

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**INVESTIGATING INTO THE PROBLEM OF CONCORD IN SECOND
CYCLE INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF S.D.A SENIOR HIGH
SCHOOL, AKYEM SEKYERE**



ELLEN AMOAH

2017

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**A DISSERTATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED
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AWARD OF MASTER OF EDUCATION TEACHING ENGLISH AS A
SECOND LANGUAGE.**

SEPTEMBER, 2017

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature:.....

Date:.....

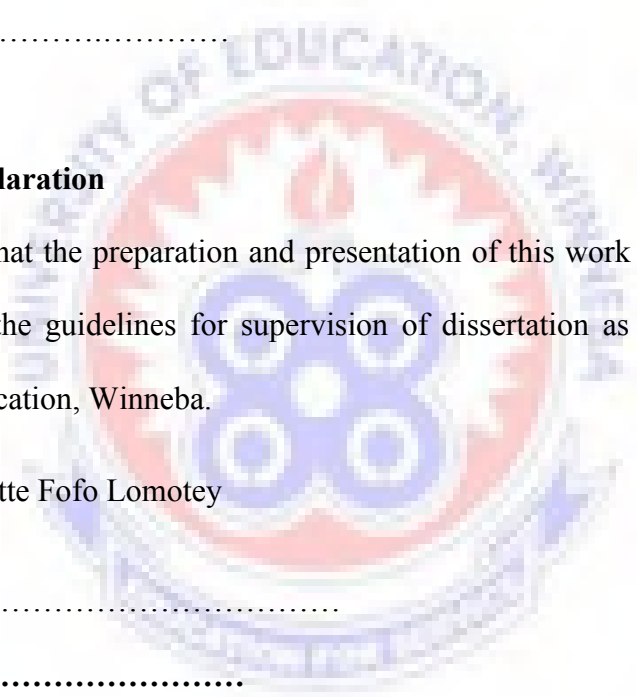
Supervisor's Declaration

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

Name: Dr. Charlotte Fofu Lomotey

Signature:

Date:



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Achieving this feat is not by my might or power but by the creator of Heaven and Earth. I am therefore grateful to Him for His Mercy, Strength and Guidance.

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DEDICATION

To my children; Gifty, Peniella, Wendy and Adutwumwaa

To my mother; Beatrice Seiwa Boakye



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ABSTRACT

The poor performance of students of SDA Senior High School in English language has been a source of worry to many people because other subjects they study have also been affected too. The most disturbing aspect of the problem is the students' inability to use the language to communicate effectively both in speaking and in writing. Their sentences are full of concord errors. This has been attributed to their negative attitudes towards the L2 as most of the students feel comfortable using the L1. This study focused on concord errors among the students, and the sources/causes of the problems. Information gathered was from the primary sources. Written scripts, test items interviews as well as observation were used to extract information on students' knowledge and use of concord. Finally, the results of the study were analyzed and discussed, and suggestions and recommendations were given for the necessary actions to be taken to help students become proficient in the use of the L2.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a historical background of the spread of English to Ghana. English in Ghana after independence to date, the falling standard of English in Ghana, the scope of study, research objectives, research questions, limitation of the study, relevance of the study and organization of the study.

2.0 Background of the study

It is widely known that English is the language most widely spoken and taught globally. Jenkins (2003) relates that, the advent of colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted in the spread of the English Language to Africa and Asia. This spread brought about language contact situation and eventually the colonized countries had to adopt the language of the British colonist for better national and international communication. In the case of Ghana, the Portuguese and other Europeans arrived in the 1450s. After the arrival of these Portuguese, the first arrival of the British occurred in the 1550s. The British contact with Ghana, the then Gold Coast was essentially trade contact. Sey (1973) reports that the initial intention behind the interaction between the British and the Gold Coasters, especially the Ga people of the modern day Accra and the Fantes of the modern day Central Region of Ghana, was purposely for trade.

This interaction also resulted in borrowing which is one of the natural consequences of language contact situations. The indigenous traders borrowed some English lexical items such as teacher, tailor and lorry.

By the end of the 17th century, there was a scattered group of Ghanaians capable of interpreting between the European languages and a number of the

indigenous languages. Sackey (1997) explains that the total picture of the English landscape throughout the colonial period up to 1957 can be drawn. Because the country had no single indigenous language which was the mother tongue of all levels, it was relatively easy for English assisted by the colonial government, to penetrate various aspects of social life and activity in varying degrees. By 1927, only four out of over forty (40) indigenous languages and dialects had been recommended for use in schools. These four were Twi, Ga, Fante and Ewe.

According to Sackey (1997), after the English Language had been spread to Ghana, the then Gold Coast by the British European traders in the 1550s, the objective of the British was to trade with the indigenous traders. When the Western missionaries' traders arrived in the Gold in 1835, they taught their converts and their pupils mainly with English. They taught English through the Bible. Sey (1973) writes: The study of the Bible was actively encouraged; church attendance was obligatory for all school children. The Bible, even at the present, plays a major role in the pupils' first acquaintance with the English Language. He is very often required to study Bible stories and memorize channels of passages from both the old and the new testaments as part of his general education.

The Western Missionaries also taught their converts and pupils the English classical literature such as the works of Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson. These Wesleyan missionaries were assisted by the colonial government. The Wesleyan missionary was very instrumental in the spread of the English Language in Cape Coast and Anomabu. Africans who preached had to do so through interpreters who spoke English to the congregation since the medium of instruction and preaching in Wesleyan schools and churches was the English Language.

According to Sackey (1997), there was the need for the indigenous people to study the English Language and become fluent in it. For instance, during the governorship of Sir Charles McCarthy, English was chosen as a compulsory subject and only medium of instruction and of communication in schools. The main motive was to train interpreters who would facilitate the activities between the British and the Gold Coasters.

According to Sackey (1997) “grammatical knowledge of the English Language as most important agent of civilization” was among other things, one of the main recommendations of an Education committee of the Privy Council of the colonial office in 1843. Smith (1929) cited in Sackey (1997) adds that English was seen as “the road to knowledge and wealth” since it presented a greater job opportunity for the Wesleyan students than their Basel compatriots whose schools encouraged the use of indigenous Gold Coast language.

One process that was also used to accelerate the growth of the population of English speakers on the Gold Coast was the total immersion mentioned. This process refers to the practice whereby some Africans were sent to Europe to acquire not just the language, but also the total culture of the speakers of the language. Apparently, some African children were sent to Britain to be educated. The Ghanaian who were thus immersed returned to assist the Europeans on the Coast in their trading activities and the propagation of the English Language.

Philip Quarcoo was one of those who were sent to Britain and he returned to Ghana as a missionary schoolmaster and catechist. According to Sey (1973) by the 18th century attempts were made to start school for Ghanaian children, and by 1788 a school for twelve children had been established in Cape Coast.

According to Sey (1973) the British colonists built schools in the Cape Coast known as Castle Schools. These schools were established to help in the teaching and learning of English. The syllabuses concentrated on Reading and Writing, both in English and on Arithmetic, Sey (1973) reports that the study of Geography, History and Grammar was optional, but the study of English Grammar was very popular. The popularity of the English Grammar was due to the fact that it was the hallmark of scholarship and the key to respectable and well-paid jobs.

During the colonial era, English was adopted as the official language and it became the language of government, law, formal education, newspapers, large scale business transactions and in national radio and television broadcasts.

From the above discussion, it is deducible that the English Language was transported to Ghana in the 1550s through trade contact, which the British where by marginalizing other European groups. Sackey (1997) as cited in Ager (2003). The processes of transmission were oral transmission, total immersion and formal classroom acquisition.

1.9.1 English in Ghana after independence

All the time of independence, Ghana had no single indigenous language which could be adopted as a national language because of her linguistically heterogeneous state. English which was the language of the British colonists was employed as a lingua franca and subsequently gained official status and has remained the single most important language in Ghana.

Ghana uses English as a second language and its main source of acquisition is through the formal school system. English has remained the single most important language in Ghana because it plays a lot of important roles, especially in education

and employment. It has remained a prerequisite for education and employment. Admission into any institution after senior high school (secondary school) such as Nurses Training Colleges, Teachers Training Colleges, Polytechnics or Universities require a credit in English at GCE, 'O' level, SSSCE or WASSCE. To qualify for any job in the civil or public sector of the country, one requires a pass or credit in English in GCE 'O' level, SSSCE or WASSCE.

During the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods, English has been taught as a subject ever since. For instance, from 1974 to 2001, a local Ghanaian language was used as a medium of instruction for the first three years of the primary schools, but English was the medium of instruction from Primary Four upwards. However, in May, 2002, the medium of instruction at all levels of education was changed to English Language. The reasons that espoused on English only language policy in education were: to enable pupils to gain a high level of proficiency in English because all examinations are conducted in English, to allow free movement of pupils across linguistic areas because of the multi lingual nature of the nation and its classrooms, and to avoid the delay in introducing English to children.

In 2009, the 2002 Language Policy was changed. The current National Language policy states that in first three years of primary education, the Ghanaian language prevalent in the local areas is to be used as the medium of instruction while English is studied as a subject. From Primary four, English replaces the Ghanaian Language as a medium of instruction, and the Ghanaian language is treated as just another subject on the time-table.

Furthermore, English is today the world's most important language regarding education. It is the medium of a great deal of the world's knowledge, especially in

such areas as science and technology. This view is shared by Harry Mashabela (1975) cited in Crystal (1998).

Learning and using English will not only give us the much-needed unifying chord but will enable us to keep company with kings in the world of ideas and also make it possible for us to share the experience of our own butchers in the world.

1.10 Statement of the problem

There have been great concerns about the falling standard of English in Ghana. Sey (1973) writes, “There has been an urgent feeling among educationists that there is the need for research into the problems involved in the use of English in Africa...”.

The study of English as a subject is intended to provide the language needs of students as they progress through all the levels of formal education. However, it seems that the study of the language is becoming increasingly difficult for students, especially those at the second cycle. Even though the English language is the official language in Ghana and teachers of English appear to be doing their best, each year the Chief Examiners Reports show a decline in the performance of candidates. It is obvious that even when in other subjects such as Mathematics, Social Studies, the blame is laid at the door of the English Language that the inadequacy of the English of many candidates resulted in their poor performance in those subjects.

The English syllabus for Senior High Schools underlines the importance of English language in the curriculum. The English syllabus for Senior High Schools treat concord rules as one of the important topics in grammar. Since this topic is taught, if students are not able to apply the rules of concord correctly, they are punished and the punishment affects their performance negatively. Students of S. D.

A Senior High Akyem Sekyere perform poorly in English Language examination because of their inability to apply correctly the rules of concord in their writings. These students usually forget that the many parts of a sentence must work together to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. Words within sentences should be arranged in an understanding pattern, and the words must have agreement. It is against this background that the researcher holds the view that there is the need to study the concord errors students make and identify reasons accounting for those errors, and strategies that should be adopted to enhance their performance.

The researcher points that concord rule violations negatively affect the writing ability of students and these violations contribute to the low performance in students' English Language examinations in the second cycle level.

1.11 Scope of study

The study has focused on the application of English concord rules and how students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere apply these rules in their writings. The study concentrates on grammatical concord and exceptions to the rule of grammatical concord namely; National concord and Proximity concord. Also, the study deals with determiner – Noun concord, Coordinated subject concord, Noun – pronoun concord and Verb – verb concord.

1.12 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this dissertation are to:

1. Ascertain the actual concord errors in the students' writings.
2. Identify the various factors responsible for the concord errors the students commit.

3. Find out the possible way to enhance students' performance in the area of English concord.

1.13 Research questions

The researcher seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the specific concord errors the students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere make?
2. What factors account for the concord errors they make?
3. What can be done to help students to overcome their English concord challenges?

1.14 Limitation of the study

The study was conducted in the researcher's school which is in a rural area for the sake of proximity in view of the available time. Perhaps the results might not be exactly the same if a comparative study was done between an urban and rural school.

1.15 Significance of the study

1. The strategy proposed in this study may bring some improvement particularly in the teaching of concord in English.
2. The study will also make available to teachers and students an approach that will complement existing methodologies in the teaching and learning of concord in senior high schools.
3. An idea will be generated that will be useful to writers of textbooks and designers.

Larsen – Freeman (2001) defines grammar as 'how words are formed (morphology) and how words are combined (syntax)'. From this

perspective one way consider it essential for learners to understand the components of a structure and how they function. For composing a sentence, either verbally or in writing, may be equated to putting up a building, whereby the blocks may be similar to the words.

This study proposes an electric approach by which formal and functional grammar would be taught. Formal grammar which has to do with structuralism is based “on the assumption that grammatical categories should not be established in terms of meaning, rather in terms of the distribution of structures in sentences” (Fries 1952 quoted in Larson – Freeman 2001). From the behaviourist point of view, learning entails a kind of condition because language was viewed as verbal behaviour (Skinner 1957, quoted in Mclaughin 1987, Richards and Rodgers 1986, Ellis 1994). We do agree with the behaviourist point of view and wish to add that learners must be taken through certain conditions (techniques or methodologies) so that they may internalize the principles entailed in the conditions.

Thus, functional grammarians consider meaning as pivotal in grammar. This implies that grammar is viewed as a means of making and exchanging meaning (Larsen – Freeman 2000; Halliday 1978, 1984, quoted in Larsen Freeman 2000). Halliday’s systematic functional theory puts forward three types of meaning in grammatical structure namely, experiential meaning interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. The first refers to how our thoughts and experiences are represented, the second implies how we interact with others through language, and textual refers to how we create coherence in what we write or speak. However, coherence may not be achieved if one’s speech is laden with errors such as errors of concord.

1.16 Hypothesis

If students are taught by the strategies which deal with the roots of their concord problems, such as methods that lay stress on pronoun usage, they may be able to communicate effectively without errors.

1.17 Delimitation of the study

This study was delimited to the teaching of concord in English. The study was further delimited to the studying of only seven types of concord in English. Considering the limited time within which this research was conducted, the study was delimited to S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere in the Atiwa District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The students of Senior High School form 1^D, 2^C and 3^E were the target population in this study. The class was chosen to find out how students construct sentences in English.

1.18 Organization

Chapter one (1) is a general introduction which consists of the background and other related information of the study, statement of the problem, scope of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, limitation of the study, significance of the study, hypothesis and delimitation of the study.

