

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**EXPLORING NOMINAL GROUP USAGE IN ENGLISH AMONG STUDENTS
OF MPAHA COMMUNITY SHS, CENTRAL GONJA DISTRICT - SAVANNAH
REGION**



ZAKARIA AMADU ISSAHAKU

MASTER OF EDUCATION

2025

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**ZAKARIA AMADU ISSAHAKU
(7231970002)**



**A dissertation submitted to the school of graduate studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of
the degree of Master of Education
(Teaching English as a Second Language)**

**DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS,
FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

JUNE, 2025

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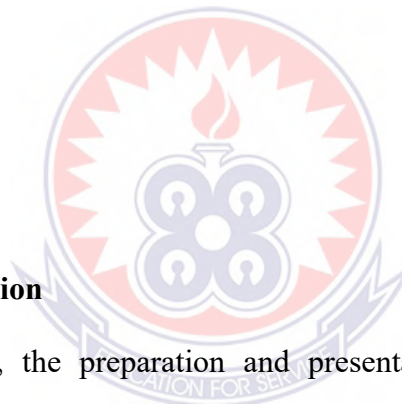
DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature:

Date:



Supervisor's Declaration

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

Supervisor: Dr. Kwaku Ofori

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God for granting me the grace to go through this program and to my wonderful family.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Almighty God for His mercy and protection throughout the completion of this work. My greatest appreciation goes to my mentor and supervisor, Dr. Kwaku Ofori (affectionately called *Koo Kori*). Thank you for the fatherly care and training you give to all students who have the privilege of getting close to you. Your readiness and availability meant a lot to me. I also wish to acknowledge my family for their diverse support, especially my sisters and my lovely wife, Rahmanatu Abdul Sammed. I cannot complete this acknowledgement without mentioning Professor Fofu Lomotey for her guidance. I further thank all the lecturers in the Department of Applied Linguistics, and I am also appreciative of all my course mates.

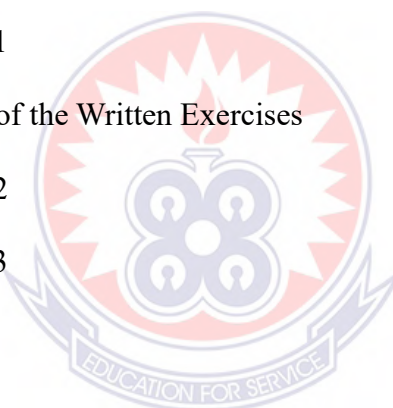


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

GES – Ghana Education Service

CLT – Cognitive Load Theory

SFG – Systematic Functional Grammar

L1 – First Language



ABSTRACT

This study investigates the usage of English nominal groups among first-year students at Mpaha Community Senior High School, a rural second-cycle institution in Ghana. Nominal groups, as crucial grammatical structures, play a significant role in the development of students' written and spoken English proficiency. However, students at Mpaha SHS often encounter difficulties in identifying and constructing these structures correctly, impeding effective communication and comprehension. The study aims to explore the nature of these challenges, assess the teaching strategies currently employed by English language instructors, and examine the availability and use of relevant teaching and learning resources within the school. Using a qualitative research design, the study draws on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and content analysis of students' written exercises to provide a comprehensive analysis of how nominal groups are taught and understood. Findings indicate that students struggle particularly with the order of modifiers, the use of determiners, and constructing complex noun phrases. The challenges are exacerbated by limited exposure to proficient English usage, insufficient instructional materials, and traditional, non-contextual teaching methods that fail to meet students' linguistic needs. The research highlights the urgent need for targeted pedagogical interventions, improved resource allocation, and professional development for teachers to enhance the teaching and learning of nominal groups. The study revealed significant influences of students' linguistic backgrounds on their English usage and highlighted effective instructional strategies that can improve understanding and application of nominal groups. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service frequently organize workshops, seminars and refresher courses that will help upgrade the professional skills and knowledge of the teachers. It also contributes to the broader discourse on second language acquisition by contextualizing the difficulties ESL learners face with nominal group structures in under-resourced educational settings.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study analyzes the Usage of English nominal groups among students at Mpaha Community Senior High School. Principally, the research focuses attention on form one students at Mpaha Community Senior High School in an attempt to find out why these students have problems identifying and constructing the English nominal groups, the structure and functions as used in statements or texts. It is also a project to examine the current teaching strategies and methods teachers of English language at Mpaha Community S.H.S School employ in teaching the topic at the school.

This chapter presents the foundation of the study and is organized into the following sections: Background of the Study, Statement of Problem, Purpose of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Organization of the Study, Limitations, and Delimitations.

1.1 Background of the Study

The relevance of English as a second language (L2) is recognized worldwide. In the first place the commanding position of English as an international communicative language is undeniable.

It is also a known fact that about 142 countries in the world obligatorily use the English Language in their national educational policy. The expectation is that, students and other learners of English as a Second Language who go through this national educational policy, can communicate in English language proficiently, and effectively interpret any written piece of text in English to non- native speakers of English

language. Unfortunately, the English nominal group which is an important aspect of understanding, and usage of the language remains a challenge in its identification and usage because of the ordering, especially, those nominal groups with complex structures (Martin, Doran & Zhang, 2021; Wiggins et al. 2020; Vahedian Shahroodi, et al., 2023). The Nominal Group in English is an essential grammatical structure for learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). Teaching the nominal group effectively is crucial because it allows learners to build more complex and informative sentences, improving both their spoken and written communication. In learning English as a Second Language, the nominal group consists of a noun as its head, along with determiners, adjectives, and other modifiers (either pre-modifiers or postmodifiers), all of which play a significant role in developing descriptive language (Thornbury, 2006; Vahedian-Shahroodi, et al., 2023).

Understanding the structure and function of the nominal group is fundamental in helping English as Second Language learners expand their vocabulary and sentencebuilding skills. Research by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) underscores that mastering the elements of the nominal group, such as adjective order and relative clauses, is critical for learners to progress from simple to complex sentence structures. The complexity of nominal groups in English often poses challenges for ESL learners, particularly when dealing with embedded clauses or multiple modifiers (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 245).

Additionally, teaching the nominal group in the ESL context has been linked to improvements in learners' academic writing skills. According to Hinkel (2002), many learners struggle with the dense, formal structures found in academic texts, which often rely on complex nominal groups. By focusing on the teaching of nominal groups,

instructors can help ESL students become more proficient in writing and speaking using complex noun phrases that are typical in academic writing leading to more precise and professional communication (Hinkel, 2002).

For beginner ESL learners, understanding the order of adjectives in nominal groups (e.g., "*a big red car*" rather than "*a red big car*") is crucial for developing fluency.

Research by Gass and Selinker (2008) highlights that teaching this grammatical concept using explicit instruction and practice exercises can significantly improve learners' ability to produce correct nominal groups in both spoken and written contexts. Moreover, Nation (2001) emphasizes that nominal groups also play a vital role in reading comprehension, as they help learners identify key information in a text.

In the classroom, teachers often focus on the meaning and form of nominal groups through both contextualized examples and focused grammar exercises (Parrott, 2010). Techniques like sentence building and grammar drills help learners become comfortable with expanding their nominal groups and applying them in various contexts (Parrott, 2010, p. 195). Integrating nominal groups into task-based learning can also enhance their application in real-life communication (Willis & Willis, 2007).

1.2 Statement of Problem

The English nominal group, which according to Halliday (1994, p. 123), is a unit of meaning that functions as a single entity in the clause, plays a significant role in effective communication and comprehension in both spoken and written English. However, at MPAHA Senior High School, a rural secondary school, students often face challenges in constructing and interpreting nominal groups correctly, which may affect their overall performance in English language subjects.

Despite the crucial role of the English nominal group in effective communication, students at Mpaha Community S.H.S who study English as a second language struggle to identify, construct and use the nominal groups accurately in writing and in their everyday communications.

Preliminary observations suggest that students at this rural school frequently struggle with aspects such as noun modification, the use of determiners, adjectives, and prepositional phrases, resulting in unclear or grammatically incorrect expressions. Additionally, the teaching strategies employed by some teachers of the English Language at rural areas, the limited exposure to proficient English speakers and access to basic language teaching and learning resources in rural areas may further contribute to these difficulties.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This research seeks to investigate the challenges form one students at MPAHA SHS face in identifying, constructing and using the English nominal groups.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. Assess the challenges students at Mpaha S.H.S face in identifying and constructing the English nominal groups.
2. To examine the current teaching strategies English language teachers use in teaching the topic during lesson delivery at Mpaha Community S.H.S.
3. To assess the English Language teaching and learning resources and other language support materials available in the school for effective teaching and learning of the English nominal groups at Mpaha SHS.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What challenges do students at Mpaha S.H.S face in identifying and constructing the English nominal groups?
2. What current teaching strategies do English language teachers use in teaching the topic during lesson delivery at Mpaha Community S.H.S?
3. What teaching and learning resources are available in the school for effective teaching and learning of the English nominal groups at Mpaha SHS?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that, its results will help teachers to identify the actual weakness of students and to use appropriate teaching strategies to assist the learners to overcome their challenges. Other teachers may adopt and adapt the suggestions here to enable them devise better methods of teaching the nominal groups much easier to students. The findings from this study will also enable G.E.S officials, and other stakeholders in education, particularly, those responsible for the distribution of teaching and learning resources to second cycle institutions to realize the negative effects of inadequate supply of teaching and learning resources to the various schools especially, in rural contexts. For students, the findings will provide insights into the specific challenges they face in mastering the English nominal group. By identifying common errors and difficulties, the study can offer targeted strategies that will improve their proficiency in constructing grammatically correct and meaningful sentences. This is crucial for enhancing both their written and spoken English, which are essential skills for academic success and future employment opportunities.

Again, for teachers, the study will shed light on the effectiveness of current teaching methods and identify areas where pedagogical approaches can be improved. Teachers

will benefit from the recommendations for better instructional strategies, enabling them to address the unique linguistic needs of rural students and foster a deeper understanding of nominal groups.

For curriculum developers and education policymakers, especially those working in rural areas, this research will provide valuable data on the specific language acquisition challenges in such environments. The insights gained could inform the design of more contextually relevant teaching materials and programs aimed at improving language instruction in rural schools across the country. Finally, the study will contribute to the broader field of linguistics and language education by adding to the body of knowledge on how rural contexts impact language learning, particularly in the area of nominal group usage. This could pave the way for further research on language development in under-resourced settings.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction to the study. This chapter discusses the background to the study, where general issues of the English nominal groups are presented. This is followed by the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions. The others are, the significance of the study and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 is literature reviews on related studies, both empirical and theoretical. Chapter 3 of the study presents the research methodology, where the overall approach to the study is presented. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and discussions of the results. Finally, chapter 5 presents a summary of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

1.8 Limitations

Creswell (2014), defined research limitations as restrictions or constraints that are inherent in the research design or methodology which can affect the validity, reliability, or generalizability of the findings.

To come out with a research work, there are always some challenges which the researcher encounters. I was faced with the unco-operative attitude of some teachers of the English language who thought I was going to expose their weakness in teaching the topic.

The study should have been designed to cover all the students in Mpaha Community Day Senior High School, and possibly one Junior High School students around the Mpaha community. But due to time available for the study and logistical constraints, the researcher could not broaden the study to cover all that. Students' potential lack of interest in English language studies was another challenging factor.

1.9 Delimitations

This study is delimited to the investigation of the usage of English nominal groups among Form One students at Mpaha Community Senior High School. The focus on Form One students was deliberate, as they are at the foundational stage of senior high school education where grammatical concepts such as nominal groups are formally introduced and developed. The study is further confined to Mpaha Community Senior High School due to accessibility and the researcher's familiarity with the school environment, having taught English and Ghanaian Language at the school for the past three years. In terms of content scope, the research concentrates solely on the identification, construction, structure, and functions of English nominal groups as used in students' written and spoken communication. Other grammatical structures in

English, such as adjectival groups, verbal groups, and adverbial groups, fall outside the scope of this study. Additionally, although the study examines teaching strategies and available teaching and learning resources related to the teaching of nominal groups, it does not seek to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the English language curriculum or compare instructional practices across different schools. Consequently, the findings of the study are context-specific and are not intended to be generalized beyond Mpaha Community Senior High School or to students at other levels of education.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the study of usage of the English nominal groups at Mpaha Community Senior High School. The purpose of this chapter is to examine previous works on the structure of the English nominal groups and their appropriate usage by second language learners.

