UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ANALYSIS OF CONCORD ERRORS IN THE WRITTEN ESSAYS OF JHS TWO (2) STUDENTS OF AKATSI-ZUTA D/A BASIC SCHOOL

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(7160080014)

A DISSERTATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION, SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF EDUCATION TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE.

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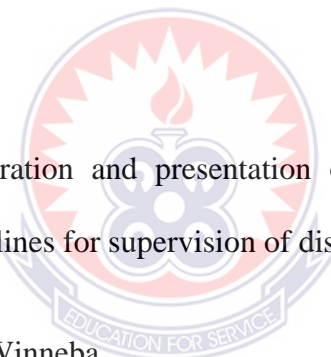# DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature:………………………

Date:..………..………….…………

Supervisor's Declaration

I 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. Charlotte Fofo Lomotey

Signature: ………………………………

Date: …………………………………

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATION

I solemnly dedicate this work to God Almighty, my lovely husband Anthony and my promising children Senam and Selikem for their support and encouragement all these years.

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ABSTRACT

The poor performance of JHS two (2) students of Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic School in English language has been a source of worry to many people because other subjects they study have also been affected. The most disturbing aspect of the problem is the students' inability to use the language to communicate effectively both in communication and in writing. Their sentences are full of concord errors. This has been attributed to their negative attitudes towards the L2 as most of the students feel comfortable using the L1. This study focused on concord errors among the students, and the sources/causes of the problems. Information gathered was from the primary sources. Written scripts, test items interviews as well as observation were used to extract information on students' knowledge and use of concord. Finally, the results of the study were analyzed and discussed, and suggestions and recommendations were given for the necessary actions to be taken to equip students sufficiently to use the language with ease.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

The role of English Language in the academic life of students in the junior high school and other levels of education in Ghana cannot be over-emphasized. Being the lingua franca in Ghana, English language is used in all levels of education in the country. Currently, it is the policy of the Ghana Education Service (GES) that English language is used as a medium of instruction from primary four, whiles from kindergarten to primary three; it is supposed to be used together with the local language. Throughout the history of education in Ghana, English Language has been a core subject as it stands currently. It is believed that a good grasp of the concept of concord is a yardstick to good performance in English language and other subjects. Grammar is one of the integral parts of the English language which needs to be given the necessary attention. One main aspect of Grammar which poses a lot of problem to students is subject-verb agreement, which is referred to as 'concord'. It is for this reason that I have decided to delve into some of the causes of concord errors in the written essays of students and also, how the teaching of concord can be made interesting to students in order to enhance their grammatical competence.

My experience as a teacher of English language at the Junior High School and my interactions with my colleague teachers at school reveals to me that "concord" is a problem right from the primary schools through to the university level.

Brown (2002) defines concord as "the grammatical relationship between a subject and a verb, or a pronoun and its verb, or a demonstrative adjective and the word it modifies".

Similarly, Wiredu, (1998) explains concord as "the agreement relationship which exists between two grammatical units, so that when one unit displays a particular feature the other unit will also display a similar feature''. Students at the pre-tertiary level find is very difficult to adhere to concord rules in the English language therefore affecting their communication and writing skills in other subject areas since all subjects at all levels of education in Ghana are taught in English language.

In spite of the fact that students are generally aware that English language will be used in almost all spheres of their lives as Ghanaians, most the students of Akatsi-Zuta have little interest in the study of the language especially, the concord aspect of grammar. This problem was diagnosed through observations, interviews and questionnaires. Due to the numerous effect the problem have on both teachers and students, the researcher has painstakingly taken it upon herself to analyze the concord errors in the written essays of students in order to find a permanent solution to it. Although, other types of errors were found in the scripts of students, that was not the focus of this research work.

In conclusion, it has become necessary for the researcher to carry out this research to address the numerous effects of errors in general and concord errors in particular to enable students communicate and write the English language with competence.

1.1 Statement of the problem

English language is one of the most important subjects studied in schools and in all levels of education. This is because English language is a subject across the curriculum. English as a second language in the country is used to teach all subjects in the curriculum except the Ghanaian languages and French. It is therefore necessary to

put in place an effective way of teaching English language in schools. The falling standard in learning and use of English language could be attributed to a number of factors which includes: inappropriate methods used in teaching the subject and the use of social media language commonly known as short-hand or Pidgin English. Sometimes teachers of the language themselves are not adequately prepared in terms of training for the teaching of the language.

The grammar problems which junior high students face especially with respect to concord and its related tenses has contributed to the low performance of students in B.E.C.E. This research therefore seeks to address the concord errors in the written essays of students at the JHS level.

Norrish (1983) made a clear distinction between errors and mistakes. He stated that errors are systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong. He added that when a learner of English as a second or foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form. Norrish defines mistakes as inconsistence deviation. When a learner has been taught a certain correct form and he uses one form sometimes and another at other times quite inconsistently, the inconsistent deviation is called a mistake. And it is in the light of this that the researcher has chosen to focus on students' errors and not mistakes. An error, however, is considered more serious.

Students in Zuta Junior High School have problems with concord and therefore write essays full of errors. The researcher has therefore painstakingly taken it upon herself to analyze the concord errors in the written essays of students' look out for causes of errors and to suggest remedies. The qualitative research method will be used in data collection which includes: interview, observation and test. Various

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categories of errors will be identified and analyzed in order to arrive at a desirable conclusion.

1.2 Scope of study

The study has focused on the application of English concord rules and how J.H.S two students of Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic School apply these rules in their writings. The study concentrates on concord errors and concord rules in the English language namely; Subject-verb, Verb-tense, Determiner-noun, Coordinated-subject verb and Noun-pronoun concord.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this research is to:

1. Ascertain the actual concord errors in the students' writings.
2. Identify the various factors responsible for the concord errors the students commit.
3. Find out the possible way to enhance students' performance in the area of
4. English concord.

1.4 Research questions

The researcher seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the specific concord errors the J.H.S.two students of Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic make?
2. What factors account for the concord errors they make?
3. What can be done to help students to overcome their English concord challenges?

1.5 Limitations of the study

Although care was taken in the design and implementation of this study, the study was not without some limitations, which are highlighted below:

Firstly, the use of the questionnaire to elicit data via self-reports could be regarded as a weakness because a mismatch between the self-reports (questionnaire responses on strategy use) and the written essays (the actual application of strategies) emerged. One cannot be completely sure that the strategy questionnaire used in this study gave precise information on the subjects' strategy use.

Secondly, due to the relatively small scale of this study, only students in JHS two only participated in the study, thus caution must be used in generalizing findings to students in other Junior High Schools in Ghana.

Lastly, the researcher could not use other students from other classes because of time constraints, work pressure and circumstances at the school. Students had to prepare for their end of term examination, also, the timeline for the submission of the work was due.

1.6 Significance of the Study

A research is an investigative understanding which is carried out in order to find out facts about an issue. When these facts are established, they ultimately add to existing knowledge. This study provides useful information to all education stakeholders including the government, educational policy makers, Ghana Education Service, Teachers of English Language and students.

The information about concord errors will not only be useful in the Akatsi-South District but also in Ghana as a whole.

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The findings will also benefit teachers by providing them with information to re-examine their teaching methods with the aim of improving students' performance in English language.

It will also help students use the rules of concord accurately both in speech and in writing. This will go a long way to improve upon their performance in in English language and other related subjects.

Finally, the research will contribute to the existing knowledge on grammar strategy instruction and how it influences performance of English language. It also helps future researchers in identifying priority areas in which to carry out more research in terms of teaching of English language in the Junior High Schools. The findings may also serve as useful feedback to language policy makers, curriculum developers and implementers.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

Bold Educational Software (2011 p.1) defined delimitation as "those characteristics selected by the researcher to define the boundaries of the study". It was the researchers' intention and interest to use JHS two students in Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic School in the Akatsi-South District in Volta region for the study because the researcher teaches in that school and therefore is familiar with the students and the problems they face in English language. Also, it will be easier for the researcher to obtain information from the respondents.

1.8 Organizations of the Study

This chapter outlines how the research was put together from chapter one to chapter five. Chapter one is the introduction of the study. It includes background to

the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the research questions and the significance of the study. It also includes delimitation of the study, limitations of the study and the organisation of the study.

Chapter two provides the theoretical background for this study. Literature was reviewed on the importance of teaching and learning concord and the factors affecting the teaching and learning of concord.

Chapter three sets out the research design and explains the methods used in this study. It describes the approach, the profile of the participants, the study procedures and data collection instruments. Finally, it explains how the data were analyzed.

Chapter four is the analysis and discussion of data. It was discovered from the marked scripts that verb-tense errors recorded the highest frequency. The discussion also revealed that sometimes, students find it difficult to apply their knowledge of concord rules correctly in their writing.

Finally, chapter five focuses on the overview of the study, summarises the findings of the study, and discusses the key findings from the study. The chapter also provides recommendations for further research works.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses available literature on the topic and provides justification for further investigation of the topic. The literature will be reviewed under the following themes which includes: the concept of errors, errors and mistakes, the notion of concord, types of concord, possible areas where concord arise, review of related studies, summary and conclusion.

2.1 The concept of error

In applied linguistics, an error is a deviation from accepted rules of a language made by a learner of a second language. Such errors result from the learners' lack of knowledge of correct rules of the target language. Brown (1994, p. 205) has defined linguistic errors as "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner". He cites the following as an example, *Does John can sing*? He notes that the occurrence of the preceding auxiliary verb *do*, the sentence has resulted in an error. Hadley (1993) notes that the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Thus, writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. Writing also involves composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts, as in expository or argumentative writing. Perhaps, it is best viewed as a continuum of activities that range from the more mechanical or formal aspects of 'writing down' on the one hand, to the more complex act of composing on the other hand.

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Errors are the flawed side of learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Teachers and mothers who have waged long battles against their students' or children's language errors have come to realize that making errors is an inevitable part of learning. People cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors. Errors are not generally thought of as errors in the same sense as those produced by L2 learners. Ellis(1994, p. 47) mentions that whereas L2 learners' errors are generally viewed as 'unwanted forms', children's errors are seen as 'transitional forms' and adult native speakers' errors as 'slips of the tongue'

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982, p. 138) state that studying learners' errors serves two major purposes: (1) it provides data from which inferences about the nature of the language learning process can be made; and (2) it indicates to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types detract most from a learner's ability to communicate effectively. In an early, seminal article, Corder (1981) notes that errors could be significant in three ways: (1) they provide the teacher with information about how much the learner had learnt, (2) they provide the researcher with evidence of how language was learnt, and (3) they serve as devices by which the learner discover the rules of the target language. Whereas (1) reflects the traditional role of Error Analysis (EA), (2) provides a new role that is of primary interest to the L2 researcher because it could ,shed light on (3) the process of L2 acquisition.

2.2 Errors and mistakes

It is essential here to make a distinction between mistakes and errors. According to Brown (1994, p. 205), mistakes refer to "a failure to utilize a known

system correctly" whereas errors constitute "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner". Two things need to be stated here: First, mistakes do not require special treatment assuming they are recognized. Second, *error* here refers to structures only. Both Corder, (1967, 1971) and James (1998) reveal a criterion that helps us to do so: A mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot. Errors are systematic, that is, they are likely to occur regularly and not recognized by the learner. Hence, only the teacher or researcher would locate them, the learner would not (Gass & Selinker, 1994).

Norrish (1983) makes a clear distinction between errors and mistakes. He states that errors are "systematic deviations when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong". He adds that when a learner makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form. Norrish defines mistakes as "inconsistent deviation". This means thatwhen a learner has been taught a certain correct form, and he uses one form sometimes and another at other times quite inconsistently, then, it is a mistake. It is in light of this that theresearcher has chosen to focus on students' errors and not mistakes. An error, however, is considered more serious. In Contrastive Analysis, the theoretical base of which was behaviorism, errors were seen as "bad habits" that had been formed. It was assumed that interference of the mother tongue (L1) was responsible for the errors made during the transition period of learning the target language.

In the cognitive approach, errors are seen as a clue to what is happening in the mind. They are seen as a natural phenomenon that must occur as learning a first or second language takes place before correct grammar rules are completely internalized.

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From this, most teachers are relieved to find a more realistic attitude towards errors. This may be because, errors are no longer a reflection on their teaching methods, but are, rather, indicators that learning is taking place. In this sense, errors are no longer *bad* but *good* or natural just as natural as errors that occur in learning a first language. The insight that errors are a natural and important part of the learning process itself, and do not all come from mother tongue interference is very important. There is variation in learners' performance depending on the task. Learners may have more control over linguistic forms for certain tasks, while for others, they may be more prone to errors.

