

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**CONCORD PROBLEMS IN THE WRITINGS OF STUDENTS: A CASE
STUDY OF BASIC 7 STUDENTS OF BULINGA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
IN THE BAWKU WEST DISTRICT OF THE UPPER EAST REGION OF
GHANA.**

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**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, FACULTY
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF EDUCATION
(TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE-TESL) DEGREE.**

AUGUST, 2019

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR:.....

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents: **Mr. Azologo Abugbilla (late) and Mrs. Abugbilla Apantuaba**, in appreciation of their relentless efforts in raising me this far even when the odds against it seemed high. God's blessings remain theirs forever and ever. Amen.



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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study that analyzed common concord errors in the written essays of Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The data used for the analysis comprised pupils' written essays. From this, a total of 153 errors were identified. Seven error types were identified and they include: Subject verb concord errors, Determiner nouns concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, Noun pronoun concord errors, Inverted subject concord errors, Verb-verb concord errors and Construction with more than one concord errors. From this, subject verb concord errors had the highest frequency with errors on coordinated subject concord and inverted subject concord being the lowest. Based on the findings of the study, causes of errors in learners' writing could be traced to lots of concord rules, overgeneralization, hypercorrection, context of learning, Lack of practice, Inappropriate teaching methods used by some teachers, Language transfer- interlingual and intralingual, ignorance of rule restrictions. Some suggestions are made to various stakeholders to ensure effective teaching and learning of the English Language in basic schools.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

The major aim of teaching is to make learners proficient in all the basic language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. As Brown (2000) puts it, in order to master the English language, learners have to be adequately exposed to all the four basic skills. To achieve this aim, the English Language components of vocabulary, structure, pronunciation and spelling need to be taught right from the lower level of education. Presently, English language is an international language and it is used as the language of international relations, and in exchanging knowledge and technology. It is the medium of communication at all official gatherings. For this reason, it becomes necessary for anyone aspiring to any official position or dreaming to join the formal sector in the country to learn to be able to use Standard English language.

In Ghana, English is used as the official language and medium of instruction in schools. In the basic schools, English is taught as a subject in the lower primary and the first language (L1) is used as the medium of instruction. The target language is rather used as a medium of instruction when the child gets to the upper primary which begins from primary four. Though the child is taught some components of the target language at the lower primary, she/he still experiences some problems due to the sudden switch from the L1 as medium of instruction to the L2 and the most difficult aspect is writing in the target language.

Writing is a highly complex task and performing this task in the second language (L2) makes it even more complicated as it requires sufficient command to fulfil all formalities; composing and developing logical ideas which are essential for a

written text to be meaningful and understandable (Sarfaz, 2011). To this effect, the contents of the English language syllabus designed for instruction entails four major aspects namely; listening and speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Writing is more complex and complicated especially when it is done in the second language since the L1 interferes greatly when producing a piece of writing in the target language. It is being argued that the impact of the first language of learners' English is heavily felt whenever they write in the English language (Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002).

In Basic 7, "the learner should be able to develop and apply the skills of good handwriting and use writing skills to communicate his/her ideas appropriately" (MOES, 2007, p. 41). But many stakeholders, especially teachers, keep complaining about the poor level of pupils' academic performance which is evident in their written exercises, in all subjects. Pupils commit a lot of errors in their writing and this affects their performance. These errors seem to occur due to several factors. In most Ghanaian primary schools, a teacher is assigned to a class to teach all subjects, including the English language, whether or not the teacher's knowledge the teacher has specialized in it.

Bulinga Basic School is situated in a homogeneous community, Bulinga, a suburb of Binaba in the Upper East Region, where English is scarcely spoken. The dominant language spoken in the community is Kusaal. Most parents in the community are farmers and traders who have not received formal education. Pupils speak their local language both in and outside the classroom and even use it to answer questions during lessons. Moreover, library facilities which could have aided pupils to read wide in order to acquire enough vocabulary for good writing is absent in the school, the community and even in the district- Bawku west district. Also, most pupils do not have access to

electricity in their homes to enable them read pieces that are given them by their teachers as extra class assignment. Again, most teachers in the school lack knowledge of the English content but are supposed to teach it since they have been assigned the subject, as mentioned earlier. What then will be the outcome of pupils' language as they write? It is in light of this that the current study seeks to analyze the common errors basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School of the Bawku West District in the Upper East Region, commit in their English Essays.

1.1 Statement of the problem

It has been observed that pupils of Bulinga Basic School face some difficulties in constructing simple and meaningful sentences. This reflects in their written essays and exercises where they constantly make concord errors such as subject verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, construction with more than one concord errors, including wrong use of punctuations, tenses, articles, and even spellings. It has therefore become difficult for teachers to read their scripts, let alone make meaning of their writings. This goes a long way to affect their performance in class exercises, tests and examinations, and later their promotion since they are always marked down due to these errors which most teachers rather see as mistakes.

It is also realized that no free writing is done in the classroom unless it is a composition lesson. As said earlier, library facilities which could have motivated pupils to read wide to enable them acquire enough vocabulary for good writing is absent in the school and in the community. Teachers do not allow pupils to use the text books, if there is any at all, unless it is time for lessons. Pupils seem to commit errors in all aspect

of the target language. They usually face difficulties in learning the target language aspects such as concord (subject-verb agreement), spellings, the use of articles, and punctuation. Kahn (2005), in a study, investigated errors of 30 form five Malaysian students and found out that the students were weak in grammar. It is believed that learning a second/foreign language is a gradual process, during which errors are made in all levels of learning. However, the use of Error Analysis and appropriate corrective measures can help effective teaching and learning of English language.

Presada and Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They confirmed that Error Analysis (EA) could lessen the number of errors in their students' work. Errors play an important role in learning a second/foreign language; from these, teachers can determine the level of mastery of language among their students and discover what they still have to learn, unlearn, or relearn. It is important for teachers to recognize the errors that their students commit, because they would have the opportunity to understand the different processes through which these errors are caused. These include borrowing patterns from the mother tongue, extending patterns from the target language, and expressing meanings using words and grammar which are already known (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). In order to better investigate the errors that students commit, teachers and researchers examine the types of errors that learners make and identify the frequency at which these errors appear in the writings of the students. According to Corder (1974) systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching.