English language is universal language of modern commerce, internet, aviation, communication, scientific publications and language of instruction around the globe.

In most African countries, students face considerable challenges largely due to their inability to understand what the teacher is saying. African is called Anglophone, Francophone or Lusophone according to the languages introduced by the colonial masters, and still used as official language.

Ghana for instance, is considered as an Anglophone country, where English language is studied as a second language for government business and as a language of instruction in Ghana's educational institutions right from upper primary four, through to the university. Therefore, learners' ability to identify, construct and use the English nominal groups effectively is crucial for the learners' academic success.

The study of nominal groups or noun phrases, has been long central to the understanding of English grammar, especially, with functional linguistics. Nominal groups typically consist of a noun or pronoun with accompanying modifiers that provide additional information (Martin, 1992).

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Lewis (2014), nominal groups are fundamental elements that contribute to the organization of ideas, establishing cohesion and structuring meaning in both spoken and written texts. This explains why the complexities and technicalities in the usage of the nominal groups have been a matter of concern to English users especially countries that adopted English as their official language and language of instruction, yet English is not a native language (De Klerk, 2006).

Comparatively, De Klerk's observation is not different in Ghana, particularly at Mpaha Community Senior High School where students generally use their native language as a medium of communication.

Interestingly, Ofori (2015), in his study on how first language (L1) interference impacts the use of English nominal groups among Ghanaian students, clearly supports De Klerk's observation.

Ofori's work revealed that the syntactic structures of Ghanaian indigenous languages often differ significantly from those of English, particularly in terms of modifiers placement and noun phrase organization. This interference, Ofori suggested can lead to students making consistent errors when forming English nominal groups. In the context of Mpaha Senior High School, where students first language (L1) backgrounds play a central role in their linguistic development, Ofori's work, can assist the researcher identify whether similar patterns of first language interference affect students comprehension and use of the English nominal groups.

In addition to identifying common structural errors, Ofori (2015), discusses the cognitive difficulties that arise when students attempt to switch between the syntactic

rules of their L1 and those of English. This is very relevant to my study at Mpaha Senior High School where the students' ability to internalize and apply English rules of nominal group construction may be hindered by their familiarity of first language structures. For example, while English often placed adjectives before noun as in "The black cat", many Ghanaian languages including Gonja language which is the dominant L1 at Mpaha Senior High School follow different rules, potentially leading students to produce non-standard English phrases. For instance, in Gonja order for the phrase "The black cat" is "Jiblan lembir na; 'Jiblan' mean cat, 'lembir' mean black and 'na' mean article 'the' (noun + adjective + determiner) which is completely different from the English structure rules.

Ofori (2015), research provides a broader analysis of first language (L1) interference but did not focus on specific educational environments, leaving a gap that my research at Mpaha Senior High School can address. By applying Ofori's theoretical insights to a specific Senior High School setting, my study offers a localized perspective of L1 interference in nominal group usage, highlighting how these language challenges manifest in a specific Ghanaian Senior High School context. Mpaha Senior High Schools may face unique challenges due to their particular linguistic backgrounds and educational resources, which are not accounted for in Ofori's more generalized study. This study also contributes to the literature by examining how interference issues play out in specific rural Senior High School setting, with implications of developing targeted teaching methods that could support students in mastering English nominal group structures more effectively.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: Nominal Group, Functional Slots within the Pre-Modifier, Studies on Nominal Groups Usage among Ghanaian Students,

Effects of Sequencing in English Nominal Group on Students' Understanding, Effect of Sequencing on Meaning and Interpretation, Views of Different Schools of Grammar on Nominal Group Sequence, Traditional Grammar, Structural Grammar, The Problem with Long Noun Sequences, Training Learners to Notice Linguistic Forms, Nominal Modifiers, Nouns as Modifiers, and Morphological Properties of Nouns as Modifiers.

2.1 Nominal Group: A Theoretical Perspective

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing language use in social context. Halliday (1994) and Matthiessen (2013) focus on understanding language as a set of resources for making meaning where grammatical choices help shape and structure information.

In this framework, nominal groups or phrases centered on nouns play a pivotal role in presenting and elaborating on ideas, particularly in formal and academic English. This theoretical foundation is also essential for analyzing the complexity, clarity, and specificity of information conveyed through nominal groups, especially when discussing abstract or specialized content. Functional grammar views language as a set of choices that speakers and writers make to achieve specific communication purpose. Nominal groups typically consist of a head noun with optional pre and post – modifiers, which function to add details, describe attributes, classify or specify. According to Halliday (1994), nominal groups are integral to constructing experiential meaning in texts. For instance, he suggests that through nominal groups language users can add precision to their discourse, offering descriptions and classifications that help readers grasp nuanced ideas. Examples of nominal group usage in Halliday's work include:

- (i) Those two splendid old electric trains
- (ii) The socio-economic impact of globalization

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), research offers a detailed breakdown of the nominal group as a key unit within the within the experiential structure of language, which is critical in representing concepts, entities, and relationships within sentences. This is particularly relevant to students at Mpaha Senior High School, as nominal groups often include complex structures that convey detailed information within academic texts. By utilizing Halliday and Matthiessen's theory, this study can assist to analyze how Mpaha Senior High School students would identify common syntactic challenges and areas for targeted instruction, to construct nominal groups.

The SFG framework highlights the multifunctional role of nominal groups in the construction of meaning across different metafunctional dimensions. Specifically, nominal groups contribute to the ideational metafunction by representing entities and experiences; to the interpersonal metafunction by facilitating interaction between speaker and listener or writer and reader; and to the textual metafunction by organizing the flow of information in relation to both the surrounding discourse and the broader situational context in which the nominal group appears.

Though this theory is attributed to Halliday, there are other linguists associated with the functional grammar. For example Chomsky (1965), uses the term "noun phrase" to describe the unit consisting of a noun and its modifiers. In a similar manner, Halle (1959, p.34), refer to the combination of a noun and its modifiers as a "phrase". Hassan (1985), argues that linguistics choices reflect and construct social identities making nominal groups not just linguistic units but reflections of shared knowledge and values. This perspective is vital when analyzing nominal groups usage among Ghanaian students, as it suggests that first language (L1) influences and cultural norms may shape

students approaches to English nominal group structures. Based on Hasan's concepts, we can have the following nominal group structure;

- (a) "The local traditions influencing family structures"
- (b) "A community-based approach to conflict resolution"

These examples illustrate how nominal groups encapsulate cultural information, and Hasan's focus on social context provides a framework for understanding potential L1 influences among Mpaha Community Senior High School students.

Christie (1992) investigates the role of grammar in educational contexts, emphasizing the need to teach nominal groups effectively to improve students' academic language skills. She argues that understanding nominal groups enhances students' ability to engage with academic texts and produce complex written language. Christie's insights support the importance of explicit instruction in nominal group structures for nonnative English speakers.

She provides pedagogical strategies that could benefit non-native speakers of English in mastering academic language. Another linguist whose work appears relevant to this study is Gunther Kress. Kress (2010) approaches nominal group through a multimodal lens, analyzing how nominal groups work within different communicative modes. He explains that nominal groups are crucial for constructing clear, impactful messages across media.

Kress's perspective is helpful for understanding how nominal groups contribute to meaning in various forms of English, from written to spoken contexts, which guides teaching methods that make nominal groups relevant for diverse communicative purposes. His emphasis on multi- modality supports the development of teaching

strategies for Mpaha students that encourage flexibility in understanding and using nominal groups across different forms of expression.

Undoubtedly, the contributions of the above mentioned functional grammar linguists to Halliday's theoretical framework of analyzing the nominal groups, support the fact that, structurally, nominal groups can be simple or complex. Simple noun phrases are nouns without modifications including pronouns (examples: he, she, it, we) and proper nouns (examples: Ghana, Ama, River Pra). Other noun phrases are more complex, some having multiple modifications (example: *those two splendid old electric trains*).

Registers of informal spoken interaction typically draw on simple nominal groups and pronoun references, as speakers often refer to participants in the situational context or to those already known to them (Eggins & Slade, 1997; Martin, 2014; Eggins, 2004). In contrast, written texts encountered in educational contexts frequently contain elaborated and abstract nominal participants, including pre- and post-modifications, noun clauses, and nominalized forms that tend to construct reference internally within the text (Schleppegrell, 2004; Fang, 2006). Nominal elements serve as a vital resource in meaning-making by enabling the condensation of significant information within a single clause. This is achieved through a range of pre- and post-modifying structures, including adjectives, adverbs, participial forms (-ed/-ing), prepositional phrases, and relative clauses. Such expanded nominal groups are a distinctive feature of registers associated with advanced literacy.

In composing written texts, authors rely heavily on nominal structures to both introduce new referents and sustain reference to those previously mentioned. For example, constructions such as "there was a big elephant," "they play together," "a cup of tea," "the two old splendid trains," and "those old electric cars" illustrate how nominal

elements can appear as pronouns, demonstratives, hyponyms, or nominalizations. Furthermore, nominal elements offer a strategic means for summarizing and synthesizing earlier parts of the discourse, thereby allowing textual progression. By encapsulating a sequence of prior information in a single nominal structure, the writer can use it as the thematic point of departure for subsequent clauses, facilitating cohesion and the further development of ideas.

Nominalization is a common characteristic of academic and scientific writing, referring to the representation of ideas as nouns or noun phrases that might otherwise appear as verbs, adjectives, or full clauses (Martin, 1991). For instance, the verb attend can be converted into the noun attendance, which allows for further modification and expansion (e.g., good attendance, attendance at meetings). This process often permits the inclusion of evaluations or regulations. Nominalization enhances both the informational load within a clause and the textual cohesion by linking ideas across the text. From a text-structuring perspective, it allows content conveyed through multiple clauses to be condensed into a single noun phrase. Since nominalization compresses substantial information into a nominal form, students are required to interpret more concepts per clause in academic reading and are expected to embed more content within nominal structures in their own writing. Learners who are not yet familiar with this linguistic feature may struggle to grasp the intended meaning. As a result, they need opportunities to deconstruct and rephrase condensed ideas and to identify the writer's purpose in using nominalization as a strategy to organize texts—emphasizing new points while referencing earlier content.

2.3 Identifying Language Proficiency

Language proficiency according to Hymes (1972), involves the ability to communicate effectively in socially appropriate way.

Halliday (1994), explains language proficiency as the ability to use language as a social semiotic system to create and interpret meaning. Also, language proficiency involves the ability to accurately, fluently and appropriately use language in various contexts, including reading, writing, speaking and listening (Celce-Mucia, 2007).

Observing from the definitions of language proficiency by the scholars above, we can say that language proficiency encompasses all the various aspects of a language a learner needs to acquire in order to become communicative competent in the target language, in this case, English language. English language proficiency has a link to students' success with nominal group identification, construction and effective usage. Proficiency in English impacts the students' ability to grasp intricate structures of the nominal group. And this proficiency is achieved when learners attain and demonstrate this communicative competence in English Language. Learners' ability to demonstrate this communicative competence to a large extent, is facilitated by their knowledge and understanding of the use of the nominal groups. Unfortunately, the nominal groups are often misunderstood by students at the immediate or lower proficiency level, affecting their ability to parse and produce complex sentences in English.

According to Canale and Swain (1980), language proficiency is made up of the following components grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence.

They explain grammatical competence as the learners' knowledge of rules of grammar use in appropriate social context. Discourse competence refers to the ability to create

and interpret coherent and cohesive text (Bloor & Bloor, 2013). Canale and Swain (1980), further describe strategies competence as the ability to use language to compensate for limitation in communication competence.

In the discussions of all these competencies as a demonstration of language proficiency, the key structure facilitating the knowledge of the various components of language proficiency, is the nominal groups. According to Nyarko et al (2018), reading proficiency is significantly and positively related with learners' performance on all standard performance tests.

According to Bohra and Raza Khan, (2023), language proficiency is a multidimensional construct that includes both linguistics and communicative competence. They further list factors that affect language proficiency as age of acquisition, expression to the language, motivation and individual differences.

