

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**HELPING FORM TWO STUDENTS OF SHIA SENIOR HIGH TECHNICAL  
SCHOOL TO OVERCOME THEIR CONCORD PROBLEM: A CASE STUDY**



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**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

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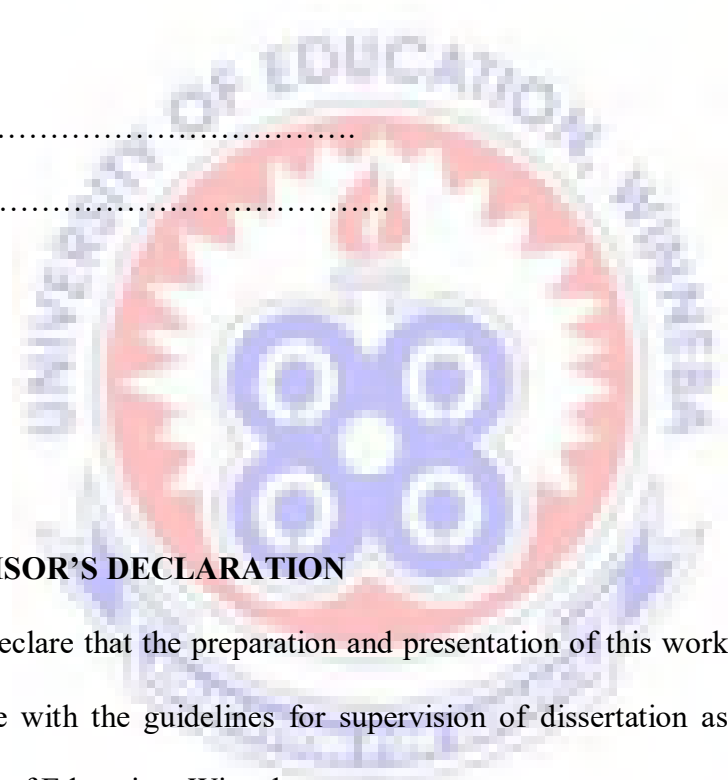
## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Victoria Abla Agbeko, 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 elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....



### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Shallote Fofu Lomotey

Signature :.....

Date:.....

## **DEDICATION**

This research work is dedicated to my mother, Grace Ablewor Kporliator, for showing faith and courage in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by accepting Him as her Lord and Saviour at a very old age which has brought joy into the heart of all and sundry in the family.



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## ABSTRACT

This write up highlights the investigation of the problems the Shia Senior High Technical School students at Ho in the Volta Region encounter in the use of English grammatical concord. The purpose of the study was to identify concord problems. It had been noticed that the F2 C students of this school have a peculiar problem with the use of the English Language due to the challenges they have with the concord, or the grammar of the language. To find the root of these causes, students' grammar exercises and essay scripts had been checked and the various types of concord errors identified in them were scrutinized. In their essay scripts and exercises, it was found that the errors committed were directly related to some grammatical features of the students' mother tongue, teachers' method of teaching and, lack of motivation of the students. In conclusion, it was realised that the learning of concord in Shia Senior High Technical School will improve if teachers are guided by the solutions arrived at by this researcher as they assist students to overcome their challenges.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

English is a Language that is used globally. In most countries it is the only common Language that brings different people from different countries together. In communication wise, if one does not understand the English language, it makes communication difficult. Also, English Language is used as an official language in most countries in the world including Ghana. For this reason it is considered as functional Language without which one cannot take his rightful position at where he finds himself. Because of the benefits and the prestige that can be derived from the language, it must always be seen as an anchor that keeps our communications. Moreover, in today's world where the whole continent have become a global village one can only become part of the village if and only if he can speak and write the Language .These have given the intrinsic motivation to the researcher to undertake this research.

#### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It is undeniable fact that students of Shia Senior High Technical School have been violating the concord rules in the English Language .Hardly will you hear them speak the Language correctly let alone write it without concord errors. This phenomenon is evident in their exercises and essays. The worse of it all is that there are not enough English Course books for the students to use. The few that are in the library, students are not allowed to take them home. The teachers also depend solely on their old text books and notes. In fact they do not seem to have put the students' interest first in designing their classroom activities. Let alone motivating them by giving them

short and long term rewards in form of compliment ,and giving them public recognition for excellent performance.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research are to

1. examine the concord errors made by students of Shia Senior High Technical School
2. identify the causes of the concord errors

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The questions that guided the study are:

1. What the types of concord errors do students' commit?
2. What are the causes of these errors?
3. How can they be helped to overcome these challenges?

### **1.5 Significance**

The purpose of this research is to help equip students of Shia Senior High Technical School to overcome their concord challenges in the English Language so that they could have the prerequisite grades to the high level institutions.

### **1.6 Delimitations**

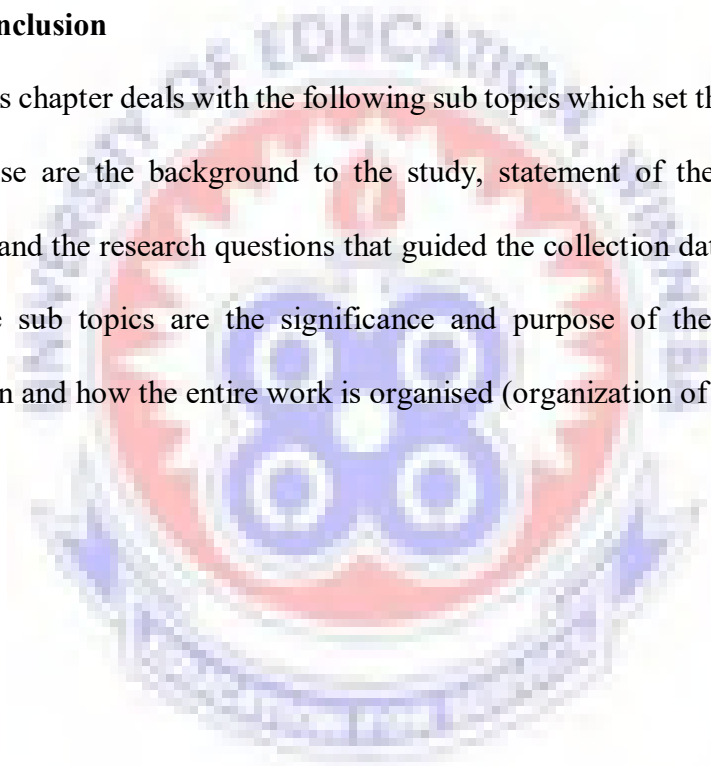
The researcher did the study in Shia Senior High Technical School in Ho. The students population in the school is two hundred and fifty [250] which comprises three streams. The researcher selected Form 2c for the study. Fifty students out of the 250 were chosen for the study.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 discusses the literature review and the principles governing concord. Chapter 3 involves research methodology, population sample and the instruments used in data collection. Chapter 4 presents explanations of concord, types of concord and discussion and analysis of data. The last chapter, Chapter 5, comprises the summary, findings of the study, recommendations and suggestions and the conclusion of the study.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter deals with the following sub topics which set the tone for the entire study. These are the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and the research questions that guided the collection data for the work. The rest of the sub topics are the significance and purpose of the study, limitations, delimitation and how the entire work is organised (organization of the study).



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter involves discussion of the concept, concord errors in English, types of concord errors, importance of errors in second language learning and the causes of concord errors. It also discusses the categorization of concord errors. The chapter ends by discussing the approaches to identifying errors and similar studies on errors in second language acquisition.

#### **2.1 The concept of Errors**

According to Roberts and Griffiths (2008), an error is difficult to define since they can be seen from different perspectives. However, James (1998) judges on errors according to grammatical correctness and acceptance. He relates error to ignorance, inferring that error correction is the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to hide their ignorance. Brown defines an error as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner. According to Dulay and Krashen (1982), errors are the flawed side of a learner's speech or writing. Maicus and Maicus (2000), in the language learning process, errors have always been regarded negatively, and must be avoided. Because of this, they argue that teachers become indifferent to their students because when they commit errors as they speak or write the second language. Errors are seen as a failure of teaching process or occurrence that cannot be avoided. So, errors can be a tool through which a second language can be learnt. Learners' errors serve three purposes: (1) They serve as a device through which learners can work out the rules of the second language by having feedback on (2) They serve as evidence for



about how languages are learnt to researchers. And finally, teachers use it as measurement to identify what has been learnt and what has not been learnt (Allis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

## 2.2 Concord Errors in English

Wiredu (1998) asserts that the term concord in grammar is used to refer to the agreement which exists between two grammatical units; so that when one unit displays a particular feature the other unit will also display a similar feature. For example in the following sentences:

- *That man sings this anthem* very well.
- *Those men sing these anthems* very well.