Although errors are seen as a part of the teaching and learning process, it is also significant for teachers to realize that if the errors are not identified and remedied, they may become problematic. For example, in an era in Ghana where students are expected to pass English language before they can gain admission to institutions of higher learning, a fail can prevent them from continuing their education. Several factors can be identified as contributing to the student failing English, and errors have been found to contribute significantly. Where errors appear to overtake one's writing, reading becomes somewhat difficult for the examiner.

Thus far, there has not been any such study in relation to the errors that pupils of Bulinga Basic School commit, although such information would go a long way to expose the teacher to the types and causes of errors that are seen in their writings. In view of this, the present study focuses on analyzing the common concord errors that Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School commit in their English writings, the causes of these errors and their implications in the teaching of English language in the school since knowing the sources of learners' errors is an effective way to help reduce them (Bennui, 2008; Penny, 2001).

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to identify the common concord errors basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School commit in their writings. It analyzes and discusses the causes of the concord errors as well as the implications of the findings, and makes necessary suggestions to both teachers and learners to help solve the problem identified.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to identify the common concord errors Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School commit in their writings;
2. to discuss the causes of the concord errors found;

1.4 Research questions

The study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the common concord errors that occur in the English writings of Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School?
2. What are the causes of these concord errors?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of the study are significant for several reasons. First, it creates awareness in language teachers, about the kinds of concord errors basic school pupils make in their essays, as well as the sources of these errors. Secondly, it enlightens language teachers on the role error plays in the language acquisition process. Again, the findings of this study reveal to language teachers, aspects of the subject that need more attention in order to devise the appropriate remediation to help pupils out. The results help pupils to identify and correct their own errors with time. In addition, the findings of the study provide language curriculum planners with enough input on how to design appropriate language programs and resources for the basic school. Finally the results serve as a source of reference and add to knowledge on concord errors in Ghana and beyond.

1.6 Delimitation

The study concentrates on the concord errors that Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School commit in their English writings. The study also looked at the causes of

the concord errors and their implication on the teaching and learning of English language.

1.7 Limitations

This study is limited to only the Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School. It is also limited to the Bawku West District in the Upper East Region and its findings cannot be generalized to all Ghanaian pupils. Due to the level of the pupils, the written essays were conducted within the normal instructional hours so it was always difficult to get enough time since the researcher needed to go by the school's time table. Some pupils were also reluctant to submit their scripts on schedule and this somehow delayed the data collection process. Also, due to financial and time constraints, the study could not focus on the entire school, but limited to only the basic 7 pupils of the school

1.8 Organization of the study

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 reviews related literature on the study. This focuses on theoretical views that are closely relevant to concord errors. It includes what constitutes an error, the concept of concord errors, sources of concord errors, the significance of errors and related studies. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology adopted for the study. In this chapter, the instruments and sampling technique used for the study, as well as data analysis, are discussed. The results of the study are discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis revealed that pupils committed subject verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, and construction with more than one concord errors. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the study. This includes the summary of findings

of the study, the pedagogical implications, as well as suggestions for future research study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the concept of concord errors and the types of concord errors. It also discusses the importance of errors in second language learning. The causes of concord errors and their categorization are also discussed. The chapter finally ends with a discussion on approaches to studying errors as well as related studies on errors in second language acquisition.

2.1 The concept of errors

In language study, errors can be termed as the deviation from the norms or rules of a language. Brown (1994) defines linguistic errors as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. For Burt, Duley and Krashen (1982), errors are the flawed side of a learner's speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norms of mature language performance. Errors are studied in order to identify the learning process and the strategies employed in learning another language (Lungu, 2003). The definitions by Brown and Burt et al differ from that of Corder (1981), who defines an error in the context of the effectiveness of the utterances made by language users. Corder (1971) identifies what he calls covertly idiosyncratic and overtly idiosyncratic errors. The former refers to flaws in utterances that are grammatical but do not clearly convey the speaker's intended meaning. Overtly idiosyncratic errors on the other hand, occur in sentences that appear to be ill-formed but whose meaning is transparent to the listeners. Corder's provision of these broad error categories was preceded by that of Burt and Kiparsky (1972). They classified errors in terms of whether they were "global" or "local". Global errors can be

considered synonymous with what Corder refers to as covertly idiosyncratic errors while local errors, on the other hand, are synonymous with overtly idiosyncratic ones.

As indicated by Maicusi and Maicusi (2000), in the language learning process, errors have always been regarded negatively, and must be avoided. As a result, they contend that teachers tend to show a suppressive attitude to their students. On one hand, errors are considered as a failure of teaching process and on the other hand, they are seen as a natural result that can hardly be avoided, so we should deal and learn from them. Therefore, errors can be a very helpful means in learning a second language as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 61) explain, learners' errors are significant in three ways. (1) They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered; (2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and (3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on

2.2 Concord errors in English

Various authors have given different authoritative definitions of concord in Grammar. According to Crystal (1988), concord or agreement is a way of showing that two grammatical units have a certain feature in common. Thus, if the subject is singular the verb must also be singular. For example,

- i. My brother has a beautiful dog.
 - a. Singular subject Singular verb.
- ii. My brothers have beautiful dogs
 - b. Plural subject Plural verb

Crystal (1988) holds the view that the most important is the third person rule for verbs in the present tense, which states that singular subjects take singular verbs. Quirk and Greenbaum (2000, p. 176), define concord as “the relationship that exists between two grammatical elements such that if one contains a particular feature, the other must also have that feature”. They further note that “the most important type of concord in English is concord of number between subject and verb” (p. 176). Quirk et al (1985, p. 755) define concord as “the relationship between two grammatical units such that one of them displays a particular feature (e.g. plurality) that accords with a displayed (or semantically implicit) feature in the other”.

Afolayan and Newman (1983) as cited in Arthur (2009), draw attention to the fact that the term concord is used to describe the relationship between the inflectional forms of different elements within a sentence. Mark and Kirsten (2011) explain that concord or agreement occurs when one element in a sentence takes the morphosyntactic features of another element. Morphosyntactic involves both morphology and syntax. All the definitions cited above imply that if a grammatical unit possesses a feature, for example, a plural noun, that plurality feature of the noun should be matched correctly with the verb.