2.3 The notion of concord

Concord can be defined as an agreement in gender, case, number or persons between different words to share a reference. For example, if a sentence contains a proper noun (John) and somewhat later a pronoun 'he' and refer to the same person we then say they agree in number (for both are singular) and gender (for both are masculine). Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) contend that concord is a relationship which exists between two grammatical units such that one of them displays a particular feature. For instance, plurality that accords with a displayed (or semantically implicit) feature on the other. Quagie (2009) throws more light on the subject of a sentence and what the verb talks about. There is a rule that if a subject is singular, the verb of a sentence must also be singular to agree with it.

This is a clear indication that the subject of a sentence can also be a pronoun. The pronouns *he, she*, *they, you, I* among others can act as subjects in sentences. Demonstrative adjectives such as *this, that*, *these* and *those* show whether the noun they refer to is far or near to the speaker. The noun always follows the demonstrative

adjective and therefore, there should be an agreement between the demonstrative adjective and the noun. Similarly, Wiredu (1998) explains concord as "the agreement relationship which exists between two grammatical units, so that when one unit displays a particular feature the other unit will also display a similar feature". For example, in

That boy sings the anthem very well.

The noun *boy* is singular; accordingly, the determiner *that* which accompanies it is also singular. This explains why the singular demonstrative determiner *that* is selected. However, if the noun had been plural, that is *boys* and *anthems,* plural demonstratives would have been selected. As a result, we would have

Those/these men sing anthem very well.

Thus, instead of *that* and *this,* we have *those* and *these* selected because the nouns in the second sentence are plural.

Sekyi-Baidoo (2002) argues that in concord the verb; the predicator, must agree with the number and person. He explains that number is the singularity or plurality of the subject. While person simply means whether the subject is first person singular or plural as *I* or *we* respectively, second person singular or plural that is *you* and third person singular or plural as in *he, she, it, they* especially when the subject is a pronoun. For example,

She dances well.

In the sentence, *she* is a third person singular and *dances* is also singular. Quirk and Greenbaum (1988) on concord observe that "the most important type of concord in English exists between the subject of clause and the accompanying verb". They refer

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to this as grammatical concord. They further explain that *that*-clauses in the position of subject count as singular for purposes of concord. For instance*, that he was annoyed really worries me.* This whole expression is a clause in subject position and *worries* is a verb. Since the clause is in the subject position it is regarded as singular and it agrees with singular verb *worries*.

Drennam (2003) describes concord as an agreement between words in gender, number, case or person. She cites the following examples

1. Gender: The queen has lost her crown.

   The <u>queen</u> is a singular feminine gender, it takes a singular feminine pronoun her. <u>Queen</u> has agreed with <u>her</u> in gender.

2. Number: The shoes are too small.

   <u>Shoes</u> are plural subject and it agreed with <u>are</u> which a plural verb is. We say, <u>shoes</u> have agreed with <u>are</u> in number.

3. Person: I am thankful.

   <u>I</u> is a first person singular pronoun and it takes <u>am</u> which is a first person singular verb. <u>I</u> and <u>am</u> agrees with each other in person.

According to Downing and Locke (2006), concord is a number (singular or plural) and person with verb, which are determined by the subject. They further state that concord is manifested in only those verb forms that show inflectional contrast. Furthermore, Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) also explains that the verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, the subject can be singular or plural; and *person* can be seen as the relationship between the speaker and the one he is speaking to or what he is speaking about. Moreover, concord in broad terms means agreement between the subjects and the verbs as well as other elements of the clause structure

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(Babajide, 2010; Leech & Svartvik, 1994). The idea of concord in the grammar of English suggests that for an English sentence to be correct and meaningful, its constituent parts must be in perfect agreement

From the explanations, concord simply is seen as an agreement between the various parts of a sentence. Hence, the subject and the verb in the sentence should display similar features. That is, a singular subject must occur with a singular verb, and a plural subject must also be accompanied by a plural verb. It is an agreement between words in gender, number, case/person or any other grammatical category which affects the forms of the words. So, concord (agreement) is the relationship between two grammatical units such that one of them displays a particular feature (e.g. plurality) that accords with the displayed (or semantically implicit) feature in the other.

2.4 Types of Concord

The rules governing concord are many. However, all the rules have been consolidated under four broad categories, commonly called types of concord. The categories of concord are as follows:

1. Proximity Concord

2. Notional Concord

3. Grammatical Concord

4. Concord of person

2.4.1 Proximity concord

According to Wiredu (1999), proximity concord refers to the agreement between the verb and its subject based not on 'notion' but on the fact that there is a 'nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. Concord of proximity does

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not. However, agree with the real subject in the sentence or the clause, it agrees with the closest noun and the numerous of that specific noun (Crystal, 2004). That is, it denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase. For instance, two singular nouns joined by 'either or, neither nor, no but, and or' take a singular verb, and if the subjects are plural, then the verbs must also be plural. However, in case one subject is plural and the other one is singular, the subject that is close to the verb must agree with the verb. That is how the principle of proximity works in English language.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) affirm that the principle of proximity denotes agreement of the verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it and sometimes in preference to agreement with the headword of the subject.

Examples:

a. Either Yaa or Emelia is travelling tomorrow.

b. Neither the coach nor the team manager is to blame for the defeat.

c. Not only a form master but a form prefect has to be appointed.

d. Either the headmaster or the students have money.

e. Neither the students nor the teachers have power to dance.

That is, it denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase. For instance, two singular nouns joined by 'either or, neither nor, no but, and or' take a singular verb, and if the subjects are plural, then the verbs must also be plural. However, in case one subject is plural and the other one is singular, the subject that is close to the verb must agree with the verb. That is how the principle of proximity works in English language. Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) affirm that the principle of proximity denotes

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agreement of the verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it and sometimes in preference to agreement with the headword of the subject. Examples:

    a.   No one except his own supporters agree with him

    b.   Either the student or the teacher is late

    c.   Neither the farmer nor the labourers are not happy about the officer's attitude

    d.   The villagers or the king is invited

2.4.2 Notional concord

Notional concord is the agreement of verbs with their subject and pronouns with their antecedent nouns on the basis of meaning rather than grammatical form. This implies that notional concord depends on the speaker's idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker. Notional concord focuses on the meaning of the whole entity (Crystal, 2004) as in:

Fifty dollars is a lot of money.

Parrot (2000) explains that plural nouns lacking the inflection (-s) such as a collective noun is considered singular when it refers to a group. In this ease, the noun takes a singular verb. For example,

    a.   The public is tired of demonstrations.

    b.   The committee has accepted my proposal

In these examples, *public* and *committee*, the subjects in the sentences, refer to group and are therefore treated as singular. On the other hand, when a collective noun is used to refer to individual members of a group, the noun is treated as plural. Examples are as follows:

i.   The public are angry with the minister's remarks.

ii.   The army are preparing for a battle.

In the examples, the subject *public* and *army* are treated as plural because they refer to the individual members of the group. Greenbaum (1985) asserts that notional concord is the agreement of verb with its subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that idea. This means notional concord refers to the agreement between subject and verb not based on number and person, but on the speaker's perception. Therefore, the speaker chooses a singular or plural verb based on his/her own idea about number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker of the idea. Group or collective nouns such as team, crowd, audience, family, public, committee, army, government, congregation and others fall into this category. So it is accepted to say

a. My family are in Kumasi.

b. The government have broken all their promises.

To them, collective nouns notionally are plural but grammatically singular. Although, singular and plural verbs are more or less interchangeable in these contexts, the choice is based, if on anything, on whether the group is being considered as a single undivided body, or as a collection of individuals. Thus, plural is more likely than singular in '*The audience were enjoying every minute of the show*' because consideration is being given to the individual reactions of members of the audience.

On the other hand, a singular verb has to be used in a sentence like '*The audience was enormous*'. Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) also describes notional concord as the agreement between the verb and the subject according to perception (that is the idea of numbers) rather than the actual display or the presence of a grammatical feature for

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the idea. Thus, while we can distinguish between singular and plural forms of some words, for example, the plural form of *girl* is *girls*. With others for instance, *class*, *crowd* and *swarm*, it is very difficult to do that.

2.4.3 Grammatical Concord

Hornsby (2002) describes grammatical concord as the fact of having the same number, gender and person. He is of the view that it is important to note that the form of the verb required in a sentence depends on the nature of its subject. He adds that care should be taken not to break any grammatical rule governs this requirement. He further indicates that the verb must agree with its subject in number and in person. For example,

 i. The girl looks beautiful.

 ii. The girls look beautiful.

 iii. She dances every evening.

 iv. They dance every evening.

In the examples, the first two verbs agree with their subjects in number while the rest agree with their subjects in person. The subject <u>girl</u> and <u>she</u> are singular and they take <u>looks</u> and <u>dances</u>. Again, <u>she</u> is a third person singular pronoun and it takes singular verb with the –s infection. In the same vein, <u>Girls</u> and <u>they</u> are plural subjects and they take plural verbs <u>dance</u> and <u>look.</u> Wiredu (1999, p. 111) states that grammatical concord "is the concord relation that exists between the subject of a clause and its accompanying verb". According to Blake (1988, p. 90) "the nominal rule for subject-verb agreement is that a singular subject requires the verb of the present tense in the –s form when the subject is a third person one". The focus of grammatical concord is about the fact that every verb must agree with its subject and number in a sentence.

This is elaborated by Crosby (2000, p.223) who also states that "the most important type of concord in English is the concord of number between subject and verb". Thus, every verb must agree with its subject in person and in number. So, a singular subject must take a singular verb and a plural subject must take a plural verb. For instance,

   a.   *The girl likes flowers.*

   b.   *Nana and Yaa like flowers.*

According to these authors the linking verb, 'be' is an exception; it changes form in both the present and the past tenses as in

   a.   *(i) They are afraid.*

         (ii) They were afraid.

   b.   *(i) He is a teacher'*

         (ii) He was a teacher.
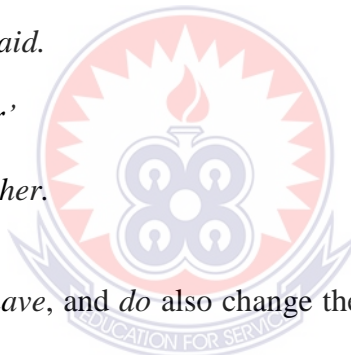
The auxiliary verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* also change their forms in verb phrases to show agreement with the third person as in:

   a.   *He is fighting a good cause.*

   b.   *Amina has good looks.*

   c.   *Mrs. Armah does not punish her children.*

Drennam (2003) enumerates the principles governing the subject-verb agreement. To her, the most basic is the grammatical concord, that is, a singular subject requires a singular verb as in

   1.   *My son watches TV after dinner.*

A plural subject requires a plural verb as in

> 2. *My sons watch TV after dinner.*

If the subject is a noun phrase (a phrase is a group of words forming a conceptual unit, but not a sentence, i.e. there is no verb), the number of the verb depends on the number (singular or plural) in the main phrase. A clause in a position of a subject counts as singular for purposes of concord:

> 1. *What they say is wrong.*
>
> 2. *To teach English language as a subject is not an easy task.*

Prepositional phrases acting as subjects also counts as singular:

> 1. *After the exams is the lime to relax.*
>
> 2. *In the evenings is cool to think.*

Nominal relative clauses on the other hand, since they are equivalent to noun phrases, may have plural as well as singular concord:

> 1. *What were once human dwellings are now nothing but piles of rubble.*
>
> 2. *What was once a forest is now a desert.*

It should be noted that plural words and phrases (including coordinated phrases) usually count as singular if they are used as names, titles, or quotations. For example,

> 1. *Peace and Love is perhaps the best designed hotel in Amansie.*
>
> 2. *K. Gvasi and Sons is doing very well in the construction business.*

Exceptions to the concord rule arise with singular nouns ending with an apparent plural-s (e,g. measles, mathematics, physics) or conversely plural nouns lacking the inflection (cattle, people, clergy, etc.).For example,

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1. *Measles is a serious disease.*

2. *Our people are complaining of economic hardship in the country.*

Kirkpatrick (2013) classifies grammatical concord as verb agreement. According to her verb agreement is also known as concord and refers to the fact that a verb must 'agree' with the appropriate subject in number. Therefore, number agreement indicates that a singular noun is usually accompanied by a singular verb while a plural noun is usually accompanied by a plural verb,

2.4.4 Concord of person

Quirk and Greenbaum (1990) intimate that in addition to number concord, there is concord of person in the present tense. Examples are:

1. *I am tired.* (1st Person Singular Concord)

2. *You are tired.* (2nd Person Singular Concord)

3. *He is tired.* (3rd Person Singular Concord)

But in the past tense, only the verb *be* has distinctions of person:

1. I was tired. (1st Person Singular Concord)

2. You were tired. (2nd Person)

3. He was tired. (3rd Person Singular Concord)

It is further explained that in a coordinate subject noun phrase where the coordinator is *or* or *nor*, the last noun phrase determines the person of the verb in accordance with the principle of proximity. For example,

4. Either my friend or I am signing the contract.

5. Neither you nor the girl knows the answer.

2.4.5 Summary

This aspect of the research work explains the different types of concord errors related to the study from the point of view from different scholars across the world. Here, the types discussed are the proximity, the notional, the grammatical and the concord of person.