The subject” *man*” is singular and as such the determiner “*that*” which accompanies it is singular. This explains why the singular demonstrative *that is* selected. Similarly, the noun *anthem* is singular, therefore, the singular demonstrative determiner *this* is selected. However, if the nouns were plural, that is *men, anthems* – the plural demonstratives would have been selected. As a result, we would have had: *those men sing these anthems very well.*

Thus, instead of *that* and *this*, we have *those* and *these* selected because the nouns in the second sentence are plural. According to Downing and Locke (2006), concord is manifested only in the verb forms that show inflectional contrast. As shown in the sentences, the verb forms, *has* and *have* determine the use of the appropriate nouns to match.

1. The librarian *has* checked the *book*.
2. The librarians *have* checked the *books*.
3. Where *is* my credit card
4. Where *are* my credit cards?

Schiffhorst and Shell describe concord as using the singular form of a verb with a singular subject and a plural form of the verb with a plural subject. Examples,

1. The watch runs fast.
2. She watches
3. The girl has changed.
4. She was especially kind.

Plural.

1. They watch.
2. The watches run fast.
3. The girls have changed.
4. They were especially kind.

Concord is also defined as a concept that is used in grammatical theory and description to refer to formal relationships that exist between elements of grammar. In simple terms, concord, otherwise known as agreement simply means that a form of one word requires a corresponding form of another. According to Radford (2001), concord is concerned with the ways in which words can be combined together to form phrases and sentences and so address questions like “why is it ok in English to say, *who did you see Mary with?* But not ok to say, *who did you see Mary and?\**. This simply means what kinds of principles determine the ways in which we can and cannot combine words together to form phrases and sentences?

The principle here refers to what word will agree or go with what word. For example a singular subject must go or agree with a singular verb form and a plural subject agrees with plural verb form Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) also gives similar definition concerning concord that the predicate/verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, it means the subject can be singular or plural. By person, it means whether

the subject is 1<sup>st</sup> person, 2<sup>nd</sup> person or 3<sup>rd</sup> person. When the subject is singular, it must agree with singular verb and when it is plural it must agree with plural verb. These persons are illustrated below:

Person speaking or writing      1<sup>st</sup>

Person spoken to hearer      2<sup>nd</sup>

Person spoken about      3<sup>rd</sup>

The combination of number and person gives us these different categories:

1<sup>st</sup> Person singular – I

2<sup>nd</sup> Person singular – We

2<sup>nd</sup> Person plural - You

Another word for concord is agreement. We need to know how the various elements of the English clause or sentence go together if we are to be competent users. Some items go along more readily with some other items while some cannot go together in usage. When items go with each other, thus, when they agree, such items are in agreement or that there is concord between them. According to O’Grady et al (1996), “a widely attested type of verb inflection in human language involves person – a category that typically distinguishes among the first person (the speaker), the second person (the addressee), the third person (anyone else). In many languages, the verb is marked for both the person and the number (singular or plural) of the subject. When one category is inflected to mark properties (such as person and number) of another, the first category is said to agree with the second.

Sekyi-Baidoo lays emphasis on agreement between subject predicate just as Ranford also stresses that it is the combination of words with agreement among them. What this means is that for sentence to be without an error, the subject in it must be identified to know whether it is singular or plural in order to be able to match it to its

corresponding verb. Students who unfortunately, lack this knowledge will find it extremely difficult to construct error free sentences as far as English Language is concerned. This has been found out to be the challenge of Form two students of Shia Senior High Technical School.

### **2.3 Types of Concord Errors**

The various types of concord errors identified among second language learners have been explained using the principles that underlie their usages. They have been classified into various types.

#### **2.3.1 Subject-verb concord errors**

The subject and verb of a sentence are in agreement when they have the same number and person. If the subject is singular, the verb will be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb will be plural. The verb must be in agreement with the subject; a singular subject takes a singular verb while a plural subject takes a plural verb. Subject-verb Agreement simply means how verbs are readily accepted by a subject it follows. This means that both need to be singular or plural in order to agree. Blake (1988) says the normal rule for subject – verb agreement is that a singular subject requires the verb of the present tense in the “s” form when the subject is a third person singular. Quirk et al (1985) make a distinction between two types of concord:

- a) Notional and
- b) Proximity

According to them Subject-Verb concord is the most important type of concord in English Language. It involves number and person. As has been explained above, the subject-verb concord rule can be explained as, a single subject agrees with a singular verb. As in:

- i. The baby cries for food.

And plural subject agrees with plural verb. As in:

- ii. The houses look nice.

a) Any clause that takes the position of a subject is treated as singular according to the rule of concord. Example:

- i. Examination malpractice is a vice.
- ii. Studying hard is a product of success.

b) Singular subjects followed by intervening expressions like, *as well as*, *together with* etc, take singular verbs. Thus, the words prior to these expressions are the subjects. In other words, the words that come before these expressions are the subject of the sentence as illustrated in the following sentences:

- i. The teacher as well as the student sings a song.
- ii. Kofi together with his father laughs at the mad man.
- iii. *Tom*, along with his brothers *is* going to the city. ('His brothers' is not the subject of this sentence.)
- iv. *Alex*, as well as his parents, *is* coming to the party.
- v. *The boys*, accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Mensah *are* planning a tour.

Agreement between plural subjects and plural verbs is the second grammatical concord. Meaning plural subjects must agree with plural verbs. Swan (1984) agrees with the above assertion that verb form changes according to whether the subject is first, second or third person. What it means by person is that a subject can be of the first, second or third person. Hence, a singular subject must agree with a singular verb and a plural subject must also agree with a plural verb.

Examples;

1. A vegetarian eats vegetables.
2. Vegetarians eat vegetables.

### **2.3.2 Proximity concord**

The proximity concord also called attraction denotes the situation where a finite verb in the present tense agrees in number with a nearby, usually preceding noun rather than with head of the noun phrase which the true grammatical subject.

Sekyi-Baidoo (2000, p. 483) also agrees with the above statement by saying that two singular nouns joined by the correlative *either...or, neither ....nor, not only..... but also*, go with a singular verb. However, if one of the nouns is plural, the verb agrees with the verb that is nearer to it as in:

- i. *Not only is* the man hardworking *but also* honest.
- ii. *Neither* Kofi *nor* Ama *is* to blame.
- iii. Either the boy or the girls are the winners.

In applying the principles of subject-verb agreement, proximity agreement is the practice of relying on the noun that is closer to the verb to determine whether the verb is singular or plural. It is also known as the principle of proximity (attraction) or blind agreement.

The following are some examples to explain this assertion:

- i. She loves it

In the examples, there is concord between the singular form of the verb 'loves' and the singular pronoun, 'she'.

- ii. Either the girl or her friends are to blame.
- iii. Neither the workers nor their employer is on strike.

Sentences (ii) and (iii) have two predicators or verbs 'are' and 'is', The two alternative subjects joined by 'or' or 'nor'. Each of the verbs are supposed to agree with the subject that comes before it. As 'are' and 'is' agree with 'friends' and 'employer' respectively. In other words, if both subject are of the same number and person, the can agree with the same verb as in,

- i. Neither Enam nor Ethel likes the game.
- ii. Either Senyo or Mawuli buys in that shop.

Proximity concord can also mean that concord that is determined by whatever comes immediately after the verb. Meaning the verb can only be determined based on the position. Wired (1999) shares the same view that agreement involved in proximity concord is not based on notion but rather on nominal group which follows the verb immediately. Examples are:

- i. Neither the students nor the teacher works hard.
- ii. Either apple or mangoes taste good.

From the sentences above, the verbs 'works' and 'taste' have two different subjects joined by 'nor' and 'or'. The verbs are to agree with the subjects that precede them. So 'works' and 'taste' agree with 'teacher' and 'mangoes' respectively.

### **2.3.3 *Pronoun antecedent concord***

A pronoun and its antecedent must agree in person, number and gender. Wired (1999) asserts that pronoun antecedent shows the agreement which involves a person and the noun it refers to.

- i. Number..... suggests whether the noun is singular or plural.
- ii. Person ..... whether the noun is 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person.
- iii. Gender .....whether the noun is masculine, feminine or neuter.

Sekyi Baidoo is in support of this. He says that since pronouns are used in places of nouns it is important that they agree with nouns which are their antecedents so that they can easily be traced to their nouns.

Examples;

- i. The *dog* shakes *its* tail.
- ii. Children like playing with *their* toys.
- iii. Adzoa cooks for her family.
- iv. The boy left his bag at home.

The word antecedent means something that precedes something else. In English, it is the word that a pronoun refers back to. Since the pronoun replaces the noun, the pronoun has to agree with the noun in number. So if the antecedent that comes before is singular, then the pronoun that takes its place must also be singular.

Examples to illustrate are as follows:

- i. The *students* celebrate *their* Hall week next month.
- ii. The *teachers* teach *their* students well.
- iii. The *boy* hurt *himself*

Oluikpe,(1981) asserts that a pronoun must agree in number , person and gender with its antecedent. What he means by number is that, the subject can be singular or plural. And” person” referring to first person second person or third person. The first person is the person speaking which can take the pronoun I or we; the former is singular while the latter is plural. The second person is the one spoken to which has both singular and plural meaning respectively. The person being talked about is the third person associated with the pronouns he, she, it and they. They is the plural and the rest are singular. You refers to both singular and plural. Having taken note of the above explanation, we can come to conclusion that there is only one principle governing them



all. So, if the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree, that sentence is grammatically incorrect. To write sentences that are grammatically correct, the following rules need to be applied.