Chapter Two (2) deals with a review of related literature. This includes what other scholars have already written on the topic in terms of theories, concepts and empirical evidence. Literature was also reviewed on the importance of teaching and learning of concord and the factors affecting the teaching and learning of concord. Chapter three (3) discusses the methodology adopted for the study. It describes the research design, population sample and sampling, research site, research instruments and the procedure employed to obtain and analyze data for the research. Chapter four

(4) is the analysis and discussion of data. It was discovered that in both the students essay scripts and summary answers, subject – verb agreement errors had the highest number. The discussion also revealed that sometimes, students found it difficult to apply their knowledge of concord rules correctly in their writing.

Finally, chapter five (5) presents the conclusion of the study. This includes the summary of the findings of the study. It also discusses the implications of the findings for classroom teaching. The chapter finally ends with recommendations and suggestions for further studies.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature on the topic under discussion. It looks at the relevance of the literature to this study and the specific directions it can give to the researcher with regards to the analysis of data, as well as findings and recommendations.

The following are examined:

- ❖ What is concord?
- ❖ Types of concord
- ❖ Possible areas where students' concord problems arise
- ❖ Error Analysis
- ❖ Error Analysis in Language Teaching

2.1 What is concord?

Concord is a grammatical agreement between two words in a sentence. This agreement (concord) happens when a word changes form depending on the other words to which it relates. It is an instance of inflection, and usually involves making the value of some grammatical category such as 'gender and person' to agree with different words or parts of the sentence. For example; we say 'I am/he is' but not 'I is/he am'. This is because in grammar, the verb and its subject must agree in person or in number. The pronouns 'I' and 'he' are first and third person singular respectively, so are the verb forms 'am' and 'is'; therefore the verb must be selected so that it has the same person as the subject.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) opine that concord refers to the agreement relationship between two grammatical units. Wiredu (1999) also explains that the

term concord in grammar is used to refer to the agreement relations which exist between two grammatical units so that when one unit displays a particular feature the other unit will also display a similar feature. Furthermore, Blake (1988) is of the view of the principle that the form of one grammatical unit in a sentence is influenced by the features of a different unit within the same sentence is referred to as concord. Hence concord reflects on number, person and gender. That is what the conventional rules of grammar require. Drennam (2003) supports Blake (1988) by describing concord as an agreement between words in gender, number, case or person. The following examples illustrate this:

Gender

The queen has lost her crown.

The 'queen' is singular and a feminine gender, it takes a singular feminine pronoun 'her'. Therefore, 'queen' has agreed with 'her' in gender.

Number

The shoes are too small.

The 'shoes' is a plural subject and it agrees with 'are' which is a plural verb. So shoes' has agreed with 'are' in number.

Person

'Person' has to do with whether the noun or pronoun used is in the 'first*' 'second' or 'third' person singular/plural. For example:

- ❖ I am thankful.
- ❖ He has done the exercise.
- ❖ I Lydia and Joan have done the exercise.
- ❖ They have done the exercise.

- ❖ The boy likes his friends.
- ❖ The students like their friends.

According to Downing and Locke (2006), concord is a number (singular or plural) and person with verb, which are determined by subjects. They further state that concord is manifested in only those verb forms that show inflectional contrast. Furthermore, Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) also explains that the verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, the subject can be singular or plural; and 'person' can be seen as the relationship between the speaker and the one he is speaking to or what he is speaking about. Moreover, concord in broad terms means agreement between the subjects and the verbs as well as other elements of the clause structure (Babajide, 2010; Leech & Svartvik, 1994). The idea of concord in the grammar of English suggests that for an English sentence to be correct and meaningful, its constituent parts must be in perfect agreement.

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

2.2 Types of concord

Communication is achieved primarily through speech or writing. To achieve proficiency in communication, whether oral or written, the knowledge of such grammatical elements like concord and others is necessary. There are different types of concord in the English language. Many scholars have analyzed concord and put them into various groups depending on the relationship that exists between the words of a constituent/ sentence. To Quirk and Greenbaum (1990), the most important type of concord in English is concord of number between subject and verb. Hence, Estling-Vannestal (2007) opines that the subject and the verb are the two most important items in the sentence. According to her, concord is classified into four different types - grammatical, notional, concord of proximity and distance concord. These are discussed below:

2.2.1 Grammatical concord

Grammatical concord is also known as subject-verb agreement/concord. This is an agreement between the subject and its interacting verb. The subject and the verb have to agree grammatically and the phenomenon is called subject-verb concord. The verb is considered to be the heart of the sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject (Woods. 2010). This implies that a singular subject requires a singular verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb. Estling-Vannestal (2007) again states that grammatical concord is when the verb and the subject belong together (I have; He has). For example, we have:

- ❖ I have a book.
- ❖ He has a book.
- ❖ The student is late.

- ❖ The students are late.

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

- ❖ My son watches TV after dinner.

A plural subject requires a plural verb, example:

- ❖ My sons watch TV after dinner.

If the subject is a noun phrase (a phrase is a group of words forming a conceptual unit, but not a sentence, i.e. there is no verb), the number of the verb depends on the number (singular or plural) in the main phrase.

A clause in a position of a subject counts as singular for purposes of concord:

- ❖ What they say is wrong.
- ❖ To teach English language as a subject is not an easy task.

Prepositional phrases acting as subjects also counts as singular:

- ❖ After the exams is the lime to relax.
- ❖ In the evenings is cool to think.

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

- ❖ What were once human dwellings are now nothing but piles of rubble.
- ❖ What was once a forest is now a desert.

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

- ❖ Peace and Love is perhaps the best designed hotel in Amansie.
- ❖ K. Gvasi and Sons is doing very well in the construction business.

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

- ❖ Measles is a serious disease.
- ❖ Our people are complaining of economic hardship in the country.

Kirkpatrick (2013) classifies grammatical concord as verb agreement. According to her verb agreement is also known as concord and refers to the fact that a verb must 'agree*' with the appropriate subject in number. Therefore, number agreement indicates that a singular noun is usually accompanied by a singular verb; while a plural noun is usually accompanied by a plural verb, However, two factors interfere with grammatical concord above, and this brings us to notional and proximity concord.

2.2.2 Notional concord

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

- ❖ Fifty dollars is a lot of money.

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

- ❖ The public is tired of demonstrations.
- ❖ The committee has accepted my proposal.

In these examples, 'public' and 'committee' are subjects in the sentences which refer to groups and are therefore treated as singular. This implies that the group is considered as a single undivided body. On the other hand, when a collective noun is used to refer to the individual members of a group, the noun is treated as plural. Examples are:

- ❖ The staffs are meeting this weekend.
- ❖ The audience are enjoying every minutes of the show.

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

- ❖ My family is in Kumasi.
- ❖ My family are in Kumasi.
- ❖ The government have broken all their promises.

To them, collective nouns notionally are plural but grammatically singular. Although, singular and plural verbs are more or less interchangeable in these contexts, the choice is based, if on anything, on whether the group is being considered as a single undivided body, or as a collection of individuals. Thus, plural is more likely

than singular in “The audience were enjoying every minute of the show’ because consideration is being given to the individual reactions of members of the audience. Contrastingly, singular has to be used in a sentence like “The audience was enormous”.

2.2.3 Proximity concord

According to Wiredu (1999), proximity concord refers to the agreement between the verb and its subject based not on 'notion' but on the fact that there is a 'nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. Concord of proximity does not. However, agree with the real subject in the sentence or the clause, it agrees with the closest noun and the numerous of that specific noun (Crystal, 2004). That is, it denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase. For instance, two singular nouns joined by ‘either or, neither nor, no but, and or’ take a singular verb, and if the subjects are plural, then the verbs must also be plural. However, in case one subject is plural and the other one is singular, the subject that is close to the verb must agree with the verb. That is how the principle of proximity works in English language.

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

Examples:

- ❖ No one except his own supporters agree with him
- ❖ Either the student or the teacher is late
- ❖ Neither the farmer nor the labourers are not happy about the officer’s attitude
- ❖ The villagers or the king is invited

2.2.4 Pronoun concord

According to Wiredu (1999), this refers to agreement which exists between a pronoun and the noun it refers to. The agreement here involves three major features associated with pronouns - number, person and gender. This implies that noun pronoun concord calls for agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent in terms of number, person and gender. A pronoun which refers back to a singular noun phrase is in the singular, and a pronoun which refers back to a plural noun phrase is in the plural. Examples;

- ❖ The boy likes his toys.
- ❖ The boys like their toys.

If a sentence contains a proper noun 'Sammy' and later a pronoun 'he' refers to the same person, we say that they agree in number and gender. Example:

Sammy is my friend, he is my friend.

'Sammy' is the same as *he*. 'Sammy' is a masculine singular subject and it agrees with *he* which is also a masculine singular pronoun. Thus, 'Sammy' and *he* agrees in person as well as in number.

2.2.5 Concord of person

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

- ❖ I am tired. (1st Person Singular Concord)
- ❖ You are tired. (2nd Person Singular Concord)
- ❖ He is tired. (3rd Person Singular Concord)

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

- ❖ I was tired. (1st Person Singular Concord)
- ❖ He was tired. (3rd Person Singular Concord)

- ❖ You were tired. (2nd Person)

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

- ❖ Either my friend or I am signing the contract.
- ❖ Neither you nor the girl knows the answer.

2.2.6 Subject-complement and object-complement concord

Again, Quirk and Greenbaum (1990) state clearly that there is concord of number between subject and subject complement and between direct object and object complement:

- ❖ My sister is a hardworking nurse, (subject complement concord)
- ❖ The sisters are hardworking nurses, (subject complement concord)
- ❖ I consider my sister a hardworking nurse, (object complement concord)

This type of concord arises naturally from the semantic role of the two complements.

However, there are few exceptions:

- ❖ Dogs are good company.
- ❖ The students nowadays are a problem.

2.2.7 Pronouns and determiner reference

It is also usual that the agreement between a pronoun or determiner and its antecedent is co-reference rather than grammatical concord. A reflexive pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person and gender. Examples:

- ❖ She hurts herself.
- ❖ I conducted the test myself.

Personal pronouns and possessive determiners in the 1st and 3rd persons agree with their antecedents in number, but those in the 3rd person singular also agree with their antecedents in gender. For example:

- ❖ Mavis knows that she is wrong.
- ❖ The boys were not ready, so I left them.

The relative pronouns *who*, *whom*, and *which* agree with their antecedent in gender. For example:

- ❖ That's the boy who took your money.
- ❖ Give the money which you took from my pocket to him.

Dondieu (2009) is of the view that the principles underlying concord (or agreement) govern the relationship of various parts of a sentence to one another; therefore, language users must adhere to them.

From the above discussions, it is apparent that concord is a grammatical agreement between two words in a sentence. The agreement between a subject and its accompanying verb or a pronoun and its antecedent or any other elements of a constituent structure is what concord is all about. Thus, concord or agreement occurs when one element in a sentence takes on the morphosyntactic features of another element. There is no freedom of choice between the forms of verbs especially where subject - verb agreement is concerned. Inadequate understanding of such rules of grammar is the general cause of errors.

2.3 Possible areas of concord errors

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) state that the rule that the verb matches its subject in number may be called grammatical concord. Difficulties over concord arise through conflict between these and the other two - notional and proximity concord. According to Woods (1999), different language teachers have different approaches to

grammar in the classroom. Most people, who have considered the definitions and overlooked it, have found a tension between form and grammar as a source for meaning. He points out that the various approaches teachers use to teach concord is the genesis of concord errors among the students. This problem arises since many people are uncertain about where parameters lie. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) see the different concord types to be the likely areas where students' concord problems lie.

On the other hand, Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) asserts that there are rules governing the way grammatical items are put together. Violation of these rules makes sentence construction ungrammatical. He lists the following areas as where students' concord problems rest:

- a) Certain nouns which are plural in form but singular in meaning, generally take a singular verb. The most common of these are Mathematics, news, statistics, linguistics, electronics, ethics, physics, dynamics etc.
- b) A collective noun takes a singular verb when the clause is considered as a unit, a plural verb when the members of the class are considered individually.

Examples:

- The crowd is in a festive mood.
 - The crowd are in a festive mood.
- c) Plural numbers take a singular verb when they are in a phrase to indicate a sum or a unit.
 - d) Such indefinite pronouns as anybody, each, either, everybody, neither, nobody, no one and somebody generally require a singular verb.
 - e) When the subject is a relative pronoun, the verb agrees with the antecedent of pronoun.

- f) When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'and' the plural form of the verb is required.
- g) When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'or', 'nor', 'but', a singular form of the verb is required.
- h) h. When one of the two subjects is connected by 'or, nor, but' one is singular and the other is plural, 'then, the verb agrees in number with the nearer one.

Both scholars hold the same view on the possible areas where students' concord problems rest. They attribute the problems to inability of learners to grasp the rules in the various concord types; and they commit a lot of errors as a result of this problem. There are cases where variation exists in subject -verb concord. Usually, when a subject consist of two coordinate heads (that is when the subject is a noun group with two heads joined together by 'and', the verb goes into the plural base form but if the subject is thought to form a singular notional entity, then singular verb with the (-s) form is used.

Again, a compound subject that is joined by 'and' or 'both' is plural except when the joined words make a single unit or when they both refer person or thing as in:

1. Rice and stew is my favourite
2. My teacher and advisor is in school today.
3. My teacher and advisor are in town.
4. Both Maame and Gladys are leaving for Accra.
5. Maame's mother and advisor like disciplined students.

Sentences of this nature pose problems to students since they do not get the concept very well. In sentence 1 and 2, the subjects used refer to one entity (unit) - 'rice and stew' is just an item (a meal) and 'my teacher is the advisor', so the noun 'advisor' refers to the same person, 'my teacher', therefore, the subjects in 1 and 2 take

singular verb. However, in 4 and 5, the subjects used are two individuals joined with a conjunction and which form a compound 1 subject so they take a plural verb. This has to do with notion rather than the form of the sentence. Notional concord poses a lot of problems since it solely depends on the speaker's perception of numbers. Moreover, Yankson (1994) also groups concord errors into six categories as:

2.3.1 Typical developmental errors

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

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

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

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

2.3.2 Notional concord errors

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

- The society at large hold the university students in a high esteem.
- The energy of the employed able-bodied men are being wasted.

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

2.3.3 Proximity concord errors

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

- A long discussion on Senchi conscientious about our challenges have finally come to an end.
- The reason for the high cost of living in our towns and cities are unacceptable.

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

2.3.4 Memory limitation concord errors

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

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

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

2.3.5 Plural inflectional concord errors

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

- Mathematics have been a difficult subject to many students.
- Tuberculosis are a deadly disease.