2.5 Possible areas of concord errors

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) observe that the rule which enjoins the verb to match with its subject in number may be called grammatical concord. Difficulties over concord arise through conflict between these and the other two - notional and proximity concord. According to Woods (1999), different language teachers have different approaches to grammar in the classroom. He points out that the various approaches teachers use to teach concord is the genesis of concord errors among the students. This problem arises since many people are uncertain about where the parameters lie.
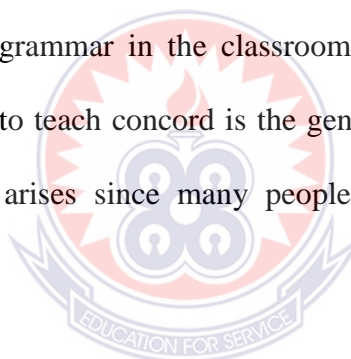
On the other hand, Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) asserts that there are rules governing the way grammatical items are put together. And that violation of these rules makes sentence construction ungrammatical. He lists the following areas as where students' concord problems rest:

a) Certain nouns which arc plural in form but singular in meaning, generally take a singular verb. The most common of these are Mathematics, news, statistics, linguistics, electronics, ethics, physics, dynamics etc.

b) A collective noun takes a singular verb when the clause is considered as a unit, a plural verb when the members of the class are considered individually. Examples:

- The crowd is in a festive mood.

- The crowd are in a festive mood.

c) Plural numbers take a singular verb when they are in a phrase to indicate a sum or a unit.

d) Such indefinite pronouns as anybody, each, either, everybody, neither, nobody, no one and somebody generally require a singular verb.

e) When the subject is a relative pronoun, the verb agrees with the antecedent of pronoun.

f) When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'and' the plural form of the verb is required.

g) When two or more singular subjects are connected by *or*, *nor*, *but*, a singular form of the verb is required.

h) When one of the two subjects is connected by 'or, nor, but' one is singular and the other is plural, 'then, the verb agrees in number with the nearer one.

Woods (1999) and Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) hold the same view on the possible areas where students' concord problems may emanate from. They attribute the problems to the inability of learners to grasp the rules in the various concord types; and they commit a lot of errors as a result of this problem. There are cases where variation exists in subject -verb concord. Usually, when a subject consist of two coordinate heads (that is when the subject is a noun group with two heads joined together by *and*, the verb goes into the plural base form but if the subject is thought to form a singular notional entity, then singular verb with the (-s) form is used. Again, a compound subject that is joined by *and* or *both* is plural except when the joined words make a single unit or when they both refer person or thing as in:

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1. Rice and stew is my favourite.

2. My teacher and advisor is in school today.

3. My teacher and advisor are in town.

4. Both Maame and Gladys are leaving for Accra.

5. Maame's mother and advisor like disciplined students.

Sentences of this nature pose problems to students since they do not understand the concept well. In sentences 1 and 2, the subjects used refer to one entity (unit) - *rice and stew* is just an item (a meal) and in *my teacher is the advisor*, the noun *advisor* refers to the same person, *my teacher*, therefore, the subjects in I and 2 take singular verbs. However, in 4 and 5, the subjects used are two individuals joined with a conjunction and which form a compound subject so they take a plural verb. This has to do with notion rather than the form of the sentence. Notional concord poses a lot of problems since it solely depends on the speaker's perception of numbers. Yankson (1994) also groups concord errors into six categories. These are discussed in the following sections.

2.5.1 Typical developmental errors

Developmental errors, according to Yankson (1994) are errors that are typical of all second language learners. Even though most of the learners know the guiding principles, they still commit errors. Presumably, such people have not fully internalized the formation rules; that is, the concord system has not been registered in their memory with sufficient firmness. Typical errors under this have to do with the inflectional problems of persons, especially third person singular nouns nominal.

Examples:

1. Life have not been easy, (the verb 'have' has not agreed with the subject, the appropriate verb to be used is has')

2. Unemployment attract people to engage in crime, (the correct verb form is 'attracts')

3. Our teachers is not teaching, ('is' cannot go with the subject, the correct verb is are)

2.5.2 Notional concord errors

The principle under notional concord sometimes comes into conflict with grammatical concord, where the rule that a singular subject requires a singular verb is 'notional concord. Examples:

1. The society at large hold the university students in a high esteem.

2. The energy of the employed able-bodied men are being wasted.

Yankson (1994) explains that the speaker conceives of 'society' as a collective noun, as a collection of individual people, and it is this notion of plurality, rather than grammatical singular subject, *society* which selects the plural verb *hold* in the first example. However, the error can also be explained m terms of proximity in example two. That is, the speaker is influenced by the immediately preceding plural noun, in his choice of the plural verb. For the speaker in the second example, it is the situational context which he uses to select the plural noun. To him the workers do not possess single energy; each one of them possesses his own energy. His conception of the noun, *energy* is therefore plural and it is this notion of plurality which comes into conflict with the grammatical concord which would demand a singular verb in the context.

2.5.3 Proximity concord errors

Other errors can be attributed to the principle of proximity, that is, the verb agreeing with the noun immediately preceding it in a sentence. Sometimes students become confused with the verb form that should follow the nouns in the context since their understanding of this principle is not fully grasped. For instance,

1. A long discussion on Senchi conscientious about our challenges have finally come to an end.

2. The reason for the high cost of living in our towns and cities are unacceptable.

You can see that in the sentences, the students use plural verbs because the nouns preceding the verbs are in the plural forms. This is incorrect since those nouns are not the head of the noun phrase, so the principle of proximity cannot be applicable in this context.

2.5.4 Memory limitation concord errors

When noun phrases acting as subjects of sentences are somehow long, most students tend to forget the right subject which should have entered into concord relationship with the verb because of the distance in terms of memory span - between the noun phrase and the verb phrase. For example,

1. A closer at into the performances and achievements of some certificate holders have shown that our educational institutions need total transformation.

The use of *have* in this sentence is unacceptable, and can be attributed to memory limitation since the student could not identify the right word (the head of the noun phrase) to match with the verb.

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2.5.5 Plural inflectional concord errors

Some words (nouns) originally ends with (-s), but these nouns are not plurals. Some students misconstrue them to be plural since they end with (-s), and they use them with the plural forms of verbs; it is incorrect that way. Examples:

1. *Mathematics have been a difficult subject to many students.*

2. *Tuberculosis are a deadly disease.*

The students have mistaken the (-s) endings of the nouns for the plural inflection and assigned them plural verbs.

2.5.6 Inability to identify noun headword

Under this category, all the errors under proximity and memory limitation can also be attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword of the noun phrase. Sometimes, students are not able to identify noun heads in noun phrases or even the subjects of sentences. This makes the situation more complex than what one can think of. Students find it cumbersome to differentiate between singular and plural nouns or singular and plural verbs since they do not know the headword. Example,

1. *The boy together with the girls is visiting the zoo.*

2. *Climbing mountains are a challenge people enjoy.*

According to him, the second language learners' inter language is characterized by inconsistencies. This reflects most commonly in subject verb concord, as in:

1. *He refuses to go to school until his mum buy him a new shoe.*

2. *The school also have a sufficient teachers who are responsible.*

3. *Rhymes helps in their language acquisition process and encourage them to listen carefully.*

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Such inconsistencies are signs that the learners are passing through transitional phase in their language learning development and that* as time goes on, they will, hopefully 'arrive at a system'. Again Kirkpatrick (2014) says concord per se is not a big issue in English since verbs in English generally have the same form, irrespective of number, apart from the change of form in the third person singular of the present tense when -s or

-is is added to the base form. A difficulty only arises when a subject takes the form of a singular noun linked to a plural noun by of I as in

A number of problems has arisen.

Although it is grammatically correct to use a singular verb here, it is common in modern usage to have the verb agreeing with the plural noun because it is nearest to it, thus sounding more natural, as in

A number of problems have arisen.

This is becoming more and more common, although it is grammatically wrong. She also attests to the fact that group or collective nouns such as *committee*, *family*, *government*, or *jury* can cause problems in relation to verb agreement since some of these words can be accompanied by either a singular or a plural verb depending on the context. That is, the choice depends on the notion of the speaker, whether he wishes to emphasize the unity of the group of things or people referred to, or whether the individual components are to be emphasized. Another area where the principle of agreement can be troublesome is when the subject is made up of two or more singular nouns connected by a phrase, which in some way, emphasizes the *togetherness* of the nouns, such as together with, as well as, with and plus, the verb takes the singular

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form. But most learners become confused as a result of the presence of the intervening phrase (s).

2.5.7 Summary

Here, the possible areas of concord errors has been discussed. Yankson (1994) has grouped and discussed the causes of concord errors into six categories and these are typical developmental errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors, memory limitation concord errors, plural inflectional concord errors and inability to identify the noun headword.

2.6 Review of related literature

Review of the related literature provides an idea of the research work done previously by the past scholars. In other words, review of related literature means to conduct a general survey of the previous studies, to analyze them critically and arrange them logically so that certain research frame work and dimension could be emerged. Darius and Subramaniam (2009) examined a corpus of 72 essays written by 72 Malaysian Secondary Schools students in Malaysia. The result showed that six most common errors that the students made were in singular/plural form 13.3%, verb tense 11.2% followed by word choice 10.5%, preposition 9.3%, subject verb Agreement 7% and word order 7% however, word form came in the ninth rank by 5%.   They also found out that many errors were produced due to students misunderstanding of English writing rules.

Abbas and Karimnia (2011) analyzed grammatical errors made by Iranian students of translation. They examined a number of grammatical errors that were committed by Iranian students in their translation and compared the errors of junior and senior students to identify the errors which had been corrected during their study

at the University. They examined the errors of 40 senior and 40 junior students of translation and classified the errors into two categories: grammatical/ lexical/semantic and word order types of errors. Findings revealed significant shortfall in English grammar and that 98% of the respondents had grammatical problems caused mainly by interlingual influence.

In addition, Ridha (2012) examined English writing samples of 80 EFL college students and then categorized the errors according to the following taxonomy: grammatical lexical/semantic, mechanics, and word order types of errors. The results showed that most of the students' errors can be attributed to L1 transfer. Furthermore, she found that most of the learners relied on their L1 in expressing their ideas. She added that although the rating processes showed that the participants' essays included different types of errors, grammatical errors were the most serious and frequent ones. Jalali and Shojaei (2012) analyzed the errors that the Persian EFL learners commit in composition. The findings indicated 15 prepositional error types were identified and that most of the students suffered from problems in the use of prepositions.

In another instance, Lawoyi and Adeyanju (2013) investigated errors in written English by the students in two institutions in Nigeria. A sample of 400 students from 12 academic departments was selected. The results of the test showed that students had fewer problems in their use of determiners and pronouns but demonstrated a very low performance in their knowledge and use of tenses. Similarly, while the students were found to do well in such areas as noun usage, their performance in the areas of adjectives, relative pronouns, prepositions and adverbs was very poor. Based on the findings, they suggested that it is therefore necessary to approach the teaching of English language skills by identifying the errors frequently

made by students. A number of studies have been conducted to investigate common errors in English language and grammar by students at different levels. The present review reveals that many scholars have studied different types of errors committed by students in learning the English language as well as English grammar.