- a. A verb must agree with its subject in number /person; that is, a singular verb should agree with a singular subject; and a plural verb must follow a plural subject.

Examples

- i. The pen is in the drawer
- ii. The pens are in the drawer

However, singular subjects preceded by *accompany by*, *together with*, *as well as*, go with singular verbs. The phrases following the subjects are not part of them and as such do not change the number.

Examples are;

- i. The boy together with the men is going home.
- ii. The president accompanied by the police men has arrived.
- iii. Mr Mensah as well as his father is weeding.

Prepositional phrases and verbs functioning as subject are considered singular. Also, when the prepositional phrases separate the subjects from the verbs, they have no effect on the verbs as shown in the examples below:

- i. *The flower* in the pots *looks* nice to the eyes.
  - ii. *The book* prescribed for the students *is* good.
  - iii. *The back* of the windows *is* painted
  - iv. The *perspective* of different people *varies* from time to time.
  - v. *The fear* of terrorists and militants *has* made the people flee the city.
- a. Nouns connected by the conjunction **and** take a plural verb.

Examples are:

- i. Kofi and Kudzo are coming here.
- ii. Robin and his friends want to go home
- iii. Apples and mangoes are my favorite fruits

c. However, singular subjects followed by such word as: *with, together with, as well as, accompanied by*, take singular verbs. The phrases introduced by these expressions are not considered as part of the subject and so do not change the number, although they do suggest plural meaning. Examples are:

- i. Tom, along *with his brothers* is going to the city. (His brothers' is not the subject of this sentence.)
- ii. Alex, *as well as* his parents, is coming to the party.
- iii. The boys, *accompanied by* their teacher, Mr. Mensah are planning a tour.

d. Indefinite pronouns such as everyone, everybody, somebody, take singular verbs.

Examples are:

- i. Someone has given her a help.
- ii. Everybody likes Raymond

There are other subjects which appear deceptively plural but function as singular:

- i. *Each of* the girls *has* a car
- ii. *One of* the students *arrives* soon.

e Correlative Conjunction Concord errors. According to Warriner (1972) Correlative conjunctions such as ; *not only...but also, either ..or, neither...nor, whether...or*, etc must be used only in pairs..

Examples in sentences;

- i. We don't know *whether* we should sell the car *or* get it repaired.
- ii. *As* the plain moved over *so* did my stomach

f. Indefinite pronoun concord errors. These are pronouns that take the place of nouns in sentences. They do not indicate a specific thing or person. They can do anything that a noun can do. Just as nouns have singular and plural forms, they also have. Some of the singular ones are *each, one, any, someone, somebody, everybody*, etc. The plural ones include, *several, a few, all, both etc.*

Examples in sentences are:

Singular forms agree with singular verbs as shown below:

1. Everybody knows Aishia.
2. Ama does not talk in class, so *nobody knows* her.
3. Everybody wants to live happily.
4. Something is bothering him.
5. No human being lives in that house.

Plural forms go with plural verbs as shown in the examples below:

1. Several people have attended my birthday party.
2. The fact that all students want to pass their examination cannot be over stated.
3. Many of them do not admit their faults.
4. Just a few students are wise enough to amend their ways.

g. Collective nouns concord errors. There are certain nouns which, in actual fact, are singular but typically denote a collection or group of individuals. These nouns are singular in form but are plural in meaning and they are referred to as collective nouns.

Examples are *government, people, army, team, staff* and *committee*. The notion of number inherent in collective nouns implies that the concord relation that exists between the subject and the verb involves the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the number marker for that idea. Very often, collective nouns are used as

subjects which select both a singular and plural verb. For example, both of the sentences below are correct:

- i. The team has played well.
- ii. The team have played well.

In the first sentence above the singular verb is used because the noun *team*, is perceived as a single body, whereas the selection of the plural verb in the second example implies that the noun 'team' is used to refer to individuals that make up the team. Other examples of collective nouns with the same notional concord are family, party, group, crew, company.

h. Subject complement concord error. This is another type of concord rule that shows agreement between a subject and complement. The complement always follows a linking verb and modifies or completes the sentence. The subject that has a complement is always a noun, pronoun, or adjective. It gives further meaning to the sentences and renames it. The rule here states that if the subject of a sentence is singular, then the complement must be singular and if it is plural, the complement must be plural. Let us compare the following sentences:

- i. *That man* is a *teacher*.
- ii. *Those men* are *teachers*.
- iii. *An Elephant* is a huge animal.
- iv. Elephants are huge animals.

When a subject complement is a noun phrase, there is usually concord of number between subject and subject complement: *Her father is a member of the church*.

A Subject complement can be adjective, noun or pronoun that follows a linking verb.

The linking verbs are; verb be (am, is, are, was, were, seem etc).

Examples:

- i. *Jane is an athlete.* Jane is the subject, 'is' is a linking verb and 'athlete' is noun functioning as subject complement.
- ii. *It was he who caught the ball.* 'It' is subject, 'was' -linking verb and 'ball' – subject complement.
- iii. *Kofi becomes embarrassed* when people compliment his skills.  
*Kofi-* subject, *becomes* – linking verb, *embarrassed-* adjective as subject complement.

Only linking verbs can have subject complement. If the verb is action, then the word that answers the question 'what?' or 'who?' after the subject + verb, is a direct object.

- i. Coordinative conjunctions join single words or groups of words which are of the same kind. eg *.and ,but ,yet, for, etc. as in.*
  - i. Baseball and tennis are different games.
  - ii. Kofi has arrived for I saw him in the garden

In the first sentence baseball and tennis are two nouns joined with the conjunction 'and'. Similarly, the conjunction 'for' in the second sentence also joined the two independent clauses together.

- j. If a definite article *the* precedes an adjective in a sentence, it will be plural and must, therefore, take a plural form of the verb. Examples are:
  - i. *The rich are* not always happy.
  - ii. *The sick need* God's help more.
  - iii. *The poor have* no friend

## 2.4 Causes of Concord Errors

The main causes of concord errors in second language learning can be classified as interference errors: interlingual and intralingual transfer. According to Richards (1971), intralingual errors are sub divided into categories.

#### **2.4.1 Ignorance of rule restriction**

Ignorance of rule restriction is one of the sources of errors. In this, the second language learner extends the rules of the second language to where they are not applicable. For instance in the use of linking verbs in English, a non-native speaker may commit error by saying *He made me gone extra mile\**. (He made me go extra mile).

#### **2.4.2 Developmental and Intralingual Errors**

These types of errors occur during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the learners have not fully acquired the knowledge of grammar in the language. The learner tries to form a hypothesis based on the few experiences she has in the use of other items in the second language. The learner ends up making structures that do not conform to the rules of concord in the second language.

The intralingual and developmental errors are due to the difficulty of the second or target language. The intralingual and developmental factors include simplification and overgeneralization.

#### **2.4.3 Simplification**

This is where learners often choose simple forms and constructions in the target language instead of more complex ones.

#### **2.4.3 Over-generalization**

This is the use of one form of construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. Examples of generalization include the use of *comed\** and *goed\** as the past tense form of “come” and “go”

respectively. It should be noted that simplification and generalization are used by learners in order to reduce their linguistic burden.

Another source of error that commonly occurs in the language of a second language learner is the interlingual transfer. This error occurs as a result of language transfer. It is caused by native language influence, the L1 (Brown, 2007; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Richards, 1993). Learners try to use items from their mother tongues or any language learnt previously as they do not have knowledge about the appropriate item they need to use in the second language. They normally use the items from the first language as their last resort in order to communicate the message they want to put across. So, interlingual transfer is the only means they can fall on as they can. Gass and Selinker (1994) also attest to this fact.

#### ***2.4.5 The context of learning***

Teacher's method of teaching and the teaching and learning materials they use for teaching can also make students commit error. Sometimes, the teaching method the teacher uses in teaching affects the students' understanding either negatively or positively. If the method the teacher is using is learner centred, students will be able to acquire the intended concept easily. On the other hand, if inappropriate method and instructional materials are used, learning may take place partially or not at all. This is what results in errors by the students since they do not fully understand the concept being taught, hence application becomes erroneous. Taylor, (1975) asserts that teacher's wrong teaching methods and materials can also make students commit errors. It further indicates that teacher's ignorance about structures and words in a text can also cause misunderstanding, hence the errors.

## **2.5 Related Studies**

A lot of research work on errors have been done by various researchers such as Winterowd and Murray (1985), Mensah, (20140), and concluded that second language learners do commit concord errors during their learning processes. For example, Agorkpo (2014) finds that students cannot distinguish between plural and singular indefinite pronouns in sentences. They used each category with the wrong form of the verb.