2.4 Structure of the Nominal Group

Nominal groups semantically represent those elements of our experience that we interpret as entities (Downing & Locke, p. 424). According to Downing and Locke, the notion of 'entities' includes not only tangible things such as individuals, objects, locations, institutions, and various collectives, but also encompasses the names of actions (e.g., swimming, laughter), abstractions (e.g., *thought*, *experience*), qualities (e.g., beauty, speed), emotions (e.g., anger, excitement), and phenomena (e.g., *thunder*, *success*), among others. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 362), a group is characterized as an extension of a single word, distinguishing it from a phrase, which they describe as a condensed form of a clause. It is important to restate this fundamental distinction prior to a detailed examination of the nominal group structure: a group and

a phrase are not synonymous. While a phrase functions as a compressed clause, a group operates as an elaboration of a word.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), however, said, the phrase and the group both have same status on the rank scale, “as units that lie somewhere intermediate between the rank of a clause and that of a word.” Also, linguists in Systemic Theory mention of two types of groups in general: logical and experiential (Downing and Locke, 2006, p. 424).

The experience structure will be the general focus of this work.

2.5 Experiential Structure of the Nominal Group

The nominal group represents the most diverse grammatical unit within the class of groups, enabling the expression of a broad spectrum of meanings (Thompson, 2000, p. 181). Downing and Locke (2006, p. 426) identify the structural components that convey experiential features as the head, determiner, pre-modifier, and post-modifier. They further note that naming an entity is often accompanied by additional descriptive elements that reflect how individuals perceive or experience that entity. In articulating such experiential meaning, some of this descriptive information precedes the noun, while other elements follow it, as illustrated in the examples provided in the table (Downing & Locke, 2006, p. 402).

Pre-head	Head	Post-head
1. one Saturday	morning	in February, 1893
2. a	sale	
3. the smart new	rooms	of a London art dealer
4. a	street	leading to the flower market in Covent
5. smartly dressed wealthy art	lovers	

Figure 1: Some constituents of nominal group

According to Downing and Locke (2006, p. 403) the nominal group has four primary elements or structural functions: *the head*, which is the central element, the *determiner* and the *premodifier* functions in the *pre-head* position, and the *post-modifier* function in the *post-head* position. Of all these elements, the *pre-head* and the *post-head* can usually be omitted, while *the head* together with the *determiner*, when present, may realize the nominal group. So, from the table above, example 5, is a nominal group with only the Head “staff”, example 2, is a nominal group that has a determiner ‘*a*’ and the head ‘*street*’ (*a street*) without the pre- and post- modifiers.

However, in example 1, the nominal group is made up of a *quantifier* (*one*), premodifier (*Saturday*) the head (*morning* - obligatory) and the post- modifier (*in February 1893*).

In a similar manner, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 364), explain experiential structure of the nominal group as a category within a class which typically expresses one or more of the following functional elements; Deictic, Enumerative, Epithet and Classifier. These elements are given further elaborations below.

2.5.1 Functional slots within the pre-modifier

I. **Deictic:** The Deictic element serves to indicate whether a specific subset of the referent (the Head) is intended, and if so, which particular subset. Its function is governed by the system of determination, which distinguishes between (i) specific and (ii) non-specific reference (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 364–365). Specific Deictics identify the intended Head in one of two primary ways: either demonstratively, by indicating spatial proximity relative to the speaker (e.g., *this, these suggest nearness; that, those indicate distance*), or possessively, by referring to a possessor from the speaker’s perspective (e.g., *my, your, our, his, her, its, their, or proper noun forms such*

as Kofi's). These forms function to identify a distinct subset of the 'thing' (Head) being referred to (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 365).

Non-deictic work in a different way: they signal that the hearer or reader is not assumed, or does not need, to be familiar with the specific identity of the *Head* at that point (Thompson, 2000, p. 182). Since the Deictic slot is not needed for identification, "it is used instead to indicate what quantity of the *head* is involved; *all, some or none*", as it is demonstrated in the example below:

I haven't noticed *any* train go by.

Some trains are very comfortable.

There are *some* trains on the track.

Both trains have left.

All animals are equal.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 368) further explain that the English articles, the definite article *the* and the indefinite articles *a* and *an*; function as determiners that realize terms within the systems of nominal deixis, with the corresponding to the specific system and *a/an* to the non-specific system. They also observe that English nominal groups operate with two distinct 'Number' systems, each associated with one of the two types of Deictic. In the case of specific Deictics, the number system is organized into non-plural and plural categories, where mass nouns are classified with singular nouns under the broader category of non-plural. Consequently, this and that are used with non-plural forms (including singular and mass nouns), while these and those are used with plural nouns.

In conclusion on Deictic, it is important for us to note that, students' knowledge on deictic element will help the students in tracking of references within a text, enhancing students' ability to identify and analyze nominal groups.

(ii) Numerative: The numerative element indicates some numerical features of the particular subset of the '*thing*' (Head); either quantity or order, either exact or inexact.

Items serving as numerative are;

(a) The quantifying Numeratives (or *quantitatives*), these specify either an exact number (*cardinal numerals, e.g. two trains*) or an inexact number

(*e.g. many trains, lots of trains*) as in;

- i The president confirmed *seven* Cabinet secretaries.
- ii They have identified *several* DCEs are corrupt.
- iii An *unknown* number of passengers are still missing.

(b) Ordering Numeratives (or *ordinatives*): They specify either an exact place in order (*ordinal numerals, e.g. the second trains*) or an inexact place (*e.g. a subsequent train*).

For example,

- For the *third* time in the semester Kofi run to his father

(iii) Epithet: The epithet indicates some quality of the '*thing*' (*head*) examples, *blue, long, fast, old*.

Halliday (1994, p. 184). It gives evaluative information about the *head*. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014. P. 376) the Epithet may be an expression of the speakers' subjective attitude towards the Head. Examples, beautiful, splendid, talented etc.

- i The young *talented* musician
- ii The *beautiful* sunset
- iii A *happy* child

In general, there may be several Epithets within a nominal group, although it is uncommon to find more than two in actual usage. The distinction between the two types of **Epithets** is not always sharply defined; however, attitudinal Epithets convey evaluation and modality, serving an interpersonal function within the meaning of the nominal group (Halliday, 1994, p. 142). In contrast, objective **Epithets** perform an experiential role by describing inherent qualities or attributes of the Head noun itself.

(iv) **The Classifier:** The classifier serves to indicate a specific subclass of the ‘thing’ (Head) being referred to. For example: electric trains, passenger trains, toy trains. Occasionally, a word may serve either as an Epithet or a classifier, with the meaning shifting accordingly. For instance, fast trains can mean ‘trains that move quickly’ (*fast* = Epithet) or ‘trains categorized as express trains’ (*fast* = classifier). While the distinction between Epithet and classifier is not always clear-cut, there are key differences.

Classifiers do not allow comparison or intensity; we do not say a more electric train or a very electric train. Additionally, classifiers tend to fall into mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories; for example, a train is typically categorized as either electric, steam, or diesel. The types of semantic relationships that may be represented by classifiers are quite diverse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 377).

(v) **Qualifier:** This is an element which functions to restrict or specify the reference of the ‘thing’ (or *head*). Qualifier typically indicate, location, time, manner or other circumstantial information. Example, The book *on the table*.

Almost all qualifiers are embedded phrases or clauses, thus Morley (1985, p. 97) and Morley (2012) point out that they are structurally of a rank “higher than or at least equivalent to that of the nominal group”, such qualifying structures are said to be

‘embedded’ or using systemic term, ranks shifted. Halliday (1994, p. 144). Some structures that may realize the qualifier element include the following.

- i The decisions made *in your name*
- ii Situations *beyond your control*
- iii The foundations *of your ambitions*

Structurally, a post-modifying embedded clause might be finite or non-finite (Thompson, 2000, p. 186). If *finite*, it may be defining a relative clause. If *non-finite*, it may be an ‘-ing’ clause or an ‘-en’ clause. Also, these post-modifier group will come after a head noun as in the examples below;

- The cost of education *in contemporary times*

2.6 Studies on Nominal Groups Usage among Ghanaian Students

English nominal groups present significant challenges for students, particularly, those in multilingual settings like Ghana. The works of Agbota (2015), Laryea (2018), Owusu (2020), Tetteh (2019), Tetteh (2024). Nkansah –Amankwa (2006) and Ansah (2015) highlight common difficulties such misidentifying elements of nominal groups, struggles with syntactic agreement and influence from native language.

In Agbota’s work, he notes that students in Ghana often face difficulties with English nominal groups due to limited exposure to English in the students’ daily lives. He argues that students misidentify head nouns and modifiers, especially in complex sentences. Examples of his findings include;

- (i) Students often confuse the head noun in phrases like, the boy with the blue cup
- (ii) Difficulty arises when student try to identify modifiers in sentences such as, a tall man in a black suit. (Agbota, 2015).

Laryea (2018), explores the structural variations in Ghanaian English nominal groups and how these differences contribute to students' challenges. He argues that direct influence of local languages create syntactic anomalies. For example, in his research he found out that literal translation of native structures e.g. the man his bag, instead of the man's bag. Also, incorrect sequencing in noun phrases like, 'the house of my mother', instead of 'my mother's house', where some of the challenges affecting the students.

On teaching strategies for nominal groups, Laryea and Agbota suggested the following. Agbota (2015) suggests that teachers should incorporate more interactive activities, including roleplaying into the classroom activities. He further suggests sentence construction tasks be employed by teachers to engaged the students actively. He added that teachers could use storytelling to generate context based nominal groups.

According Laryea (2018), using cultural relevant examples to relate to the teaching material will help students to grasp the concept of nominal groups easily. He further suggests that teachers could analyze phrases from local folklore, e.g. 'the wise old man in the forest'.

Another challenging area this researcher read around in order to gain insight into the challenges students at Mpaha Senior High School face in the usage of the English nominal group is teaching and learning resource. The availability and effective use of teaching and learning resources significantly influence how well students grasp nominal groups. Owusu-Ansah (2018), highlights the lack of advanced grammar textbooks in Ghanaian Schools and recommended collaboration with publishers to improve resources. Afriyie (2014) and Frempong (2022) examine syntactical errors in nominal group construction among Senior High School students in Ghana, providing

insights into common challenges like article misuse and sequencing errors. Their study fills a critical gap in addressing specific grammatical issues in Ghanaian Senior High School contexts, yet leaves unexplored sociolinguistic influences such as home language or informal linguistic exposure.

The review of related works of these Ghanaian scholars about my topic: “Usage of the English nominal groups “, highlights significant contributions to understanding the usage of nominal groups in Ghanaian English and the broader context of English language teaching in Ghana. However, some gaps remain unaddressed particularly, the specific challenges and the pedagogical needs at Mpaha Community Senior High School (SHS).

For example, Agbota (2015), provides broader overview of English language teaching in Ghana, discussing systemic challenges, teaching methods, and curriculum design. While the offers valuable insights into general teaching practices and linguistic challenges faced by Ghanaian students, it does not delve deeply into specific grammatical structures like nominal groups. Furthermore, Agbota does not explain how does not explore how socio-economic and rural-urban educational disparities affect students' understanding and usage of nominal groups in English. His work does not focus on nominal groups or provide specific strategies for teaching them in rural schools like Mpaha SHS. This gap leaves room for research that examines the unique linguistic challenges of rural students and offers targeted pedagogical interventions for teaching nominal groups in such contexts.

Also, Ansah (2015), engaged in corpus-based study which offers a comprehensive analysis of nominal group structures in Ghanaian English, identifying common patterns and deviations from Standard English norms. While this research is valuable for

understanding broader trends in nominal group usage, it is based on written texts from educated adult speakers and does not address the learning processes or challenges faced by high school students. Ansah's work overlooks the developmental aspects of nominal group usage among high school learners, particularly in rural schools like Mpaha SHS. There is a need for studies focusing on how nominal groups are taught and learned at the secondary school level, and how L1 interference or limited English exposure impacts students' mastery.

Last but not the least, Tetteh (2019), wrote a dissertation which provides a detailed linguistic analysis of nominal group structures in Ghanaian English, emphasizing their syntactic and semantic features. However, it does not address how these structures are taught or learned in educational settings, particularly at the high school level. Again, Tetteh's work focuses on linguistic theory rather than pedagogy. This leaves a gap in understanding how teachers can address the specific needs of high school students, especially in rural settings like Mpaha SHS, where instructional resources and student proficiency levels may differ significantly from urban schools.

2.7 Effects of Sequencing in English Nominal Group on Students' Understanding

In every sentence, whether it consists of a single word, a phrase, or multiple words, the issue of word order emerges.

Similarly, the arrangement or sequence of elements within complex groups or entire sentences also becomes a point of concern.

2.7.1 Effect of Sequencing on Meaning and Interpretation

Coordination introduces several points of interest regarding multiple modifications. For example: Children who have speech that is impaired; in such cases, the following phenomena occur:

(a)..... More than one modification is applicable to a single head. For example: The man in *the comer painted red*

In this case, "painted red" modifies the entire preceding complex noun phrase. The issue of ambiguity arises from the difficulty in determining which specific phrase is being directly modified.