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

2.3.6 Inability to identify noun headword

Under this category, all the errors under proximity and memory limitation can also be attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword of the noun phrase. Sometimes students are not able to identify noun heads in noun phrases or even the subjects of sentences. This makes the situation more complex than what one

can think of. Students find it cumbersome to differentiate between singular and plural nouns or singular and plural verbs since they do not know the headword. Example:

- The boy together with the girls is visiting the zoo.
- Climbing mountains are a challenge people enjoy.

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

- He refuses to go to school until his mum buy him a new shoe.
- The school also have a sufficient teachers who are responsible.
- Rhymes helps in their language acquisition process and encourage them to listen carefully.

Such inconsistencies are signs that the learners are passing through transitional phase in their language learning development and that* as time goes on, they will, hopefully 'arrive at a system'.

Again Kirkpatrick (2014) says concord per se is not a big issue in English since verbs in English generally have the same form, irrespective of number, apart from the change of form in the third person singular of the present tense when *-s* or *~es* is added to the base form. A difficulty only arises when a subject takes the form of a singular noun linked to a plural noun by *of I* as in

A number of problems has arisen.

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

A number of problems have arisen.

This is becoming more and more common, although it is grammatically wrong. She also attests to the fact that group or collective nouns such as committee, family,

government, jury etc. can cause problems in relation to verb agreement since some of these words can be accompanied by either a singular or a plural verb depending on the context. That is, the choice depends on the notion of the speaker, whether he wishes to emphasize the unity of the group of things or people referred to, or whether the individual components are to be emphasized.

Another area where the principle of agreement can be troublesome is when the subject is made up of two or more singular nouns connected by a phrase, which in some way, emphasizes the 'togetherness' of the nouns, such as together with, as well as, with and plus, the verb takes the singular form. But most learners become confused as a result of the presence of the intervening phrase (s).

2.4 Error analysis

Second Language (L2) learning is a process that is clearly not unlike the first language (L1) acquisition in its trial-and-error nature. Inevitably, learners will make mistakes in the process of acquisition and that process will be impeded if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback on those errors. To analyze learner language in an appropriate perspective, it is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and errors because technically they are two different phenomena. Mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. Native speakers make mistakes. When attention is called to them, they can be self-corrected. However, error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker; it reflects the competence of the learner (e.g. Does John can sing?). Thus, an error is a learner language that deviates from, or violates a target language rule.

James (1998) defines error as an unsuccessful bit of language, which seems to be succinct and compact a description. Accuracy occurs when learner language

conforms to the rules of the target language, error occurs when it does not. The fact that learners do make errors, and these errors can be analyzed and corrected, led to a surge of study of learners' errors, called Error Analysis. This is a method used to document the systematic errors that appear in the learner language. It studies the types and causes of language errors. Error analysis became distinguished from Contrastive Analysis by its examination of errors attributable to all possible sources, not just those resulting from negative transfer of the native language. It is still widely used in language classes. The attraction of the Error Analysis lies in one's ability to isolate variability in responses, such as distinguishing true errors from mistakes.

Originally, error analysis mainly consisted of more impressionistic collection of common errors and their linguistic classification. This information was basically used to sequence items for language instructions or for remedial lessons (Ellis, 1985). However, today, Error Analysis has transformed into a systematic procedure used by both researchers and teachers to collect samples of learners' language, identify the errors in the sample, describe the errors, classify the errors according to their hypothesized causes and evaluate their seriousness. Even though the process for error analysis is more systematic and comprehensive today, it continues to experience changes as more and more proposals are added in an attempt to streamline it. Corder (1974) for instance, elaborated five distinguished stages in the procedure for Error Analysis (Lenon, 1991). These are:

- Collection of a sample of learner language
- Identification of errors
- Description/classification of errors identified
- Explanation of errors
- Evaluation of errors (Ellis, 1985; Lenon, 1991)

According to Brown (1997) the following are the forms/types of errors that occur in the learner language:

Pre-systematic errors: these errors occur when the learner is unaware of the existence of a particular rule in the target language - the learner cannot give any account of why a particular form is chosen.

Systematic errors: this occurs when the learner has discovered a rule but it is the **wrong one** - the learner is unable to correct the errors but can explain the mistaken rule used and type.

Post-systematic errors: this occurs when the learner knows the correct target language rule but uses it inconsistently (makes a mistake) - the learner can explain the target language rule that is normally used. This procedure, Brown (1997) steps in error analysis has been common in many studies involving error analysis. However, Lenon (1991) proposes a revision of stage two (2) of Brown (1997) procedure especially in second language research. He proposes that in identifying errors, the first consideration should be unambiguously defining error. Lenon (1991) illustrates his proposals through a study of the narrations produced by four advanced learners, aged 20-24 years, who were German university students of English.

Agor (2003) also analyzed concord errors in the writings of 300 teacher trainees from three (3) selected colleges in Ghana. Like Edu-Buandoh (1997), Agor (2003) chose the written texts or essays of participants as the corpus. Findings and conclusions from Agor (2003) showed that teacher trainees hardly had any explicit knowledge of concord rules. He recommended more attention or the teaching of English at the training level. The present study attempts to analyze senior high school students' errors in concord usage using Quirk (2002) model.

2.5 Error analysis in language teaching

Since Quirk (2002) highlighted the importance of considering errors in the language learning process, there has been a shift in emphasis towards an understanding of the problems learners face in their study of a language. Errors are indispensable to learners since the making of errors can be *regarded as* 'a device the learner uses in order to learn' (Selinker, 1992). Also, Quirk (2002) noted that a learner's errors are significant in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language. Research has provided empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving grammatical accuracy (Carroll & Swain, 1993; White, Spada, Lightbown & Ranta, 1991; Trahey & White, 1993). Indeed, as Carter (1997) notes, it is important for students to have knowledge about how grammar works in order to understand more about how grammar is used and misused. There is also the need for students to recognize the significance of errors which occur in their writing, to fully grasp and understand the nature of the errors made. This requires English language teachers to be better equipped, more sensitive and aware of the difficulties students face with regard to grammar so *that they* can guide their students to become proficient.

Error Analysis has made significant contributions to language studies. For instance, it has refocused attention on error from a language processing and language acquisition perspective (Lenon, 1991). Quirk & Greenbaum (2000) note that analysis of learner errors has proved that the learner makes a significant cognitive contribution to learning. This insight has unveiled the strategies the learner uses to assimilate the rules of the language. This knowledge has been useful in shaping both first and second language research and teaching and learning (Ellis, 1985). For instance,

Quirk's (2002) "inbuilt syllabus theory" which determines the order in which grammar is acquired has given linguistic researchers and educators clues about how to organize the language syllabus (Lenon, 1991).

All these strengths nevertheless, there are widespread doubts in SLA about how errors explain the route or path learners take to learn language (Ellis, 1985). It is argued not to be comprehensive enough to explain the process of language acquisition and processing. Fortunately, error analysis is a dynamic concept and as it continues to be streamlined, its impact on research and language teaching and learning will increase. To conclude, it is important to establish the relevance of Error Analysis as it is adopted as the framework for this study.

2.6 Conclusion

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

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology is an important component of any study. It provides the framework upon which the process is conducted (Brown, 1996). It is therefore used in this study as sound and thorough enough to efficiently produce accurate data in order that the stated research goals and objectives will be achieved. This chapter opens with a presentation of the various techniques employed in carrying out the study. Specifically, it discusses the following: the research design, population of the study, sample, sampling techniques and the sample size. The rest of the chapter describes the data collection procedure and data analysis.

3.1 Research design

In order to ensure the success of the investigation, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher's arrival of valid findings. A research design according to Punch (2005) is the strategy to plan and restructure of conducting a research project. It encompasses the employed to conduct scientific research.

To Sdenntwi and Amartei (2009) research design refers to the overall plan the researcher employs to collect data in order to answer the research questions including the research data analysis techniques or methods. This is done to ensure that the problem in question is effectively addressed. For the purpose of this study, the research design adopted is qualitative case study to examine concord problem in English in S.D.A Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere. Oral interviews, Test and observations were also conducted. A qualitative research is a kind of method when seeks to “describe action within a specific setting and invites rather than tries to

control the possibility of a rich array of variables” (Halliday, 2002). A case study is also a written account that gives detailed information about a person, group, or thing and their development over a period of time. Nunan (1992, cited in Tweedy 2012) adds that a case study generally incorporates a variety of data collection and analysis method.

A case study was chosen because it enables the researcher to analyse the school’s setting and problem of concord in English by students in Business class (1D) General Arts class () (Geography D Students) and General Science class (3). The results will be put to use by all those concerned to help remove the hindrances which result in the students’ inability to use concord correctly in their writings.

3.2 Population

Population is the entire group individuals or objects having common observable characters. That is to say the group has come common observable characteristics and each member can be identified as having these characteristics. According to Castillo, (2009) research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. Agbeke and Denkyirah (2001) also define population as the total set from which the individual or units of a study are chosen. It is the totality of persons, events or organization units with which the real research problem is concerned. In addition, Seidu (2007) maintains that population is the entire group of people, objects, animals, institutions which the research intends to study.

The population used for this research work comprised students of S.D.A Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere. The researcher decided to use 90 students. The reason for selection is that, the researcher teaches these students and have identified this problem among these students and also for the sake of proximity and

convenience. Then again, the researcher has been teaching core English language in the school for the past eight (8) years. This undoubtedly enabled her to gather the required data with ease.

3.3 Sample and sampling technique

Sample size refers to the actual number of members, individuals or cases selected from the target population. According to Bentil (2001) sampling is defined as the process of selection units from the large population. Due to constraints of time, effort and resources, it became virtually impossible for one to undertake a large scale. Therefore the sample size of 90 out of 650 students in the school and three (3) English teachers were selected for the study. The teachers indicated their willingness to be part of the research process because, as they declared, “concord” usage problem has become a common problem among the students hence their collaboration was needed in solving them. The total number of persons involved in the research work was ninety of six hundred and fifty students (boys and girls) and two teachers. Random sampling technique was used in selecting a section of the students because it was difficult for the study to cover the entire school population of S.D.A Senior High School. This technique was also used to ensure that all the students had the equal chance of being selected.

Additionally, they have the same problem with the problem under study sample population was taken to represent all of them. In all, ninety (90) questions were administered and retrieved. The following are the various programs offered by the respondents. 18 respondents represented 20% are offering Business courses, 38 respondents represented 42% are offering General Arts (Geography students) and 36 respondents representing 40% are offering General Science.

Table showing the size of respondents selected for the study

Respondents	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Male	56	62
Female	34	38
Teachers	3	

3.4 Research instruments

The researcher used a number of instruments which included interview, observation, test.

3.4.1 Interview

Interviews for research purposes usually take the form of conversations in which the researcher tries to ask questions in connection with his research topic. To facilitate the interview schedule or guide. This is mostly a set of questions written more or less like a questionnaire which helps the interviewer to ask question on the actual issues in which he is interested instead of drifting into irrelevant issues. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (K vale, 1996). The researcher used interview as data collection tool. Interview schedule was chosen because it enabled the researcher to seek clarification for responses provided by the interviewee. It also gave a wide range of information on the problem being investigated. The interview schedule was used at the pre-intervention stage. All the students sampled were interviewed at different times. Two classifications were used in the study: structured and unstructured.

3.4.2 Observation

By observation, we mean the systematic selection, recording and encoding of a set of behaviours and setting. Peil (1982) observes that “as a method for social scientists, observation involves more than just looking at what is going on”. Because our subjects can talk and explain their behavior, observation involves listening and asking questions and often participating in the activities of the group to get firsthand experience of what daily life involves. In the course of gathering data, the researcher employed observations as one of the primary sources of data collection. The researcher undertook a systematic observation of students’ events on school compound. The findings helped in cross checking responses considered to be inconsistent with what was given during the interview. Students and teachers in their normal learning environment were observed closely. They were observed as classroom lessons were taking place. Outside the classroom environment, the researcher observed students’ ways of interacting in the playground. In all these observation, the researcher employed the concealed approach method of observation. This was done to enable the researcher have a firsthand information about the language in which students communicate in their own free time. The researcher used observation at the pre-intervention stages of the research. The result of the pre-intervention observation are presented in the next chapter.

3.4.3 Test

Test is the presentation of series of questions given to the testee to answer (Mehrens and Lehman, 1977). As a result of the answer, the tester obtains a measure of the testees characteristics that is normally expressed in numerical value. In other words one of the most common devices used to obtain measurement in education is test. The researcher employed test as the fourth research instrument to collect data on

the topic under study. Two different types of test were administered to the students. These were used at the pre-intervention and the post-intervention stages of the research work to collect data on the performance of the S.D.A Senior High School students in their concord usage.

The exercise covered seven main areas of grammatical concord namely: subject-verb concord, determiner-noun concord, coordinated-subject concord. The Noun-pronoun concord inverted subject concord, verb-verb concord and construction with more than one concord errors. Questions were constructed by the researcher using the recommended texts for the students. The testing instrument was therefore constructed in line with the syllabus of the Senior High School students. This is to ensure that the test items were presumably within the competence level of the study population. We needed this type of instrument because the study hung specially on the academic performance and the data needed should necessarily reflect learning.

3.5 Data collection protocol

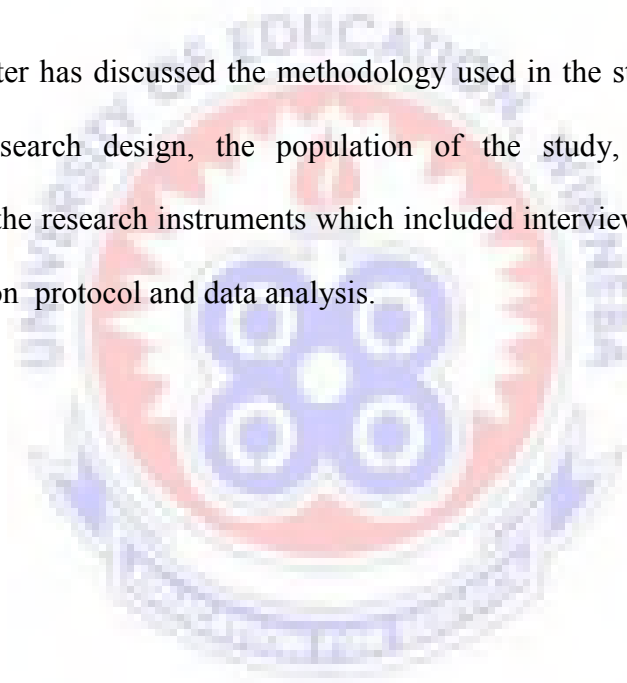
The researcher verbally requested to meet the headmaster of the school. When the request was granted, the research topic was disclosed to him as well discussed with him about the need to conduct the research in the school. He agreed and promised to support if only there was the need. The English teachers and the students were also met to discuss with them the topic under study. They were made to understand the nature of the exercise and why their support was needed. The advantages of the study were also outlined to them. With this, they agreed and assured of their co-operation during the exercise. The commencement data was also communicated to them.