2.3 Types of concord errors

Concord errors found in second language learners’ writing are analyzed based on the principles governing their usage and categorized into various types as follows:

2.3.1 Subject verb concord errors

Wiredu (1999) defines Subject verb (grammatical) concord as the relationship that exists between the subject of a clause and its accompanying verb. Hornsby (2002) describes grammatical concord as the fact of having the same number, gender or person.

Ogunsonwo (1993) is also of the view that it is important to note that the form of the verb required in a sentence depends on the nature of its subject. He indicates that the verb agrees with its subject in number and in person. Subject-verb concord is generally defined as formal agreement between different sentence constituents. Quirk et al (1985) make a distinction between two types of concord:

- a) Notional and
- b) Proximity

According to Quirk et al, the most important type of concord in English is Subject-Verb concord which involves, mainly, number, and or person. In English, syntactic concord is established between the central constituent of the number phrase subject, typically the noun head and the initial constituent of the verb phrase, predicator. Also, it involves a distinction between 3rd person singular number present tense verb form and non-3rd person singular number present tense verb form.

[My son] [sweeps] every morning.

NP/Subj. VP/Pdctor

As Quirk et al explain, that there is a basic rule to follow: a singular subject takes a singular verb as in *The boy dresses well* and plural subject takes a plural verb, as in *The boy and the girl dress well*. They treat the following as singular subjects which attract singular verb forms.

- a. A clause that is in the position of a subject counts as singular for the purpose of concord. Observe the following;
 - i. To speak harshly to your elders shows disrespect.
 - ii. Absenting yourself from lectures attracts queries.
- b. Singular subjects followed by intervening expressions like ‘with’ or ‘together with’, ‘including’ etc. take singular verbs

- i. The headmaster, together with his teachers has met the Education minister.
- ii. The president as well as the first lady, his wife was in Winneba yesterday.
- c. Finite and non-finite clauses generally count as singular;
 - i. How you get there does not concern me.
 - ii. Smoking cigarette is dangerous to your health
- d. Prepositional phrases and verbs functioning as subject also count as singular:
 - i. In the evening is good for me
 - ii. On the road side serves it well.

The second part of grammatical concord states that a plural subject attracts or takes a plural verb. Swan (1984) agrees with the above assertion that verbs form change according to whether the subject is first, second or third person. What he meant by person is that a subject can be of the first, second or third person. Hence, a singular subject must be paired with a singular verb and a plural subject must be paired with a plural verb. The following are examples:

- a. Water does mix well with gari
- b. A man, his son and a dog go to the farm every morning
- c. The teacher, his pupil and the circuit supervisor walk to the party.

Aarts (2001) makes a generalization that subjects of sentences are usually nouns, noun phrases or pronouns. Subjects are obligatory and they determine the form of the verb. A careful teaching of how subjects are realized in English sentences will help students to select appropriate verbs for their sentences.

2.3.2 Proximity concord

The principle of 'proximity' also termed as 'attraction' denotes agreement of the verb with a closely preceding noun phrase in reference to agreement with the noun phrases that function as subject (Quirk et al, 2005). The proximity concord may be

extended to mean that concord is determined by whatever immediately precedes the verb. In other words, it is the position of the subject which normally determines the concord. Wiredu (1999, p. 113) has the same view that *proximity concord* refers to the agreement between a subject and its verb based not on notion but on the fact that there is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. That is, grammatical concord is established between these elements instead of the normal formal agreement with the head of the noun phrase/subject (NP/Subj). Below are examples:

- i. Either the driver or his mates collect money
- ii. Neither he nor she writes well

In the above sentences, the predicators or verbs “collect” and “writes” have two or more alternative subjects, linked by “or” or “nor”. This should agree with the subject that precedes it. Thus, “collect” and “writes” agree with his “mates” and “she” respectively. On the other hand, where the alternative subjects are of the same person and number, the verb can be common to them as in:

- i. Either the teacher or a student performs the experiment.
- ii. Neither the girls nor their mothers sweep the house.

In agreement with this rule, Sekyi-Baidoo (2000, p. 483) states that two singular nouns joined by the correlatives; either...or, neither....nor, not...but, take a singular verb, the verb however agrees with the noun nearest to it when one of them is plural as in;

- i. Either the children or the woman wants the television.
- ii. Neither the woman nor the children want the television.

Yankson (1994) defines proximity concord as “the verb agreeing with the noun immediately preceding it in a sentence.” For example; the reasons for its fall in these areas are not known.

According to Sidney (1990, p. 215), proximity concord “denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrases.”

2.3.3 Pronoun-antecedent concord

A pronoun typically restates a noun, called its antecedent; it must agree with its antecedent in gender and number as opined by (Wiredu, 1999) who states that pronoun antecedent refers to the agreement which exists between a pronoun and the noun it refers to. The agreement here involves three major features associated with pronouns. These are number, person and gender. That is pronouns in English generally display distinctions in terms of;

- i. Number... whether it is singular or plural
- ii. Person ... whether it is first, second or third person
- iii. Gender... whether masculine, feminine or non-human.

Freeborn (1987) refers to pronouns as co-referential of nouns and when linked should agree with their antecedents so that it will be possible to associate them with the nouns in whose place they occur or perform. Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) buttresses this by proposing that since pronouns are pro-forms which are used in place of nouns, there is every reason they should agree with their antecedents so that it will be possible for us to associate them with these nouns in whose place they perform. Consider the following examples;

- i. George planted a palm tree on his farm.
- ii. The women have gone to their farms.
- iii. The hen protects its chicks.

Oluikpe (1981) comments on pronoun antecedent agreement that a pronoun must agree in number, gender and case with its antecedent. By number, he means the subject can be singular or plural, while “person”, according to him, can be seen as a relationship between the speaker and what he is speaking about. If the speaker speaks to himself, we refer to it as the first person. The first person is associated with the pronoun “I” and “We”. The person he speaks to is the second person which has a general meaning of “you”. The “third” person is the one talked about and it is associated with the pronouns “he”, “she”, “it” and “they”. “He”, “She”, “It” and “I” have singular reference. “We” and “they” have plural reference, while “you” may refer to singular or plural. It can be concluded after having discussed the above types of concord; grammatical concord, proximity concord and pronoun antecedent concord, that the principles governing their usage share in the following general rules of concord. If the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree, that sentence is considered ungrammatical. We, therefore, speak of errors in agreement of faulty agreement. To avoid this we must adhere to the rules of concord. Brown (2009, p. 134) states the following rules of concord;

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

Examples are:

- i. The book is on the table.
- ii. The books are on the table.