## **2.6 Importance of Errors in Language Learning**

The importance of errors in the process of learning a language has always been necessary evil in the field of second language learning and acquisition (see Selinker, (1972) Identification of sources of errors students make is very important because it assists the teacher to know what actually is the root of the students' problem. Errors are not always bad, rather, they are crucial parts and aspect in the process of learning language. They may provide insight into the processes of learning a language. They can also provide insight into the complicated processes of language development as well as a systematic way of identifying, describing, and explaining students' errors. Errors may also help to better understand the process of second or foreign language acquisition. The errors that a language learner commits rather serve as a stepping stone for him to strive to learn the rule. Students' errors do not only help the teacher to know where the students have challenges but also help him to know what the students are learning and not learning.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter discusses related literature on the topic under study. This discussion covers the concept of errors, concord errors in English and causes of concord errors.



Other areas covered are related studies on concord errors and how important errors are to learners of a second language such as English.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology used in the data collection and analysis. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research type and its justification which includes the details of the population selected for the study, sampling techniques, instrumentation and finally the data collection procedure and analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study used the qualitative research method for data collection and analysis. This is the type of method that involves data collection through open-ended and conversational communication. This method is not only about what people think but also why they think so. It allows for in-depth and questioning of respondents based on their responses. The method is designed in a manner that helped to reveal the behaviour and perception of the target audience with reference to the particular topic. Since the researcher is doing a case study, this method is appropriate for the study. Why? Because the results of the qualitative focus on the description of individual experiences and beliefs rather than describing the characteristics of a population. Also, reference can be drawn easily from the data that is obtained to address the immediate problem identified. This method is appropriate for the study for data collection and analysis because the researcher will have to interact with teachers through interview and also administer tests to students to find out whether they have actually learnt most of the rules on the concord. Data was collected at Shia Senior High Technical School. The researcher chose this Topic and

School because it was observed that students in the said school have challenges with the English concord

### **3.2 Population**

Polit and Hungler (1999:37) refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In this research the researcher chose Shia SHS students in form two C as her population but in order to have a sizable population she cut the number down to a specific group referring to us the target population. This target population was all the students of Shia Senior High Technical School and out of that a sample of 50 students were selected to take part in the study.

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique**

Sample and Sampling Technique is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 1998:250; Polit & Hungler 1999:95). The researcher chose fifty (50) students from the total population of sixty five (65) to form the sample population. Students were made to form a queue as the researcher counted from number one to five till he got to the last person. The students who were numbered from one to four were selected while the fifth ones were left out. Out of the sixty five (65) students, fifty (50) were selected. Their exercise books were examined. It was realised that all the 50 exercise books that had been checked, most of the students answered some of the questions involving various types of concord *wrongly Various concord rules were violated in each of the exercises*. Essay topic was given to them to write on and the errors they committed on concord were identified. The errors that were committed are discussed in chapter four.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instrument**

The instrument used for the data collection was students' class exercises and the essay topics administered to them since the researcher was undertaking case study research., She used the qualitative method of taking the data whereby the data were taken from only the students' exercise books and essay script for study.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection procedure involves the means through which data were collected. The researcher, using the qualitative design in collection of data, had to use the exercise books of the selected students to pick the concord errors for which she was undertaking the study. Before then, she informed the headmaster as well as the class teacher and the students about the exercise. The researcher gathered the 50 students in the classroom for them to write an essay on the topic "What my mother does every Saturday". In other to pick the concord error from students' exercise books and their essay scripts, she collected all the exercise books of the students who formed the sample size. That is students who had been selected. She checked the exercise books of each of them and recorded all the errors found in them. The researcher did this in order to be sure that the students actually had the concord problem. Different types of errors had been identified.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Procedure**

Data analysis is a process of systematically applying statistical or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap and evaluate data (Dornyei, 2007). After taking the data, what was needed was to analyze it using frequency table and bar graphs so that logical conclusions would be made from them. Tables and graphs were used to analyze the data that were collected. In the table, various errors were

categorized under their respective columns. The number of times each error occurred had been explained by the tables showing the gravity of errors committed under each type. The bar graph was used to show the percentage of errors committed under each type of concord.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, issues discussed include the details of the population selected for the study, research design and sampling techniques. Data collection procedure and data analysis were also discussed.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and analysis of results from students' essay scripts and their exercises. The aim of this study is to analyze concord errors identified in the written essays and exercises of Form 2 students of Shia Senior High Technical School-Ho. The chapter reveals some concord errors committed by the students and the causes of these errors. Five types of concord errors have been identified from their essay scripts and exercises and have been discussed. The causes of these errors are found to stem from intralingua transfer, interlingual developmental and the teachers' teaching method. The chapter ends with summary and conclusion.

#### 4.1 Categorization of Concord Errors

The types of concord errors identified after the analysis of the data collected are as follows:

1. Subject –verb concord errors
2. Noun-pronoun concord errors
3. Verb tense concord errors
4. Indefinite pronouns concord errors and
5. Correlative conjunction concord errors.

As students' exam scripts were checked on the topic "What I do every Saturday." One hundred and fifty (150] errors had been identified, of which one hundred (100) were concord errors. When their exercise books were checked one hundred and two (102] errors were identified. The total errors identified were two

hundred and fifty (250). Out of which one hundred and eighty two (182] were concord errors.

#### **4.1.1 Subject-verb concord errors**

This is the cornerstone rule that forms the background of the concept of concord. Unfortunately, the results from the students' scripts revealed that the rule was not well internalized. The students made a lot of mistakes in this respect. In English grammar, the rule of concord of subject-verb agreement states that a singular noun must agree with a singular verb and plural nouns must also agree with plural verbs. Plural nouns are formed by inflecting the noun with "s" in some cases. But this is not so with verbs, singular verbs do not end in "s" to become plural. Rather the verbs used with singular nouns and third person pronouns in the present tense take "s". Examples,

1. *The boys pack* their books on the shelf. (plural subject-plural verb)
2. *The teacher teaches* well. (singular subject-singular verb)
3. *Schools vacate* in June.(plural subject-plural verb form)
4. *The class begins* at 8am everyday (singular subject-singular verb)
5. *The woman sells* in the market. (Singular noun-singular verb.)

Unfortunately, students committed errors in this aspect of concord. They seemed not to know the particular form of a verb that should agree with a particular subject, hence the subject they used in the following sentences did not agree with the verbs in the present tense. They used singular verbs with plural subjects and plural verbs with singular subjects as shown in the following types:

##### **4.1.1.1 Singular subject with plural verbs**

1. My *mother wake* up early to sweep the compound.

2. *Akosua help* her to sweep.
3. *She always wash* the dish.
4. *My father* also *work* on the farm on Saturdays.
5. *Akosua* also *do* the washing.

The students used singular subjects with plural verbs and there is therefore no agreement between the subject and the verb, hence the errors. One factor responsible for this error is that teachers always use the mother tongue to teach the English concept. This resulted in students committing this error. Students need to study this rule and make a conscious effort to use it correctly. Richard, (1971), states that this error is an interlingual error, meaning mother-tongue interference. Most of the students in Shia Senior High Technical School are from the Volta Region and therefore speak Ewe as their mother tongue. In Ewe there is no difference between singular verbs and plural verbs when used in the present tense but this is not the case in English Language. So as students transferred this rule from their mother tongue into English Language they ended up committing errors. Examples illustrating this phenomenon are as follows:

1. *Ama foa devi la.* (*Ama* beats the child.) (singular verb-singular subject)
2. *Kofi kple Ama foa devi la.* (Kofi and Ama beat the child.) [plural subject-plural verb]

The verb “fo” which is “beat” used in Ewe with the singular subject is the same verb form used with the plural subject. But in English there is variation; meaning plural verbs go with plural subjects and singular verbs go with singular subjects.

#### **4.1.1.2 Plural subjects with singular verbs**

The following errors were identified:

1. *Mothers knows* what is best for their children.
2. *Things* that *is* given out is what we keep.



3. *My brothers loves* jogging in the morning.
4. *Saturday mornings is* our busiest day.

From the examples, the subjects involved here are all plural nouns. Instead of identifying them as such, students ignored the plural marker “s” and therefore treated them as singular nouns, hence the numerous errors committed. The cause of this error could be that students often hear adults especially their teachers use only the singular form of these nouns with their corresponding verbs in the present tense. Students subsequently have not gotten adequate exposure to the use of these plural forms to match the corresponding verbs. Brown, (1980) cited in Hasyin (2002) posits that this error is an induced one. Meaning students are influenced by the way teachers give definitions, examples, explanations and arranged practice opportunities.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement error***

Another error that was realized concerns the use of the demonstrative pronouns. Demonstrative pronouns are “this”, “that”, “these” and “those”. Harts (2018) says that these pronouns are used in making reference to entities. “This/These” are used to refer to entities that are near and “those/that” are used to refer to entities that are far away. Like the personal pronouns, the demonstrative pronouns have singular and plural forms. The singular forms are “This/That” and the plurals are “These/Those”. When these pronouns are used in sentences as subjects, they must agree with the verb in number. The students failed to apply this rule. They could not understand that “this” and “that” are subjects which have to take singular verb forms. And “these” and “those” are to take plural verb forms. This problem can be traced to students’ lack of following the grammatical rules correctly. A possible cause of the error could be fossilization. The error has been programmed in their minds for a long time that they find it difficult to change it. They used singular demonstrative pronouns with plural nouns and vice versa.