3.6 Data analysis

The inductive qualitative analysis strategy was used to analyse data on how English concord is taught in the school. The data were grouped based on their similarity and described this similarity conceptually and created domains for them. The ideas that emerged from the data were then coded. The data were also analysed statistically and interpreted. Due to the categorical nature of the data, percentages were used as the main statistical technique.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology used in the study. It specifically discussed the research design, the population of the study, sample, sampling techniques used, the research instruments which included interviews, observation and test, data collection protocol and data analysis.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the data which comprises the students' scripts, interview and observation. The chapter highlights some concord errors and common errors that students make and the causes that account for those errors. The first research question addresses the major concord errors of S.D.A Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere. Seven (7) major types of concord errors are to be discussed in the students' tests, exercises and summary scripts. The concord error categories which are the subject – verb agreement error; determiner –noun concord error; noun-pronoun concord error; verb-verb concord error; coordinated subject-verb concord error; inverted, subject-verb concord error and constructions with more than one concord errors are identified in the students' test, exercises and summary scripts. The second research question will also talk about the causes of the students' errors. These are poor teaching method and materials and competence of teachers, L1 interference, lack of motivation in the classroom, carelessness, laziness and social media influence.

4.1 Categorization of concord errors

After analyzing the data, the researcher identified different types of concord errors in students' written essays and sentences. These are subject-verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors and construction with more than one concord errors. Although, other categories of errors were present in the extracts, those errors were not the focus of the research.

4.1.1 Subject-verb concord errors

Subject-verb concord errors were the most common. From Table 4.1, the category has the greater frequency, indicating that getting a verb to agree with the subject is difficult from the point of view of respondents. This was shown particularly in singular subject with their person singular verb in the present tense. Examples of Subject-Verb concord errors in the data are shown below.

4.1.1.1 Plural subject with singular verb

The students mismatched the subjects and their verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular.

- i. The *schools lacks* most of required amenities.
- ii. *Vacation classes helps* students to understand what they have learnt better.
- iii. *Public secondary school is* unattractive to students because most of them lack some facilities that facilitate learning.
- iv. The *students doesn't* understand what they are *thought* in class.
- v. *Students tends* to flee from the villages to the cities pursue proper studies.

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

may be operating intuitively by thinking that the first –s of the noun attracts a second one of the verb.

The frequency of subject verb concord errors in these students' scripts indicates that they have not truly internalized the subject-verb agreement rules. Thus, they consistently matched the plural subject with singular verbs. The grammatical rule states that the verb must agree in number with its subject. That is, the subject of a sentence and its corresponding verb must agree in number. An agreement error occurs when a plural subject is used with a singular verb as in the above extracts. The errors in example i and ii above can be corrected as:

- i. The **schools lack** most of the required amenities
- ii. **Vacation classes help** students to understand what they have learnt better.

4.1.1.2 Singular subjects with plural verbs

Regarding singular subjects with plural verbs, the following examples show that students committed errors in their use.

- i. *Even the Bible have stated in Ephesians that children honour your parent that you may live long.*
- ii. *When the child decide to go for vacation classes, he or she will not get enough rest.*
- iii. *Canning affect school children and put fear in them.*
- iv. *Unemployment have been a great challenge to graduates.*

Though the subject of each of the sentences is singular, their corresponding verbs are plural. Erkaya (2000) describes this kind of error as Interlingual. It occurs as a result of the use of an element from one language while speaking or using another. Most of the students speak Akan (Asante, Akwapim and Fante). In Akan, verbs are

not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense. Examples are as follows:

- 1) *Akua tɔn nsu. (Akua sells water)*
- 2) *Akua ne Adu tɔn nsu (Akua and Adu sell water)*

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

One other factor that may be the cause of this error is that teachers tend to emphasize the use of third person *-s* after pronoun *he, she, and it*. Thus, when the subject of the verb is singular, there appears to be confusion. Students therefore need to make a conscious effort to understand the grammatical rules. In other words, students should be more sensitive to the subject-verb agreement rule in English.

The correct versions of the extract above are

- i. *Even the **Bible has** stated in Ephesians that children honour your parent that you may live long.*
- ii. *When the **child decides** to go for vacation classes, he or she will not get enough rest.*
- iii. ***Caning affects** school children and **puts** fear in the children*

The third sentence exemplifies the grammatical rule that in a structure where the same subject controls a series of verbs, all the verbs must agree with the subject. In Example (iii), for instance, the subject *caning* before the subsequent verb *puts* is

deleted because it is the same as the antecedent subject *caning* which is controlling the verb in the preceding clause.

4.1.1.3 Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors

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

- i. *Also, this **attract** students to have interest in public schools*
- ii. *When this **happen**, it does not attract students to attend public secondary schools.*
- iii. ***This** are all my **suggestions** which I think will help to make secondary schools in deprived communities more attractive to students.*
- iv. ***This** **affirm** the saying, 'Two heads are better than one'.*

Demonstrative pronouns are used to refer to the location of things and persons in space. They have number contrast and have two sets; *this* and *these* on the one hand and *that* and *those* on the other. Aarts (2010) explains that these pronouns are used following reference: *this* and *these* are used to refer to entities that are proximal (close by), whereas *that* and *those* refer to entities that are distal (further away). The pronouns *this* and *that* are (singular) while *these* and *those* are (plural).

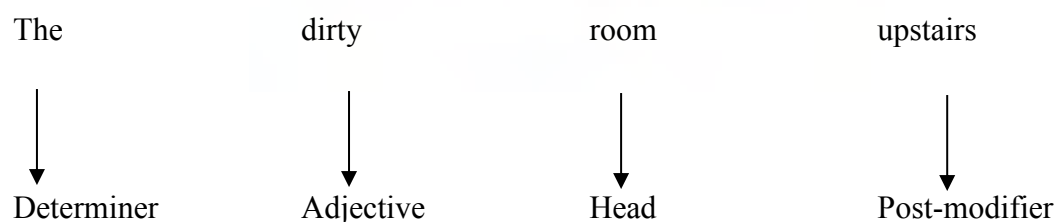
When a demonstrative pronoun is used as the subject, it must agree in number the verb. Unfortunately, the students did not apply this grammatical rule. They failed to recognize that *this* as the subject should take a singular verb form, but that its plural counterpart *these* should take a plural verb form. A possible cause for this violation could be fossilization. This is because this error has become imprinted in their brains that they find it difficult to change. The sentences are grammatical acceptable if the verbs are changed to agree with their corresponding subjects as in:

- i. *Also, this **attracts** students to have interest in public schools*

- ii. *When this **happens**, it does not attract students to attend public secondary schools.*
- iii. ***These** are all my **suggestions** which I think will help to make secondary schools in deprived communities more attractive to students.*
- iv. ***This** affirms the saying, 'Two heads are better than one'*

4.1.1.4 Headword-verb concord errors

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



The complex subject poses problems in that the student loses track of the headword or memory limitation prevents either him from employing the correct verb form, which should enter into relationship with the noun headword. The rule should not change whether the subject is simple or complex. Thus, if the head is singular, the

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

- i. *The students of these great institutions in the deprived communities finds it difficult to embark on educational trips to improve their academic performance.*
- ii. *Dear reader, the cogent factors I have mentioned proves that girls should be given equal educational opportunities as boys.*
- iii. *No one fails to realize that most students of this generation attends vacation classes with intention of showing off things they have.*
- iv. *The development of the area become less and this poses a lot of danger on the people*
- v. *I therefore wants to tell you three problems of school in deprived areas.*

It is evident in the examples that the students could not identify the headword of the sentences. As a result, they were unable to match them with the appropriate verbs. In Extract (1), the headword is *students* and it is plural. This headword is followed by a prepositional phrase *of these great institutions in the deprived communities*. The prepositional phrases that come between the subject and the verb may be the cause of confusion in determining the appropriate verb. The verb *finds* is used and its usage makes the sentence incorrect. The author forgot the fact that no matter where a verb appears in a sentence, it must still agree with its subject. Students should understand that the verb agrees with its subject but not with a word in the phrase or a clause. They should mentally cross out the interrupting group of words,

because these words serve as modifiers of the subjects. Since the headword *students* is plural, the verb should also be plural.

4.1.1.5 Relative pronoun-subject with singular verb

In the principle of proximity, attraction is applied when a sentence has two clauses; main and subordinate and the subordinate is a relative clause. A relative clause is introduced by the relative pronoun, *who, whom, that, which or whose*. There should be agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun in such sentences. Therefore, if the antecedent is singular the verb is also singular and the vice-versa. For example in

1. Spencer is one of the *students* who *play* hockey,

The main clause of the sentence is *Spencer is one of the students*. The subordinate clause is *who play hockey in the school*. The antecedent of *who* is *students*. So the verb that follows should be plural, thus *play* instead of *plays*. This rule was violated by the students in the following sentences:

- i. *Vacation classes will help students to ask questions and get the chance to understand the topics that was not treated in class.*
- ii. *Schools in the deprived communities are rated as schools that faces more problems.*
- iii. *Drivers who pollutes the environment are to be punished by the government.*
- iv. *One of the main problems that needs improvement is unemployment*

In the sentences, it is obvious that they could not identify the nominal group which the relative pronouns – *that, which, and who* refer to. Thus, they might be ignorant of the rules of proximity. If the right rules of this principle are applied, the sentences will be as follows:

- i. Vacation classes will help students to ask questions and get the chance to understand the *topics* that *were* not treated in class.
- ii. Schools in the deprived communities are rated as *schools* that *face* more problems.
- iii. *Drivers* who *pollute* the environment are to be punished by the government.
- iv. One of the main *problems* that *need* attention is unemployment

Table 4.1.1. Subject-verb concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Singular subjects with plural verbs	17	27
Plural subject with singular verb	15	23
Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors	12	19
Headword-verb concord errors	11	17
Relative pronoun subject with singular verb	9	14
Total	64	100

The table shows the different concord errors committed in subject verb agreement by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 1. The different types of subject-verbs concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is difficult from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense.

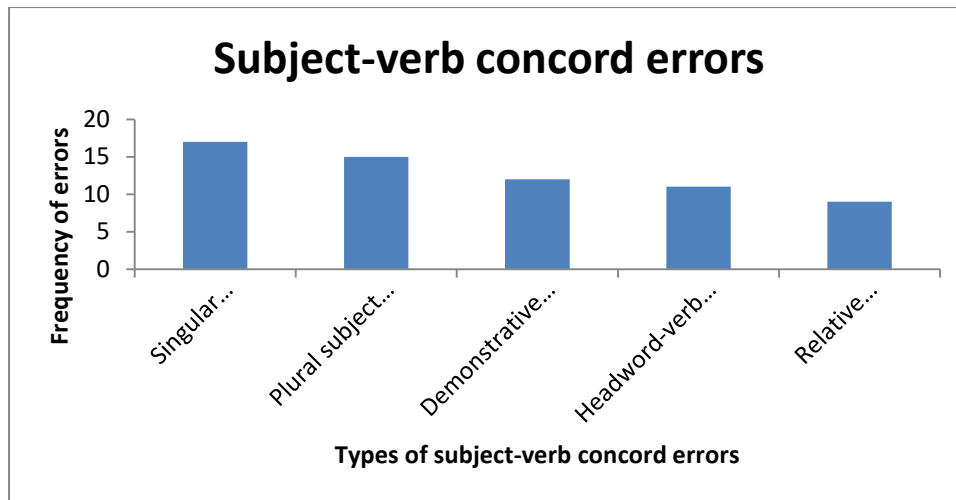


Figure 4.1.1. Types of subject-verb concord errors

With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. The subject of each of the sentences under singular subject with plural verbs are singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In the category of demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronoun as subjects but they violated the rules of subject-verb agreement.

The Headword-verb concord errors are also attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword of the string of words. The head on headword is the most prominent element of a string of words. In the relative pronoun-subject with singular verbs, the principle of proximity (attraction) is applied. When a sentence has two clauses; the main and subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the relative clauses with must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

4.1.2 Determiner-noun concord errors

According to Quirk and Green Baum (2000:61), there are six classes of determiners with respect to the co-occurrence with the noun classes, singular count, plural count (such as bottles), and non-count nouns (such as furniture).

4.1.2.1 Singular determiner-noun errors

Errors committed under this type of determiner-noun concord errors were 15 representing 43%. This and that are used with only singular nouns. According to Agor (2003), singular denote one. Examples are:

1. *This book is red*
2. *This water is coloured*
3. *This student is a boarder*
4. *That bag is mine*
5. *That man is Kofi's father*

The demonstratives this which signifies proximity and that showing distance were misused by students. Some of them used *this* when pointing to a man as Kofi's father and *that* when describing books on their laps when they were interviewed. Quick and Green Baum (2000:176) explain the principle of proximity as “agreement of the verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it, sometimes in preference to agreement with the headword of the subject “In other words, this principle is the practice of relying on the noun or pronoun that is closest to the verb to determine whether the verb is singular or plural.

The students could not apply this rule of proximity and consequently produced such deviant strictures. For example:

1. *Because of all this reasons, the man will not send his children to school in his hometown.*

2. *One raining Saturday morning, this two friends decided to go for hunting.*

The correct version of the above sentences are as follows:

- i. *Because of all these reasons, the man will not will not send his to school in his hometown.*
- ii. *One rainy Saturday morning, these two boys decided to go for hunting.*

4.1.2.2 Plural determiner-noun errors

This type of errors, a type of determiner noun concord errors had 10 errors representing 28.5%. These and these are used in this type of errors. Wiredu (1998) defines these and that as determiners used to introduce nouns and they are in plural forms. Examples are as follows:

1. *These book are for English Language*
2. *These girls are Nigerians*
3. *These tables belong to 3c*
4. *These boys are punished.*

Some of the students used singular determiners to introduce plural nouns and also use singular verbs to match them. For example,

1. *These book are red*
2. *These student is boarders*
3. *These bag is ours*
4. *Those man has houses.*

Yankson (1994:21) explains that some West Africa learners of English fail to make the necessary phonetic distinction between these two sounds (This and That) and as a result, they make phonological errors that is spelling-pronunciation errors.