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. The vice-chancellor, as well as his staff, is hard-working.
 - ii. Dr. Abdulai, together with other lecturers in her department, is here.
 - iii. The course representative, accompanied by the students, has arrived.
- b. Indefinite pronouns such as everyone, everybody, somebody, take singular verbs. Examples;

- i. Everyone is to blame
- ii. Someone has arrived
- iii. Everybody dislikes cheating

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

- i. Each of the students owns a car
 - ii. One of the teachers appears lazy
 - iii. More than one student has complained about her laziness
- c. When two or more subjects are joined by “and” and refers to the same person or thing, the verb is in the singular. However, compound subjects referring to two different people or things take plural verbs. Examples;

- i. His brother and sponsor was there to help him.
- ii. The president and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces has arrived.
- iii. A dog and a cat are seldom friends.
- iv. The man and his wife have come

d. When two subjects (a compound subject) refer to the same thing or is thought of as a simple idea or a unit, a singular verb is used. Examples:

- i. Gari and beans is my favorite dish.
- ii. Rice and stew tastes delicious.
- iii. Bread and butter is a snack that is easy to prepare.

e. Some nouns appear plural in form but are singular in meaning and therefore take singular verbs. Examples:

- i. The United Nations has its headquarters in New York.
- ii. Economics is an interesting subject
- iii. The sports news was aired an hour ago.

Other words that are always in the singular form include; information, music, advice, United States, evidence, aid, research, phonetics, semantics, physics, furniture, luggage, equipment, knowledge, stationary, mathematics etc.

f. When singular subjects are joined by “not only but also”, “neither...nor”, “either...or”, the verb is in the singular. Example:

- i. Not only the vice president but also his wife was present at the meeting.
- ii. Either the teacher or the class prefect is expected to attend the meeting.
- iii. Neither the boy nor his father has eaten.

However, if the subjects differ in number (that is, one subject is in the singular and the other is in the plural), the verb agrees with the subject (noun) nearer to it. For example,

- i. Either the students or the teacher has to be present.
- ii. Neither the teacher nor the students seem lazy.

g. A collection noun takes a singular verb when the group is regarded as one unit.

But a collective noun takes a plural verb when emphasis is placed on the individual members of the group; that is, the individual members of the group are acting separately. Consider the following examples:

- i. The audience were arriving. (individually).
- ii. The audience was clapping (together).
- iii. The committee are unable to agree on the matter (individually).
- iv. The committee is meeting today (together)

h. A demonstrative adjective (such as this, that, these, those) must agree in number with the noun it modifies. Examples are;

- i. That kind of music is out of date.
- ii. Those kind of cars are in high demand.

Nouns (subjects) that are always regarded as plural verbs are police, people, and cattle. Etc.

- i. The cattle look healthy.
- ii. The police are hard-working
- iii. The people of Bauchi State love their culture

2.3.4 Determiner-noun concord errors

According to Downing and Locke (2006), English obliges us to make a distinction with regards to how a referent is cognitively perceived: whether as a discrete, countable entity such as stone or as an individual, non-countable 'mass' entity, such as sheep. This difference constitutes a feature which is salient in speakers' experience of 'things'. Other languages make a count-mass distinction, but we must not assume that particular items are conceptualized or lexicalized in the same way in different languages. News, for example, is a singular mass noun in English language, (the news is good) *one news, *a news, *many news are ungrammatical.

2.3.4.1 Count-nouns

This is basically one whose referent can be counted, as in one cow, two cows but not *one sheep, *two sheeps. The referents of these nouns are viewed as individuated in things or in persons. The following count nouns include both regular plurals in -s or invariable or 'zero' plurals: 5 cyclists, 3 trouts, a dozen eggs, three new television series, 7 minutes, 4 salmon, 3 crossroads, five and a half kilos, a hundred

sheep, two US aircraft, five spacecraft. Countable nouns are nouns that can be quantified in units and in numbers; that means they can be counted.

2.3.4.2 Non-count nouns

This is one whose referent is cognitively perceived as not countable. We don't therefore say, for example, three furniture, two luggages. Both *furniture* and *luggage*, as well as *news*, can be individuated by a preceding counter- 'a piece of'. Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be quantified in units and numbers.

2.3.5 Coordinated–subject concord errors

Concord with subordinated subject has been discussed by Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) as a process where equivalent units are linked by 'and', 'or', 'but'. They further explain that it may occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements, words. coordinating with 'and', coordination with a 'singular subject and coordination with 'or' and 'nor'.

2.3.6 Noun-pronoun concord errors

Like a machine, for a sentence to be grammatically correct, all its parts should agree with one another. When a pronoun is used to refer to a noun used, there must be an agreement. A pronoun which refers to a singular noun phrase is in singular, and a pronoun which refers to a plural phrase is in plural, (Leech & Startvik, 2002). For example,

1. He goes to his work place
2. They go to their work place

A pronoun is generally defined as a word which can replace a noun. The definition may be considered appropriate at the basic level where the learners are studying mainly words or the parts of speech. However at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High

School (SHS) levels, where phrases and clauses are taught, the definition must change accordingly. Hence, the pronoun may be defined as a word that can replace a noun or a noun phrase. Wiredu (1999) also defines pronouns as words which are used to replace a noun, especially where we do not want to repeat that noun.

2.3.6.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

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

Examples:

1. Atinga goes to Winneba (He goes to Winneba)
2. Alale exercises everyday (She exercises everyday)
3. The dog hunts on Fridays (It hunts on Friday)

2.3.6.2 A pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase

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

1. Atinga and Gilbert do their exercise (They do their exercise)
2. The head teacher and his staff go for their salary (They go for their salary)
3. Students do not want studies (They do not want studies)
4. A smart phone does not like water (It does not like water)

2.3.7 Inverted subject-verb concord errors

Downing and Locke (2006, p 44) explain that this type of concord involves sentences whose subjects are interrogative pronoun, the adverbial *here*, or the unstressed existential *there*. Interrogative pronouns include *what*, *which*, *who*, and *whose*. If an interrogative pronoun, the adverbial *here* or 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. Therefore, if the noun or the noun phrase that follows is singular, the verb must be singular and the vice versa. For example,

- i. Who is your favorite author?
- ii. Here lies the oak tree.
- iii. What were the reasons for his actions?
- iv. There is no girl in the classroom.
- v. There are no girls in the classroom.