Without the use of a conjunction or punctuation, the ambiguity remains unresolved.

Thus: *The car in the comer, painted red*

(b) A modification is applicable to more than one head as in the earlier example

He unites long papers and books and (the man woman ((in (the corner]]]] (c)

Complex structures as in:

- 1) the man and woman] [in the corner talking to John]
- 2) The [Man and woman] [in [the corner] [nearest the door] (talking to John))

In example (2) above ambiguity is a bit removed from the last post modifier (*talking to John*) because the door could not be talking to John. Nevertheless, to take ambiguity farther, the use of a finite relative clause is possible (... *who are talking to John*).

Frequently, careful ordering of constituents in a noun phrase is essential to effective communication. For example:

The man in black talking to the girl. The man talking to the girl in black.

2.7.2 Views of different schools of grammar on nominal group sequence

The analysis and interpretation of grammatical terms are largely influenced by the methodological approach and terminological preferences of individual grammarians, which are, in turn, shaped by the grammatical tradition or school to which they belong. As a result, the English nominal group has been examined through diverse analytical

frameworks and described using varying terminologies across different grammatical schools.

2.7.2.1 Traditional grammar

Traditional grammarians emphasize correctness of usage and linguistic propriety. Traditional grammar predates what is now considered the scientific approach to language study. According to Crystal (1971), traditional grammar describes syntactic categories based on features identified in classical languages such as Greek and Latin. From these features, a universal grammar is constructed, serving as a descriptive model for analyzing all languages, as intended by traditional grammarians. Much of the terminology employed such as subject, predicate, object, noun, verb, adverb, and adjective remains in use today, although these terms have undergone clearer definition and refinement in contemporary linguistic theory.

Traditional grammar also identifies hierarchical units of language, such as the sentence, clause, phrase, and word, and describes their interrelationships using both formal and notional definitions. For instance, phrases are categorized as noun phrases because they "function as" or "perform the role of" a noun in a sentence (Lyons, 1968). Thus, constructions like poor John or new house are seen as structurally equivalent to John or house respectively, in terms of syntactic distribution. However, traditional grammar has been critiqued for its descriptive limitations, particularly for introducing ambiguity and inconsistency in the characterization of these grammatical units (Dineen, 1967; Newsome, 1961).

2.7.2.2 Structural grammar

The structural grammar framework, as advanced by scholars such as Gleason (1955) and Christophersen and Sandved (1969), is closely associated with the concept of

Immediate Constituent (IC) analysis. This theoretical approach is grounded in the assumption that elements within any linguistic string are typically arranged in a systematic and logical order. It involves a hierarchical organization of elements, whereby larger structures are broken down into smaller, constituent parts.

Roberts (1962), in elucidating the concept of Immediate Constituents, asserts that these constituents are so named because they form the essential building blocks of a sentence. They are deemed "immediate" insofar as they interact directly with one another—the semantic interpretation of one unit is immediately applicable to the other. He further explains that a group of words qualifies as a constituent only if they can be traced back to a single point of syntactic division; otherwise, they do not function as a unified constituent.

With respect to noun phrases, Roberts posits that the Immediate Constituents of such constructions are typically the determiner and the noun, which together form a group that functions as a single syntactic unit.

For example:

The old man who rented the room upstairs likes the movie

The noun phrase cited above, with *man* serving as the headword, functions as the subject of the entire verb cluster.

Similarly, 'who rented the room upstairs' is also an Immediate Constituent of 'the old man'.

Roberts (1962) also elaborated on IC analysis in relation to prepositional phrases.

By/the tree which my father had planted behind the house could often be used to generate complex constructions in English language.

In the following phrase for example,

By/ the tree near the house across the road in the village

It is evident that the object of the initial preposition *by* has as its headword *tree*, which is further modified by another prepositional phrase beginning with *near*, thereby creating a recursive structure in the following manner:

By/the tree near the house across the road in the village

He said that a preposition and the object of the preposition (*which may be a complex noun phrase*) as in

The tree/near the house across the road in the village

Near/the barn across the road in the village

The barn/ across the road in the village

Across / the road in the village the road/in the village

In/ the village

The aforementioned theory has attracted its share of criticisms. According to Halliday (1985, p. 22), Immediate Constituent (IC) analysis may be characterized as a grammatical framework that "does not allow more than two elements in a bracket." For example, a basic IC analysis—one that terminates at the word level—would yield the following structure:

Old soldiers love games.

Halliday further observes that IC analysis results in "maximum bracketing," in contrast to the "minimum bracketing" characteristic of unit analysis in modern grammar. While IC analysis operates independently of rank, modern grammatical approaches permit minimal bracketing, which facilitates the functional labeling of elements within a nominal phrase.

Despite the structural insights provided by IC analysis, it was frequently limited in its ability to account for the types of structural knowledge accessible to native speakers. Moreover, the complexity involved in describing phrase structures proved to be extraordinarily high; numerous simple and readily identifiable regularities were excluded, and many essentially identical grammatical components had to be redundantly represented (Katz & Fodor, 1964, pp. 138–151).

Noam Chomsky, a key proponent of Transformational Generative Grammar, analyzed noun phrase constituents through phrase structure rules. One such rule posits that a noun phrase (NP) may consist solely of a noun (N), expressed as $NP \rightarrow N$. Another rule proposes that an NP may comprise an article followed by a noun, expressed as $NP \rightarrow ART\ N$. As Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1968) suggest, these rules may be combined to allow for both possibilities: $NP \rightarrow (ART)\ N$.

The use of parentheses in phrase structure rules indicates that the enclosed constituent is optional and need not appear in every noun phrase. Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1968) further assert that noun phrases may include not only articles but also entire embedded sentences. For example:

- (1) Grace accepted *the idea that we could buy the book*.

According to TG grammarians, the applicability of passive transformations to the structure of the sentence as demonstrated below, serves as confirmation that the italicized string functions as a noun phrase.

- (2) *The idea that we could buy the book* was accepted by Grace.

However, if the word ‘*that*’ is excluded, the italicized noun phrase can be seen to contain the sentence:

We could buy the book.

The sole function of “*that*” therefore seems to be, to indicate that the italicized string is an embedded sentence.

2.7.3 The problem with long noun sequences

Extended noun sequences present significant challenges for natural language analyzers. These issues will be examined and addressed in this section through the lens of phrasal analysis; however, they are not merely artifacts of this analytical framework. A comparison with alternative approaches to such constructions, as discussed later in this paper, further substantiates this point.

The main difficulties with multiple noun sequences are:

2.7.3.1 Determination of their Length

One must make sure that the first few nouns are not taken to constitute the first noun phrase, ignoring the words that follow. For example, upon reading ‘*chocolate request cycle*’ we do not want the analyzer to conclude that the first noun phrase is simply ‘chocolate’ or ‘*chocolate request*’.

2.7.3.2 Interpretation of Ambiguous Noun/Verbs

A large portion of the vocabulary used in digital system specification consists of words which are both nouns and verbs. Consequently, the phrase interrupt vector transfer phase, for example, might be interpreted as a command to interrupt the vector transfer phase, or (unless we are careful about number agreement) as the claim that phase is transferred by interrupt vectors. In spoken language, stress is sometimes used to "adjective-ize" nouns used as modifiers. For example, the spoken form would be "arithmetic register transfer" rather than "arithmetic register transfer". Obviously, such a device is not available in our case, where specifications are typed.

2.7.3.3 Determination of Enough about their Meaning to Permit Further Analysis of the Input

Full understanding of such expressions requires more domain knowledge than one would wish to employ at this point in the analysis process (Finin, 1980). However, at least a minimal understanding of the semantics of the noun phrase is necessary for testing selection restrictions of higher level phrasal patterns. This is required, in turn, in order to provide a correct representation of the meaning of the complete input. The phrasal approach utilizes the phrasal pattern as the primary means of recognizing expressions, and in particular noun sequences. In effect, a phrasal pattern is a sequence of restrictions that constituents must satisfy in order to match the pattern.

2.7.4 Training learners to notice linguistic forms

Conscious learning constitutes a fundamental element of the "noticing" hypothesis, as articulated by Skehan (1998). This hypothesis emphasizes attention to specific features of authentic language use and positions noticing as a potentially rich source of input for capable learners. Essentially, noticing occurs when learners direct their attention to both the form and meaning of particular linguistic structures in the input they receive. Schmidt (1995, p. 20) articulates this view by stating that "the noticing hypothesis states that what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning." He further asserts that whether such noticing occurs intentionally or incidentally, the crucial point is that once noticed, the input is converted into intake. Noticing, according to Schmidt, is a necessary though not sufficient condition for language acquisition. This process involves "noticing the gap," that is, recognizing the discrepancy between the linguistic input and the learner's current productive capacities. In the context of Nigerian learners of English (NG), this gap is particularly pronounced at the early stages of acquisition.

The concept of "intake" was first introduced by Corder (1967), who described it as the subset of input that a learner successfully processes and internalizes to construct their developing linguistic system.

Merely presenting a linguistic form to learners does not guarantee its reception as input. As Corder (1967) notes, input is defined by what actually "goes in," rather than what is made available, and it is ultimately the learner who regulates this intake process. Consequently, learners cannot be expected to be at the same developmental stage. Pienemann, as cited in Pienemann and Johnson (1987), Cook (1999), and Spada and Lightbown (1999), proposed the "learnability hypothesis," which suggests that learners can only internalize structures that are at the next sequential stage in their natural developmental trajectory. While instructional intervention might accelerate acquisition, it cannot entirely bypass stages. Therefore, intake must be scaffolded by prior linguistic knowledge to ensure that both input and intake function as components of a unified learning process (Van Patten, 2002).

Ellis (2002) delineates the transition from input to intake as a process that involves learners attending to linguistic features in the input, storing them temporarily, and subsequently comparing them with their own output. Building on Schmidt (1990), Cross (2002) identifies four primary factors that support learners in noticing these features:

Explicit Instruction: Direct explanation and emphasis on a target structure facilitate learner recognition and understanding. Through guided analysis, learners are encouraged to deduce or identify grammatical rules.

Frequency: Regular exposure to a given structure increases the number of opportunities for the learner to notice it, thereby enhancing retention.

Perceptual Salience: Making structures visually prominent (e.g., through highlighting or underlining) draws attention and aids in their recognition.

Task Demands: Designing tasks that compel learners to focus on and utilize particular structures reinforces their awareness and understanding, especially when learners are required to replicate similar constructions independently.

Ellis (2002) cautions, however, that while explicit instruction raises grammatical awareness, it does not directly contribute to the development of implicit knowledge unless it is integrated with other instructional strategies.

2.8 Nominal modifiers: Definition and characteristics

As previously discussed, noun phrases are structured around a central noun, known as the head, which is accompanied by various dependent elements, including modifiers. While adjectives are typically the primary category used in the premodifier position, nouns are also commonly employed in this role. The following section offers a detailed analysis of the characteristics that define nouns functioning as modifiers. Noun phrase construction is inherently recursive, meaning that additional elements can be integrated to further specify and describe the external referent to which the noun phrase refers.

The head noun can accommodate both premodifying and postmodifying elements, allowing expansion on either side. This syntactic flexibility is evident in Present-Day English. Moreover, the study by Biber et al. (2002) on the increasing use of nouns as premodifiers highlights a growing linguistic trend that has attracted scholarly attention. Therefore, it is pertinent to explore the underlying factors contributing to the rise of nominal premodifiers and to examine the functional motivations for their increasing usage.

2.8.1 Nouns as Modifiers

A noun is typically defined as the word class that most commonly serves as the head of a noun phrase (NP). It generally shows inflection for number and may be accompanied by a variety of dependents, such as determiners, adjective phrases, and relative clauses. This definition implies that while the role of head is characteristic of nouns, it is not their exclusive function. Nouns can also function as dependents within a noun phrase, contributing distinctive attributes to the head noun. By specifying and characterizing the head, these dependent nouns enrich the expression and play a crucial role in conveying meaning within a communicative context.

Nominal modifiers considered as a grammatical category between the noun and the noun phrase can also function as premodifiers, often containing their own pre-head elements. However, they usually do not allow right-hand dependents. Noun dependents are classified into two main types: complements and adjuncts. As complements, the dependent noun forms a fixed and inseparable unit with the head noun (e.g., a linguistics student). As adjuncts, they combine more freely with the head noun (e.g., an Oxford student). Payne and Huddleston (2002, pp. 439–443) draw a clear distinction between these two roles. Nonetheless, it is often challenging to determine whether a noun functioning as a complement belongs to a syntactic phrase or if it instead forms part of a morphological compound (see Bauer, 1998; Bisetto & Scalise, 1999; Giegerich, 2004; Rosenbach, 2007).