The correct structures of the above sentences written wrongly by student are:

1. *These books are red*

2. *These student are boarders*
3. *These bags are ours*
4. *Those men have houses.*

4.1.2.3 Non-count determiner-noun errors

Non-Count noun which also had 10 errors committed under it representing 28.5 occurred due to the overgeneralization of language rule by student. Some of the students used these and those which are meant for plural forms and never used with non-count nouns for words like furniture, queue, committee, infrastructure, choir etc.

Examples:

1. *These furniture is new (singular in mind)*
2. *These queue are long.*
3. *These choir sing nicely.*

Educational principles stipulate that learners must learn a new topic starting from the known to the unknown or the simple to the complex. Students are often able to construct sentences that have singular and plural count nouns.

The correct version of the above sentence are as follows:

1. *This furniture is new.*
2. *This queue is long.*
3. *The choir sing nicely.*

Table 4.1.2. Determiner–non concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Singular count errors	15	43
Plural count errors	10	28.5
Non count noun	10	28.5
Total	35	100

Table 4.1.2 describes the classes under concord errors committed in determiner noun concord error. This has been presented in Figure 4.1.2.

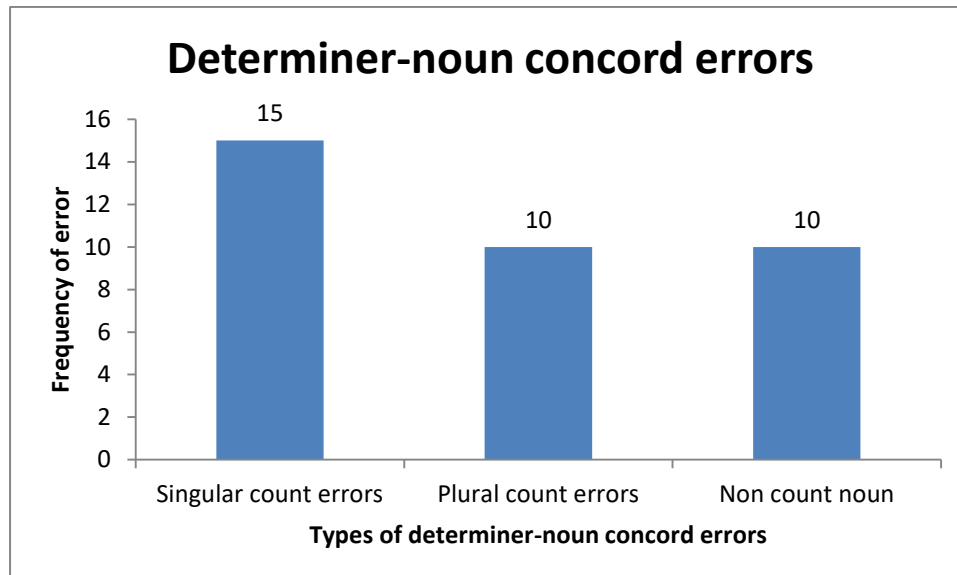


Figure 4.1.2. Determiner–noun concord errors

There are classes of determiners with respect to the co-occurrence with the non-classes, singular count, plural count and non-count nouns. The demonstratives *this* and *that* are one of the classes of determiners that can take both count and non-count nouns. With count nouns, *this* and *that* are used with only singular nouns. These and those form another class and they take count nouns that are in plural forms. They are never used with non-count nouns. Students could not apply the rules of classes of determiners and consequently produced deviant structures.

4.1.3 Coordinated subject-verb concord errors

Concern with coordinated subject has been discussed by authors such as Quirk and Green Baum (2002), Leech and Startvik (2002) and Yankson (1994). Leech and Startvik (2002) explain coordinated as when equivalent are linked by *and* or *but*. They

further explain that coordinated can occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements and words. Examples are

1. *I 'm selling my car and buying a new one.*
2. *You can wash this dress hand or in the washing machine.*

In the first sentence above, two clauses I 'm selling my car and I am buying a new one are linked together by the conjunction and. The second subject is omitted because it refer to the same person in the first clause.

The major types of coordinated subject-verb concord Errors are:

- When the coordinated subjects are abstract nouns.
- When a subject comprise two or more nouns or noun phrase linked together by 'and' and.
- When the coordinated refer to the same person or thing.

4.1.3.1 Abstract noun coordinated subject

When the coordinated subjects are abstract nouns, the verb can be either singular or plural. The choice of singular or plural verb depends on how the speaker or the writer regards the qualities in the subject, if they are seen as separate issues or qualities, a plural verb is used as in:

1. *Law and order are considered important in an election.*

If the two are seen as a singular, complex issue, a singular verb is used as in:

2. *Law and order is an election issue.*

However, if the coordinated subjects are preceded by the correlative both, and, a plural verb is acceptable as in:

3. *Both of the judge's fairness and impartiality were admired.*

Some of the students could not comply with these rules and wrote the above sentences wrongly. For example,

1. *Law and order is considered important in an election year.*
2. *Law and order are an election issue.*
3. *Both judge's fairness and impartiality was admired.*

4.1.3.2 Two or more nouns or noun phrases linked together by 'and' as subject

Quirk and Greenbaum (2002), Leech and Svartvik (2002), and Yankson (1994) discuss this type of error under coordinated subject concord error. According to these writers, when a subject consists of two or more nouns or noun phrases coordinated or joined by and, the verb is typically in the plural form as in:

1. *Kofi and Ama are my friend*
2. *Monday and Wednesday are very busy for me.*

In the above examples, the coordination is taken to be a reduction of two clauses.

1. *Kofi is my friend and Ama is my friend.*
2. *Monday is very busy for me and Wednesday is very busy for me.*

The students used singular verbs for some constructions under this type.

Examples:

1. *Drinking and Smoking of drivers has being causing road accidents.*
2. *Bad road and poor maintenance culture is another cause of road accidents in the country.*
3. *The people of Ghana and the youth in the country expresses their gratitude for your good work done in terms of development.*
4. *My opponant and the world at large is afraid of success women.*

These errors made by the students can be described as past-systematic errors. Post-systematic errors occur when the learner can explain the target language rule that is normally used, but uses it inconsistently. When those students who misapplied the rule were interviewed, they explained the rule to the research but they were not able

to use them correctly. The students made the errors because they over extended or overgeneralized one of the use of concord with coordinated subject. The sentences above should have been:

1. *Drinking and Smoking of drivers have been causing road accidents.*
2. *Bad road and poor maintenance culture are other causes of road accidents in this country.*
3. *The people of Ghana and the youth in the country express their gratitude for your good work done in terms of development.*
4. *My opponent and the world at large are afraid of successful women.*

4.1.3.3 When coordinated noun phrases or noun refer to the same person

When coordinated noun phrases or noun refer to the same person or thing a singular verb is used as in:

1. *Gari and beans is my favourite meal.*
2. *The hammer and the sickle was flying from the flagpole.*
3. *My colleague and long-time friend has brought a car for me.*
4. *The teacher and pastor attends church every Sunday.*

Some of the students violated this rule and made this sentences as follows:

1. *Gari and beans are my favourite meal.*
2. *The hammer and the sickle were flying from the flagpole.*
3. *My colleague and long-time friend have brought a car for me.*
4. *The teacher and pastor attend church every Sunday.*

Gogovi et al (2005) explain that there are instances where Pseudo-conjunctions are used. These pseudo-conjunctions are not true conjunctions; they, therefore, cannot connect two singular subjects to make them plural. They are seen as interviewing phrase, so, if the subject is singular, the verb is singular and if the subject is plural, the

verb is plural. The Pseudo-conjunctions include “with”, “in addition to”, “together with”, “including”, “no less than”, “along with”, “accompanied by” and “rather than”.

Examples are

1. *The headmaster as well as the teacher requires allowance.*
2. *Several representatives of the board, including the chair, have visited the region in the past year.*

Table 4.1.3. Coordinated subject concord errors committed

Types of errors (Rule)	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Abstract noun coordinated subject	6	40
Two or more nouns or noun phrases linked together by ‘and’ as subject	5	33
When coordinated noun phrases or noun refer to the same person	4	27
Total	15	100

Table 4.1.3 illustrates the different categories of errors committed in coordinated subject concord and has been presented in figure 3

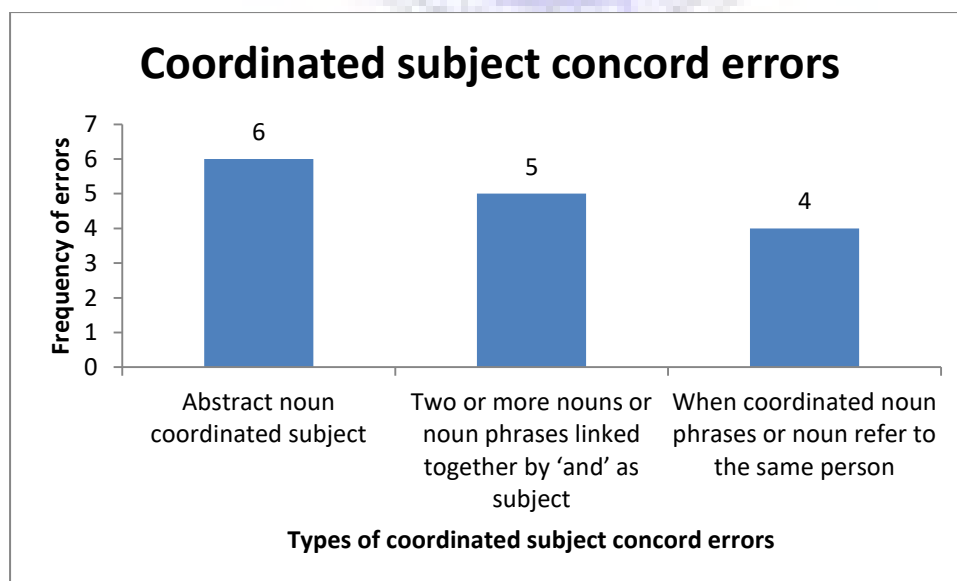


Figure 4.1.3. Coordinated subject-verb concord errors

The rules that are applied when using coordinated subjects include

- a) When a subject comprises two or more nouns or noun phrases linked together by 'and', the verb is in the plural form.
- b) When the coordinated subjects refer to the same person or thing, a singular verb is used.
- c) When the coordinated subjects are abstract nouns, the verb can be either singular or plural. The choice of a singular or a plural verb depends on how the speaker or the writer regards the qualities in the subject; if they are seen as separate issues or qualities a plural verb is used.

Some of the students misapplied the rules of concord on coordinating subjects wrongly. The students made the errors because they over extended or over generalized one of the use of concord with coordinated subjects, which says that when the coordinated subjects are abstract nouns, the verb can be either singular or plural. The choice of a singular or plural verb depends on how the speaker regards the qualities in the subject; if they are seen as separate issued or qualities, a plural verb and the vice – versa.

4.2 Noun-Pronoun concord errors

For a sentence to be grammatically correct, all its parts should agree with one another. When a pronoun is used to refer to noun used, there must be agreement.

Leech and Startvik (2002) write that a pronoun which refer to a singular noun phrase is in singular, and a pronoun which refer to plural noun phrase is in plural:

Examples:

1. *She lost her life*
2. *They lost their lives.*

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

The Ghana Senior Secondary School English Book 1 defines a pronoun as ‘a word that stands for a noun’ whereas nouns phrases and noun clauses can also be replaced by a pronoun. Also David Cobb and others (2001), perhaps assuming that definitions must have been taught in the JHS, do not define a pronoun in their books, *English for Senior Secondary Schools*. In Unit 2 Section 7 which is titled, ‘Focus on grammatical forms – noun phrases and pronouns’ students are asked to identify noun phrases and pronouns in a previous passage read but no definition nor revision exercise given.

Wiredu (1998) also defines pronouns as words ‘which are used to replace a noun, especially where we do not want to repeat that noun’. Notwithstanding this, his book which is titled *Organized English Grammar* is well – organized for self-study and practice by students at secondary and tertiary level.

4.2.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

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

Examples:

1. *Kofi prays football (he prays football)*
2. *Esi sweeps the room (she sweeps the room)*

3. *The bird sings nicely (it sings nicely)*

This rule was overtly violated by some students

The above sentences were made:

1. *Kofi pray football (football)*
2. *Esi sweep the room (she sweep the room)*
3. *The bird sing nicely (it sing nicely)*

4.2.2 A pronoun which refer to plural noun phrase

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

1. *John and Beatrice hurts their feet*
(They hurt their feet.)
2. *The teacher and his wife have built a house.*
(They have built a house.)
3. *Kofi and Ama like oranges.*
(They like oranges.)
4. *The white and the black bowls are filled with water.*
(They are filled with water.)
5. *I wish to draw your attention to why students neglect senior high schools in deprived communities and ways by which it can be made attractive to students.*

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

1. *John and Beatrice hurts their feet.*
2. *The teacher and his wife built a house.*
3. *Kofi and Ama like oranges.*

4. *The white and the black bowls is filled with water.*
5. *I wish to draw your attention to why students neglects senior high schools in deprived communities and ways by which it can be made attractive to students.*

In examples (1) and (3) the students who committed these errors thought that once the subjects are in plural forms, the verb should be added with –s.