2.4 Causes of concord errors

It is very essential to know the source of errors learners commit in their writing because it helps the teacher to provide the appropriate remediation. Though knowing the source of an error is essential in language teaching, there is not a generalized agreement on the sources by researchers. For instance, errors may emanate from first language (L1) habits, psychological state of the learner, teaching methods, styles of course materials and introduction of written language. In the opinion of Touchie (1989), language learning errors consist of components like phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic. Brown (2002) classifies second language error sources into two main categories. These are L1 interference and intralingual and developmental factors. The intralingual and developmental errors are subdivided into simplification, overgeneralization, hypercorrection and faulty teaching. Other subcategories are fossilization, avoidance, inadequate learning and false concepts hypothesized.

In another development, Richards (1971) categorizes sources of second language errors into three which include interference errors, intralingual errors and developmental errors to build up hypotheses. According to Richards, intralingual errors can be broken into overgeneralization, ignorance of rules, incomplete application of

rules and false hypothesis. As a result of criticisms from Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977), Richards combined intralingual errors and developmental errors into one and states that two major sources of errors are interlingual errors and intralingual errors. For him, the first refers to errors caused when learners wrongly transfer the rules of their first language to the target language as they produce sentences.

The second one is caused during the learners' language learning process and such errors include overgeneralization and false analogy. Heydari and Bagheri (2012) also suggest that interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer are the two main sources of errors committed by English learners. Based on her study, Penny (2001) also concludes that there are two sources of language errors namely interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Likewise, Kaweera (2013) argues that interlingual interference and intralingual interference are the two major sources of errors in language learning. He explains interlingual transfer error as negative transfer of the learner's first language while intralingual involves errors caused by the learner's incomplete knowledge of the target language. Besides, Hinno (2004) differently proposes that there are three sources of errors which are negative transfer of the mother tongue, limited knowledge of the target language and the difference between words and sentence structures of the mother tongue and those of the target language. Finally, James (1998, p. 178) identifies the following as sources of second language errors: interference errors or interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, communication strategy-based errors and induced errors. These causes are explained in the following sections:

2.4.1 Interlingual transfer

Interlingual transfer mostly occurs when one is learning a second language. Here, the second language learner frequently transfers L1 structures to the L2. When

this happens, the second language learner produces what Latiff and Bakar (2007) term as interlanguage; the language produced by second language learners or foreign language learners in the process of learning a target language. Such transfer can be either positive or negative. Positive transfer leads to the facilitation of learning while negative transfer leads to error. Second language learners often write statements like I bought car (Mam dae loot) instead of I bought a car, omitting the article 'a'. This happens because theoretically, Kusaal is less marked with reference to the articles a/an. Hence, learners tend to ignore such articles in their L2 written production which is a direct transfer from their L1. Another example of the L1 transfer is He cook (budiminga do'aya) instead of He cooks. This is due to the fact that in Kusaal, there is no -s- marker in the third person singular which seem to be a grammatical error in the target language. The language teacher, if not familiar with the learner's native language, might not be able to detect and analyse such errors.

2.4.2 Intralingual transfer

Intralingual transfer is one within the target language itself. This occurs when learners begin to acquire new structures in the target language. As learners progress, their experiences begin to include structures in the target language. This causes negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization. Here students fail to apply the rules they have learnt in the target language correctly. Some of these causes by learning strategies include:

2.4.2.1 Fossilization

Sometimes a learner's grammatical development appears to have stopped at a certain level and recurring errors of both grammar and pronunciation have become permanent features of a learner's speech. This is referred to as fossilization. It consists

of the persistence of errors in a learner's speech despite progress in other areas of language development. Littlewood (1984) stresses that fossilization is most likely to occur when a learner realizes (subconsciously) that the error does not hinder him in satisfying his communicative needs (at the functional or social level). This is what Gass and Schacter (1989) refer to as a stage short of success as it is the stage when development ceases and even serious conscious efforts to change are often fruitless, and even if there might be some brief changes, those would just not take the learner anywhere as the learners always backslides to the stable state. Spada and Lightbown (1993) add that this lack of change happens even after extended exposure to or instruction in the target language. Brown (1994) indicates that this could a problem even with those who have otherwise learned the language quite well. For example,

1. I doesn't understand what she wanted.
2. He never ask me for help.

Errors due to fossilization such as those above tend not to affect comprehension although they might be stigmatized due to the fact that they often reflect errors that are typical of very basic-level learners (such as omission of 3rd person -s). It is therefore essential to discuss the global research findings on concord/subject verb agreement which will shed light on the complexity of the subject.

2.4.2.2 Incomplete rule application

This arises when the participants fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences. It involves learners failing to learn more complex types of structures since they think they can succeed effective communication by using relatively simple rules. This can be said to be the opposite of overgeneralization as the learners do not apply all the rules. They rather change or decrease the complicated rules

to simpler rules since they aim at simplification rather than attempt to get the whole complex structure. An example is seen in: *They showed me who their father instead of who their father is*. Here, learners have used a wh-element but have failed to invert the subject and the verb.

2.4.2.3 Overgeneralization

This covers the instances where the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structure of the target language. Nordquist (2010) defines overgeneralization as the application of a grammatical rule in the case where it does not apply. He further explains that it is part of the language-learning process in which children extend regular grammatical patterns to irregular words. Two of the examples of overgeneralization are:

a) When a learner adds a plural marker –s or –es on a noun which has a different plural formation as in:

1. Tooth – toothes/ tooths instead of (Tooth – teeth)
2. Equipment – equipments instead of (Equipment – equipment)

b) When a learner gives the past tense form of an irregular verb by adding –ed as in:

1. Teach – teached instead of (Teach – taught)
2. Buy – buyed instead of (Buy – bought)

This occurs when learners misuse words or grammatical rules. For instance, in the sentence: *The boy that came here*, the learner used a relative pronoun *that* instead of *who* and that is an error.