They wrote sentences as follows. Students' failure to know this rule made them make the following errors:

1. This things are not done in our house.
2. These year is good to me.
3. That mean I will not go to school.
4. Those boys is not my friends.

The rule concerning demonstrative pronouns was not applied well by the students in the examples above. "This" and "that" are singular and must be followed by singular verb forms (is, means). And "these" and "those" are plural and must be followed by plural verb forms.

#### **4.1.1.4 Subject-complement concord errors**

Subject complement is a word that follows a linking verb and modifiers or completes the sentence predicate. The subject complement is always a noun, pronoun or adjective. It gives further meaning to the subject. It renames or re-identifies the subject. For example:

1. Spot is a dog. ("dog" is the subject-complement and it follows a linking verb "is")
2. Spot is brown. ("brown" is an adjective and the subject-complement which follows the linking verb "is")

**A subject-complement must agree with its verb in number.** For Example:

1. Jean was a professor. (singular verb; *was*]
2. My parents are social workers. (plural verb; *are*]

Students made a lot of mistakes here. Plural forms of subject-complements were used with singular verbs in the sentences. Example:

1. Kwame is my brothers.
2. She is the women who came here.
3. The man here is a labourers.
4. My sister becomes a teachers
5. Kofi is a drunkards.

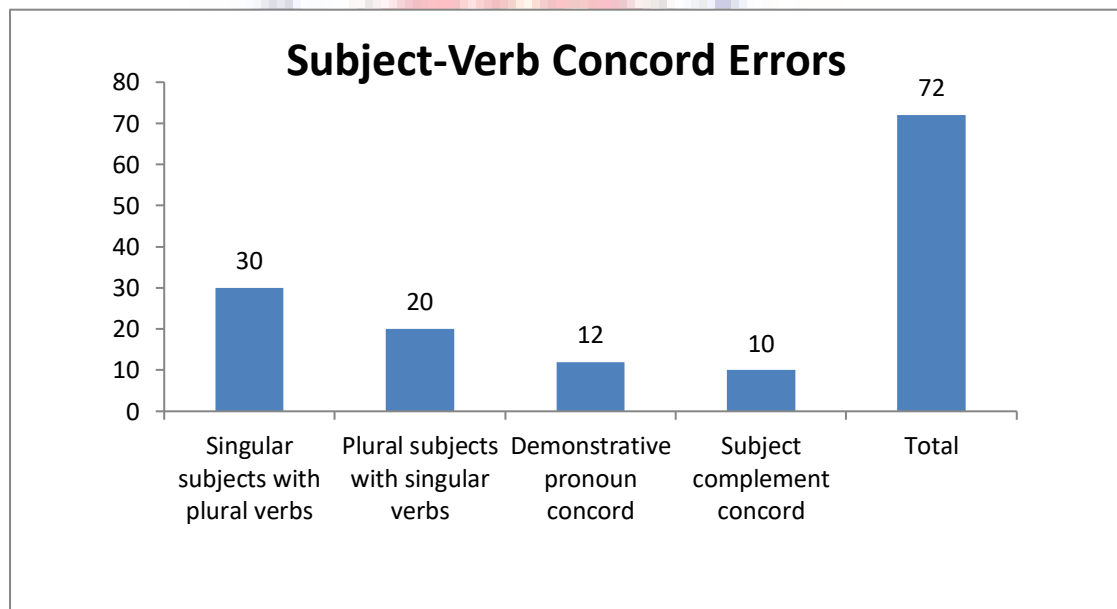
The students' spoken English might have caused these errors in their scripts. When teachers speak they are not mindful of complement agreement. They only pay attention to subject-verb agreement. Students also commit these errors as they are learning in this environment. They have no knowledge of these rules and so speak or write what they hear from other people without applying any rule. This error, according to Richard (1974), is a developmental error is an error that occurs during the learning process of a second language. So teachers, need to be conscious when they are speaking English Language among learners because students will learn the wrong things unconsciously. The summary of subject-verb concord errors is shown in Table 4.1.1 and Figure 4.1.1.

**Table 4.1.1: Subject-verb Concord Error**

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%)
Singular subject with plural verbs	30	25.0

Plural subjects with singular verbs	20	37.5
Demonstrative pronouns concord	12	15.0
Subject complement concord	10	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows the number of concord errors committed under the subject verb related concords. The results realized indicate that the students were not able to match subjects to their corresponding verbs especially in the present tense with the third person singular.



**Figure 4.1.1: Subject-verb Concord Errors**

The concord errors students committed under each topic shown on the graph are very much related. They all involved singular and plural subjects with verbs that did not correspond to them. Their main challenge is with the use of the singular subjects with the appropriate verbs in the present tense. This is evident in the level of the errors committed under this topic. Similarly, John Mensah (2014, p. 41) also identified these particular errors in the written essays of his students.

#### **4.1.2 Noun-pronoun concord errors**

A pronoun is usually defined as a word that takes the place of one or more nouns or pronouns. The word [or words] to which a pronoun refers is called the antecedent. An antecedent usually comes before the pronoun (Winterowd & Murray, 1985).

##### **4.1.2.1 Agreement in number concord errors**

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number. When an antecedent is singular, singular pronoun must refer to it and vice versa. Examples in sentences:

1. The dog wagged its tail.
2. Ms Johnson read her summation to the jury.

**When an antecedent is plural, use plural pronoun to refer to it Examples,**

1. We called our parents yesterday.
2. Six dogs threw back their heads and howled at the moon.

Students could not match pronouns to their antecedents to agree in number well. They used singular antecedent with plural pronouns as in the sentences below.

1. Alice spent much of their time with us.
2. The gallery was destroyed when their roof collapsed.
3. A driver who failed to study for the drivers' examination only harmed themselves.
4. My sister passed all their papers.

##### **4.1.2.2 Agreement in gender concord errors**

Winterowd and Murray (1985) states that a pronoun must agree in gender with its antecedent and that singular antecedent creates few problems. When a singular

antecedent is masculine, masculine pronouns [he, his, or him] must be used to refer to it. When the singular antecedent is feminine, pronouns [she, her, or hers] must refer to [it, its] to refer to neuter.

Examples are:

1. *Seyram* likes *his* sisters.
2. *Enam* took *her* sister to school yesterday.
3. *The composer* has done *his* job well.
4. *Each* of the students will have *his* picture taken.
5. *Josephine* said the book was *hers*.

The students failed to apply this rule and consequently wrote the following wrong sentences:

1. *My mother* dried *his* clothes.
2. The *man* brought *her* kids to school.
3. *Our room* and *his* compound is always clean.
4. My mother and his friend went to the market together.
5. *The baby girl* cried when *he* was thirsty.

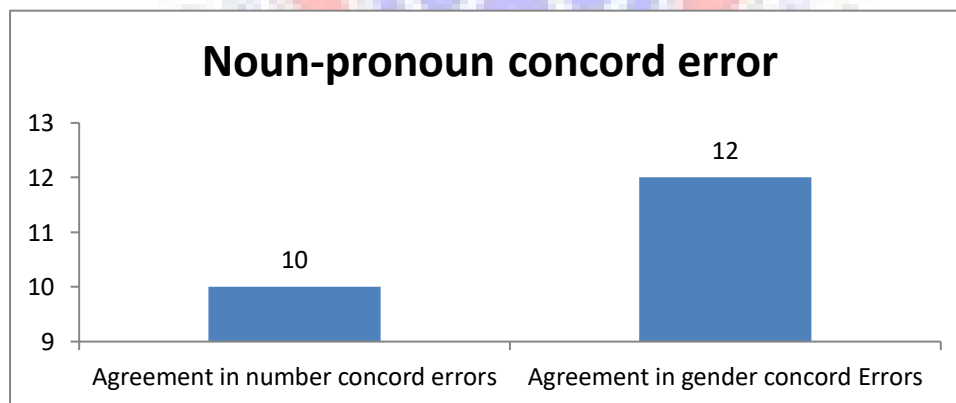
The above extract has error because the pronouns do not agree with the antecedents in gender and number.

**Table 4.1.2: Noun-pronoun concord errors**

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%)
-----------------	---------------------	----------------

Agreement in number concord errors	10	46
Agreement in gender concord Errors	12	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

The errors students committed under noun-pronoun concord are shown in the table above. The number of errors committed here shows that the students have more rooms for improvement as far as these concord rules are concerned. .With the noun-pronoun agreements in number, plural pronouns were used with singular antecedents. They also used pronouns of male gender to refer to feminine gender. According to Winterowd and Murray (1985) a pronoun must agree with its antecedents in number and gender. He continues to say that when a singular antecedent is masculine, pronouns [he, his, him] must be used to refer to it. And when the singular antecedent is feminine, pronouns [she, her, hers] must refer to it.