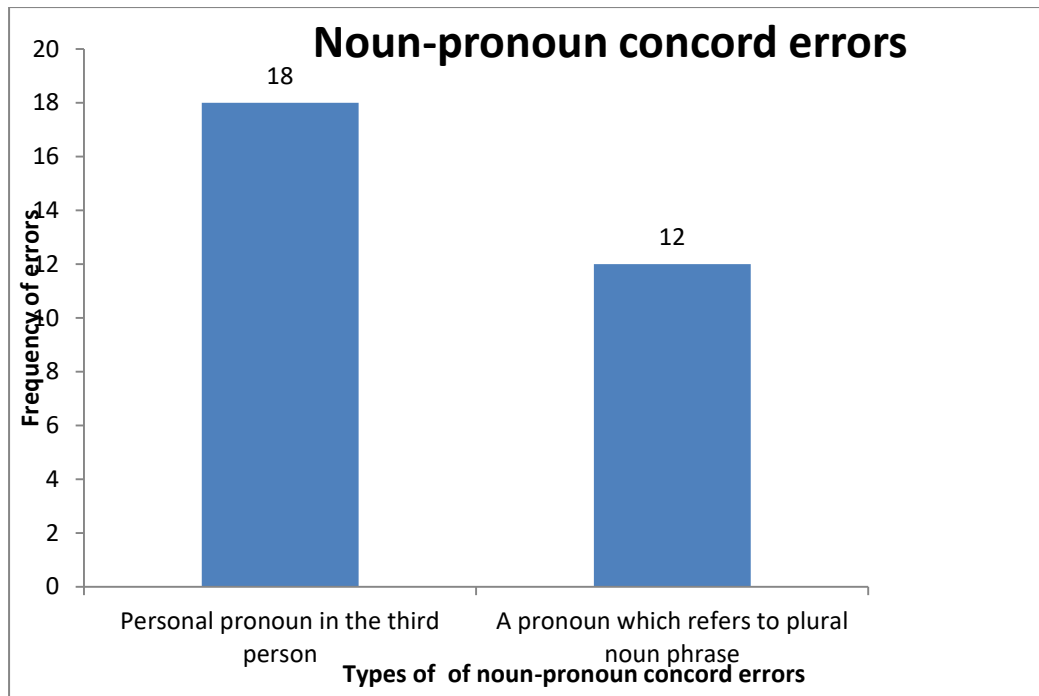
In examples (2) and (4), some of the students also took *the teacher and his wife and the white and the black bowls* to be one subject and therefore matched them with singular verbs.

In the final example (5), the deviant construction occurred because some students used attention as the noun phrase. Senior High School which is in plural should have been referred to and since it is plural requires a plural verb *neglect* and not *neglects*.

Table 4.1.4. Noun-pronoun concord errors

Types of errors (Rule)	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Personal pronoun in the third person	18	60
A pronoun which refers to plural noun phrase	12	40
Total	30	100

The above table summarizes the errors made in noun-pronoun concord. This is shown in Figure 4.1.4.



The rule of noun-pronoun concord says that a pronoun which refers to a singular noun phrase is in singular and a pronoun which refers to plural noun phrase is in plural. Personal pronouns in the third person must agree with their antecedents both in number and in gender. These rules of agreement between pronouns used to refer to nouns or noun phrases used in this type of concord were overly violated by some of the students.

4.3 Inverted subject–verb concord errors

Downing and Locke (2006) explained that this type of concord involves sentence whose subject are interrogative pronoun, the adverbial '*here*' or the unstressed existential '*there*'

Interrogative pronoun include what, which, who, whose.

4.3.1 The Wh–interrogative

In Wh-interrogative, it is the noun phrase that follows the verb that acts as the subject. Therefore, if the noun or the noun phrase that follows the singular, the verb must be singular and the vice versa. For example,

1. *Who is your favourite author?*
2. *What were your reasons for his actions?*
3. *How are Kofi and Ama?*

In the first example, the noun phrase ‘*your favourite author*’ which is a singular form controls the sentence, therefore the verb must be singular. In the second example, ‘*the reasons*’, the controller of the verb used is in plural hence, the verb must be plural. Example 3 contains plural nouns and therefore, must agree with plural verb.

Few of the students violated this rule and produced the following structures:

1. *Who are your favourite author?*
2. *What was your reasons for his actions?*
3. *How is Kofi and Ama?*

4.3.2 The unstressed ‘there’

Downing and Locke (2006) explained that this type of concord involves sentence whose subject is the unstressed existential ‘*there*’ is used as subject of verb of a sentence. It is the noun phrase that follows the verb that acts as the subject. Hence, if the noun or the noun phrase that follows is singular, the verb must be singular and the vice versa.

Examples:

1. *There is **no girl** in the classroom.*
2. *There are **no girls** in the classroom.*

3. If there are *enough classrooms and dormitories*, students would be able to study well.

In the first example, the noun phrase ‘no girl’ controls the verb *is*. In example two, ‘no girls’ being the noun phrase is the controller of the verb *are*. The controller of the verb *are* in the final example is the noun phrase ‘enough classrooms and dormitories’. 12 errors representing 44.5% were committed under this type of inverted subject concord errors.

Table 4.1.5. Inverted subject – verb concord errors

Types of errors (Rule)	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
The Wh-interrogators	15	55.5
The unstressed “There”	12	44.5
Total	27	100

The above table shows the different concord errors made in inverted subject – verb concord. These are shown in figure 4.1.5.

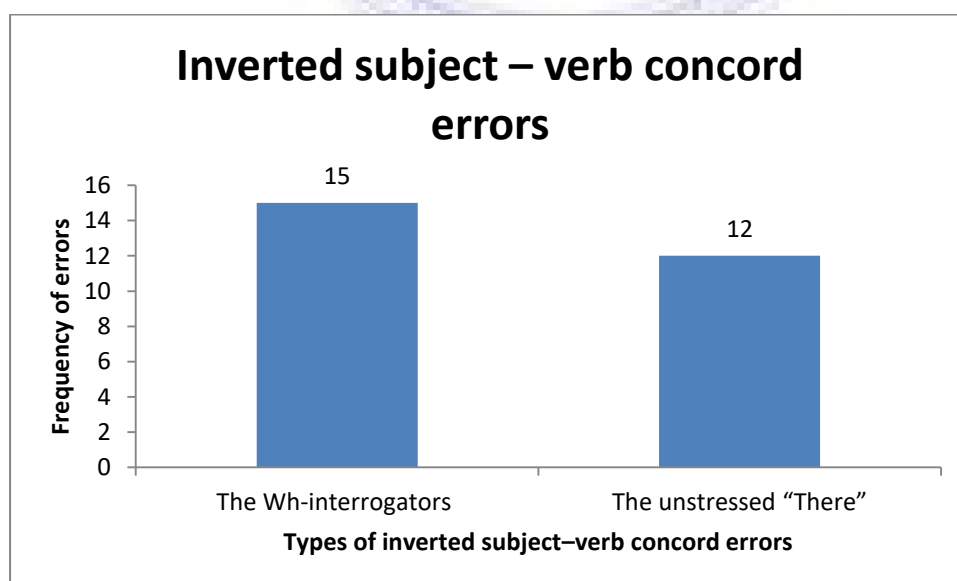


Figure 4.1.5. Inverted subject – verb concord errors

The inverted subject is the same as the noun phrase that follows the verb and this noun phrase is the same as the subject. Hence, if the noun phrase is singular, the verb must be singular and if it is plural, the verb must be plural. Under this type of concord, the unstressed “There” and the Wh-interrogators are used as temporary subjects. Few of the students violated this rule by matching singular verbs with plural noun phrase and plural verbs with singular noun phrases.

4.4 Verb–verb concord errors

Verb–verb concord errors were common in scripts of students who chose the questions that asked them to write a story ending ‘*we regretted venturing into it*’. Tense, according to Connie (1985) refers to the grammatical realization of location in time. The principle of sequence of tense is observed when referring to more than one time in one sentence or in one paragraph. This implies that there should be consistency in the selection of verbs tenses when one is writing or speaking. Careful and accurate use of tenses is important so that one’s reader does not get confused. When one is talking about the same event or group of events, one must make sure that he or she sticks to a single general tense, present, past or future.

4.4.1 A single general - ‘past’

This refers to the agreement between the verb in the first clause of a sentence and a subsequent verb or verbs in the second clause. For example:

1. *The robbers **raped** the young girl and **killed** her.*
 2. *Sammy **took** his bath before he **slept**.*
 3. *I **opened** the door and Mike **was standing** there.*
1. (i) *The robber **raped** the young girl.*
 - (ii) *The robber **killed** her.*

2. (i) *Sammy took his bath.*

(ii) *Sammy slept.*

3. (i) *I opened the door.*

(ii) *Mike was standing there.*

The two independent clauses are joined by the coordinator and making the sentence compound ones.

Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) explains however that independent clauses are independent not only in meaning and in structure, but also in tense.

The students who made these errors could not decipher the principles of sequence of tenses. Below are examples of deviant constructions.

1. *Kofi always **got** above 80% and his parents **like** him a lot.*

2. *When running he **slipped** and **fall** under a big tall tree.*

3. *The car **stopped** at the Nkawkaw station and we all **alight**.*

In all the deviant constructions, the students were inconsistent in the selection of tense. In each of the clauses, one clause contains a verb in the past but the other clauses has a verb in the present tense. This means that all the sentences contain disagree in tenses. These are what they should have been:

1. Kofi always *got* above 80% and his parents *liked* him a lot.

2. When running he *slipped* and *fell* under a big tall tree.

3. The car *stopped* at the Nkawkaw station and we all *alighted*.

4.4.2 A single general –‘present’

Sekyi- Baidoo (2003) explains that the independent clauses are independent not only in meaning and in structure, but also in tense. Therefore if the first clause is in present, the other clause(s) must also be in present.

Examples:

1. *Kofi opens the door and Ama is standing there.*

These are two separate sentence joined by the coordinating conjunction and making the sentence a compound one. Sekyi- Baidoo (2003) further state in complex sentences, it is expected that there is agreement of the tenses, that is the tenses of the subordinate clause must agree with that of the main clause, or the clause on which it depends. Examples:

1. *Since Priscila needs food, we will go to Anyinam market.*
2. *Adutwumwaa does not delay in her work because she is very smart.*

Some of the students misapplied this rule by agreeing with the past tense in the main clause with the present in the subordinate clause.

Example:

1. *The dormitories **were** overcrowded and that **come** with a lot of disease.*
2. *The youth **went** to school but **become** unemployed after completion.*
3. *When I complete school, Dad and Mum were paying me visit.*
4. *This is a problem that was facing my country.*

The correct version of the above sentences are:

1. *The dormitories **were** overcrowded and that **came** with a lot of disease.*
2. *The youth **went** to school but **became** unemployed after completion.*
3. *When I complete school, Dad and Mum will pay me a visit.*
4. *This is a problem that is facing my country.*

4.4.3 A single general –‘future’

This sub category of verb concord is commonly known as agreement in sequence of tense or verb- verb agreement in tense form. Yankson (1994) states that like most of our West African languages, English also maintains the sequence in a

sentence (verb / past, verb / present and verb / future). The rule of this type of verb-verb concord says that if a sentence is made up of two clauses; main and subordinate, the future tense used in the main clause must be applied in the subordinate clause.

Example:

1. If I get money, I will buy a car.

Although the above sentence is in condition, it is a future tense. Two clauses in future tense:

- i. *If I get money.*
- ii. *I will buy a car.*

The rule was not complied with. Some student use past and present tense in either the main or subordinate clauses to match the future tenses in the other clauses.

Example:

1. *If these women are given equal educational chance as men, they would perform same like men.*
2. *I saw a cottage and I will go there.*
3. *The youth would be employed so as to had the knowledge to care for their communities.*

The correct versions of these sentences are:

1. *If these women are given equal educational chance as men, they will perform same like men.*
2. *I will see a cottage and I will go there.*
3. *The youth would be employed so as to **have** the knowledge to care for their communities.*

Even though English language maintains the sequence within clauses, there is verb – verb disagreement in tense form.

Example: *I emptied the dustbin and Aku washes the bowls.*

In the example sentence above, the first verb emptied is expressed in past tense but the second verb, washes is expressed in the present tense, all within one sentence. The relationship between these two verbs items is therefore discordant. Brewton et al (1998) refer to this inconsistency in tense as unnecessary shift in tense. There is another sub category of verb- verb concord that is referred to as agreement in number/person. For example:

1. *My mother always goes to church early and sits in front.*

The word *goes* and *sit* are verbs both expressed in 3rd person singular and they establish a concordant relationship with their subject '*my mother*' which is also third person singular.

There is verb-verb disagreement in number/person in the sentences quoted below:

1. *A child wakes up and expect (expects) his parents to greet him.*
2. *A student who wants to indulge in examination malpractice do everything to succeed.*

Yankson (1994) who explains that 'such inconsistencies are signs that the learner is passing through a transitional phase in his language learning development' refers to this category of verb – verb concord deviations as a systematic errors.

Table 4.1.6. Verb-verb concord errors

Types of error	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Past	12	37.5
Present	10	31.25
Future	10	31.25
Total	32	100

Table 4.1.6 illustrates the different types of errors committed by students in verb-verb concord. These are shown in Figure 4.1.6.

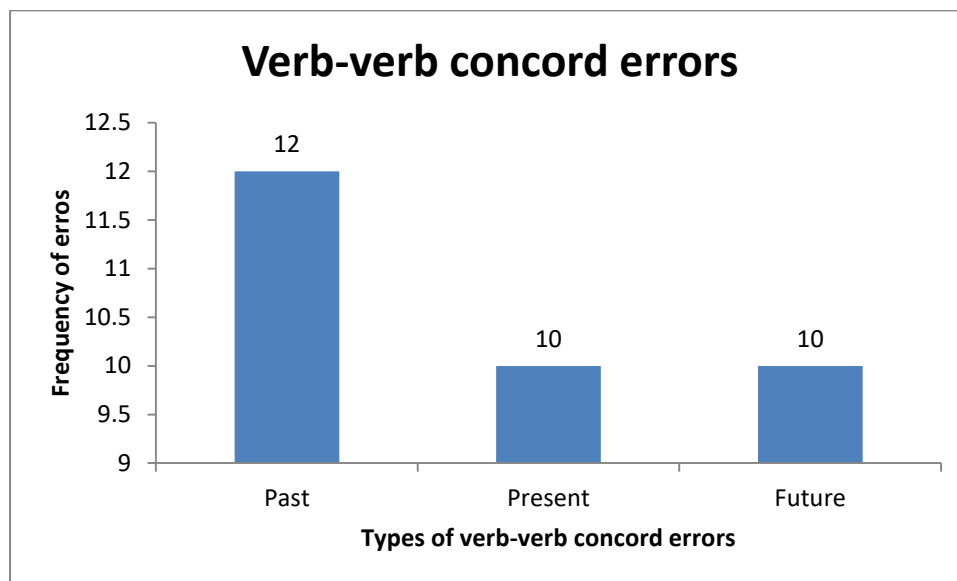


Figure 4.1.6. Verb-verb concord errors

The students who made this type of error could not decipher the principle of sequences of tenses. When one is talking about the same event or group of events, one must make sure that he or she sticks to a single general tense-present, past or future and this was the students' problem.

