instance, the study can be conducted in a private senior high school. The reason being that, the problem of grammatical errors in the writings of students of private senior high schools may turn out to have a different twist from that of the public schools. Likewise, the views of teachers, their approach to the handling of grammar topics in their classrooms and the approach taken by students towards the learning of grammar topics may differ.

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**APPENDICES**  
**APPENDIX A 1**

**Semi- Structured Interview for Teachers**

Hello, my name is ..... and your name is .....

Please, I am here to have your views on the teaching and learning of English Grammar. I assure you that information offered will be treated confidential. The information you are providing is only for academic purposes and nothing short of that. No answer therefore will be treated as correct or wrong. The following are the questions I want you to provide responses to. Thank you.

1. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammar errors?
2. On what grounds do you say that your response in 1 can cause grammar errors in your students' writings?
3. What grammar errors can you point out in the writings of your students? You can list them.
4. Which students mostly commit grammar errors in their writings?
5. How many credit hours are allocated to the teaching of grammar in your school?
6. How does the response provided in 5 affect the delivery of your grammar lessons in class?
7. What are some possible strategies that can be applied to mitigate the problem of grammar errors in your students' writings?
8. How effective are these strategies stated in 7?

## APPENDIX A 2

### Observation Check-list

- Teachers' approach to the delivery of grammar lessons in class.
- Students' attitude towards grammar lessons.
- Students' participation in grammar class.
- Number of credit hours allocated to the teaching of grammar lessons.



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Boa Amponsem Sen. High Sch.

Post - Office Box 225

Dunkwa - On - Ofin

19<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Hi Gilgod,

I'm very excited and <sup>grateful</sup> ~~greatful~~ for this opportunity given to <sup>me to</sup> express myself this morning. By the way, how are you doing? I hope by the Grace of our merciful God you are doing as I am. Gilgod, how is your studies? I hope you are doing good as compare to last semester. If my mind sets me right, the last time in our conversation, you told me that you are having some special <sup>programme</sup> ~~program~~ in your school, which is the speech and prize given and I hope you <sup>were given</sup> ~~was~~ ~~rewarded~~ a prize. And I also humbly myself sheepishly to shared my <sup>greetings</sup> ~~greetings~~ to your noble family and know that due to their kindness, the Lord almighty also will <sup>fulfill</sup> ~~fill~~ their <sup>request</sup> ~~promise~~ and He will never forsake them when they are in trouble or facing any problem. Gilgod, the reason for me writing to you is that, I want to give you the reasons why my school, Boa Amponsem Senior High school is performing well in ~~our~~ academic work. ~~as education is~~ ~~concern~~.

To start the ball rolling, our school has been performing well due to our professional teachers, our teachers have been trained in such a way they have the ability and capability in teaching. They have the ~~skill~~ ~~skill~~ and knowledge in teaching us. They have been ~~been~~ <sup>giving</sup> ~~giving~~ us all

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When it is six o'clock every day morning, students are not suppose to walk around but should stay in class and do some reading. If you <sup>are</sup> found outside you will be punished so every students do their work early and attend for preps. Because of that, our academic work have been improved that is how our school has been performing well in academic work.

secondly, My school has been performing well in academic work because of the needed facilities we have. My school ~~have~~ <sup>has</sup> science laboratory which students go there to do practicals. Because of that, learning of science has become ~~easy~~ <sup>easy</sup> easy. We also have I.C.T laboratory and comfortable class rooms which <sup>make</sup> students feel comfortable when learning, and because of that <sup>these</sup> students facilities students understand everything and it makes the learning <sup>easy</sup> for them.

In Addition, ~~to~~ our school has been performing well in academic work because the parents of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> students buy the necessary and needed <sup>item</sup> for their children. Every students ~~have~~ <sup>has</sup> the books and items she/he need so <sup>is over</sup> when the lesson then they go over what the teacher taught them and this has help our school to perform well in ~~an~~ every academic work.

Finally, My school has been performing well in academic work because our teachers are good and not just a teachers but qualified



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teachers. The teachers in our school teach very well and they make sure that every student understands whatever they teach. They always give us assignment<sup>and</sup> also do mental and quiz and because of that every student makes sure that he/she learn before he/she they come to class rooms. Because this has help us to improve in academic work because no student want to fail. Now because of this students have become mentally alert. And this has also helped the students to perform well in academic work.

In conclusion, I will like to need end here, ~~but~~ put in mind that these reasons are not the only why my school ~~been~~ <sup>has been</sup> performing well in academic work but there are more that I cannot talk about it. Finally, I will also like to hear from you ~~the~~ about your school academic work. Send my greetings to your classmate especially the troublesome girl in your class called felicity.