The distinction mentioned earlier is closely linked to the linear arrangement of premodifying nouns within noun phrase (NP) structures. This is reflected in the Principle of Head Proximity proposed by Rijkhoff (2002, p. 264), which suggests that in a hierarchical grammatical structure, the preferred position of a head element within

a subordinate domain is as near as possible to the head of the superordinate domain. Applied to noun phrases, this means that a modifier, functioning as the head of a subordinate domain, tends to be positioned as close as possible to the head noun of the NP.

Notably, different grammatical categories exhibit variation in how closely they are placed to the head noun; for instance, nouns typically appear nearer to the head noun than attributive adjectives do. The previously discussed distinction between complements and adjuncts helps explain this fixed order of elements. Complements are generally expressed through nouns or nominals (e.g., *a linguistics student*), whereas adjuncts are more commonly realized through adjectives (e.g., *white* in *a white skirt*). Given the stronger syntactic and semantic bond between complements and the head noun, complements are generally placed closer to the noun than adjuncts are (as in *a smart linguistics student*). Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this pattern, as some adjectives can also function as complements, a phenomenon noted by Payne and Huddleston (2002, p. 439), such as *with criminal* in *criminal lawyer*; or nouns functioning as adjuncts, such as *London* in *London Psychiatric Hospital*, where a noun modifier precedes an adjectival modifier.

If they refer to plural referents and goes on to identify the problem of ambiguity when nouns as modifiers co-occur with other nominal modifiers.

A similar classification to that of Payne and Huddleston is the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers (Warren, 1993, pp. 59–60). When nouns function as modifiers, they are typically restrictive, meaning they combine with the head noun to create a more narrowly defined and specific reference (e.g., *flower seller*), whereas adjectives as modifiers tend to be non-restrictive, since they simply provide

the head of the noun phrase with additional information about the referent (e.g., *an amusing joke*). As restrictive modifiers, nouns may serve either a defining or classifying function. In the classifying role, they limit the meaning of the head noun to a specific subset of its general category for instance, *telephone box* does not refer to a general type of box but instead to a distinct kind of entity (see De Mönnink, 2000; Rosenbach, 2007). Nouns can also be identifying, as in *winter clothes*, where the modifier restricts *clothes* to those appropriate for the winter season. Still, nouns used as modifiers can sometimes be non-restrictive, as in *an Oxford old residence*, where *Oxford* neither specifies a particular residence nor designates a particular category (Warren, 1993, p. 64).

According to Warren (1993, p. 60), this distinction sheds light on the phonological, morphological, and syntactic behavior of noun modifiers. Because of their restrictive role, such modifiers typically follow a stress pattern that involves reduced emphasis, they usually lose their capacity for plural inflection even when plurality is implied, and when paired with another modifier, the scope of their modification is not always clear. As a result, word order or the use of coordinating conjunctions must clarify the intended meaning. Warren (1993) specifically highlights the typical stress pattern that occurs when nouns are used to modify other nouns, and she emphasizes that these modifying nouns do not take plural forms even when the meaning could suggest more than one.

2.8.2 Morphological Properties of Nouns as Modifiers

As Warren (1993) highlights, nominal modifiers often lose their capacity for inflection due to their restrictive function, which is why they typically appear in singular form (e.g., *book seller*). Interestingly, even nouns that usually appear in plural form in referential contexts (like *trousers*) often drop the plural ending when used as modifiers

(e.g., *trouser press*). Adams (1973) reflects on this by proposing that the first elements in noun+noun (N+N) structures might not be morphologically singular but grammatically neutral. He suggests that, in some cases, it is the possessive 's rather than the plural 's that is left out (e.g., *pigtail* deriving from *pig's tail*).

This absence of plural marking could also be attributed to the lower referential salience of modifying nouns a view supported by Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Rosenbach (2005, as cited in Rosenbach, 2007). Their web-based analysis indicated that nouns like *Bush* in *the Bush Administration* are less likely to be referenced again in context compared to genitive forms such as *Bush's Administration*. This suggests that *Bush* in the compound is less prominent, or more backgrounded, than in the genitive phrase.

Nonetheless, Quirk et al. (1985) observe a growing trend in plural attributive constructions (e.g., *grants committee*), especially in British English, where such usage is more prevalent than in American English. This rise may be linked to institutionalized expressions. These are termed “exclusive plurals” by Quirk et al., meaning that the plural form carries a more specific, less ambiguous interpretation than the singular, which tends to be broader or less clearly defined. Such forms are frequently used with collective or institutional head nouns, and the primary stress often falls on the plural modifier.

Taylor (2000) argues that some plural forms, like *sports* in *sports administrator*, may be valid because they have undergone semantic changes, acquiring meanings distinct from their singular counterparts. Using either the singular or plural as a modifier can result in different interpretations, signaling a shift in specification. This aligns with

Goldberg's (1995) Principle of the No Synonymy of Form, previously advanced by Bolinger (1977), Givón (1985), and Wierzbicka (1988), which asserts that any variation in form necessarily implies a difference in meaning.

Moreover, choosing between singular and plural modifiers can help eliminate ambiguity (e.g., *goods shop* vs. *good shop*). Yet, as Taylor (2000) concedes, this area of grammar is often marked by irregularities and confusing exceptions.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology used to investigate the identification, constructing and the usage of English nominal groups by students at Mpaha Community S.H.S. The study employed the qualitative methods of observation, interview and document analysis which are fit for purpose in this study. The chapter focuses on several methodological components, including the research design, research site, population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection protocol, data analysis, validity and reliability measures and summary. The methodology ensures that the study's findings are credible, reliable, and valid (Creswell, 2014). James Paul Gee (2014) – *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (4th ed.).

Gee explicitly endorses observation, interviews, and document analysis as fit-for-purpose qualitative methods for studying language in use, emphasizing their value in uncovering meaning, identity, and social practice. This chapter unfolds through a systematic presentation of the methodological components that guided the study. It begins with Research Design, followed by The Research Site and Population. It then presents the Results of Demographic Information, before discussing the Sample Size and Sampling Technique. The chapter proceeds to outline the Research Instruments, which include Observation, Interviews, and Written Exercises. This is followed by an explanation of the Data Collection Protocol and Data Analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with discussions on Validity and Reliability, and finally, a Chapter Summary.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a case study design which is suitable for in-depth exploration of the linguistic phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). This design allows for the detailed analysis of how students construct and use nominal groups in their English writing and speech. Other designs considered include ethnographic and phenomenological designs (Creswell, 2014). However, according to Stake (1995), the case study selected focuses on a specific group, that is, students, and teachers of English language at Mpaha Community S.H.S, providing rich and contextual insights.

3.2 The Research Site

The study was conducted in Mpaha Community Senior High School in the Central Gonja District of the Savannah Region of Ghana. Mpaha is a village with population of about eight thousand people. The people are mostly crop and animal farmers with the Ewes who engaged in fishing around the Black Volta and the White Volta that are found at the northern and the southern ends of the Mpaha village. These two rivers form a beautiful confluence at the eastern end of the Mpaha community towards a popular fishing town in the Bono East Region called Yeji. This confluence attracts tourists a lot. Other natives in Mpaha also engage in petty trading mostly in foodstuff, since it is a farming community. It has a Health Center, a Police Post, one E. Block Community S.H.S and two public Junior High Schools with two primary schools.

Most of the government workers in the government establishments are non-natives. Every Saturday is the village market day with patrons coming from Techiman, Kintampo, and Tamale and of course from Buipe, the Central Gonja District Capital, who come to mostly buy foodstuff at lower cost, particularly, yam and fish. The Chief of the village is a member of the Council of Elders for the Palace of the Overlord of the

Savannah Region and King of the whole Gonja Kingdom in Ghana. Majority of the people are Moslems with a few Christians and Traditional believers. The main festivals the people celebrate are Damba Festival, Kadeto (Fire Festival), Eid-ul Adha and Eid-ul Fitr.

3.3 Population

The population of my study was seventy-five students, and four English language teachers in Mpaha Community Senior High School, form ones from the three departments in the school (General Arts, Home Science and the Agricultural Science Departments). Almost all the students speak the dominant local language (Gonja) of the environment in the school and use English only during instructional periods in the classroom. It must however, be mentioned that, even though the Gonja language dominates (about 80%), the students come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Some are Ewes, Fantes, Dagombas, Chorkosi and Fulani who can speak their mother tongue fluently. The population was chosen due to the students' distinct linguistic challenges influenced by the local dialects, providing a unique context for examining the usage of English nominal groups.

3.3.1 Results of Demographic Information

The gender of the 35 students are present below. Male students were 20 which constituted 57% and female students were 15 which is equivalent to 43% as seen in the chart.

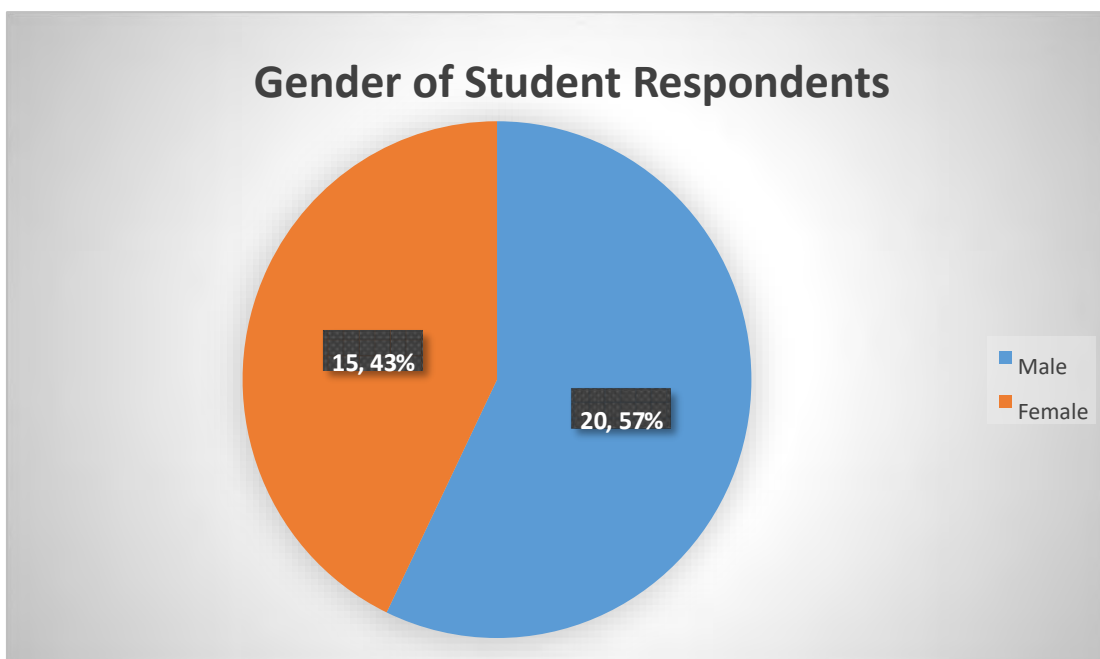


Figure 2: Gender of Student Respondents

The results also revealed that all the 4 teachers who participated in the interview were males, making the total number of males in the study 24 against 15 females.

This is presented in the table below.