In summary, the literature was reviewed critically on what previous studies and researchers have said about concord and its related problems and why it is necessary for both students and teachers to take the topic very serious and work on it. The concept of errors was also discussed, touching on the differences between errors and mistakes. The notion of concord was also discussed, with emphasis on the types of concord errors that learners commit in their writing. These types include proximity, notional, grammatical and concord of person. Finally, some possible areas of errors that occurs in the use of concord among students were also discussed.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the literature review as it relates to concord problems in English language. Specifically, it discussed the concept of concord, errors and mistakes, types of concord, possible areas of concord errors which included proximity concord errors, memory limitation concord errors, plural inflection concord errors and inability to identify noun headword. The various errors identified were also discussed. These factors have negative impact on learners English Language learning. Also, review of related literature was captured. The next chapter discusses the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology is an important component of any study. It provides the framework upon which the process is conducted. It is therefore used in this study thoroughly enough to efficiently produce accurate data in order that the stated research goals and objectives will be achieved. This chapter explains the various approaches, tools and the strategies that were adopted in undertaking this research. The discussion includes the research design, study population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection, and data presentation and analysis.

3.1 Research design

In order to ensure the success of the investigation, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher's valid findings. A research design is the strategy to plan and restructure a research project. It encompasses the tools employed to conduct scientific research. A research design also refers to the overall plan the researcher employs to collect data in order to answer the research questions including the research data analysis techniques or methods. This is done to ensure that the problem in question is effectively addressed. For the purposes of this study, the research design adopted is a qualitative case study to examine concord problems in the English writings of students of Akatsi-Zuta D/A Junior High School; interview, test and observation were employed.

A qualitative research is a kind of method which seeks to describe actions within a specific setting and invites rather than tries to control the possibility of a rich array of variables. A case study is also a written account that gives detailed

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information about a person, group, or thing and their development over a period of time. A case study was chosen because it enables the researcher to analyze the school's setting and problems of concord in English by the students. The results will be put to use by all concerned to help minimize the hindrances which result in the students' inability to correctly use concord in their writings.

3.2 Population and sampling

In this study, the researcher focused on Akatsi-Zuta Junior High School in the Volta Region of Ghana. The school has a student population of seven hundred and fifty (750) and a teaching staff of eighteen (18). Out of the eighteen teachers, eight (8) teach English Language. The simple random sampling procedure was used to select the sample, made up of both boys and girls in Form 2. The total population could not be used because of time constraints and unavailability of resources. In order to arrive at a round figure the simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of fifty-two (52) students.
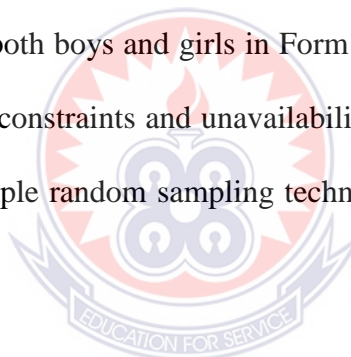
The teachers of English language in the school were sampled for the problems they faced in the delivery of their lessons, considering the poor performance of students in English language. The researcher administered a test to the 52 students to help her identify the problems they have in concord. This method was used to gather information from the respondents so that the appropriate methods to be used would be put in place. As already indicated, the instruments used are interview, questionnaire and test. The interview with the teachers was to find out the textbooks they use as their sources of reference in the preparation of their lesson notes and to find out whether they themselves find the topic disturbing. The information obtained from

teachers was valuable pertaining to the competence level as far as English concord was concerned.

3.3 Research instruments

Here, the instruments I used to elicit information are discussed.

3.3.1 Interview

An interview for research purposes usually takes the form of conversations in which the researcher tries to ask questions in relation to the research topic. This is mostly a set of questions written more or less like a questionnaire which helps the interviewer to ask questions on the actual issues in which s/he is interested instead of drifting into irrelevant issues. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. The researcher used interview as data collection tool. Interview was chosen because it enabled the researcher to seek clarification for responses provided by the interviewees. It also produced a wide range of information on the problem being investigated. All the students sampled were interviewed at different times. Two types of interview were used in the study: structured and unstructured.

According to McLeod (20014), a structured interview is the type of question that are asked in a set of standardized order with the interviewer not deviating from the interview schedule or probe beyond the answers received. He further explains the unstructured interview, which is sometimes referred to as the discovery interview as the type of interview in which the questions are not prearranged and are more like a guided conversation than a strict structured interviews. They are sometimes called informal interviews.

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3.3.2 Observation

To obtain information, I observed the students as they communicated orally, both in and outside the classroom. In the classroom, I observed the students as they engaged in discussions and debates. Outside the classroom, I observed the students as they interacted with each other and also with teachers. I observed that about 15% of students spoke English in the classroom and 85% spoke the local language. Outside the classroom, about 10% spoke English, 80% spoke the local language (Ewe) and another 10% spoke Pidgin English.

3.3.3 Test

A test is the presentation of series of questions given to testees to answer. It is also a set of standard questions, problems, or tasks designed to elicit responses for use in measuring the traits, capacity, or achievement of an individual. In other words, one of the most common devices used to obtain data in education is test. The researcher employed test as the third research instrument to collect data on the topic. Two different types of test were administered to the students. The exercise covered seven main areas of grammatical concord; subject-verb concord, determiner-noun concord, coordinated-subject concord. The rest are noun-pronoun concord inverted subject concord, verb-verb concord, and constructions with more than one concord error. Questions were structured using the recommended texts for the students. The testing instrument was therefore constructed in line with the syllabus of the Junior High School. This was to ensure that the test items were within the competence level of the students. This type of instrument was used because the study hinges especially on the academic performance of the students and the data needed should necessarily reflect learning.

3.4 Data collection

The researcher verbally requested to meet the headmaster of the school. When the request was granted, the research topic was disclosed and discussed with him. He agreed and promised to support. The English teachers and the students were also met to discuss the topic with them. They were made to understand the nature of the exercise and why their support was needed. The benefits of the study were also presented to them. With this, they agreed and assured of their co-operation during the exercise. The commencement data collection was also communicated to the headmaster, teachers and pupils. The data used for this study consisted of two composition topics where students were asked to answer any one of their choice.

1. How I celebrated my last birthday.
2. My first day at the Junior High School.

The major instrument of this study was the written essays of pupils because the analysis of pupils' errors was the major objective for the study. The purpose of the essay was to identify the types of errors and to group them.

3.5 Data analysis

A qualitative analysis strategy was used to analyze data. The data were grouped based on their similarity and described conceptually with domains created for them. The themes that emerged from the data were then coded. The data were also analyzed statistically and interpreted. Due to the categorical nature of the data, percentages were used as the main statistical technique. Data were coded from students' essays and Microsoft Excel was used for analysis. Diagrams like bar graphs were used in representing the data bringing about meaningful analysis. The data used for this study was on a written essay for JHS 2 students.

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3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various methods used to obtain the data for the study. It specifically discussed the research design, the population of the study, sampling techniques used, and the sample size. The rest are the research instruments which included interviews, observation and test, data collection protocol and data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and analysis of results from students' scripts. As mentioned earlier, the aim of this study is to analyze concord errors in the written essays of JHS 2 students of Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic School. The chapter discusses some concord errors that students make and the causes that account for these errors. The first research question addresses the types of concord errors of students. Five types of concord errors were identified and discussed from students' written essays. The concord error categories include the subject- verb concord errors, the verb- tense concord errors, the determiner-noun concord errors, the coordinated-subject concord errors and the noun-pronoun concord errors. The second research question talks about the causes of the errors in the students' written essays and these were identified to be interlingual as well as intralingual transfer and the context of teaching. Interlingual errors refers to transfer from the mother tongue or any other previously learned language into the target language. Intralingual errors are "items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The chapter also includes the summary and the conclusion.

4.1 Categorization of concord errors

After analyzing the data, different types of concord errors in students' written essays were identified. These are subject-verb concord errors, verb-tense concord errors, determiner- noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors and noun-pronoun concord errors. For my first day at the Junior High School, one hundred and ten (110) concord errors were identified. The essay on how I celebrated my last

birthday, one hundred and fifty-five (155) errors were identified as well. In sum, two hundred and sixty-five (265) concord errors were identified in the scripts of students.

4.2 Subject-verb concord errors

The subject of a sentence is the actor or an idea of a sentence whiles the verb is the action or state of being of a subject. Subjects and verbs need to agree in number, which is known as singular and plural. A subject -verb agreement errors occurs when the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree.

Subject-verb concord errors recorded a greater frequency, indicating that getting a verb to agree with the subject is difficult from the point of view of the students. This was evident particularly in singular subject with their singular verb in the present tense. Subject-verb concord errors in the data are shown as follows.

4.2.1 Plural subject with singular verb

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

   i.   A lot of <u>peoples comes</u> to the party.

   ii.   Everybody <u>eats </u>and <u>drinks.</u>

   iii.   *My* <u>friends </u>and <u>teachers</u> also <u>brings </u>some gifts

   iv.   <u>All the girls is</u> sweeping the assemble halls

   v.   <u>The headmaster and teachers was</u> at a meeting.

Haydari (2012) notes that subject-verb errors are ones that occur during the learning process of the second language. Thus, they are developmental errors. Developmental errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience. These errors are also intralingual because the students made faulty generalization of the rules of –s inflection of nouns. With this in mind, these students may be operating intuitively by thinking that the first –s of the noun attracts a second one of the verb.

4.2.2 Singular subjects with plural verbs

Subjects and *verbs* must agree with one another in *number* (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural. Examples:

1. John eats rice every morning.

2. John and Ama eat rice every morning.

In the above sentences, *John* is a singular subject and must take a singular verb 'eats'. Also *John and Ama* are plural subjects and must take plural verb 'eat'. Therefore, the simple principle behind the subject verb agreement is that, a singular subject demands a singular verb and a plural subject demands a plural verb.

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

   i.   <u>My friend give</u> me some gift.

   ii.   <u>The headmaster write</u> something for my father.

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iii.   <u>My mother prepare</u> my **favorites** food for me.

iv.   <u>The class teacher give</u> me some questions to answer.

v.   <u>The class prefect collect</u> some answer sheets from the head teacher for me.

In these sentences, we see that each subject is singular but their corresponding verbs are plural. Regarding singular subjects with plural verbs, although the subject of each of the sentences is singular, their corresponding verbs are plural. This may be caused teachers, where they tend to emphasize the use of the third person –s after pronoun *he*, *she, and it*. Thus, when the subject of the verb is singular, there appears to be confusion. Students therefore need to make a conscious effort to understand the grammatical rules. In other words, students should be more sensitive to the subject-verb agreement rule in English. The third sentence exemplifies the grammatical rule that in a structure where the same subject controls a series of verbs, all the verbs must agree with the subject. Erkaya (2000) describes this kind of error as Interlingual. It occurs as a result of the use of an element from one language while speaking or using another. Most of the students speak Ewe (Anlo and Avenor). In Ewe, verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense. Examples are as follows:

1) Ama dzra agbeli. (Ama sells cassava)
2) Ama kple Kofi dzra agbeli (Ama and Kofi sell cassava)

The verb dzra 'sell' maintains the same form in the two examples even though a singular subject is used in the first example while a plural subject is used in the second example. English on the other hand, has a different grammatical rule. The students however matched singular subjects with plural verbs because they have transferred what they know in their L1 into their English expressions.

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4.2.3 Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors

Demonstrative pronouns are used to refer to the location of things and persons in space. They have number contrast and have two sets; *this and these* on the one hand and *that and those* on the other. Aarts (2010) explains that these pronouns are used following reference: *this* and *these* are used to refer to entities that are proximal (close by), whereas *that* and *those* refer to entities that are distal (further away). The pronouns *this* and *that* are (singular) while these and those are (plural). In English, when a demonstrative pronoun is used as the subject, it must agree in number with the verb. Unfortunately, the students did not apply this grammatical rule. They failed to recognize that *this* as the subject should take a singular verb form, but that its plural counterpart *these* should take a plural verb form. A possible cause for this error could be fossilization. This is because this error may have become imprinted in their brains that they find it difficult to change. The sentences are grammatically acceptable if the verbs are changed to agree with their corresponding subjects as in:

i.   <u>This makes</u> my friends very happy.

ii.   <u>These were</u> the things I saw at my first day at the Junior High School.

iii.   <u>These were</u> the things my mother bought for me at the boutique.

iv.   <u>This was</u> how I celebrated my birthday.

v.   <u>Those were the things</u> my father bought for me at the supermarket.

In this category, students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but violated the rule of subject-verb agreement. The following extracts illustrate it:

i.   <u>This make</u> my friends very happy.

ii.   <u>These is</u> the things I saw at my first day at the Junior High School.

iii.   <u>This were the things</u> my mother bought for me at the boutique.

iv.   <u>These was</u> how I celebrated my birthday.

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v. <u>Those is the things </u>my father bought for me at the supermarket.

In the examples, students could not apply the rules of the demonstrative pronoun being in agreement with the verb that they follow, resulting in erroneous structures. In the sentences, *this* is singular and must be followed by a singular verb. Also, *these* and *those* are plural and must be followed by a plural verb.