**Figure 4.1.2: Noun-pronoun Concord Errors**

Two types of noun-pronoun concord errors students committed in the study are shown in the graph above. According to the graph, they could not match nouns with their antecedents in number and gender correctly. They therefore used pronouns which

did not agree with their antecedents in number and gender. Ajongchica (2013) has also identified these errors in his students' essay scripts.

#### **4.1.3 *Verb-tense in related clauses concord errors***

This is another aspect of concord under which students committed many errors. With this concord, according to Agbagedy (1991) the tense in which a verb is in the main clause, the verb in the subordinate clause must also be in the same tense of the clause which is related to it. In the subordinate clause which is also known as **the** 'if-clause', the agreement between the verb is required. That is if the verb in the main clause is in the present tense, the one in the second clause must also be in the present tense. And when the verb is in the past tense in the main clause, the same form of the verb must be used in the second clause. For example,

1. I do not know that he is here. (both verbs are in the present tense)
2. I did not know that he was here. (both verbs in the past tense)

But there are exceptions to this rule, which are:

If the verb in the main clause is in the present, perfect or future tense, the verb in the subordinate clause may be in any tense required by the sense intended. Example;

1. I sincerely thank you for the letter you sent to me last week.
2. I have not seen what he was referring to.
3. I do not see what he was referring to.
4. You will not hear from your sister unless you call her.
5. I have not seen the man you are talking about.



The following are sentences from the scripts that had errors of tense:

#### ***4.1.3.1 Present tense***

1. Whenever I call her she did not answer.
2. When my mother cooks she washed the bowls.
3. Students think they knew more than their teachers.
4. He talks without taken note of his errors.
5. Grace loves John but he did not know.

#### ***4.1.3.2 Past tense***

1. He sent the books to where he takes them from.
2. I did not know that you are there yesterday.
3. When I woke up, I pray to God
4. My mother gave me a new bag last term but I don't like it.
5. I wrote to him but he fails to reply.

#### ***4.1.3.3 Future tense***

- i. I will write to my father to paid my fees.
- ii. You will not hear from your sister unless you called her.
- iii. I will not attend his birthday party if he did not invite me.
- iv. He will go to the school and paid the arrears.

These errors can be traced to intralingua and developmental errors. It is clear that students failed to grasp the concept of sequence of tenses in the main and subordinate clauses. Students did not apply the grammatical rules well. They used verbs which did not agree with the verbs in the subordinate clauses. With the present tense, students used the present forms of the verb in the main clauses and the past form in the subordinate clauses. The same thing happened to the past and future tenses.

**Table 4.1.3: Verb tense in Related Clauses**

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage (%)
Present	12	24
Past	16	32
Future	22	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

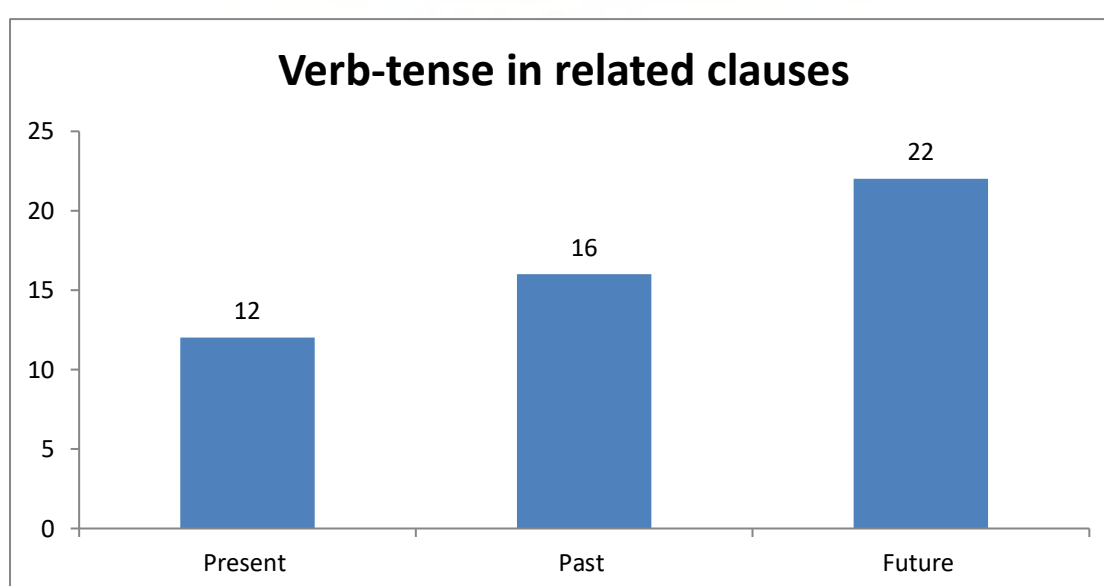
**Figure 4.1.3. Verb-tense in Related Clauses Errors**

Table 4.1.3 with its corresponding bar chart shows the Verb-tense in related clauses concord errors. The errors students committed are shown in the figures. It is obvious that students have difficulties in regard to this concord. They could not identify the Verb-tense to be used in the related clauses. They need to be helped to know how verb tense agree with each other in related clauses. They could not see which tense to stick to when present, past and future tenses are used in the main clauses. Mensah (2014) again found these errors in his students' written essay scripts.

#### 4.1.4 Correlative conjunction concord errors

Correlative conjunctions are used only in pairs. Examples are: *both*, and, *not only ... but also*, *either...or*, *neither....nor*, *whether... or* etc. Examples are below.

1. We don't know whether we should sell the car or get the motor repaired.
2. As the plane rolled over, so did my stomach.

This conjunction joins some parts of speech. Examples are adjectives and nouns. With this kind of conjunction, it is only the subject in the second part of the sentence that determines the form of the verb to use. If both subjects before and after the conjunctions are singular, singular form of the verb is used. Example:

#### **Neither Kofi nor Ama is to blame**

But if one subject is singular and the other which comes after the conjunction is plural, then plural form of the verb is used. For example,  
Neither Kofi nor his *parents are* hardworking.

The following extracts from students' scripts are with errors:

1. Neither my sister nor my *parents works* on the farm.
2. I always wake up at 6 o'clock whether it's raining.
3. The village is not only quiet but is serene.
4. Either the books or the pen are missing
5. Both Joe and Ali is my friend.

Students failed to apply this concord rule well. And this is a sign that the rule was not well internalised by the students. As such, they did not use the conjunctions as well as the verbs correctly. Plural subjects were used with singular verbs and vice versa.

#### 4.1.4.1 Coordinating conjunctions concord errors

Coordinating conjunctions join elements of equal rank, such as two nouns, (or a noun and a pronoun), two verbs, two phrases, or two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are, *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor* and *yet*. Examples are:

1. Does the baby walk *or* talk yet?
2. Kate visited us *but* she didn't go to farm with us (two independent clauses)
3. My brother speaks English Language well *for* he lived in London before.

This concord rule says when two clauses are joined together, by *but*, one of the clauses must contradict the other. Example:

He planned to play the game *but* he did not succeed.

It is therefore, ungrammatical to say *or* write a sentence like [He did not plan to play the game *but* he did not succeed].

**But**, Afua went to class *but* she found no one. She went into the room *but* she saw nothing. These ones are allowed. The following are some of the coordinating conjunction errors committed by students:

1. Our father works on the farm *but* he has a lot of farm produce
2. We studied hard *and* we did not score all the marks.
3. The earth is round *or* not flat. .
4. The headmaster saw the students *but* they also saw him.

The students' error occurring in the coordinating conjunction was caused by their L1 influence. They seem to be constructing the sentence in Ewe. In Ewe, two positive clauses can be joined together by a particular conjunction (*eye*) which rather means 'and' but not '*but*' in English. A sample sentence in Ewe is Kofi va eye woɖu nu. (Kofi came *and* he ate). So, they used the application based on this knowledge in Ewe. L1 influence is the cause of this error. And it can be traced to interlingual transfer

which is the application of rules learnt from the mother tongue. Winterowd and Murray (1985) talked about this conjunction. According to them, elements of the same ranks must be joined with *and* and students also used wrong conjunctions to join the clauses. In sentence one, instead of them using *but* they used *and*. Elements with unequal ranks were joined with the conjunction in the above sentences which should not be the case.

#### **4.1.4.2 Subordinating conjunction concord error**

Subordinating conjunctions join unequal elements in a sentence.

Examples; *when, because, before, after, till, if, where* etc.

The subordinating conjunction may link a word or phrase to a main clause. Sample sentences are:

1. When angry, count ten before you speak
2. If you are very angry, count a hundred.

The most common use of the subordinating conjunction, however, is to join two clauses.

Examples are:

1. We got our allowance after we swept and washed the floor.
2. They always listen to the radio when they are driving

The independent clauses in the above sentences are ‘*we got our allowance*’, and ‘*They always listen to the radio*’ while the rest are dependent clauses: The clauses that cannot stand on their own without the main clause. Subordinating conjunctions join two clauses together and for that matter two subjects are joined by it. This concord rule says that when the clauses are connected by the subordinating conjunction, it is only the subject that comes before the conjunction determines the verb form. Subordinating and coordinating conjunctions can be used as connectors in one sentence. When this happens, the whole sentence is controlled by the verb in the first clause.