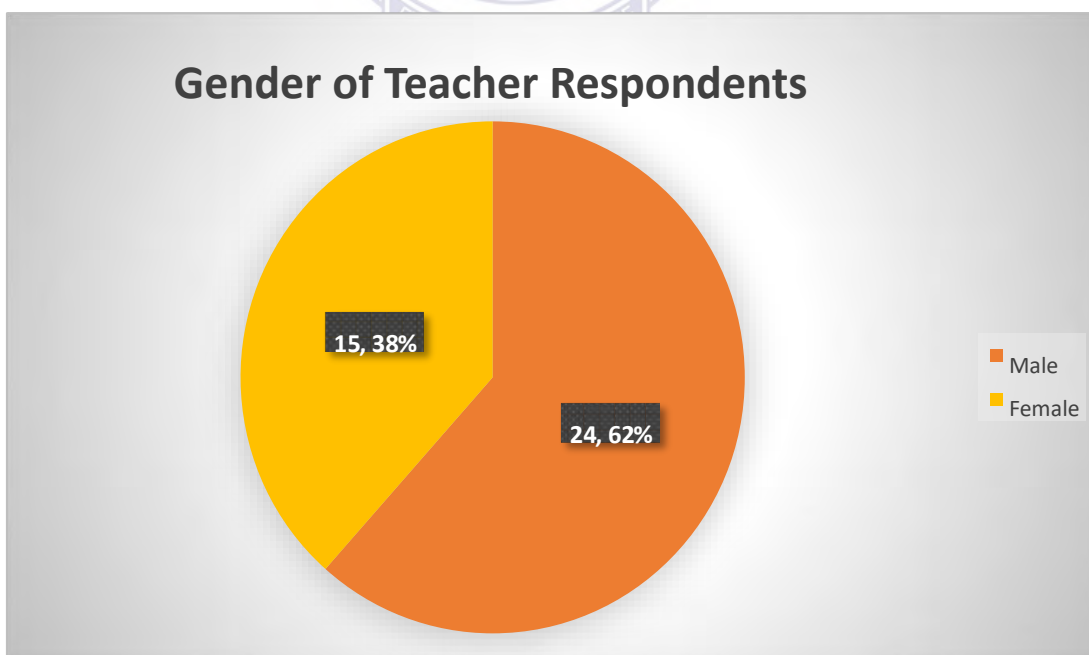


Figure 3: Gender of teacher respondents

When it comes to age range, 31 of the respondents were between 15-20 years; 5 were between 21-25 years; 2 were between 26-30 years and 1 were above 31 years. It is instructive to note that the age distribution reveals many of the respondents are within SHS age range and very few fell within 26-30 and above 31 years because of the teachers who were part of the study' respondents.

We have presented these results in a bar chart below.

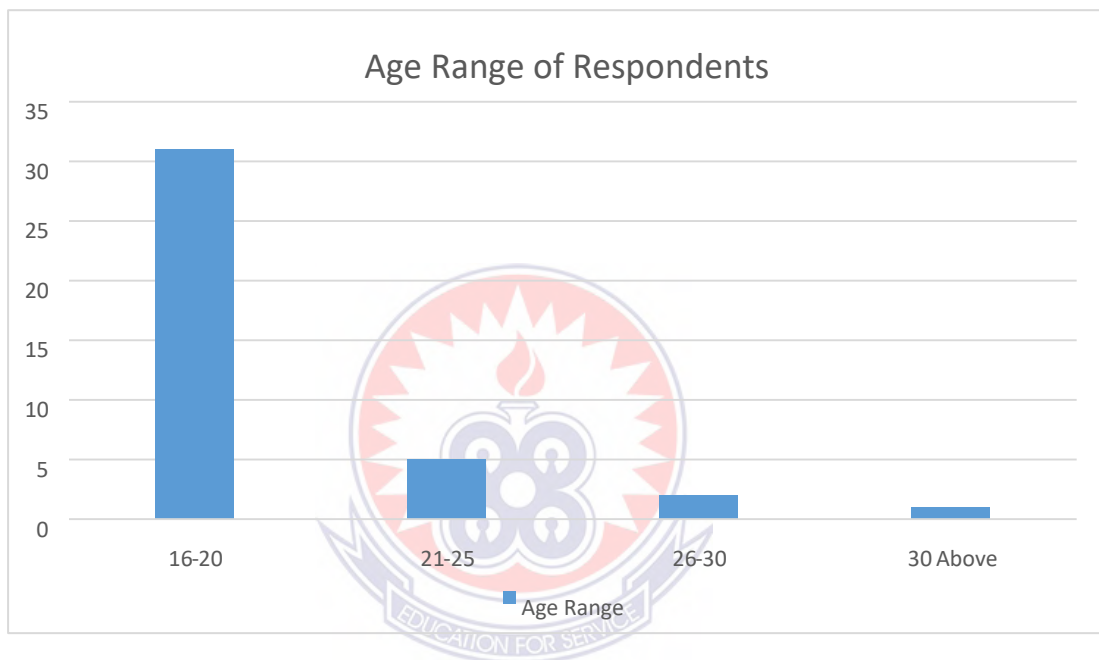


Figure 4: Age of Range of Respondents

3.4 Sample Size

The study involves 35 students and 4 English teachers, selected based on their active engagement in English language lessons. This sample size was chosen to ensure manageable data collection and in-depth analysis while maintaining representativeness (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). The students include individuals from diverse academic performance levels to capture varying proficiency in nominal group usage. There were 20 male students and 15 female students, all the four teachers were males.

3.5 Sampling Technique

I used non-probability sampling method to get the sample out of the entire population for the research. The purposive sampling technique was employed, as it ensures the selection of participants with relevant knowledge and experience (Patton, 2015; Palinkas, 2015). Students and teachers who actively participate in English lessons were targeted to provide meaningful insights. The purposive approach is justified because it facilitates the identification of cases that are information-rich (Creswell, 2014; Poth, 2018). The sample offered me time and a manageable population size of thirty-five students and four teachers to conduct the research. It also made the distraction of attention of participants to be avoided during my observation, and recording of data was accurate.

3.6 Research Instruments

The study uses multiple instruments to collect data, these include, Classroom Observation, Interviews and Written Exercises.

3.6.1 Observation

I used observation as strategy to examine students' spontaneous use of nominal groups in speech and writing during classroom activities like essay writing, group discussions, and answering questions. And informal interactions such as engaging in casual speech around the school during break times. The classroom was done using an observational guide I developed which included the following indicators in the checklist, the frequency and accuracy of nominal group usage, types of modifiers (e.g., adjectives, determiners), and errors in construction. Observing students in different contexts provides a comprehensive view of their nominal group usage in various linguistic tasks (Creswell, 2014; Poth, 2018).

Also, the purpose of observing the teaching methods and strategies used by the teachers was to understand how teachers introduce, explain, and reinforce the concept of nominal groups. The pedagogical and instructional strategies used in the classroom. The data obtained through the observation later served as check against the interviews I conducted and content analysis of the students' written exercises.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews are a valuable qualitative research tool for collecting in-depth data about students' usage of nominal groups and teachers' methods and strategies for teaching them. Merriam and Tisdell (2016), praise interviews as a primary means of collecting qualitative data, particularly when the goal is to understand how individuals construct meaning from their experiences. She underscores that interviews enable researchers to probe for clarification and elaboration, which helps in achieving a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. I used semistructured and unstructured interviews to explore students' understanding, challenges, strategies, and contextual influences on their use of nominal groups in speaking and writing. Creswell and Poth (2018), explain that interviews enable researchers to access participants' perspectives and gain deeper insights into their experiences and practices, so I used interviews to investigate the techniques, materials, and instructional practices teachers use to teach nominal groups at Mpaha Community SHS.

3.6.3 Written exercises

Written exercises and textual analysis are effective tools for gathering detailed case study data on students' usage of nominal groups and understanding teachers' methods and strategies for teaching nominal groups. These methods allow for the examination of concrete evidence of language use and instructional practices. According to

Creswell and Poth (2018), written exercises and textual analysis provide empirical evidence of linguistic competence and teaching practices, enabling in-depth analysis. I personally administered exercises on English nominal groups in English nominal groups to the students to find out their knowledge and performance. The exercises were four. The first two were pre-intervention exercises. One was on some of the elements that come before the “head” noun (pre-modifiers Determiners, Adjectives, Nouns, Numerals etc.), meant to find out from students whether they understood the meaning of nominal groups and could use those elements to construct nominal groups on their own.

The second pre-intervention exercise was on post-modifier. It was to find out students could identify some of the post-modifying elements that form part of the nominal groups but which comes after the “head” noun following the structure of the nominal group. After the pre-intervention exercises, the researcher delivered two intervention lessons. One was on “Deictic” elements which come before the “head” noun. The researcher guided and encourage students to orally construct their own nominal groups with some of the deictic elements (e.g. *the boy, her books that train, those houses etc.*). The second was on qualifier, the elements that come after the “head” noun. For example, *look at those two splendid old electric trains with pantographs*. A qualifier element in a nominal group is a word, phrase, or clause that comes **after the head noun** and provides additional information about it. It usually **specifies, describes, or narrows** down the meaning of the noun. The researcher guided the students to practice constructing nominal groups with qualifiers (e.g. *the event **after the ceremony**, the student **who won the prize** etc.)*

The researcher then conducted two post-intervention exercises. The marking of these two exercises gave a lot of data on the teaching and learning of nominal groups, its construction and usage by the students. Conducting the exercises for the students was time consuming because I had to teach lessons and evaluate them.

3.7 Data Collection Protocol

An official letter was submitted to the Headmaster of Mpaha Senior High School to seek permission to conduct the study within the institution. A follow-up visit was made one week later, during which the researcher engaged in a discussion with the Headmaster regarding the research, and formal approval was granted to proceed. Subsequently, the purpose and nature of the study were explained to the Form One students and English teachers at Mpaha S.H.S. This step was taken in accordance with ethical research principles, which require that participants be fully informed about the research, including its purpose, potential impact, associated risks and benefits, and their right to refuse participation without any consequences.

Accordingly, the principle of voluntary participation was strictly observed throughout the data collection phase, in order to safeguard the privacy, autonomy, and well-being of the participants. The key ethical considerations addressed in the research process included informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. To obtain informed consent, the researcher provided detailed explanations about the study's objectives and procedures to the selected participants. To maintain anonymity, both teachers and students were instructed not to disclose their names during interviews. Instead, unique identification codes were assigned to each participant and used throughout the research process.

3.8 Data Analysis

I used the thematic analysis which is considered ideal for identifying patterns, themes, and relationships in qualitative data collected through observation and interviews. This method provides insights into how students and teachers perceive and interact with nominal groups. For the written exercises, content analysis was used to systematically examine students' written exercises to quantify and categorize the features of nominal group usage. This strategy highlights linguistic competence and reveals common patterns or gaps in students' nominal group usage. Also, the use of triangulation analysis ensures validity and reliability of findings, by comparing and integrating data from observation, interviews, and written exercises.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Generally, validity in research refers to the extent to which a test, instrument, or method measures what it is intended to measure and produces accurate, credible results. It ensures that the conclusions drawn from the research are well-founded and based on reliable evidence. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), validity is "the degree to which a test actually measures what it claims to measure". Validity is critical in both quantitative and qualitative research, ensuring that the data collected and the inferences made accurately reflect the phenomena being studied. Also, reliability is a critical aspect of ensuring the consistency and dependability of data collected through observation, interviews, and written exercises. To ensure this, I created a detailed observation guide with clear indicators for analyzing students' usage of nominal groups (e.g., frequency of modifiers, errors in construction). This ensures consistency in data collection across multiple sessions. I then piloted the checklist before formal observation which helped refined the tool for accuracy and clarity. Finally, a

combination of the data from observations, interviews, and written exercises was done to ensure reliability through multiple sources.

3.10 Chapter Summary

In Chapter Three, the research methodology was thoroughly presented, offering a clear path for investigating the usage of English nominal groups by students at Mpaha Community Senior High School. The case study design, as supported by Yin (2018), enabled an in-depth examination of linguistic challenges in a specific educational context. The research instruments; observation, interviews, and written exercises, were carefully chosen to provide triangulated data that is both credible and reliable, ensuring the study's findings were well-founded.

Additionally, ethical considerations such as confidentiality and informed consent were meticulously adhered to, emphasizing the study's commitment to academic integrity. The methodology serves as a robust foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions and practical recommendations aimed at improving English language instruction and learning in similar educational settings.

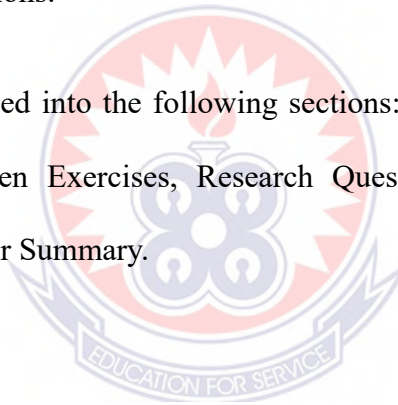
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an extensive analysis of the data collected through various instruments, including classroom observations, interviews, and written exercises. The results are discussed in relation to the research questions, highlighting the challenges students face in constructing English nominal groups, the teaching strategies employed by teachers, and the availability of teaching resources. The discussion integrates relevant literature and theoretical frameworks to contextualize the findings and highlight their implications.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: Research Question 1, Content Analysis of the Written Exercises, Research Question 2, Research Question 3, Discussion, and Chapter Summary.