4.2.4 Headword-verb concord errors

These errors are attributed to the inability of students to identify the headword of the string of words acting as the subject. The head or headword is the most prominent element in a string of words. For example, a noun phrase is a string of words whose head is a noun as in *the red bag.* Students who have properly internalized subject-verb concord rules have no problem matching subjects such as a nominal group (a noun or pronoun) or the dummy *it* with the right verbs in their speech or writing. In other words, it is easier for students to let the simple subject agree with its verb in the present tense. However, there are instances where the subject is a complex one. A complex subject can be a noun phrase with a multiple pre-modification and post-modification. Pre-modifiers precede their heads. For example:

The	red	bag	downstairs
↓	↓	↓	↓
Determiner	Adjective	Head	Post-modifier
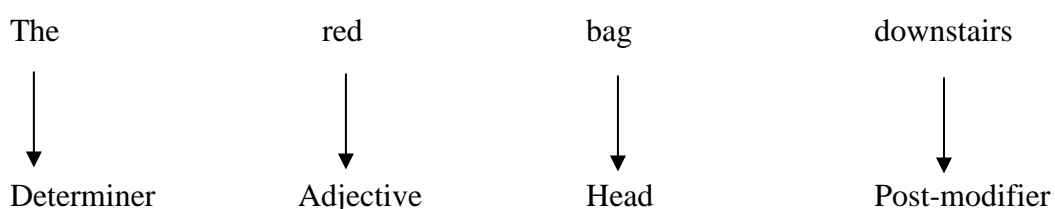
The complex subject poses problems in that the student loses tack of the headword or memory limitation prevents them from employing the correct verb form, which should enter into a relationship with the noun headword. The rule should not

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change whether the subject is simple or complex. Thus, if the head is singular, the verb in the present tense should be singular. In the same vein, the verb is plural if the head is plural. Sometimes, there is an adverb between the subject and the verb. This does not change the number, person or gender of the subject. So, if the subject is singular, the verb must be singular and the vice-versa. The following are examples produced by the students.

    i.   Some of <u>my friends</u> in my area <u>finds</u> it very difficult to attend the party.

    ii.   <u>Everyone</u> **decides** to request a special song for me.

    iii.   <u>The school have</u> three different classroom blocks.

    iv.   <u>The headmaster and some teachers was</u> at a meeting when we get to the school.

    v.   <u>All my friends in the school decides</u> to surprise me with a wonderful present.

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

4.2.5 Relative pronoun-subject with singular verb

In the principle of proximity, attraction is applied when a sentence has two clauses; main and subordinate with the subordinate being a relative clause. A relative clause is introduced by the relative pronoun, *who, whom, that, which or whose*. It is in fact possible for the relative pronoun to be either singular or plural. They take their number from their antecedent- the words to which they refer. That is, if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun is plural and therefore takes a plural verb. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun is singular and thus takes a singular verb. Hence, there should be agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun in such sentences. For example, in:

Emily picked the flowers that were growing in the garden.

In this sentence, the antecedent of 'that' is 'flowers'.

Since the noun 'flowers' is plural, the pronoun 'that' is plural as well and therefore takes a plural verb. In a different sentence, the antecedent of that could be a singular noun. For example:

Emily picked the flower that was growing in the garden.

Since the noun 'flower' is singular, the pronoun 'that' is singular and therefore takes a singular verb.

This rule was violated by the students in the following sentences:

    i.   <u>My friends</u> who <u>comes</u> to my birthday party eat a lot of foods.

    ii.   One of the main reasons that made <u>my parents</u> to <u>celebrates</u> my birthday for me is because I took the first position in class.

    iii.   <u>The headmaster and teachers punishes</u> students that are in indiscipline.

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iv.   <u>My father and my mother plans </u>for my birthday to surprise everyone in the family.

v.   <u>The headmaster and teachers that welcomes </u>us to the school was neatly dressed.

Table 1 is a summary of the sub-categories of subject-verb concord errors.

Table 4.1. Subject-verb concord errors.

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Singular subjects with plural verbs	30	48.3%
Plural subject with singular verb	12	19.4%
Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors	9	14.5%
Headword-verb concord errors	5	8.1%
Relative pronoun subject with singular verb	6	9.7%
Total	**62**	**100%**

The table shows the different types of subject-verb concord errors committed by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 4.1. The errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is difficult from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense

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Subject-Verb Concord Errors
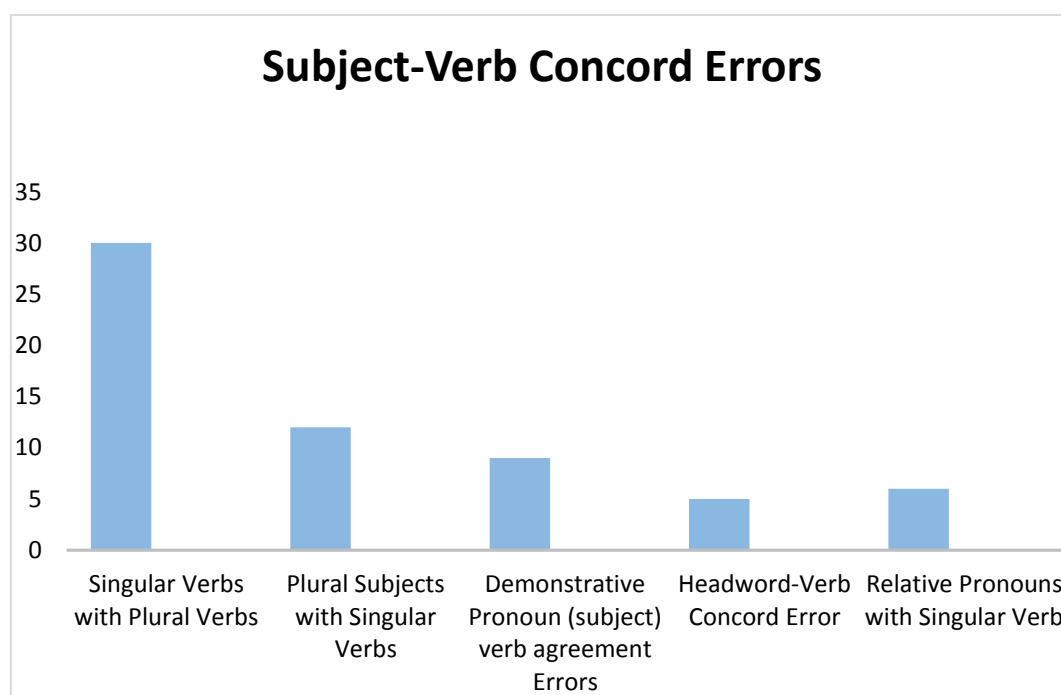
Figure 4.1. Types of subject- concord errors

With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In the category of demonstrative pronoun-(subject) verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but they violated the rules of subject-verb agreement (such as table), plural count (such as tables), and non-count nouns (such as furniture). *This* and *that* are one class of determiners that can take both. The Headword verb concord errors are also attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword of the string of words. The headword is the most prominent element of a string of words. In the relative pronoun-subject with singular verbs, the principle of proximity (attraction) is applied when a sentence has two clauses; the main and subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the

relative clauses which must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

4.3 Verb-tense concord errors

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

1. They do the shopping on Saturdays. (Present tense)
2. They did the shopping on Saturday. (Past tense)
3. They are going to do/ will do the shopping on Saturday. (Lexical auxiliary/modal)

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

4.3.1 The past tense

The past tense in English is the marked form. Cognitively, the situations conceptualized by the speaker as past have the status of known, but not immediate,

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reality; they are not currently observed. Morphologically, the vast majority of verbs in English have a distinctive past form, (played, saw) and, semantically, the past tense basically refers to a situation that is prior to the present, as in *Yesterday was fine*. Below are some of the sentences that were wrongly structured:

i.   My father <u>buy</u> me so many gifts.

ii.   All my friends <u>eat</u> a lot of food.

iii.   I <u>dance</u> to my best music to the surprise of everybody.

iv.   The headmaster <u>ask</u> of my name.

v.   I <u>play</u> football that afternoon with some of the boys.

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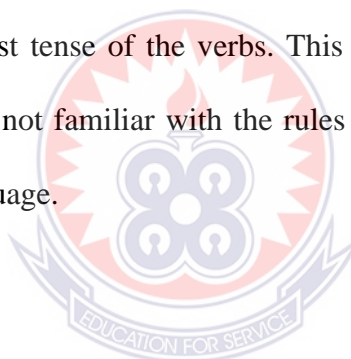
4.3.2 The present tense

The present tense is the unmarked tense. Cognitively, it expresses situations which have immediate reality, that is, what is currently observed. Morphologically, it is marked only on the 3rd person singular (with the exception of be, which has three forms (am, are and is)). Semantically, it covers a wider range of temporal references than the past tense, including reference to future time (Tomorrow is a holiday). Even in our everyday use, 'at present' and 'at the present time' have a wider application than simply to the present moment of speech time. Thus, *Birds have wings* represents a situation which holds not only at the present time but has also held in the past, and will conceivably continue to hold in the future. Some examples of sentences that were wrongly structured by students are as follows:

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     i.   My friends <u>comes</u> to the party at all times.

     ii.   The headmaster <u>call</u> me into his office.

     iii.   Everybody <u>celebrates</u> this event once in a year.

     iv.   Some of the students <u>weeds</u> around the school compound.

     v.   Our exam <u>starts</u> at 10am.

Over here also, errors were attributed to the fact that students were not conversant with the use of the present tense in the English Language. The sentences should have been:

     i.   My friend <u>comes</u> to the party at all times.

     ii.   The headmaster <u>calls</u> me into his office.

     iii.   Everybody <u>celebrate</u> this event once in a year.

     iv.   Some of the students <u>weed</u> around the school compound.

     v.   Our exam start at 10am.

4.3.3 The future aspect

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

For example:

i.   I <u>will</u> go with you.

ii.   I <u>am going to</u> send you an email.

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

Some statements of students are shown as follows:

i.   I tell my father to take me to the Zoo next time.

ii.   The boys said they play football with me.

iii.   We go to the supermarket another time.

iv.   As I walk to church the following day.

v.   I am famous in the future.

The correct structure should have been:

i.   I <u>will</u> tell my father to take me to the Zoo next time.

ii.   The boys said they <u>will</u> play football with me.

iii.   We <u>will be going</u> to the supermarket another time.

iv.   As I <u>will be walking</u> to church the following day

v.   I <u>will</u> be famous in the future.

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

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Table 4.2. Verb- tense errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Past	40	63.5
Present	15	23.8
Future	8	12.7
Total	**63**	**100**

Table 2 illustrates the different verb tense concord errors committed by students and these are presented in Figure 4.2. The different types of verb tense concord errors from students' written essays show that getting verb to agree with the tense in structures in English Language becomes confusing to students. The students who made this type of error could not decipher the principle of sequences of tenses. When one is talking about the same event or group of events, one must make sure that he or she sticks to a single general tense-present, past or future and this was the students' problem.
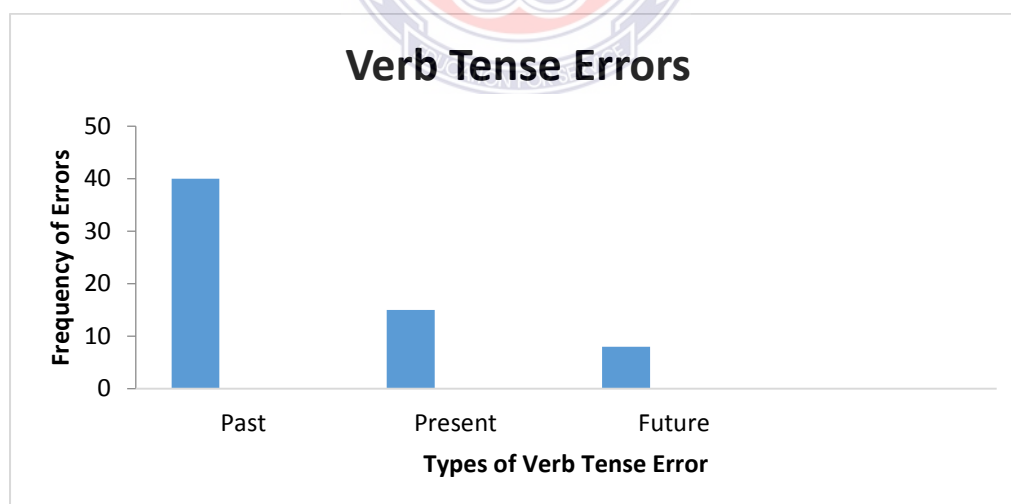
Figure 4.2. Types of verb tense errors

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4.4 Determiner-noun concord errors

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

4.4.1 Count- noun

This is basically one whose referent can be counted, as in one cow, two cows, but not *one beef, *two beefs. The referents of these nouns are viewed as individuated things or persons. The following count nouns include both regular plurals in -s and invariable or 'zero' plurals:

ten cyclists, two trout, a dozen eggs, three new television series, five minutes, five salmon, one grapefruit, four crossroads, two and a half kilos, and a hundred sheep. Countable nouns are nouns that can be quantified in units and numbers, that is, nouns that can be counted.