2.4.2.4 Simplification

This occurs when learners reduce a complex aspect of grammar to a much simpler set of rules and reflects a process that is used when messages need to be

conveyed with limited language resources. For example instead of making the distinction between “he” and “she” the learner may use the masculine pronoun even where the feminine ones would have been a requirement. This is because he does not take the pain to differentiate between genders by using different pronouns. At other times, instead of distinguishing between first and third person in verbs (“I like, she likes”), the learner may use the first person rule for all persons (“I like, He/ She like”). This is also because the learner sees it simple using what he is already familiar with and so does not offer different inflections with any of the different number of pronouns. Brown (1994) explains this type of an error as intralingual transfer and claims that it is evident once learners have begun to acquire parts of the new system of the target language. Ignorance of rule restriction, occurring as a result of failure to observe the restrictions or existing structures causes simplification

2.5 Importance of errors in language learning

Language learning, like any kind of human endeavour, involves committing errors. Previously, language teachers considered errors as something unacceptable which they try hard to prevent from occurring (Touchie, 1986). Most second language teachers also think that every error students commit should be corrected to make them excellent. In recent times, second language teachers and even first researchers in the area of applied linguistics have identified that errors are significant in language learning. They have noted that students’ errors are evidence of what they are learning and how they are learning. It makes language teachers aware of how learners acquire the second language. In effect, errors are no longer seen as nuisance in the classroom which should be terminated by all means but are seen as enhancing second language learning. For the learners themselves, errors can be regarded as a device that one uses in order to learn. Gass and Selinker (2001) define errors as ‘red flags’ that provide

evidence of the learners' knowledge of the second language. Selinker (1969, cited in Brown, 2002) has noted errors in two important ways.

First, errors make the language teacher aware of the progress of learners in the language learning process. Second, it gives language researchers an insight into how language is learnt and lastly, errors help language teachers to get involved in hypothesis testing to know whether what their students have learned is being used appropriately. This implies that errors in language learning have importance to the language learner, language researcher and the language. Richards (1971), from a linguistic, psycholinguistic and pedagogic perspective, observes that errors help us to discover what constitutes human intelligence, reveal the mental processes involved in language language, and help language teachers identify and analyse learners' errors and design appropriate ways of dealing with them.

2.6 Related studies

Various researchers such as Yankson (1994), Edu-Buandoh (1996), Agor (2003), Akrong, (2008), Arthur (2009), and Annor (2011) have studied errors of students. A research work which is closely related to the present work is that conducted by Yankson (1994) conducted a study aimed at increasing an awareness of the enormity of concord problems and helping both students and teachers to overcome these problems. The study was based on concord errors made by first year undergraduates of two West African universities. He was of the view that concord rule deviances reflect badly on the speaker's personality. His study provides the needed scientific empirical data that are reliable to help English language teachers at all levels in West Africa who seem to be operating in the dark. Yankson analysed the errors students make and

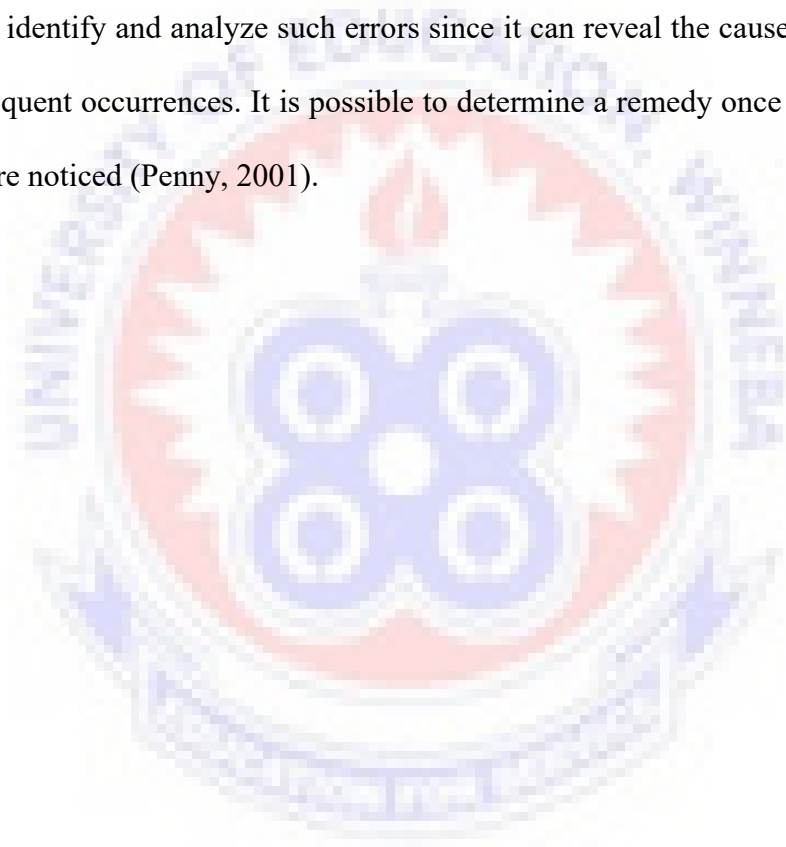
classified them into categories such as subject-verb concord errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors, and plural inflection concord errors.

Again, Oribabor (2006) studied concord errors in the written composition of JSS 3 pupils in some selected schools in the Abeokuta Local Government area. From this, he found that most of the pupils have problems in applying the rules of concord. He observed that this could be inferred that the pupils made concord errors of different types and few of them were able to write error-free essays. He further noted that most of the errors committed were under subject concord errors of number and persons. Based on his results, he recommended that much time should be devoted to concord errors by writers of grammar books for use in schools.

Finally, Quagie (2014) examined concord in the writings of students of a public university in Ghana. He found that although concord continues to pose problems to students, its teaching has not been foregrounded in Ghanaian institutions. This, according to him, was evident in the responses given by students to the questions asked on concord and the errors revealed in the marked essays scripts of students. He therefore argues that if concord was taught to include its various aspects using effective methods, the challenges that students encounter with its usage could be minimized. Following the discussions on the studies carried out by different researchers, it is clear that concord is an aspect of English grammar that cannot be glossed over. This is because it has proven to be the pivot around which English language revolves, hence the importance of this research with Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region of Ghana.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter deliberated on the concept of error and narrowed down specifically to the concept of concord errors. It also discussed the importance of errors in second language learning, the causes of errors as well as their categories. The chapter finally touched on some important related studies on concord errors in second language acquisition. The discussion shows that second language learners are bound to make errors (Myles, 2002). Error analysis can therefore be considered as one of the effective ways to identify and analyze such errors since it can reveal the causes of the errors of their frequent occurrences. It is possible to determine a remedy once the causes of the errors are noticed (Penny, 2001).