4.1 Research Question 1: What challenges do students at Mpaha S.H.S face in identifying and constructing English nominal groups?

Table 1: Challenges Faced by Students in Constructing Nominal Groups

Main Theme	Frequency (%)	Sub-Theme	Direct Quote
Limited Understanding	65%	Difficulty identifying what components	“I often get confused about modifiers to use.”
Influence of Local Language	70%	Direct issues	“When I think in Gonja, in translation I struggle to say it correctly in English.”
Lack of Practice	70%	Insufficient opportunities	“We don’t do enough exercises on nominal groups in class.”
Confusion with grammar rules	60%	Misunderstanding structures	“Grammar rules are hard to remember, especially with nominal groups.”
Main Theme	Frequency (%)	Sub-Theme	Direct Quote
Low confidence	55%	Fear of mistakes	“I feel embarrassed when I speak because I might make errors.”
Insufficient Feedback	65%	Lack of detailed guidance	“Sometimes I don’t know why I lost marks on my assignments.”

Table 1 presents six main themes with corresponding frequencies, sub-themes, and direct quotes from which the themes were coded. The first main theme is "Limited Understanding," with a frequency of 65% and the sub-theme "Difficulty identifying components," deduced from the direct quote, “I often get confused about what modifiers to use.” The second theme from the results is "Influence of Local Language," at a frequency of 70% and a sub-theme of "Direct translation issues." This is supported by the direct quote, “When I think in Gonja, I struggle to say it correctly in English.” The third theme, "Lack of Practice," also at 70%, reveals the subtheme "Insufficient

opportunities," illustrated by the quote, "We don't do enough exercises on nominal groups in class."

The fourth theme, "Confusion with Grammar Rules," has a frequency of 60%, with the subtheme "Misunderstanding structures," supported by the quote, "Grammar rules are hard to remember, especially with nominal groups." The fifth theme, "Low Confidence," is reported at 55%, with the sub-theme "Fear of mistakes," as indicated by the quote, "I feel embarrassed when I speak because I might make errors." Finally, the sixth theme, "Insufficient Feedback," has a frequency of 65% and a sub-theme of "Lack of detailed guidance," deduced from the quote, "Sometimes I don't know why I lost marks on my assignments."

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that a majority of students (65%) struggle with understanding the key components of nominal groups, particularly identifying premodifiers and post-modifiers. This aligns with Halliday's (1994) perspective that nominal groups are complex structures essential for conveying detailed information.

The influence of the Gonja language, reported by 70% of students, corroborates Odlin's (1989) findings on linguistic interference, where direct translations lead to errors in constructing English sentences. The lack of practice (70%) and confusion regarding grammar rules (60%) highlight the cognitive load issues discussed by Sweller (1988), suggesting that students are overwhelmed by the complexity of nominal groups without adequate instructional support.

Additionally, low confidence levels (55%) hinder students' willingness to engage in speaking and writing exercises, which echoes the findings of Hattie and Timperley

(2007) regarding the importance of feedback. The reported insufficiency of feedback (65%) further exacerbates these challenges, as students are not receiving the guidance necessary to improve their understanding and application of nominal groups.

4.1.1 Content Analysis of the Written Exercises

For the written exercises, content analysis was used to systematically examine students' written exercises to quantify and categorize the features of nominal group usage. This strategy highlights linguistic competence and reveals common patterns or gaps in students' nominal group usage. The analysis of written exercises showed that students frequently misidentified components of nominal groups, with many failing to include necessary modifiers or using incorrect structures. For instance, a significant number of students struggled to construct sentences with correctly placed adjectives and determiners, leading to unclear or ambiguous nominal groups. This reinforces the challenges identified in interviews regarding limited understanding and highlights the critical need for explicit instruction in nominal group structures. Note that we have put double asterisk on any sentence that is ungrammatical.

Misplaced Adjectives

Students often place adjectives incorrectly within nominal groups.

Example 1: I saw the *red big ball* at the park. **

Example 2: She wore a *beautiful lovely dress* to the event. **

From these sentences, we can see that the conventional order of adjectives is disrupted. The corrected forms should be "the *big red ball*" and "the *lovely beautiful dress*," showcasing the importance of positioning modifiers correctly.

Omission of Determiners

Many students omit determiners, leading to phrases that lack specificity.

*Example 1: Dog is barking loudly in the yard. ***

*Example 2: Teacher assigned homework for tomorrow. ***

The absence of determiners creates ambiguity. The correct versions should be "The *dog* is barking loudly" and "The *teacher* assigned homework for tomorrow," emphasizing the necessity of determiners.

Incorrect Use of Plurals

Some students struggle with pluralization, as seen in sentences such as:

*Example 1: The apple are on the table. ***

*Example 2: The child play in the garden. ***

These errors demonstrate a lack of understanding of subject-verb agreement and pluralization. The correct sentences should read "The *apples* are on the table" and "The *children* play in the garden."

Failure to Include Modifiers

Students frequently write nominal groups without necessary modifiers.

*Example 1: She read book for her class. ***

*Example 2: I found note on the table. ***

These sentences lack clarity, as they omit important details. The correct forms would be "She read *the interesting book*" and "I found *the note* on the table."

Unclear Antecedents

Phrases like "the one who won" are often used without clear antecedents.

*Example 1: I talked to the one who finished first. ***

*Example 2: The one who called you is waiting outside. ***

These constructions create confusion. A clearer construction would specify who “the one” refers to, such as “*the student who won.*”

Redundant Modifiers

Instances of redundancy complicate sentences unnecessarily.

Example 1: She has a *small tiny puppy* that barks. **

Example 2: He drove a *fast speedy car* yesterday. ** The corrected forms should be "She has a *tiny puppy*" and "He drove a *speedy car*," highlighting the importance of concise modifiers.

Overuse of Adjectives

Some students overload their nominal groups with adjectives, which detracts from clarity.

Example 1: It was a *really nice wonderful day* for a picnic. **

Example 2: They bought an *incredibly expensive luxury watch*. **

A more effective version would be "It was a *wonderful day*" and "They bought an *expensive watch*."

Inconsistent Modifier Forms

Errors indicate a misunderstanding of adjective forms.

Example 1: She is a *kindness person* in our class. **

Example 2: He is a *tiredness student* who needs help. **

The corrected forms would be "She is a *kind person*" and "He is a *tired student*."

Complex Structures without Clarity

Students attempt complex nominal groups but struggle with clarity.

Example 1: The girl with the red dress who is singing performs well. **

Example 2: The man with the blue hat who is dancing looks happy. **

These sentences lack clarity and could be simplified. A clearer construction would be "the *singing girl in the red dress*" and "the *dancing man in the blue hat*."

Incorrect Prepositional Phrases

Misplacement of prepositional phrases disrupts the intended meaning.

Example 1: The car in the garage *blue* broke down. **

Example 2: She saw the cat under the tree *black* yesterday. **

The corrected versions should be "the *blue car in the garage*" and "the *black cat under the tree*," emphasizing proper adjective placement.

These results underscore the critical need for explicit instruction in both pre-modifiers and post-modifiers, as students often lack awareness of the grammatical rules governing their use.

Addressing these gaps can significantly improve students' nominal group usage and overall English proficiency. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the syntactic and morphological properties of nominal modifiers for clearer communication (Biber et al., 2002; Payne & Huddleston, 2002). By focusing on the characteristics and functions of nominal modifiers, educators can help students construct clearer, more effective sentences.

4.2 Research Question 2: What Current Teaching Strategies Do English Language Teachers Use in Teaching the topic during Lesson Delivery at Mpaha Community S.H.S?

Table 2: Teaching Strategies Observed

Main Theme	Frequency (%)	Sub-Theme	Direct Quote
Lecture-Based Instruction	80%	Predominant teaching method	“I mostly explain the rules without much student interaction.”
Interactive Group Work	50%	Occasional use	“We sometimes work in groups, but it’s not frequent.”
Use of Examples	70%	Providing illustrations	“I show examples, but students rarely practice them.”
Feedback on Exercises	30%	Limited constructive feedback	“I try to give feedback, but it’s often just a mark.”
Visual Aids	40%	Rarely utilized	“We have charts, but I don’t use them often.”
Use of Technology	20%	Minimal integration	“I wish we could use more digital tools in our lessons.”

Table 2 summarizes the teaching strategies observed in the classroom. The reliance on lecture-based instruction (80%) limits student engagement and contradicts the principles of communicative language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), which emphasizes interaction and practical use of language. The first main theme is "Lecture-Based Instruction," with a frequency of 80% and labeled as the predominant teaching method. This is illustrated by the direct quote, “I mostly explain the rules without much student interaction.”

The second theme, "Interactive Group Work," appears at 50%, indicating occasional use of collaborative learning strategies, as shown by the quote, “We sometimes work

in groups, but it's not frequent." The third theme, "Use of Examples," boasts a frequency of 70%, with the sub-theme "Providing illustrations." This is reflected in the quote, "I show examples, but students rarely practice them."

The fourth theme, "Feedback on Exercises," is noted at 30%, with the sub-theme "Limited constructive feedback," as indicated by the quote, "I try to give feedback, but it's often just a mark." The fifth theme, "Visual Aids," is observed at 40%, representing rarely utilized resources, illustrated by the quote, "We have charts, but I don't use them often." Finally, the sixth theme, "Use of Technology," shows minimal integration at 20%, supported by the quote,

"I wish we could use more digital tools in our lessons."

Table 2 summarizes the teaching strategies observed in the classroom. The reliance on lecture-based instruction (80%) limits student engagement and contradicts the principles of communicative language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), which emphasizes interaction and practical use of language. The limited use of interactive group work (50%) suggests missed opportunities for collaborative learning, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory. The data indicating that only 30% of classes provided constructive feedback aligns with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) assertion about the significance of feedback in the learning process.

Furthermore, the underutilization of visual aids (40%) highlights a gap in effective teaching strategies, as these aids can enhance understanding of complex grammatical structures

(Christie, 1992). The minimal integration of technology (20%) further limits the potential for modern instructional practices, reducing engagement and interactivity in

lessons. The lack of diverse teaching methods may contribute to the challenges students face in mastering nominal groups, as they require varied and engaging approaches to fully understand and utilize these structures.

4.3 Research Question 3: What Teaching and Learning Resources Are Available in the School for Effective Teaching and Learning of English Nominal Groups at Mpaha SHS?

Table 3: Availability of Teaching Resources

Main Theme	Availability (%)	Sub-Theme	Direct Quote
Textbooks	50%	Basic resources	“The textbooks we have don’t cover nominal groups well.”
Visual Aids	30%	Rarely used aids	“We have some charts, but I don’t see them in lessons.”
Digital Resources	20%	Minimal access	“There aren’t enough computers for us to use.”
Supplemental Materials	40%	Few worksheets	“I wish we had more practice sheets on nominal groups.”
Classroom Space	60%	Adequate but underutilized	“We have enough space, but we don’t do group activities often.”
Teacher Training	50%	Limited professional development	“I haven’t attended any development workshops on teaching grammar.”

The findings in Table 3 indicate that the availability of teaching resources at Mpaha Community S.H.S is quite limited. The first theme, "Textbooks," shows that only 50% of resources provide adequate coverage of nominal groups, which hampers students' learning. This finding correlates with Owusu-Ansah's (2018) observations regarding the lack of advanced grammar textbooks in Ghanaian schools, as illustrated by the quote, “The textbooks we have don’t cover nominal groups well.”

The second theme, "Visual Aids," is represented at 30%, indicating that these aids are rarely used, as reflected in the quote, "We have some charts, but I don't see them in lessons." The third theme, "Digital Resources," shows minimal access at 20%, with the quote, "There aren't enough computers for us to use," demonstrating the limitations in technology integration.

The fourth theme, "Supplemental Materials," is observed at 40%, indicating that there are few worksheets available, as noted by the quote, "I wish we had more practice sheets on nominal groups." The fifth theme, "Classroom Space," indicates that while there is adequate space (60%), it is underutilized, as shown in the quote, "We have enough space, but we don't do group activities often." Finally, the sixth theme, "Teacher Training," shows limited professional development opportunities at 50%, illustrated by the quote, "I haven't attended any workshops on teaching grammar."

The findings in Table 3 indicate that the availability of teaching resources at Mpaha Community S.H.S is quite limited. Only 50% of the textbooks provided contain adequate information on nominal groups, which hampers students' learning. This aligns with Owusu-Ansah's (2018) findings concerning the lack of advanced grammar textbooks in Ghanaian schools. The underutilization of visual aids (30%) suggests a missed opportunity to enhance learning through diverse instructional methods, supporting Kress's (2010) emphasis on multimodality in education.