Examples of the determiner count errors that students made include:

i.   <u>The students comes</u> to the party on time.

ii.   <u>The teachers eats</u> all the food that were served.

iii.   <u>Some waters was</u> served also.

iv.   The boys in my class plays all kinds of game.

v.   The tables and chairs are arranged in a nice way.

In the examples, students mismatched the verbs with their referent nouns and noun phrases. In the first example, the noun phrase "the student" is a plural count-noun and therefore requires a plural verb 'come' and not a singular verb 'comes'. Also, in the third examples, "water" is a non-count noun a must not take a plural marker '-s' so the correct sentence should have been *some water was also served*.

4.4.2 Non-count nouns

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

i.   Some informations were given to my teacher about my birthday.

ii.   The head teacher asked me to bring my own furnitures to school

iii.   Some of my friends gave me some advices.

iv.   Some machines were brought to the ground.

v.   My mother gave me some equipments for school.

The words underlined in the sentences should have been written without the plural markers as in *information, furniture*, *advice*, *machine and equipment.*

Table 4.1.3 presents the sub-categorization of the determiner noun concord errors

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Table 4.3. Determiner-noun concord errors

Types of error	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Count noun errors	20	54.1
Non-count errors	17	45.9
Total	**37**	**100**

Table 4.3 shows the different determiner-noun concord errors committed by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 4.4. The different types of determiner-noun concord errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns.
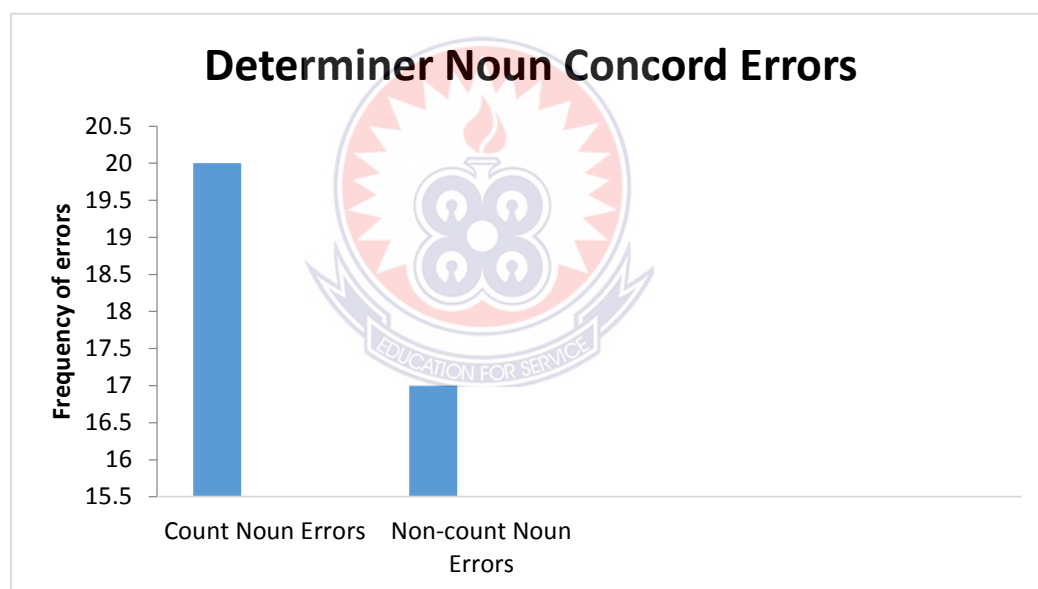
Figure 4.3. Types of Determiner Noun Concord Errors

From the table above, it could be observed that students were ignorant about the concord rules and therefore misapplied them in their sentence constructions.

4.5 Coordinated subject concord errors

Concord with coordinated subjects has been discussed by Quirk et al (2000) as a process where equivalent units are linked by *and, or* or *but*. They further explain

that it can occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements, words. Some of the common errors that students committed could be classified under the following sub-headings: coordination with *and*, coordination within a singular subject and coordination with *or* and *nor*.

4.5.1 Coordinating conjunction 'and' concord errors

When the subjects in a sentence are joined by "and," all the subjects collectively control the verb. Hence, you should use a plural verb. For example, it is wrong to write

John Minta and Michael Hayford <u>writes</u> good blog posts

The statement is wrong because there are two subjects in the sentence that is 'John Minta' and 'Michael Hayford' hence making the subject plural. Therefore, the accompanying verb should be 'write' (plural) as the two subjects control the verb. We therefore, have the correct sentence as

John Minta and Micheal Hayford <u>write</u> good blog posts.

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

The Director of Education and founder of Liberty International Chapel <u>are</u> humble.

Here, 'the director of education' and 'founder of liberty international chapel' are two titles referring to the same person and therefore take a singular verb 'is' and not 'are'. However, if the definite article, "the" is used before the second title, it means both titles refer to separate people. In that case, you should use a plural verb. For example,

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The Director of Education and the founder of Liberty Chapel <u>are</u> humble.

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

i. My father and mother <u>is</u> going to buy me a present from the shop.

ii. Kwasi and Ama, my best friends also <u>comes</u>.

iii. The headmaster and staff <u>was</u> sitting in the office.

iv. Food and drinks <u>is</u> also served.

v. The headmaster and founder of my church <u>are</u> happy.

In this instance, students could not apply the rules of coordination with *and* which simply states clearly that, when a subject consists of two or more noun phrases (or clauses) coordinated by *and,* distinction has to be made between coordination and coordinative apposition. Coordination comprises cases that correspond to fuller coordinate forms. A plural verb is used even if each conjoin is singular. The examples cited from students' essays could be attributed to over generalization of rules as most students concentrated on singular subjects with their corresponding verbs forgetting about the rules of coordinating conjunctions. Quirk and Greenbaum (2002), Leech and Startvik (2002), and Yankson (1994) discuss this type of error under coordinated subject concord error.

4.5.2 Subordinating conjunction concord errors.

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

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Everyone was happy <u>when </u>it stopped raining

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

Mr. Ansah and his wife together with his children <u>are </u>decent.

Over here, both 'and' which is coordinating conjunction and 'together' which is also a subordinating conjunction appear in the same sentence, but then, 'and' appears first. Therefore, all the subjects collectively must control the verb in the sentence. But if a subordinating conjunction appears first, only the subjects which appear *before* the subordinator control the verb. For instance,

Mr. Ansah with his wife and children <u>is</u> tall.

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

i.   My father with his friends <u>buy</u> a present for me.

ii.   .<u>Everyone</u> were happy when I open the door to come out.

iii.   My best friend and teachers together with my headmaster <u>was</u> present.

iv.   My family and friends beside my church members <u>is</u> rejoicing.

v.   My uncles with aunties and my grandmother <u>were</u> there too.

The sentences indicate clearly that the students could simply not decipher the rules governing the use of subordinating conjunction structures where the subject controls the verb in each case. As a result, their structures could not agree in terms of subject and verb as the rule of concord states.

4.5.3 Correlative conjunction concord errors

Correlative conjunctions connect similar parts of a sentence, such as adjectives, nouns, and clauses. However, unlike coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions are combinations of coordinating conjunctions, not only a single word. They always come in pairs and link grammatically equivalent items. Some commonly used correlative conjunctions are:

'As…as', 'Both…and', 'Neither…nor', 'Either... or', 'Not only…but also', 'Not…but', 'Whether…or'

For example,

i.   I like banku with hot pepper <u>as</u> much <u>as</u> rice with palava sauce.

ii.   <u>Both</u> Tony <u>and</u> Peter played the game.

iii.   <u>Neither</u> Senam<u>n or </u>Selikem want to see the cat.

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

1.   <u>Neither</u> my mother <u>or</u> father <u>wants</u> to see my friends.

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2. Neither the students as well as their teachers is present.

3. Either John or Prince my friend <u>attend</u> the party.

4. Neither my class teacher or lest friend <u>some</u> to the birthday party.

5. Either Kofi or Ama <u>come</u> to my house.

The sentences from students' scripts could be attributed to the fact that students could not apply the rule of correlated conjunction which states that when two subjects are found in sentences only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb. Table 4.5 shows the sub-categorization of coordinated subject concord errors

Table 4.4. Coordinated subject concord errors

Type of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage
Coordinating conjunction concord errors	29	50.9
Subordinating conjunction concord errors	18	31.6
Correlative conjunction concord errors	10	17.5
Total	**57**	**100**

Table 4.1.4 shows the different coordinated subject concord errors made by students in the study and these are presented in Figure 4.4. The different types realized show that most of the students could not decipher between the uses of the conjunctions to agree with the verbs in the English Language.

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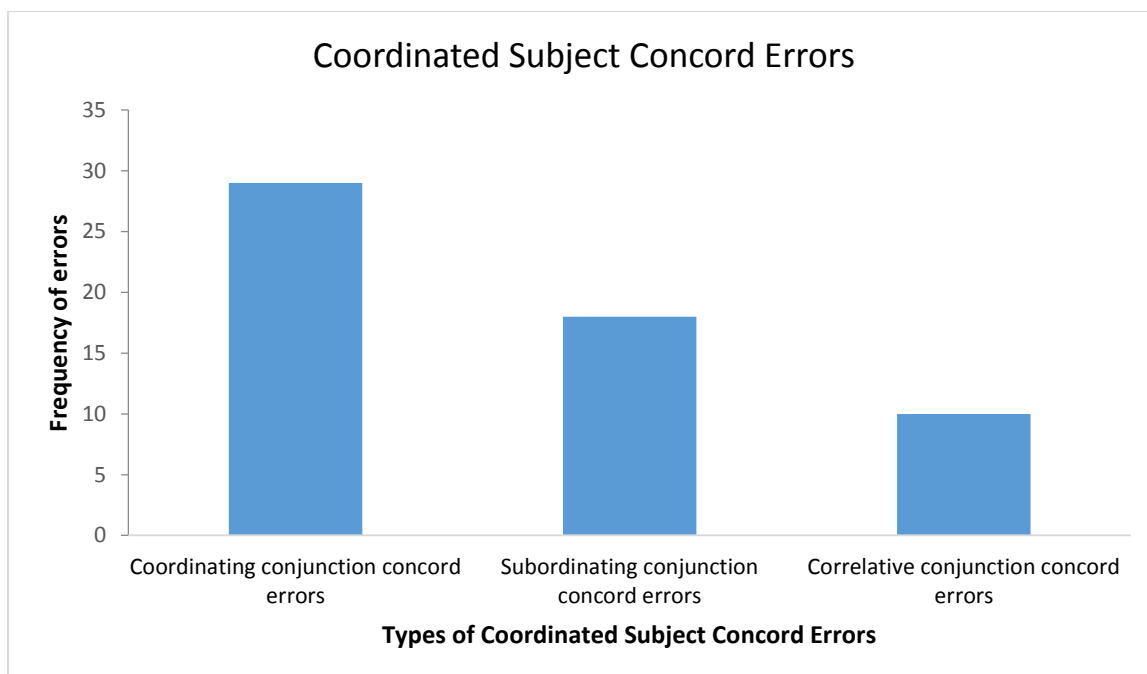
Figure 4.4. Types of coordinated subject concord errors

4.6 Noun-Pronoun concord errors

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

1. She lost her life

2. They lost their lives.

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

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

4.6.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

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

For instance,

1. Kofi prays football (he prays football)

2. Esi sweeps the room (she sweeps the room)

3. The bird sings nicely (it sings nicely)

This rule was overtly violated by same students

These sentences were written as:

1. Kofi pray football (football)

2. Esi sweep the room (she sweep the room)

3. The bird sing nicely (it sing nicely)

4.6.2 A pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase

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

1. Kwame and John hurt their feet

(They hurt their feet.)

2. The pastor and his wife have built a house.

(They have built a house.)

3. Emelia and Yaa like oranges.

   (They like oranges.)