4.5 Constructions with multiple concord errors

The sentences produced in some instances had more than one concord errors within one sentence. The sentences below are examples produced by students in their essays:

1. *People loses their life.*

The sentence contains a determiner noun construction concord error and subject-verb concord. As already discussed, *this* is singular so must take a singular noun when used as a determiner and takes a singular verb when used as a subject (demonstrative pronoun). In the sentence, the subject of 'does' is 'students' which is plural, but the student used a singular verb. The errors are corrected below:

2. However, *these days*, students who attend vacation classes **do** very well in their final examination.

The third sentence contains subject verb agreement and noun-pronoun concord errors. The subject used is a third person singular subject therefore it requires a verb in the third person singular form. Yankson (1994) explains that a pronoun takes the same form singular or plural as the noun subject headword, which precedes it, and which the pronoun refers to in the sentence. If the subject-verb agreement and noun-pronoun concord rules are applied, the sentence becomes

3. The child **has** to stay home and help **his or her** parents.
4. The space **cost** huge sums of money which can be used to feed the hungry mouth.
5. it **cost** huge sum of money
6. They **advances** sound points to discourage the venture.
7. Space exploration **have developed** scientific instruments.
8. Space exploration **waste** money.

Table 7. Constructions with multiple concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors (%)
Subject-verb agreement and noun-pronoun concord errors	25	62.5
A determiner –noun construction concord error and subject-verb concord	15	37.5
Total	40	100

Table 7 gives an indication of the categories of errors committed I constructions with more than one concord errors. These are in Figure 4.1.7.

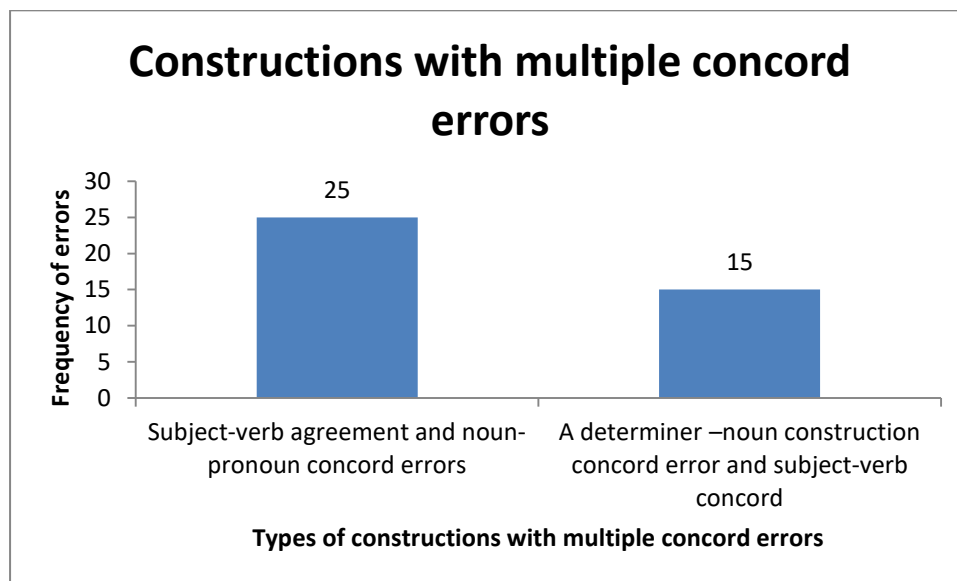


Figure 4.1.7. Constructions with multiple concord errors

The deviant constructions produced have more than one concord errors within one sentence. The deviant structures contained a determiner noun construction concord and subject-verb concord, and subject verb agreement and noun-pronoun concord errors. An example like 'This' being singular and must agree with singular noun when used as a determiner and takes a singular verb when used as subject (demonstrative pronoun) was mismatched with plural noun and plural verb respectively.

4.6 Summary of concord errors

Table 4.1.8. Summary of the types of concord errors

Categories of Concord Errors	Frequency of errors in the various categories	Percentage of errors (%)
Subject-verb concord errors	64	26
Constructions with multiple concord errors	40	17
Determiner-noun concord errors	35	15
Verb-verb concord errors	32	13
Noun-pronoun concord errors	30	12
Inverted subject concord errors	27	11
Coordinated subject concord errors	15	6
Total	243	100

The information in Table 4.1.8 is represented in table is presented in Figure 4.1.8:

Figure 4.1.8 shows that subject verb concord errors constitute the highest error which could be found in the students' test, summary and written essay scripts. This had the percentage of 26% with 64 cases recorded in this study. Although the students still make errors, they do lack a basic understanding of subject-verb agreement. It can be said that the concord errors may be due to simplification strategy and overgeneralization of English language rules. Some substitution errors like 'is' instead of 'are' and has instead of have might have resulted from inadequate competence in the target language.

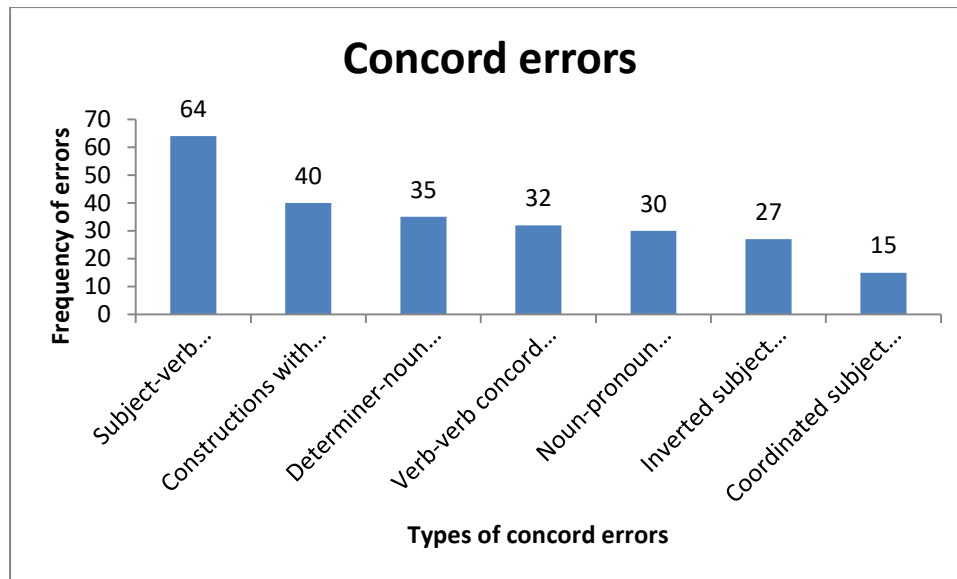


Figure 4.1.8. Summary of the types of concord errors

Figure 4.1.8 again reveals that construction with more than one concord errors with a total of 40 errors occurrences representing 17% was due to a deviant construction produced. The determiner noun concord error which comes next to the construction with more than one concord errors had a frequency of 35 out of the 90 scripts representing 15%. These errors also occurred due to the students' inability to apply the rules of classes of determiners.

Verb-verb concord error which had a total of 32 errors out of the 90 scripts representing an error rate of 13%. The students who committed this type of error could not decipher the principle of sequences of tenses. Noun-pronoun had a total error of 30 with 12% and this error occurred because students could not comply with the rules covering this type of concord. Inverted subject – verb concord error is the next error category in the study. This occurred 27 times out of the 90 scripts representing 11% and was mad because singular and plural subjects were mismatched. The coordinated subject concord error which was committed by few students had a frequency of 15 representing 6% and was the least among the mistakes. It was caused due to misapplication of rules that govern it. The finding suggests that

these types of errors are the learning difficulty for students in S.D.A Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere.

4.7 Causes of students' errors

Norrish (1987) classifies causes of error into three types. These are carelessness, first language interference and *translation*. *Carelessness* is closely related to lack of motivation. A student makes errors when he is not motivated. Many teachers will admit that it is not always the student's fault if he loses interest, perhaps the materials and/or style of presentation do not suit him. Some teachers may feel that errors are caused by learners' inattentiveness in class. Carelessness in class means not caring or troubling, having no concern or not paying enough attention to the teacher. Interest can be lost if the materials provided by the teacher or his teaching style do not suit his students.

Norrish states that learning a language (a mother tongue or a foreign language) is a matter of habit formation. When someone tries to learn new habits the old ones will interfere the new ones. This cause of error is called first language interference. When learning the English language an individual already knows his mother tongue, and he attempts to transfer the features. The transfer may prove to be justified when the structure of the two languages is similar (that is positive transfer). It may also prove unjustified when the structure of the two language is different (negative transfer or interference). Translation is one of the causes of errors. This happens because a student translates his first language sentence or idiomatic expression in to the target language word by word. This is probably the most common cause of errors. It has been noticed that translations occur higher in number when the teacher teaches by the translation method. Errors due to translation also occur during discussions because learners focus more on meaning rather than structure in a discussion. Their

concentration is on over all meaning instead of structures and forms that they will be using to convey their message.

This study has identified several causes of students' errors which are not far from what Norrish (1987) and Richards (2015) posited. Through interviewing, observations and feedback from the students' written essays, the researcher identified errors caused by teachers, errors caused by the students, errors caused by first language interference and errors caused by modern technology; precisely, social media.

4.7.1 Errors caused by teachers/context of instruction

In this study teachers were seen as a major cause of students' errors. This is because the way and manner a teacher teaches has a great influence on his/her students. According to Richards (2015), teachers' attempt to communicate in the target language without having completely acquired the grammatical form necessary to do so causes errors. He adds that when it happens like that the teacher automatically transfers errors to his subjects. It was revealed that three of the English teachers travel from Kumasi, a town far from the school to teach. The distance presents a challenge because they do not arrive early and so end up not having enough time to teach.

It was noted through the interview and the observation that some of the teacher- factors that contributed to the errors were inappropriate teaching methods, inability to give and mark exercises and assignments promptly, and the tendency of teachers to pay much attention to the grammar aspects to the neglect of the other aspects, especially, writing. A teacher and some students claimed that one teacher of English always uses Twi throughout his teaching and the students call him "Twi master". According to the students, his method of teaching affects them since they do

not get the correct pronunciation of words and it therefore affects the way they spell words. The use of pidgin by some teachers was also identified as a major factor. This has been a problem for the school authorities any time we go for staff meetings. According to them the students are copying from the teachers.

Finally, the teachers claimed that students make these errors because they believe that teachers at the basic levels fail to expose students to most of these errors, particularly spellings errors. Categorically, one teacher said that he believed that the work done on spellings at the basic level is very low. His belief was that some of these errors were so basic that he expected students to be conversant with them. One teacher was very worried that a student misused *bed* for *bird* in his writing. Teacher-factor causes of errors are equally dangerous and can cause tenses error, concord error, prepositional error, and sentence fragments etc. This is what Richards (2015) calls *false concept*. James also uses the term 'teacher-talk induced errors' to describe this type of errors (James, 1998, p. 191). One of the many roles of a teacher is to provide models of the standard target language in class. There is a chance that teachers may not be good models of the target language with regard to the way they speak, write or generally teach the language. Therefore, some of the errors being committed by students could be teacher-induced.

4.7.2 Errors caused by students

Another major cause of errors in students' written essays identified was the students' poor reading habits. The teachers interviewed explained that students have poor reading habits. Some other teachers termed this problem as "lack of extensive reading". As a result, they believe that this limits students' stock of vocabulary. One of them saw this as laziness on the part of the students. The students identified their poor reading habits and attributed it to poverty in the entire district, that is, they do not

have the means to get the reading books. It was also observed that students were not making good use of the few books at the school library.

The teachers also said that students fail to pay attention to the basic format and features of the essay type they write. This was evidently clear with the type of essay given to students for this study. Though the essay is not a debate, some students used the debate format. Thus, addressing the *Panel of Judges, Time Keeper and co-debaters*. Closely related to the generalization of deviant structures is the failure to observe the restriction of existing structures, that is, the application of rules to context where they do not apply. This again is a type of generalization of transfer, ignorance of rule restrictions and incomplete application of rules since the learners are making use of a previously acquired rule in a new situation.

4.7.3 Errors caused by social media influence.

Another cause noted is the influence of modern technology. It was noted that students' consistent use of modern gadgets such as mobile phones and electronic tablets provide other negative influence. As a result, it was observed that students wrote as if they are messaging (whatsapping) their friends. A teacher exemplified with the use of 'e' (the), 'a' (that) and 'gud' (good). She noted this as the results of frequent social media chatting. This is confirmed by the analysis of the written essays for this study. The analysis revealed words like de (the), tu (to) cuz/bcuz (because), and dis (this), which are all as a result of short hand transfer in social media chatting.

A teacher also added that since students hear and see others using these errors on social media, they come to see them as the correct or acceptable forms. Some teachers, particularly those who do not teach English, were also observed using and advising students to use shorthand writing to speed up the way they write notes. Some of the teachers interviewed confirmed that other subject teachers tend to use shorthand

expressions in class so their belief is that students pick some of the expressions from these teachers. One teacher emphasized that she had to continuously correct many of these expressions any time she went to class. This is because she realized that some of the teachers who taught before her utilized these expressions. Errors caused by the students' L1 transfer.

Ellis (2003) states that there is an influence that the learners' LI exerts over the acquisition of the L2. Myles (2002) views transfer as the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired. Majority of the students studied were Twi speakers and they appeared to transfer some structures in their LI to the target Language. This is what Norrish (1987) calls "*Translation*". This happens because a student translates his first language sentence or idiomatic expression into the target language word by word. This is probably the most common cause of error, for instance, Akan article usage is different from the English usage. In English, the article always comes before the noun.

English

Twi

Example: The boy or a boy Abofra no or Abofra bi

Here, '*the*' or '*a*', which is an article comes before the noun boy but on the other side '*no*' and pig which are the Twi versions of '*the*' and comes after the noun '*Abofra*'. The teachers interviewed also supported that the influence was a major cause of errors. They claimed that such influence explains why students tend to write 'belet', instead of *bell*, 'milik' instead of *milk* etc. Thus, it can be maintained that since our indigenous languages (particularly Akan) are Syllable-timed, the students tend to insert vowels in words with clusters to simplify their pronunciation. This may explain why spelling errors make up the highest number identified in this study.

The different types of spelling errors identified were mother tongue (L1) interference, confusion of writing letters substitution, wrong joining of words, wrong splitting of words, wrong usage of the apostrophe and letter omission. The findings may suggest that poor spelling was a major learning difficulty for all the students. However, some spellings errors were seen to be the result of carelessness in writing rather than lack of knowledge, our confidence or bad habit towards word formation.