Furthermore, the minimal access to digital resources (20%) limits the ability to incorporate technology into teaching, which is crucial for engaging students in a modern educational context. The adequate classroom space (60%) for group activities is underutilized, indicating a need for more interactive teaching methods that foster collaboration and deeper learning among students.

4.4 Discussion

The results of the study reveal significant challenges faced by students at Mpaha Community S.H.S. in identifying and constructing English nominal groups, effectively meeting the first objective of the study. The data from Table 1 indicates that a majority of students (65%) struggle with understanding the key components of nominal groups, particularly pre-modifiers and post-modifiers. This aligns with Halliday's (1994) view that nominal groups are complex structures essential for conveying detailed information. The influence of the local Gonja language, reported by 70% of students, exemplifies the issue of linguistic interference identified by Odlin (1989), where direct translations hinder their ability to construct grammatically correct sentences. Such challenges highlight the urgent need for targeted instructional strategies to enhance students' grammatical competence.

In assessing students' written exercises through content analysis, the findings further underscore the difficulties encountered in constructing nominal groups. The analysis revealed that many students frequently misidentified components of nominal groups, particularly concerning the placement of adjectives and the inclusion of necessary modifiers. For instance, examples demonstrated that students often wrote sentences such as "the red big ball" instead of the correct "the big red ball," indicating a lack of understanding of conventional adjective order. This aligns with Biber et al. (2002), who emphasize the importance of syntactic structure in effective communication. Additionally, the omission of determiners and incorrect pluralization were common issues, reflecting gaps in foundational grammar knowledge. These findings reinforce the challenges identified in interviews regarding limited understanding and highlight the critical need for explicit instruction in nominal group structures, as supported by

research indicating the efficacy of focused grammatical instruction (Payne & Huddleston, 2002).

In examining the teaching strategies employed by educators at Mpaha S.H.S., the results reveal a predominant reliance on lecture-based instruction, as indicated by the 80% frequency in Table 2. This approach limits student engagement and interaction, contradicting the principles of communicative language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The occasional use of interactive group work (50%) suggests missed opportunities for collaborative learning, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in language development. These findings address the second objective of the study, as they highlight the current teaching methods that may not effectively support students in mastering nominal groups.

Feedback on student exercises was noted to be limited (30%), indicating that students are not receiving the constructive guidance necessary for improvement. This aligns with findings from Hattie and Timperley (2007), emphasizing the significance of feedback in the learning process. The limited use of visual aids (40%) and technology (20%) in lesson delivery further illustrates the gaps in teaching strategies that can hinder effective learning. The study underscores the importance of adopting more diverse and interactive teaching methods to enhance students' understanding of nominal groups, thus achieving the second objective of examining current teaching strategies.

The availability of teaching and learning resources at Mpaha S.H.S was found to be quite limited, as presented in Table 3. Only 50% of textbooks provide adequate coverage of nominal groups, which directly impacts students' learning outcomes. This

finding aligns with Owusu-Ansah's (2018) observations regarding resource shortages in Ghanaian educational contexts.

The underutilization of visual aids (30%) and minimal access to digital resources (20%) suggest significant barriers to effective instruction. Addressing these gaps in resources is crucial for enhancing the teaching and learning of English nominal groups, thereby fulfilling the third objective of the study.

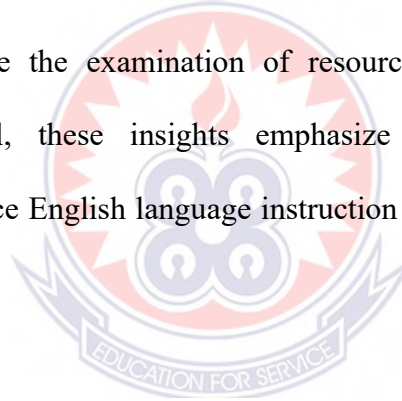
Furthermore, the findings indicate that while classroom space is adequate (60%), it is often underutilized for group activities. This situation points to a need for more interactive teaching methods that foster collaboration among students. Limited professional development opportunities for teachers (50%) also contribute to the challenges faced in effectively teaching nominal groups. This underscores the necessity for ongoing training that equips teachers with modern instructional strategies and resources to better support student learning. The results highlight the critical need for an investment in educational resources and teacher training to enhance the overall effectiveness of English language instruction.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges students face, the teaching strategies employed and the resources available at Mpaha Community S.H.S. By addressing these issues, the study not only meets its objectives but also emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to improving English language instruction. Enhancing teacher training, increasing resource availability, and fostering interactive learning environments are essential steps toward improving students' proficiency in English nominal groups, ultimately supporting their broader language development.

4.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, Chapter Four has provided a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by students at Mpaha Community S.H.S. in identifying and constructing English nominal groups, the teaching strategies employed by educators, and the availability of teaching resources. The findings highlight significant gaps in students' understanding and application of grammatical structures, largely influenced by linguistic interference and insufficient instructional support.

Additionally, the reliance on lecture-based teaching methods and limited use of interactive strategies reveal a need for more engaging pedagogical approaches. The analysis of written exercises underscores the necessity for explicit instruction in nominal groups, while the examination of resources indicates critical areas for improvement. Overall, these insights emphasize the importance of targeted interventions to enhance English language instruction and support students' linguistic development.



CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

Chapter Five will provide a comprehensive conclusion to the study, synthesizing the key findings from the previous chapters regarding the challenges faced by students at Mpaha Community S.H.S. in constructing English nominal groups, the effectiveness of current teaching strategies, and the availability of educational resources. This chapter will draw on the insights gained from the data analysis to present a cohesive understanding of the implications for English language instruction at the school. Additionally, it will offer practical recommendations aimed at addressing the identified challenges, enhancing teaching practices, and improving resource allocation to support students' linguistic development. By consolidating the study's findings, Chapter Five will underscore the importance of targeted interventions in fostering a more effective learning environment for English language learners.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: Summary of the Study, Key Findings, Policy Recommendations, and Suggestions for Future Research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by students at Mpaha Community Senior High School (S.H.S.) in identifying and constructing English nominal groups, assess current teaching strategies employed by educators and evaluate the availability of teaching and learning resources. The research is grounded in the context of English language instruction in Ghana, where students often struggle with grammatical structures due to various factors, including linguistic interference and insufficient practice.

Chapter one presented the background of the study, highlighting the gaps in existing literature on nominal groups in effective communication and the specific challenges faced by learners.

It established the objectives of the research, which included:

- i Assessing the challenges students at Mpaha S.H.S. face in identifying and constructing English nominal groups.
- ii Examining the current teaching strategies English language teachers use in teaching the topic.
- iii Evaluating the English language teaching and learning resources available in the school for effective instruction.

Chapter two reviewed relevant literature, providing a theoretical framework for understanding nominal groups and their role in language acquisition. It discussed key theories related to language learning, including Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. This literature review emphasized the need for explicit instruction in grammatical structures and the importance of interactive teaching methods to foster better language skills among students.

Chapter three described the research methodology, detailing the qualitative approach used to gather data through interviews, observations, and content analysis of students' written exercises. This chapter outlined the sampling techniques, data collection methods, and analytical strategies employed to address the research questions. The methodology was designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students and the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

In chapter four, the findings were presented and discussed in relation to the study's objectives. The analysis revealed significant challenges faced by students, including limited understanding of nominal groups, confusion with grammar rules, and low confidence levels. The teaching strategies employed were primarily lecture-based, with limited use of interactive methods and feedback. Additionally, the availability of teaching resources was found to be insufficient, impacting the overall effectiveness of instruction. These findings underscored the need for targeted interventions to enhance teaching practices and support student learning, fulfilling the study's objectives and paving the way for future recommendations.

5.2 Key Findings

The study revealed several key findings that highlight the challenges faced by students at Mpaha Community S.H.S. in constructing English nominal groups. First, a significant majority of students (65%) reported a limited understanding of nominal groups, particularly struggling with the identification and placement of pre-modifiers and post-modifiers. This foundational gap in grammatical knowledge indicates the need for explicit instruction to improve students' comprehension of these complex structures. Additionally, approximately 70% of students indicated that their proficiency in English is adversely affected by the influence of their native Gonja language. This linguistic interference often results in direct translation issues, where students attempt to apply Gonja grammatical rules to English, leading to errors in sentence construction. Such findings underscore the importance of recognizing the impact of students' first language on their learning process and the necessity for targeted interventions to mitigate these challenges.

The analysis also revealed that 70% of students feel they do not have enough opportunities to practice constructing nominal groups. This lack of practice contributes to their difficulties in applying grammatical rules effectively, suggesting that increased exposure to exercises focused on nominal groups is essential for building confidence and competence among learners.

Furthermore, the teaching strategies employed by educators predominantly relied on lecture-based instruction, with 80% of classes following this approach. This method limits student engagement and interaction, contradicting the principles of communicative language teaching that emphasize active participation and practical use of language. The findings highlight the need for teachers to adopt more interactive and collaborative teaching methods to foster a deeper understanding of grammatical structures.

Not only the above but also the content analysis conducted on the written exercises of the students has confirmed the multifaceted nature of the difficulties Mpaha SHS student go through. One would suppose at high school level they should be well abreast with the basic rudiments of constructing a nominal group however the errors prove otherwise.

Finally, the availability of teaching resources was found to be insufficient. Only 50% of the textbooks provided adequate coverage of nominal groups, and access to digital resources was minimal (20%). This lack of necessary materials significantly hampers the effectiveness of English instruction, indicating a pressing need for improved resource allocation and the development of supplementary materials to support students' learning. Overall, these findings collectively emphasize the critical areas that require attention to enhance English language instruction at Mpaha Community S.H.S.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

To enhance the teaching and learning of English nominal groups at Mpaha Community S.H.S., several key recommendations are proposed. First, educators should implement explicit instruction focused on the structure and function of nominal groups. This involves detailed lessons that clarify the roles of pre-modifiers and post-modifiers, supported by practical examples and exercises. Such targeted instruction can significantly improve students' grammatical understanding and application.

Additionally, it is crucial to integrate interactive teaching methods into the classroom. By adopting collaborative approaches such as group work, peer reviews, and hands-on activities, teachers can foster a more dynamic learning environment that encourages active student participation. These interactive methods are essential for enhancing engagement and promoting deeper comprehension of grammatical structures.

Increasing practice opportunities is also vital. Schools should provide more targeted exercises and assignments that allow students to practice constructing nominal groups regularly. Consistent practice will reinforce grammatical concepts and help build students' confidence in using these structures effectively in both writing and speaking contexts.

Furthermore, enhancing resource availability is critical. The school administration should invest in acquiring additional teaching resources, including updated textbooks, visual aids, and digital tools that comprehensively cover nominal groups. Access to a variety of materials can cater to different learning styles and significantly improve the overall teaching and learning experience.

Lastly, the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the school authority should consider providing targeted professional development for teachers in teaching nominal group and other grammar topics in general. Training sessions and workshops should be organized to equip teachers with modern instructional strategies and resources for teaching grammar effectively. This professional development will help teachers stay updated on best practices and innovative techniques, ultimately promoting student engagement and success in language learning.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

One area for future research could focus on exploring the specific ways in which linguistic interference from local languages, such as Gonja, impacts English language acquisition among students. This study could analyze the types of errors commonly made in nominal group constructions and investigate the underlying reasons for these errors. By identifying the specific challenges posed by direct translations and grammatical structures from students' first languages, educators can develop targeted instructional strategies to mitigate these issues and improve students' grammatical competence.

Another valuable avenue for research would be to conduct longitudinal studies assessing the long-term effectiveness of various teaching methods on students' understanding of nominal groups. Such research could compare traditional lecture-based approaches with more interactive and collaborative teaching strategies. By tracking student progress over time, researchers could determine which methods yield the best outcomes in terms of grammatical understanding and overall language proficiency, providing insights that can inform educational practices.

Additionally, future research could examine the role of digital resources and technology in enhancing students' comprehension and usage of nominal groups. This study could focus on the effectiveness of various educational technologies, such as language learning apps, online exercises, and interactive platforms, in improving students' grammatical skills and engagement. Understanding how technology can support language learning could provide valuable recommendations for integrating digital tools into the curriculum, ultimately benefiting students' language development.



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APPENDIX

SAMPLE OF STUDENTS EXERCISES