4. The blue barrels and the black buckets are filled with water.

   (They are filled with water.)

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

1. Kwame and John hurts their feet.

2. The pastor and his wife built a house.

3. Emelia and Yaa likes oranges

4. The blue barrel and the black bucket is filled with water.

In examples (1) and (3), the students who committed these errors thought that once the subjects are in plural forms, an –s should be added to the verb. In examples (2) and (4), some of the students also took *the pastor and his wife* and *the blue barrel and the black buckets* to be one subject and therefore matched them with singular verbs. Table 4.5 presents a summary of the noun-pronoun concord errors

Table 4.5. Noun pronoun concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Personal pronoun in the third person	26	56.5
A pronoun which refers to the plural noun phrase	20	43.5
Total	**46**	**100**

Table 4.1.5 presents the different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by students and these are presented in Figure 4.6. The different types of noun-pronoun

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concord errors from students' essays indicate that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with the verb in structures in English Language is difficult for them.
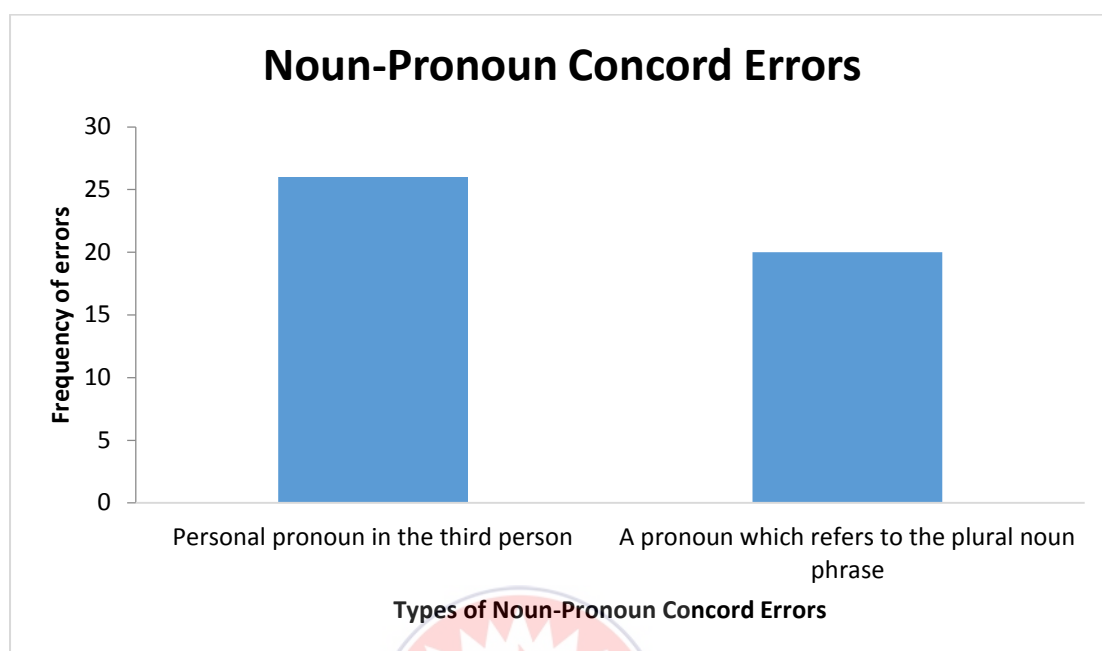
Figure 4.5 Types of noun pronoun concord errors

4.1.6. Summary of the categorization of concord errors.

Table 4.1.6 presents a summary of the categories of concord errors identified in students' scripts.

Table 4.6. Summary of the categories of concord errors

Categories of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Subject-verb concord errors	62	23.3
Verb-tense concord errors	63	23.8
Determiner-noun concord errors	37	14
Coordinated subject concord errors	57	21.5
Noun pronoun concord errors	46	17.4
Total	**265**	**100**

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The table is represented in Figure 4.6
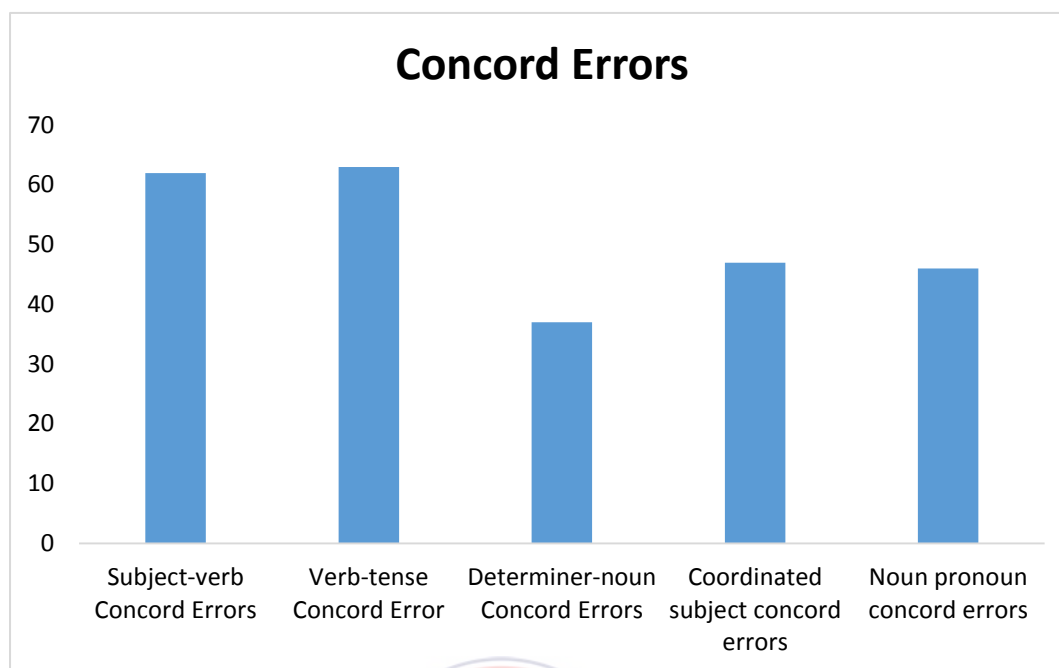
Figure 4.6. Summary of the categories of concord errors

4.7 Summary of the categories of concord errors

Figure 4.1.6 shows that verb-tense concord errors constitute the highest error that could be found in the students' written essays. This had the percentage of 23.8% with 63 instances recorded in this study. It can be said that these errors may be due to simplification strategy and overgeneralization of English language rules. Some substitution errors like *buy* instead of *bought* and *has* instead of *had* might have resulted from inadequate competence in the target language. The chart again reveals that subject-verb concord errors have a total of 62 errors occurrences representing 23.3% was due to lack of knowledge of the basic rules on subject-verb agreement. The next highest type is coordinated subject concord errors also constituting 21.5% representing 57 cases clearly shows that students are not familiar with the rules of concord in terms of singular subjects and its accompany verb and vice-versa. Also,

noun-pronoun concord errors recorded 46 representing 17.4%. Finally, determiner-noun concord errors had a frequency of 37 representing 14%. These errors also occurred due to the students' inability to apply the rules of classes of determiners.

4.8 Causes of students' errors

A lot of causes of errors have been presented by Linguists. They form the main reasons behind some errors committed by both teachers and students of English as a second language. The common sources of errors are interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, and the context of learning, including both teaching materials and teaching methods adopted by teachers. For the purpose of this study, analysis shows clearly that most of the errors committed by student were attributed to the afore-mentioned factors. In the following sections, these causes are discussed one after the other.

4.8.1 Interlingual Transfer

Interlingual transfer (i.e. transfer from the mother tongue or any other previously learned language) in second language learning is a major cognitive strategy that learners fall back on when their linguistic means falls short of achieving their communicative ends. Needless to say, the mother tongue is an additional source for hypothesis formation that the first language learner does not have. The influence of the mother tongue and the pervasiveness of interlingual transfer are indisputable, especially in learning situations where students' exposure to the second language is confined to a few hours per week of formal classroom instruction (Mahmoud, 2000). Thus, interlingual transfer is a strategy that is readily available to the learners to compensate for the inadequacies when attempting to communicate in the foreign language. Deviations resulting from interlingual transfer have been recorded at all

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linguistic levels (Gass & Selinker, 1994). The interlingual errors that students committed under this structure are singular subjects with plural verbs. The following examples show that students committed errors in their use.

    i.   <u>My friend give</u> me some gift.

    ii.   <u>The headmaster write</u> something for my father.

    iii.   <u>My mother prepare</u> my **favorites** food for me.

    iv.   <u>The class teacher give</u> me some questions to answer.

    v.   <u>The class prefect collect</u> some answer sheets from the head teacher for me.

Though the subject of each of the sentences is singular, their corresponding verbs are plural. Erkaya (2000) describes this kind of error as Interlingual. It occurs as a result of the use of an element from one language while speaking or using another. Most of the students speak Ewe (Anlo and Avenor). In Ewe, verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense. Examples are as follows:

    1) Ama dzra agbeli. (Ama sells cassava)

    2) Ama kple Kofi dzra agbeli (Ama and Kofi sell cassava)

The verb dzra 'sell' maintains the same form in the two examples even though a singular subject is used in the first example while a plural subject is used in the second example. English on the other hand, has a different grammatical rule. Students however matched singular subjects with plural verbs because they often have erratic use of the third person –s. With this, they think that some verbs create a phonetic environment that makes them sound more 'third person friendly' than others.

4.8.2 Intralingual transfer

A second cause of the errors is 'intralingual transfer', due to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language. They are

> Items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner, in this case, tries to "derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language, Richards (1971, p. 6).

Such errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. Brown (1994) cites research suggesting that the early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of interference (interlingual transfer), but once learners have begun to acquire parts of a new system, more and more intralingual transfer-generalization within the target language – is manifested.

The intralingual errors that students committed are related to plural subject with singular verbs. Generally, in English, a count noun takes an −s when forming its plural. For example, girl (singular), girl*s* (plural). However, with verbs it is the third person singular form in the present tense that takes −s. The fact that a plural noun usually ends in an −s does not necessarily mean that verbs should also have an −s at the end to make them plural. Here, the students mismatched the subjects and their verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. Examples are:

i. A lot of <u>peoples comes</u> to the party.

ii. Everybody <u>eats </u>and <u>drinks.</u>

iii. *My* <u>friends </u>and <u>teachers</u> also <u>brings </u>some gifts

iv. <u>All the girls is</u> sweeping the assemble halls

v. <u>The headmaster and teachers was</u> at a meeting.

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Haydari (2012) asserts that these are errors that occur during the learning process of the second language. They are developmental errors. Developmental errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience. These errors are also intralingual because the authors made faulty generalization of the rules of −s inflection of nouns. Generally, in English, a count noun takes an −s when forming its plural. For example, boy (singular), boys (plural). However, with verbs it is the third person singular form in the present tense that takes −s. The fact that a plural noun usually ends in an −s does not necessarily mean that verbs should also have an −s at the end to make them plural. These students may be operating intuitively by thinking that the first −s of the noun attracts a second one of the verb.

4.8.3 The Context of Learning

Teaching methods and materials within the classroom can also be a source of errors. Taylor (1975) thinks that the faulty presentation of structures or words in a textbook, improper contextualization of pattern, and teachers' ignorance might lead to errors. Taking into account the data obtained from the responses of the students in the questionnaire, it was found that a considerable number of students believe that methods of teaching sometimes plays a role in their weakness in the English concord. In my opinion, traditional methods in teaching writing are not appropriate, at least in the case of the students learning English. Considering the data collected from teachers' responses to the questionnaire, it can be deduced that most of the teachers still stick to the traditional methods of teaching. When they were asked if they adopt new methods in teaching concord, three (3) teachers out of five (5) responded that they seldom do so, When they were asked if they use supplementary materials in teaching concord two (2) responded "never" while one teacher responded "always".

According to Richards (2015), teachers' attempt to communicate in the target language without having completely acquired the grammatical form necessary to do so causes errors. He adds that when it happens like that the teacher automatically transfers errors to his students. It was revealed that most of the teachers who teach English Language at the Junior High School did not study the subject as their major subjects and therefore have inadequate skills in teaching the subject. Two of the teachers who studied Technical Skills and Social Studies at the University are now teaching English Language because there are no teachers to take over the subjects. It was noted through the interview and the observation that some of the teacher-factors that contributed to the errors were inappropriate teaching methods, inability to give and mark exercises and assignments promptly, and the tendency of teachers to pay much attention to the grammar aspects to the neglect of the other aspects, especially, writing. Some of the teachers always use the local language throughout their teachings. The use of pidgin by some teachers was also identified as a major factor. This has been a problem for the school authorities any time staff meetings are held.