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

One important feature of any research work is the gathering of information which can be used to solve stated problems. To achieve this, systematic methods,

procedures and instruments of collecting data need to be adequately used. The accuracy of these processes determines, to a large extent, the validity and the reliability of the data collected. This chapter describes and explains the methodologies as well as the strategic measures employed in order to obtain the necessary information relevant for the study. Specific areas looked at include research design, population and sampling, research site, data collection, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

3.1 Research design

In order to ensure the success of an investigation, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher's determination of valid findings. A design, according to Punch (2005), is the strategic plan to structure the conduct of a research project. It encompasses the methodology and the procedures employed to conduct scientific research. To Adentwi 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. The success and validity of results of any investigation is based on the appropriateness of the research design used. Kader Parahoo (1997, p. 142) describes research design as "a plan that describes how, when, and where data are to be collected and analyzed research data". To investigate concord errors made by Bulinga Basic 7 and 8 pupils, a qualitative case study design was adopted to identify and interpret the concord errors in the students' written essays.

3.2 Population

Population is the entire group of individuals or objects having common observable characters. That is to say, the group has some common observable characteristics and each member can be identified as having these characteristics.

According to Castillo (2006), 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 individuals 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, institution which the research intends to study.

The population selected for this research work comprised students of Bulinga Junior High School. Since the study was limited to this school, it is useful to provide a description of the school, its geographical location, as well as its material and human endowments. The school is co-educational. It has a total population of about two hundred pupils at the Junior High School. The teaching staff at the Junior High level is made up of ten (10) teachers who teach different subjects. Outside of the school premises, learners are not exposed to spoken English, since no one usually speaks English in the vicinity, except the local language, Kusaal. The only exposure the learners get to English language is at school where English language is used as a medium of instruction. Even at school, learners find it difficult to get more practice in English since during English periods, a teacher of English either uses the mother tongue as a medium or code- switches by explaining challenging concepts in Kusaal. This being the case, it would have been ideal if all the students were included in the research.

However, the researcher decided to use Basic 7 and 8 students. The reason for selection is that, the first and second year students at the Junior High school department of the school have more years to complete school and this will pave the way for the researcher to spend more time with them by explaining the various methods and

strategies for understanding concord. Again, the researcher has been teaching core English language in the school for the past five (5) years. This undoubtedly enabled him to gather the required data with ease since he already knew some of the students' difficult areas regarding concord.

3.3 Sample and sampling technique

The main target population used for the study was Bulinga Junior High school in the Upper East Region of Ghana with a numerical strength of two hundred students comprising one hundred and twenty (120) girls and eighty (80) boys and a teaching staff of ten (10). Out of 10 teachers, three teach English Language. Purposive sampling technique was employed for selecting two (2) English teachers and hundred (100) students with an average age of thirteen (13) for the study. "Purposive sampling method is adopted when the respondents selected may be either judged to have certain characteristics Or more commonly those who are likely to provide the most useful information for the purpose for which the study is being done" (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1990, p. 100). The selected teachers are experienced teachers who have been teaching the subject for quite a long time and are also familiar with the students' problems as far as English Language is concerned. The researcher chose purposive sampling technique because the selected students are the people that could give the needed information he was looking for.

Table 3.3.1. A table showing the size of participants selected for the study

Respondents	Boys	Girls	Total Of Students
Students	40	60	100
Teachers	Male	Female	Total Of Teachers
Total	1	1	2

3.4 Data collection instruments and procedure

The instruments used in the study were interview, observation and test. 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 participants can talk and explain their behaviour, observation includes listening and asking questions and often participating in the activities of the group to get a first-hand experience of what daily life involves. In the course of gathering data, the researcher employed observation 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 crosschecking responses considered to be inconsistent with what was given during the interview. Students and teachers during their normal learning environment were observed closely. They were observed as classroom lessons were taking place.

Outside the classroom environment, the researcher observed students' way of interacting in the playground. In all these observations, 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 employed the observation tool because it offers first-hand information without relying on the report of others which sometimes may be underestimated or exaggerated. The researcher observed the students objectively as they communicated orally, both in and outside the classroom. In the classroom, he observed

the students as they engaged in discussions and debates. Outside the classroom, he observed the students as they communicated with fellow students as well as teachers.

The researcher engaged the students in a face to face interview, both in and outside the classroom. Outside the classroom, he engaged the students in conversation, listening carefully to them and noted down their errors in concord. In the classroom, he used the question-and-answer technique to acquaint himself with the degree of students' errors in concord. To facilitate the interview process, the researcher used an interview guide which is mostly a set of questions written more or less like a questionnaire which helped him to ask questions on the actual issues he is interested in without veering off target. Again, the interview sought to find out from students whether or not they enjoyed and understood lessons on concord in English and the challenges they face in their concord usage. Similarly, the interview with the teachers gave the researcher the chance to explore their opinions on students' inability to perform well in concord tests, how this affects their performance in English language and what could be done to eradicate it.

The researcher, in his attempt to know more about the students after the observation and the interview, used test as a tool to find out the strength and weaknesses of the students. A test or an examination is an assessment tool intended to measure a test taker's knowledge, abilities, skills, aptitude or classification in other topics. The data collection instrument for this research is a non-standardized test which is used to determine the proficiency level of students, to motivate them to study and to provide feedback to students (Goswani, 1991). Using the non-standard test, the 100 students were given essays on two topics to write:

1. Write a story which ends 'we regretted venturing into it'.

2. Write a letter to the Municipal chief executive of your area complaining about the lack of basic social amenities in your municipality and how that affects the lives of the people.