4.8 Summary

The analysis has revealed that the concord errors in the students' scripts in English could be traced to several sources; misapplication of concord rules, simplification strategy and overgeneralization of English rules, inadequate competence in the target language, carelessness, mother tongue (L1) interference, wrong spelling and inadequate motivation to speak and write good English. It could be said that difficulties of the students to express themselves in good English are common in Ghana and stem from the common reasons of limited exposure to good standard English and laziness of teachers and students to correct their mistakes. Social media influence was also identified as another major cause since students always watch television. Listen to radio and chat on whatsapp and facebook.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the data which comprised the students' scripts, interview and observation. The study highlighted some concord errors and common errors that students make and the causes that account for those errors. To conclude, the first research questions addressed the major concord errors of S.D.A Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere. Seven (7) major types of concord errors were identified in the students' tests, exercises and summary scripts. The concord error categories were the subject – verb agreement error (64), determiner-noun concord error (35); noun-

pronoun concord error (30); verb-verb concord error (32); coordinated subject-verb concord error (15); inverted, subject-verb concord error (27) and constructions with more than one concord error (40). The second research question was also addressed by looking at the causes of the students' error. The causes were identified as poor teaching method and materials and competence of teachers, L1 interference, lack of motivation in the classroom, carelessness, laziness and social media influence. The next chapter discusses the summary of the study, its implication and recommendation for future study.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The researcher identified problems in students' writing and set out to investigate the problems to know the causes and the effects of the problems on students' academic performance. The researcher investigated concord errors in the writings of students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere. The data, their analysis and discussion have been presented in chapter three (3) and four (4) of this work. In this chapter, the summary of the findings, the pedagogical implication and discussion are presented.

5.1 Summary of findings

The related issues of the whole study included the ascertainment of the particular concord errors that create problems for students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere, the factors that account for those concord errors they make, these causes of students' poor performance in their study of English Language and measures for improving their performance. The summary of the findings included the findings from essay analyzed, and the findings from objective test.

5.1.1 Findings from market scripts analyzed

After analyzing all the ninety (90) scripts of the respondents, it was discovered that students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere make all kinds of concord errors in their writings. Out of the ninety (90) scripts, subject verb concord had the highest number of errors and the lowest were coordinate subject – verb concord. It was inverted subject – verb concord. It was also discovered that though students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere had some understanding of

subject – verb agreement rules, they were not able to apply those particular rules appropriately. Consequently, subject – verb agreement errors were the most frequent. Interesting, it was observed that the students’ use of the plural with singular verbs was as a result of their own intuitive rule that count nouns with the –s plural marker must use a verb with an –s inflection. For example, These invigilators allows candidates to do whatever they like in the above example, the author thought that the –s of invigilators should attract an –s in the verb, thus allows instead of allow. Students should be made to understand that singular count nouns take –s in their plural forms, however, when a verb takes an –s, it means that verb in the present tense is third person singular. The opposite of the above observation is the singular subjects with plural verbs. These deviations were made because the authors thought the subject had no –s, therefore the verb should not have any –s.

For example:

The laboratory also help students understand some topics.

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

The laboratory also helps students understand some topics

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

5.1.2 Findings from the objective test analysis

Most of the questions used in the objective tested subject – verb agreement. One finding is that the respondents have more problems with these types of subject–verb agreement, proximity concord, grammatical concord and notional though these students have been taught these topics. Though some respondents were able to choose the right answers for some of the questions that tested proximity concord, grammatical concord and notional concord from the analysis. It was discovered that more than half of the respondents did not score most of the question that tested these sub – categories included Question 3,5,10,12,22,24 and 25. Through an interview with the respondents they explained that they had for instance, the question 3: which tested proximity concord wrong because the right answer ‘am’ when used did not sound good in their ears. However, ‘is’ sounded good and ‘normal’ in their ears. It is I used (is, am) the head teacher.

More than half of the respondents had question 10 wrong because some applied the principle of proximity and some also took ‘together with’ as the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ and chose a plural verb ‘were’ instead of ‘was’. The sentence;

The drug dealer together with his agents (was were) arrested outside the city, Those who applied the principle of proximity explained that ‘his agents’ is closer to the verb and it is plural so it should control the verb, therefore they chose ‘were’. Those who took ‘together with’ as a coordinating conjunction but not a pseudo – conjunction replaced ‘together with’ with ‘and’ and chose ‘were’. This suggests that although students have learnt the rules of concord, they misapplied the rules.

5.2 Factors that account for the errors

A number of factors account for the concord errors made by the respondents. Prominent among these factors are inadequate scope of concord topics in the Senior High School syllabus and textbooks, students' negative attitude towards the study of the English Language, students' inability to truly internalize the concord rules of the English Language and how teachers teach the concord rules.

5.2.1 The scope of concord topics in the senior high school syllabus and textbooks

Concord is treated under unit three, section three of year two Senior High School syllabus. Surprisingly, concord is treated only in the second year and in the New Gateway to English Book 2, Unit 4, pages 28-30. The scope of the categories of concord to be taught is subject – verb agreement. Therefore, according to the syllabus, teachers of English are supposed to teach grammatical concord, the principle of proximity and notional concord since these are the three main principles, which are involved in the subject – verb agreement. The syllabus is silent on the exceptions to concord rules – the subjunctive mood and the modal auxiliary verbs. Consequently, if teachers of English strictly go by the specification of the syllabus, then the students will not be taught other categories of concord except subject – verb agreement. Both the syllabus and the textbooks limit both teachers of English and students from doing detailed work in the area of concord. The inadequate scope of categories of concord taught at the Senior High School contributes to the numerous concord problems of students of Senior High Schools.

5.2.2 Negative attitude of students to the English Language

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

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

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

Agor (2013) however, discussed the negative attitude to the teaching of grammar by teachers of English referring to the second cycle institution he visited. Agor (2003) posits that the teaching of grammar of English does help provided it is taught consistently as a means of improving mastery of the language. He further adds that the adoption of any particular approach to the teaching of English grammar should be determined: if students in an English class could read fluently, understand clearly what they read and express themselves freely in English then they could be

conveniently introduced to some of the rules in grammar that would help them to edit their own work and eventually produce good writing. The researcher found out that students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere have relegated the personal study of English Language to the background. They think being successful in the language is automatic. This negative attitude affects their performance in both internal and external examination. These students' lackadaisical and ambivalent attitude about the study of English Language affects the image of the schools.

5.2.3 Pedagogical implications

The findings of this research revealed that students have problems with concord rules. The study was also to find a solution to address the students' problems with concord. The solution has pedagogical implications for syllabus designers, textbook writers, teachers of English Language and students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere and other schools by extension.

5.2.4 Syllabus designers

Since the only category of concord to be taught in the Senior High School syllabus relates to the grammatical concord, the present researcher suggests that syllabus designers endeavour to include all the categories or types of concord in the syllabus. These categories can spread throughout the three year programme. For instance, in year two others and so forth.

5.2.5 Textbook writers

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

concord thereby improving the proficiency of these teachers of English and their students.

5.2.6 Teachers

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

Teachers should not be only concerned with the success of their students in both internal and external examinations, but these teachers should maintain a good relationship with their students. Positive teacher – student relationship develops and improves students' academic performance. Teachers who are affable, maintain a good relationship with their students and are responsive to their academic needs contributes greatly to the academic well-being of the students. According to Otivio (2013), teachers should make students more sensitive to concord rules in the input that surrounds them. The more these students notice and re-notice the 3rd person –s outside the classroom, the more likely they are to restructure their inter language. Otivio (2013) entreats teachers to encourage students which might contribute to long term overall accuracy.

5.2.7 Students

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

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

The goal of language teaching is to develop in the learners the knowledge and skills which enable him to play certain roles in another language community, to turn him into a performer in the target language and to give him a communicative competence. To achieve this, teachers should make effort to be flexible in delivering their lessons. Teachers of developmental English in second cycle institutions ought to give adequate attention to the teaching of concord and other difficult areas in the language. When this is successfully done, it will not only bridge the gap created by inadequate teaching and learning in Senior High Schools, it raises the students sophistication in the language to a level where they can engage gainfully in the activities of writing essays and the other subjects in the medium of English. Learners should be made to recognize their incompetence on concord as a reflection of the general problem facing the use of English in the Ghanaian society with particular reference to Senior High Schools. The exposure given to them would be of immense help in the English language pedagogy.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Further research work is also recommended on concord errors in English on a wider scope. It could be done by covering all the Senior High Schools in Atiwa District and beyond. The research would create room for more discoveries of challenges faced by students on areas of concord and proffer possible remedy to the problem. All in all, the position occupied by English in Ghana and the pivotal role it plays in every facet of the life of the country can never be underplayed. To speak and write good English is rooted on the ability of the user to avoid derailment from the norms of the language. The mastery of the syntax of English demands close attention to the minutest details of the language. Nothing should be taken for granted. Every effort must be geared towards the promotion of standard English. Errors are not to be regarded as signs of failure but as an evidence that the learner is working his way towards the correct usage. An error in the use of English is an integral part of language learning process and a key to competence development in the language. Users of English must have positive attitude to errors and work towards the improvement of their performance in the language.

5.5 Conclusion

This study discloses that students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem-Sekyere have plethora of problems in applying the rules of English Language concord. Students should be aware that it is unpardonable when their constructions of sentences are full of concord rule deviations. For one thing, their speech habits sometimes interfere with their ability to apply the rules of concord. If they have the habit of dropping the final ‘-s’ from words when they talk, they need to be particularly careful not to leave off the ‘-s’ when they write. Books that are made available to the students must be examined. The students must cultivate the culture of reading because

the culture of reading can improve their performance. The way forward has been suggested in this chapter under the sub-topic pedagogical implications and it is the researcher's fervent hope that these suggestions would be heeded to in order for students' concord errors to minimize.



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APPENDIX 1

COMPOSITION QUESTION

SECTION A

Easy [50 Marks]

Answer one question only from this section. Your answer should be about 450 words long

You are advised to spend about 50 minutes on this section.

1. Write a letter to the minister of education suggesting three way of making public secondary schools in deprived communities more attractive to students.
2. Write a letter to your friend who stays aboard on three problems affecting your country and suggest three ways of solving them
3. Write an artifice for publication in one of your national newspapers expressing your views on “the need for girls to be given equal educational opportunities as boys”.
4. You are the principal speaker in a debate on the tope “vacation classes should be abolished”. Write your views for or against the motion.
5. Write a story ending with the expression. We regretted venturing into it.

(THESE ARE ALL W.A.S.S.C.E. PAST QUESTION)

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY PASSAGE WITH QUESTIONS

SECTION B

Summary [30 marks]

Read the following passage carefully and answer in your own words, as far as possible, the questions on it.

Space exploration started more than half a century ago and has brought many benefits with it. No one can deny that it has taken the would be medicine a bit step forward in that substance of medicinal value can now be made under specially controlled conditions prevailing only in space.

Space exploration has laid bare some of the secrets of the universe. By providing accurate knowledge about the heavenly bodies and the laws which govern them, scientist now know that space is limitless and actually stretches to infinity

Such precise knowledge has enabled scientists to know the movements of the planet and predict eclipse, partial and total, up to the very day, our or exact movement of occurrence. This precious knowledge has freed from superstitious views they held.

And this is a great relief because developments backwards and actually bring all progress to a standstill.

In the field of communication, space exploration has done marvelous well for all mankind. Sensitive scientific instruments, which can measure great distance with accuracy, have been developed. Space exploration has helped to pinpoint the exact positions of oilfields and other mineral deposits for some countries. Needless to say, this has brought a lot of improvements to the financial and economic well-being of these nations. More importantly, space exploration has brought clear understanding of

the weather. Scientists are able to make useful predictions to save thousand from natural disasters.

While some people urge scientists on further space exploration, others condemned it in no uncertain terms. They advance sound reasons to discourage the venture. Space exploration, they assert, is one of the most expensive enterprises imaginable, but of little or no real economic value to anyone. One spaceship costs huge sums of money which can bet be used to feed the hungry mouths of the earth's teeming masses. A lot people do not have access to safe drinking water and some are even plagued by various kinds of diseases. If scientists have not solved worrying earthly problems, why should they spend billions on a venture which mankind does not reap any concrete benefits from?

Apart from the above objections, space exploration is risky beyond measure. On one occasion, a crippled spaceship and its human cargo were blown into pieces on re-entry into the earth's atmosphere. There is no denying the fact that space exploration. More than any other pursuit has worsened atmospheric pollution.

Space is, indeed, a indeed, a vast endless expanse with bodies of varying sizes. Which are either too hot or too cold and totally unfavourable for human habitation? Why then should we embark on a venture that does not benefit anyone?

- a. In three sentences, one for each, state the benefits of space exploration
- b. In three sentences, one for each, state the arguments advanced by critics of space exploration.

Summary passage and questions are picked from WASSCE Past Question.

APPENDIX 3

TEST ITEMS ON CONCORD

SECTION C

Select the appropriate verb form from the options provided in the brackets.

1. Both sailor (was, were) attempting to grab the lifeline
2. Hockey and football (has, have) always been particularly aggressive sports.
3. It is I who (is, am) the headmaster
4. Several of the students (have, has) gone home
5. The committee (has, have) regrouped themselves into three factions
6. Trips to Europe (has, have) become more expensive
7. There (is, are) too many grammatical errors in this easy
8. The good news (is, are) that the Black stars won that tough competition
9. The effect of the worker's strike (are, is) spread over the country
10. The drug dealer, together with his agents, (was, were) arrested outside the city.
11. One of the members of the family (was, were) elected as successor to the throne
12. Either my parents or Nelson (is, are) going to the wedding
13. The couple (disagrees, disagree) with each other about where they should spend their vacation
14. *Romeo and Juliet* still (retains, retain) much of its popularity.
15. That couple (has, have) been living there for years
16. One of the disasters which often (occurs, occur) when you are travelling is to arrive at your destination without your language
17. Neither the headmaster nor the teachers (takes, take) such a decision

18. All the soup (was, were) spilled on the new floor
19. At the top of the hill (stands, stand) two majestic oaks
20. Phil or Caleb usually (opens, open) the office each morning
21. Here (is, are) five examples of hard drugs.
22. In the early sixties, if you (listened, listen) to an elementary school pupils speaking English, he (will, would) sound like someone already in the secondary school
23. (these, This) cars are his
24. Although the apples were sweet, I did not enjoy (them, it)