4.9 Summary of causes of concord errors

The analysis has revealed that the concord errors in the students' scripts in English could be traced to several sources; misapplication of concord rules, simplification strategy and overgeneralization of English rules, inadequate competence in the target language, mother tongue (L1) interference, wrong spelling and inadequate motivation to speak and write good English. It could be said that difficulties of the students to express themselves in good English are common in Ghana and stem from the common reasons of limited exposure to good standard English and laziness of teachers and students to correct their mistakes.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the data which comprised the students' scripts, interview and observation. The study highlighted some common concord errors that students commit and the causes that account for these errors. In all, five (5) major types of concord errors were identified in the students' scripts. The error categories were the subject-verb concord error (62), verb- tense concord error (63), determiner-noun concord error (37) and coordinated subject concord error (47). The second research question was aimed at examining the causes of the students' errors. These causes were identified as poor teaching methods and materials, L1 interference, and intralingual causes. The next chapter discusses the summary of the study, their implication and suggestions for future study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND

RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study. It summarizes findings of the analysis and interpretations made in the previous chapter. The main aim of the study was to analyze the concord errors in the written essays of JHS 2 students in Akatsi- Zuta D/A Basic School in the Volta Region of Ghana. The data was gathered from fifty-two (52) students. Essays marked revealed several concord errors that were categorized. The errors were broadly categorized under subject-verb concord errors, verb-tense concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord error and noun-pronoun concord errors. The next section presents a summary of the findings made of the errors identified. This is followed with a discussion on the causes of the errors. The fourth section presents pedagogical implications of the results and the role of concord in the teaching and learning of English language. The chapter finally ends with suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the findings

This chapter has analyzed the data which comprised the students' scripts, interview and observation. After analyzing all the fifty two (52) scripts of the respondents, it was discovered that JHS 2 students at Akatsi- Zuta Junior High School, make all kinds of concord errors in their writings. Out of the fifty two (52) scripts, verb tense errors concord had the highest number of errors and the lowest were coordinated subject – verb concord errors. After analyzing all the fifty two (52) scripts of the respondents, it was discovered that JHS 2 students at Akatsi- Zuta Junior

High School, make all kinds of concord errors in their writings. Out of the fifty two (52) scripts, verb tense errors concord had the highest number of errors and the lowest were coordinated subject – verb concord errors. The study highlighted some common concord errors that students commit and the causes that account for these errors. In all, five (5) major types of concord errors were identified in the students' scripts. The error categories were the subject-verb concord error (62), verb- tense concord error (63), determiner-noun concord error (37) and coordinated subject concord error (47). The second research question was aimed at examining the causes of the students' errors. These causes were identified as poor teaching methods and materials, L1 interference, and intralingual causes. Also, the chapter presents the summary of the findings which comprises the instruments used in data collection. It also, highlighted some common errors that students commit and the causes that accounted for these errors. It was also discovered that though students had some understanding of subject – verb agreement rules, they were not able to apply those particular rules appropriately. Interesting, it was observed that the students' use of the plural subject with singular verbs was as a result of their own intuitive rule that count nouns with the –s plural marker must use a verb with an –s inflection.

 For example,

 These teachers allows candidates to do whatever they like in the above example, the author thought that the –s of teachers should attract an –s in the verb, thus allows instead of allow. Students should be made to understand that singular count nouns take –s in their plural forms, however, when a verb takes an –s, it means that verb in the present tense is third person singular. The opposite of the above observation is the singular subjects with plural verbs. These deviations were made because the authors thought the subject had no –s, therefore the verb should not have any –s.

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For example:

The laboratory also help students understand some topics.

Students should make conscious efforts to understand the subject – verb agreement rule that an –s is added to the verb is subject is a singular noun. Therefore, the above sentence should be:

The laboratory also helps students understand some topics

Another finding is that concord errors such as determiner – noun concord errors, coordinated subject – verb concord errors were low frequency in the students' scripts as these structures are not common in their **repertoire.** It was also discovered that most of the errors committed in the students' scripts were developmental errors, interference errors, and psycholinguistic errors.

5.2 Causes of students errors

The study examined students' attitudes towards English language and grammar in particular because attitude is the major the major determine factor to proficiency in language acquisition. It was revealed that attitude played a major role in the poor performance of the students in English grammar. This has affected the English language in general as well as all other areas of their academic work. It is necessary that further investigations into are done in this area to find suitable solutions to what accounts for students dislike of grammar as well as English language in general is a way of attempting to find an antidote to the problems that hinder our educational system.

In the discussions that followed the administration of test on concord to respondent disclosed that one of the prominent factors that contribute to students'

poor performance in English is their negative attitude towards the study of English. In literature, it is known that the learner's attitude affects his or her study of the second language. Schumann (1978) explains that attitude deals with whether the L2 group and TL group hold positive or negative attitude towards each other. A positive attitude helps the L2 learner to be more successful in the learning of L2 but a negative attitude makes them less successful.

The integrative and instrumental motivations are the two types of motivations that drive learners in their learning process. Cook (1996) explains that integrative motivation involves the learner's more admiration for the target culture and this great admiration makes the student more successful in the L2 classroom. The instrumental motivation is the student's motive for learning a second language which is to pass examination or to get a certain kind of job. Cook (1996) adds that L2 motivation is still being researched. Asinyor (2012) agrees with Cook in her assertion that L2 motivation is still being researched. Asinyor (2012) explains that the educational system in Ghana requires that a student gets at least a pass or credit in English before he can proceed with his academic ambitions and these students understand the values of good speaking and writing ability, they are not bothered about studying English.

One cannot blame the students entirely in this matter because it could be possible that teachers could not play their parts well to ensure that students develop positive attitude toward the L2 or possibly, teaching of Grammar lacks the innovation and effectiveness to generate motivation in the teaching and learning process. Lack of textbooks and other relevant teaching and learning materials contributed immensely to this problem as revealed by the interviewees. Any programme designed for students for learning needs some materials as a guide and if this is lacking, the programme

becomes ineffective. This unfortunate is the case in our classrooms because the necessary materials to support teaching and learning are not there, both teachers and students experienced the negative effects. How these factors are assessed indicate the rate at which these affects the students in the classroom.

As a matter of fact, attitude is clearly an individual-driven trait but at least two external factors contribute to its development: environmental and pedagogic. The environmental factors includes social, cultural, political and economic imperatives that shape the L2 educational milieu. The pedagogic factors refer to how interaction between teachers, learner and the learning situation develop positive or negative attitudes in the learner. Most of the scholars claim that L2 development is influenced by teachers' attitudes more than parental or community wide attitudes. Therefore, teachers need to consider all they do to impact knowledge in the language classroom so that learners can benefit from the teaching and learning process.

5.3 The role of concord errors in the teaching and learning of English language

Many educators and theorists in the field of error analysis have focused on the importance of second language learners' errors. Corder (1967) indicates that errors are significant in three different ways. First to the teachers, in that they tell them how far towards the goal the learners have advanced and consequently, what remains for them to learn. Second, they provide to the researchers evidence of how language is learnt or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learners are employing in their discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learners themselves, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learners use in order to learn. Research has provided empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving grammatical accuracy (Carroll and Swain, 1993).

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Indeed, as Carter (1997 p.35) notes, 'Knowing more about how grammar works is to understand more about how grammar is used and misused'. There is a need for students to recognize the significance of errors which occur in their writing, to fully grasp and understand the nature of the errors made. This requires English Language teachers to be better equipped, more sensitive and aware of the difficulties students face with regard to grammar. In other words, it is a way the learners have for testing their hypotheses about the nature of the language they are learning. Taking these ideas into consideration, this study attempts to identify the grammatical errors which students make in writing English essays in order to help teachers of English tackle the problem and to indicate the points of weakness in English writing.

5.4 Pedagogical implications

The findings of this research revealed that students have problems with concord rules. The study was also to find a solution to address the students' problems with concord. The solution has pedagogical implications for curriculum designers, textbook writers, teachers of English Language and students of Akatsi –Zuta D/A Basic School and other schools by extension.

5.4.1 Curriculum designers

Curriculum designers in the Ghana Education Service should consider the introduction of topics that could suit the level of children in the Basic Schools in the country. A starting point will be to contract experts to organize workshops for teachers of the language especially on Grammar lessons to enhance effective delivery in the classroom.

Since the only category of concord to be taught in the Junior High School syllabus relates to the grammatical concord, the present researcher suggests that syllabus

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designers endeavour to include all the categories or types of concord in the syllabus. These categories can spread throughout the three year programme. For instance, in year two others and so forth.

5.4.2 Textbook writers

Textbook writers should not limit the contents in textbooks they write to the principle to the grammatical concord. They should emphasize the other categories. Secondly, they should include sufficient exercises that will help both teachers and students to understand and gain both implicit and explicit knowledge of the rules of concord thereby improving the proficiency of these teachers of English and their students.

5.4.3 Teachers

Teachers of English, especially those at the Junior High must do well to understand all the rules of concord so that in their teaching, they can explain the rules of concord with dexterity for students to internalize the various aspects of the broader concept of concord such as Noun – pronoun, verb – verb, determiner – noun and lots more. If teachers of English can decipher which concord rule may be applicable in a particular context they can help to clarify a concord rule that perhaps was misunderstood or partially learned by their students. Teachers of English should feel a strong sense of responsibility towards the students they teach.

Teachers should not be only concerned with the success of their students in both internal and external examinations, but teachers should maintain a good relationship with their students. Positive teacher – student relationship develops and improves students' academic performance. Teachers who are affable, maintain a good relationship with their students and are responsive to their academic needs contributes

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greatly to the academic well-being of the students. According to Otivio (2013), teachers should make students more sensitive to concord rules in the input that surrounds them. The more these students notice and re-notice the 3rd person –s outside the classroom, the more likely they are to restructure their inter language. Otivio (2013) entreats teachers to encourage students which might contribute to long term overall accuracy.

5.4.4 Students

Students should develop positive attitude towards the study of English Language. They should change their mindset that English Language is automatic and it is mere of speech subject them writing and should be prepared to be committed to the study of it. For instance, they should gradually move from lexical intuitive and offer erratic use of third person –s towards more conscious and systematic sort of mapping and deployment of the underlying systems when it comes to the study of concord rules. Finally, students should revise their notes on concord regularly to avoid deviations associated with concord.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

This study did not cover all the issues concerning attitude as far as teaching and learning a language is concerned because that is not the ultimate goal of the study. The main focus of the study is to analyze the concord errors among JHS2 students Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic School. Therefore, there is the need for further investigation into attitudinal factors, how they influence teaching and learning of English language, especially the Grammar aspect (concord). It is also necessary to look at the elements that influence students' acquisition of language and its structures so as to plan lessons to meet the various needs of the learners.

It is important for teachers of English language at all levels of education to study and analyze error patterns of their students to know the challenges of their students in order to design adequate lesson notes, and also adopt strategies that will help students grasp the concept they teach. More teachers should study problems of students regarding the use of L2 in our schools, to help them with the challenges there in. The causes of concord errors in the written essays of students are varied. There is therefore the need for further investigation into the methods used in teaching of concord lessons at the Junior High School level of education. Knowledge of this could help find ways and means of improving upon the quality of teaching English Grammar in the Junior High School to enhance students' competence in English Language. English language teachers should be trained adequately in second language teaching for example, in error analysis and error correction so that they can deal with L1 interference errors effectively.

Although, this research has tried to find out students' knowledge of concord and analyze their concord errors, that is only an aspect of Grammar; therefore, more research should be carried out in Grammar so that the challenges students face with grammatical rules will be made clearer to them.

5.6 Conclusion

The study has provided an account of the concord errors made by JHS two students at Akatsi-Zuta D/A Basic School in the Volta Region of Ghana. Based on the discussions of the findings and the examples given in chapter four, it could be concluded that students in this study committed four types of concord errors that is the subject-verb concord errors, the verb- tense concord errors, the determiner- noun concord errors and the coordinated subject concord errors. It goes with the saying that

most of the students errors could be attributed to teachers context of instruction, errors caused by students and errors caused by L1 transfer. It is therefore the responsibility of curriculum designers and teachers of English as a second language as a whole to teach the Grammar aspect of the language using the appropriate methodology.

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APPENDIX 1

COMPOSITION QUESTION

Write a composition on one of the following questions:

Your composition should be about 250 words long.

1. My first day at the Junior High School (JHS).

2. How I celebrated my last birthday.