Your friend ✓

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Dr. Whites reasons were taking on. The And when the incident happened, all the dormitory has burnt. The students who lost their things were almost three hundred and fifty-two.

And the third point, due to how the place burnt, our boys started crying for help. Instead, they called the fire service to come and help as by the time that they reached, the place has already burnt. They and that time, our school mistress was not around, so they called her and she came. When she came, she started crying for help, asking the teacher if they had called the fire service and still it was burning, the fire service people lost water so they went back to bring more water. About twenty minutes they were there and they started doing their work. When they finished, you will see our dormitory look like. And by God's grace, no one those who were inside the dormitory came out with out any <sup>infectious</sup> ~~infection~~ <sup>infection</sup>. The student especially the first years students that sleep there were crying for help and our school mistress saw how the boys were crying, so the headmistress called the municipal <sup>Chief Executive</sup> ~~Chief Executive~~ District that they need their help and that they they day they brought five hundred plastic and four hundred boxes and sponges and they shared for them. And because of the incident, they were

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX B

Semi- Structured Interview for Teachers

Hello, my name is Opoku Nkrumah Merchix and yours is \_\_\_\_\_

Please, I am here to have your views on the teaching and learning of English Grammar. I assure you that information offered will be treated confidential. The information you are providing is only for academic purposes and nothing short of that. No answer therefore will be treated as correct or wrong. The following are the questions I want you to provide responses to. Thank you.

1. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammar errors?

- a. They were not taught grammar properly at their basic level
- b. They don't read novels
- c. They speak in pidgin even though they can't speak proper English
- d. Most students hail from rural areas and therefore they only use their local language at home.

2. On what grounds do you say that your response in 1 can cause grammar errors in your students' writings?

The error they make was reflected in their writings

3. What grammar errors can you point out in the writings of your students? You can list them.

- a. Concord
- b. Preposition
- c. Tenses
- d. Wrong usage of vocabularies

4. Which students mostly commit grammar errors in their writings?

Mostly boys and the students who hate reading

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B

Semi- Structured Interview for Teachers

Hello, my name is Opoku Nkrumah Merchix and yours is

Please, I am here to have your views on the teaching and learning of English Grammar. I assure you that information offered will be treated confidential. The information you are providing is only for academic purposes and nothing short of that. No answer therefore will be treated as correct or wrong. The following are the questions I want you to provide responses to. Thank you.

1. Why do Boa Amponsem Senior High School students commit grammar errors?

- a. The students were not grammar properly at the basic level.
- b. The students don't like reading stories.
- (c) Most students come from areas where the local language (Twi) dominates.

2. On what grounds do you say that your response in 1 can cause grammar errors in your students' writings?

The errors they commit reflect in what they write.

3. What grammar errors can you point out in the writings of your students? You can list them.

- a. Concord
- b. Preposition
- c. Tenses
- d. Wrong use of vocabularies

4. Which students mostly commit grammar errors in their writings?

Mostly boys speak wrong English because they lack reading.

5. How many credit hours are allocated to the teaching of grammar in your school?

One hour in a week.

6. How does the response provided in 5 affect the delivery of your grammar lessons in class?

Students below average will not benefit from the one hour lesson since they need ample time to understand better. Also, since the time is limited, most of the topics are not treated before they move to the next level.

7. What are some possible strategies that can be applied to mitigate the problem of grammar

errors in your students' writings?

- Ⓐ Students should be motivated to always <sup>use</sup> English language when communicating.
- Ⓑ More time should be allocated for grammar lessons.

8. How effective are these strategies stated in 7?

Reading of novels will help students to acquire vocabularies. The teaching of the some simple rules like subject verb agreement will at least help students to avoid some errors associated with concord.

5. How many credit hours are allocated to the teaching of grammar in your school?

One hour in a week

6. How does the response provided in 5 affect the delivery of your grammar lessons in class?

Students below average are not able to benefit from the one hour lesson since they need ample time to understand better. Again, since the time is limited, most of the topics are not treated before they move to the next level.

7. What are some possible strategies that can be applied to mitigate the problem of grammar

errors in your students' writings?

1. Ample time should be allocated for grammar lessons
2. Tutors should make it a point to teach some of the rules - the simple ones
3. Students should be encouraged to always communicate in English
- 4.

8. How effective are these strategies stated in 7?

The teaching of the some simple rules like Subject-agreement will at least help students to avoid some errors associated with concord.

Reading of novels will help students to acquire vocabularies.

Allocation of ample time for teaching of grammar will make tutors being able to at least cover most of the topics and have more attention for all students.