Example; Kofi and Ama as well as Kojo are here.

The rule of coordinating conjunction is applied here because the coordinating conjunction and comes before the subordinating conjunction “*as well as*”.

Students’ errors are shown in the sentences:

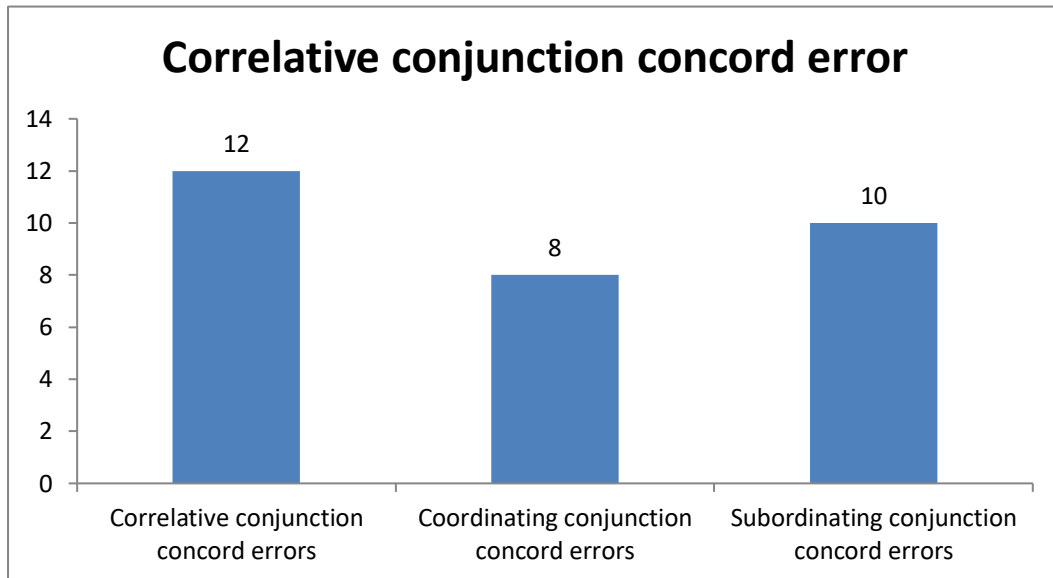
1. The president or the vice as well as his MPs travel often.
2. The teacher and the student alongside the parents attend meetings.
3. The policemen together with the thief is running.
4. The man and his wife together with the guest has arrived.

The above sentences do not conform to either the subordinating or coordinating conjunction rules. Singular verbs were supposed to be used with the subjects that came before the first conjunctions but they rather used plural verbs with the subjects that came after the second conjunctions. They might be thinking that it was the second conjunction that controlled the verbs. It has come to realization that they lack the knowledge of these concord rules.

**Table 4.1.4: Correlatives Conjunction Concord Errors**

<b>Types of Errors</b>	<b>Frequency of Errors</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Correlative conjunction concord errors	12	40
Coordinating conjunction concord errors	8	27
Subordinating conjunction concord errors	10	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The concord errors committed by students under the various conjunctions are shown above. This findings show that students somehow understand these concord rules better than the rest. This table shows the least concord error among the four types.



**Figure 4.1.4: Correlative conjunction concord errors**

#### **4.1.5 Indefinite pronouns concord errors**

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to specific persons or things. Often, they do not have antecedents. They include *all, each, one, any, anybody, everybody, both, few, none, no one, someone, somebody, several* etc. Examples in sentences:

1. All the students were present.
2. Everybody knew he was telling lies.
3. Each has its advantage.
4. Doesn't something look suspicious here?
5. Somebody wants to see you.

**“Someone”, “no one”, and “somebody” are used in positive statements.** Examples:

1. I saw someone in the room.
2. There is no one in the room.

**“Anyone” and “anybody” are used in negative statements and questions.**

Examples:

1. I didn't see anybody in the room.
2. They didn't see anyone in the market.
3. Is there anybody in the room?

All the definite pronouns that end with “one” and “body” (someone, somebody) are always singular and therefore require singular form of the verb. Examples:

1. Everyone knows Aisha.
2. Nobody knows tomorrow.
3. somebody knows the answer.

**The plural forms are few, several, both, many, most, all.** Examples:

1. Several men were seen at the scene.
2. Few teachers are in school today.
3. Both lecturers are hardworking.
4. Many people in Ghana are unemployed.
5. Most of the men are not marriage materials.

The word all is an exception. It is used as singular when the noun that follows it is singular (money) and as plural when the noun after it is plural (monies) as shown in examples (vi) and (vii) above. Examples are as follows:

- i. All the money has been spent. [singular noun ;money...has]
- ii. All the monies have been spent.[plural noun; monies...have]



The following examples show that students committed errors in their use of indefinite pronouns. **4.1.5.1 Plural subjects with singular verbs**

1. Many of their sisters stays in Accra.
2. All workers complains about their salary.
3. Only a few students respects their teachers.
4. Many houses surrounds us.

#### ***4.1.5.2 Singular subject with plural verb***

Though the subjects of the above sentences are plural, students used the singular forms of the verbs instead to match them. The factor that may be responsible for this error is that teachers always teach indefinite pronouns citing examples with the singular types such as “someone”, “somebody”, “anybody” and “anyone” without laying emphasis on the types that have plural meanings. The students thus infer the construction of the singular types to the plural types in ignorance. Examples are:

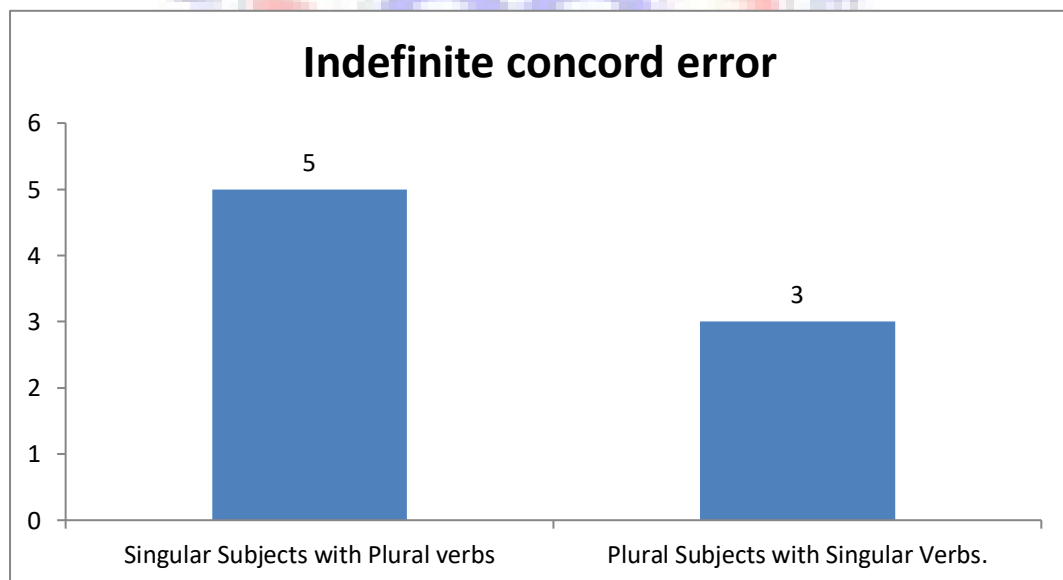
1. Everybody pray for good health.
2. Everybody *know* that Kofi was telling lies.
3. Nobody *like* to be a friend to poor people.
4. Somebody play drum in the community every morning

What made the sentences unacceptable here is that the verbs were not inflected with the plural marker [s] in order to agree with the plural sentences, hence the errors.

**Table 4.1.5: Indefinite Concord Errors**

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Singular Subjects with Plural verbs	5	62.5
Plural Subjects with Singular Verbs.	3	37.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>

The results shown in the table indicate the levels of problems the students have with the various concord rules in regard to the indefinite pronouns. It is obvious that they found it difficult using the singular and plural subjects with their appropriate verbs.

**Figure 4.1.5: Indefinite Concord Errors**

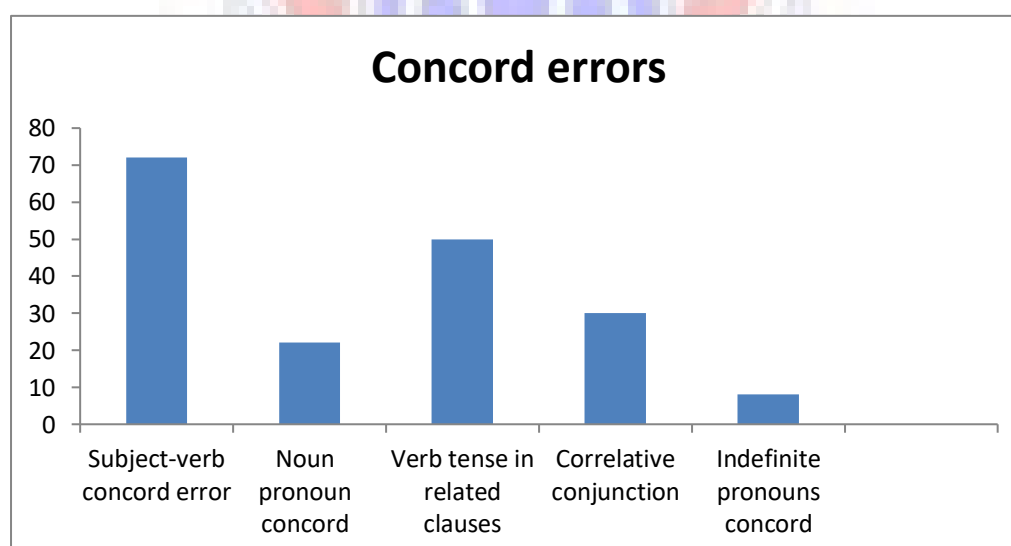
The bar chart above shows that errors have been committed by students in the use of the indefinite pronouns. Students could not use the plural and the singular forms of the indefinite pronouns to agree with the appropriate verbs. Similarly, Agorkpo

(2014) found that students cannot distinguish between plural and singular indefinite pronouns in sentences. They used each category with the wrong form of the verb.

**Table 4.1.6. Concord errors**

Type of Error	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%)
Subject-verb concord error	72	39.5
Noun pronoun concord	22	12.1
Verb tense in related clauses	50	27.5
Correlative conjunction	30	16.5
Indefinite pronouns concord	8	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.1.6 shows the summary of the errors made by students in the various aspects of concord discussed in this write up. This is further shown in the bar chart below.



**Figure 4.1.6: Concord Errors**

Figure 4.1.6 represents the summary of the types of concord errors identified on the table. Subject verb concord errors recorded the highest error which is 72 cases representing 39.5%. This error may come about as a result of overgeneralization of

English Language rules. Verb Tense in related clauses concord errors totalled to 50. The second highest error on the chart represents 27%. This error may be due to inability of students to internalise the golden rules of subject verb agreement. They used simplification as their last resort by applying any rules they know concerning subject verb agreement and ending up constructing wrong sentences. Correlative conjunction concord errors is the third highest recorded on the is 30 representing 16.5 %. This clearly shows that they could not identify the appropriate conjunction with their corresponding verbs. They only used intralingual language transfer to substitute the rule. However the frequencies of noun-pronoun concord and indefinite pronoun concords are 22 and 8 representing the percentage of 12.1 and 4.4 respectively.

## **4.2 Causes of Students' Errors**

So many factors account for the errors students commit in concord when learning English Language as a second language. The source of these errors can be traced to developmental, intralingua, teaching methods and interlingual transfer.

### **4.2.1 *Developmental and intralingual errors***

These types of errors occur during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the learners have not fully acquired the knowledge of grammar in the language. The learner tries to form a hypothesis based on the few experiences he/she has in the use of other items in the second language. The learner ends up making structures that do not conform to the rules of concord in the second language. The intralingual and developmental errors are due to the difficulty of the second or target language. The intralingual and developmental factors include:

#### ***4.2.1.1 Simplification***

This is where learners often choose simple forms and constructions instead of more complex ones.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Over-generalization***

This is the use of one form of construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. Examples of generalization include the use of comed\* and goed\* as the past tense form of “come” and “go” respectively. It should be noted that simplification and generalization are used by learners in order to reduce their linguistic burden. The students committed errors in subject-verb agreement by using singular subject with plural forms of the verbs in the following sentences:

1. The teacher teach\* us on Saturdays.
2. My mother sell\* in the market.
3. She wake\* up early to sweep the compound.
4. My father work\* on the farm.

The students used singular subject with plural verbs in the above sentences which are concord errors. Touchie (1983) describes this error as intralingual error. Students have not yet developed the knowledge about this rule very well so they tend to extend the rules they learnt in other contexts. Another source of error that commonly occurs in the language of a second language learner is the interlingual transfer. This error occurs as a result of language transfer. It is caused by native language influence, the L1 (Brown, 2007; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Richards, 1993). Learners try to use items from their mother tongues or any language learnt previously as they do not have knowledge about the appropriate item they need to use in the second language. They normally use the items from the first language as their last resort in order to communicate the message they want to put across. So, interlingual transfer is the only

means they can fall on as they can. Gass and Selinker (1994) also attest to this fact. In this study, students committed interlingual error in using indefinite pronoun (subject) verb concord. Indefinite pronouns that have plural meanings were used with singular verbs in the following sentences.

1. All the workers complains about their salary.
2. Most of my sisters stays in Accra.
3. Only a few students respects their teachers.

These errors occurred because the students do not have enough knowledge about this kind of agreement in the second language. The only strategy they could use was the knowledge acquired in their mother tongue. But the problem is, the structure they know in their mother tongues does not coincide with those in the second language, hence an error.

The following examples in Ewe illustrate this:

1. *Amewo vana. (People come.)*
2. *Ama vana (Ama comes)*

The verb **va** 'come' agrees with both singular and plural nouns in Ewe language. But this is not so in English. So, as the students were tempted to use this rule, they ended up committing error.

#### **4.2.3 The context of learning**

Teacher's method of teaching and the teaching and learning materials they use for teaching can also make students commit error. Sometimes, the teaching method the teacher uses in teaching affects the students' understanding either negatively or positively. If the method the teacher is using is learner centred, students will be able to acquire the intended concept easily. On the other hand, if inappropriate method and instructional materials are used, learning may take place partially or not at all. This is

what results in errors by the students since they do not fully understand the concept being taught, hence application becomes erroneous. Taylor (1975) asserts that teacher's wrong teaching methods and materials can also make students commit errors. It further indicates that teacher's ignorance about structures and words in a text can also cause misunderstanding, hence the errors.

#### **4.2.4 Summary of concord errors**

The concord errors committed by form two students of Shia S.H. S in both their essay scripts and exercises are analysed in this chapter. The types of concord errors they committed were realised from the results of the findings taken from their scripts. The students committed five types of concord errors: subject- verb concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors verb-tense in related clauses concord errors Indefinite pronouns and correlative conjunction concord errors. The chapter also indicates the causes of the errors in the students' scripts. These include, wrong teaching method, on the part of the teacher, lack of practice on the part of the students, intralingua and developmental and interlingual transfer.

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the analysis of students' scripts and exercises. It also shows the types of errors students committed and their causes. Five types of errors have been identified in the scripts of form 2 students of Shia Senior High Technical School in Ho. When the errors were grouped, it was realised that 72 was subject-verb concord error; 22 was noun-pronoun concord errors; 50 Verb tense in related clauses errors; 8 was indefinite pronouns concord errors and 30 was correlative conjunction concord. The next chapter presents the summary of the study, suggestions and recommendation for any further study on this topic.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

That form 2c students of Shia Senior High Technical School have acute concord problem with the English Language cannot be overstated. Apparently, students commit errors in both their oral and written exercises. This was evident in their grammar exercises that the researcher checked and their essay scripts that she marked. After the researcher had found these problems, she did investigation to find the causes in order to help them overcome the challenges. The types of concord that they have the problem with had been identified as they were given an essay topic [What I do on Saturdays] to write on.

#### 5.1 Findings

The followings have been identified as the causes of the problem facing the students. The teachers' teaching method is one of the causes for students' problems. Teacher-centred method of teaching is used where students are not allowed to explore and discover rules by themselves. This makes them learn only the structure of the Language but when it comes to using it they become handicap since they cannot apply the rules without the help of the teacher who they always depend on. Also teachers do not understand the first language of their students. This language barrier hinders them from identifying students' problems. They lack the knowledge of the structure of their students' Language. So, they cannot actually identify what the cause of their problem is. Moreover teachers always teach to please their Headmasters Stakeholders and Students. They therefore, do the teach to the text kind of teaching just to prepare their

students to pass examinations .They virtually forget about the fact that students need to use the Language in and outside the classroom.

Students are also the cause of their problem .They always want the shortcut ways of learning the rules. Since they find it difficult to understand their teachers, they always fall on any rule that seems similar to situations they find themselves.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The roles English Language play in the lives of students are many .Students do not need the English Language to pass examination a lone they also need it to function as an individual in the society more especially in the larger societies which have now become a global world .So students need to understand the concord in order to become competent in speaking the Language. For this to be done, teachers must understand the structure of their students' Language for that matter the Language so as to be able to help them. Not only must they be conversant with their structure but also, they must use the appropriate teaching methods focusing on the Communicative Language Teaching Method as a Language teacher by allowing the students to explore and discover the rules by themselves, as they [teachers] serve as facilitators and supervisors. Finally, students must also make sure that they always apply the rules they learnt to new situations so as to become used to them.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

Too many instances of violation of concord rules by students of Shia Senior High Technical School were what prompted the researcher to undertake this study. She tried and identified the problem. She also brought to light some of the causes responsible for them. The causes were explained and she made recommendations that will assist them in solving them. The researcher believes that this recommendation is

the best choice for the teachers and students of Shia Senior High Technical School to overcome their concord challenges.



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## APPENDIX