The data were collected at the time the students were writing their End-of-Term District Common Examinations. The researcher used the District Common Examinations because it is usually in essays that the use of concord is actually observed, unlike in simple class exercises involving short sentences. An ethical procedure was followed for the collection of data for this research. Firstly, the head and teachers of the school were contacted, and explanation of the study was given to them. The researcher explained to them that the study is only for academic purpose. They were assured that only the school's name is used for the study; no teacher's or student's name would be used. The students were informed as well. Once permission was granted, the day and time of the examination were given by the head. The researcher went to observe the way the students were writing the paper. This was to ensure that what was gathered from the students' scripts was the actual representation of them and nothing else. After the examination, the written scripts were taken and photocopied and the original scripts given back to the teachers for marking. After marking and gathering of the concord errors, the researcher also sought permission to interview some of the students on the possible causes of their concord errors. Ten students, made up of five boys and five girls, granted interview to afford the researcher much knowledge on the students' concord errors. The two (2) English language teachers were also interviewed.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of inspecting cleansing, transforming and modeling data with the sole view of discovering useful information, information conclusion, and supporting decision making. The data were analyzed using Error Analysis approach,

which, according to Crystal 1987, p 112), is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language using any one of the principles and procedures provided by Linguistics. The researcher collected the data, identified the errors, classified the errors by categorizing them into groups or types, discussed the errors in a suitable way and evaluated the errors by interpreting tables, graphs, and conclusions drawn. The researcher also employed the use of content analysis approach in analyzing the data. According to Moore and McCabe (2005), content analysis is a type of research technique whereby data gathered are categorized into themes and sub-themes so as to make it comparable. The analyzed data are presented in bar chart to indicate the frequency and percentage of each category of concord error. Responses of the interviews on causes of concord errors were also analysed and discussed in Chapter 4.

3.7 Validity and reliability

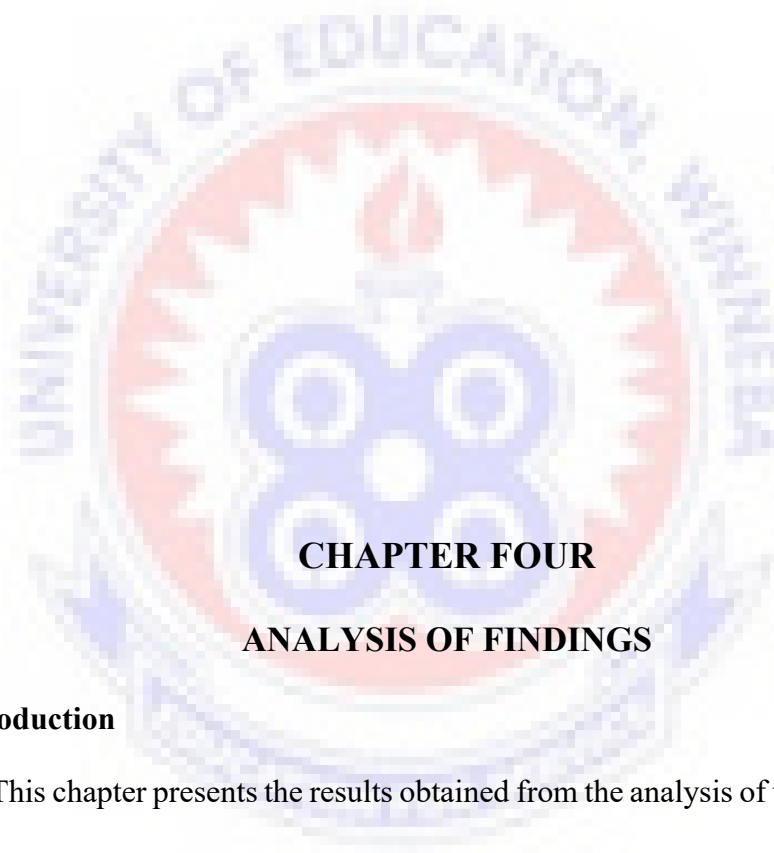
For a dissertation to be scientifically acceptable it has to be located in a 'nomological network', made up of laws that are either statistical or deterministic. These laws tie observable properties to one another, in other words the same topics or constructs are grouped together (Garrison, 1994; Moss, 1992). The main purpose of a researcher by exploring validity is to determine whether the inferences made about the results of the assessment are meaningful and serve the purpose of the assessment. Following what some few authorities have to say about a research validity, the researcher, before the proper commencement of this study ensured that the research design was carefully planned in order to ensure the success of the investigation. With this in the researcher's mind, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher's determination of valid findings.

Also, the data collection instruments were consciously selected in a way that would not compromise the validity of what the instrument seek to measure. The researcher having in mind what is known in research validity as test-retest, decided to use a number of instrument so that one could be used to check the other to ensure validity. The researcher after having observed the participants in the classroom also observed them outside the classroom to ensure validity and reliability since validity begets reliability. After the observation came the test so that the data could be compared to ensure that inconsistencies were taken care of. The researcher monitored the conduct of the test from the start to the end to ensure that the exam was conducted under a serene, non- threatening environment, and also to ensure that fairness was ensured throughout devoid of discrimination and bias. The test was relevant, appropriate and used correctly to ensure that it actually measures what it seeks to measure.

Since validity gives rise to reliability, the researcher was conscious enough to ensure that the design, the data collection instrument and all that went into the collection and analysis of the data collected was replicable, hence ensuring reliability. In the researcher's quest to ensure reliability, he engaged the two English Language teachers in the school where the research participants are drawn from, to also observe, test and interview the participants so as to check reliability and what they had did not reveal anything different from the data collected by the researcher from the same students. The researcher also took some measures towards ensuring test-retest at the analysis of results stage to check to be sure that the test was replicable and consistent since reliability reflects consistency and replicability over time.

3.9 Conclusion

The analysis and discussion of data on concord errors in students' scripts were presented in this chapter. From the discussion above, it was discovered that in the students' scripts, subject verb agreement errors had the highest number. The discussion also revealed that students found it difficult to apply their knowledge of concord rules correctly in their writing thereby leading to the commission of many errors.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from the analysis of the data collected. It analyses errors found in the written essays of pupils. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents an analysis of concord errors committed by learners in their writing. Such errors include subject verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun- pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors and construction with more than one concord errors. From this, subject verb concord errors had the highest frequency with coordinated subject concord errors and inverted subject concord errors

being the lowest. The second section discusses the causes of these errors based on the findings. Based on the findings of the study, several factors were realized to be the causes of concord errors in learners' writings. The analysis showed that learners could not find the right verbs to agree with their corresponding subjects to make their sentences grammatical and this was due to incomplete learning of rules. Other causes are incomplete learning of the rules regarding singular count, plural count and non-count nouns, students' inability to appropriately apply the rules, and over-generalization of rules. The rest are ignorance of rules application, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete learning of rules as well as L1 interference.

4.1 Categorization of concord errors

After analyzing the data, different types of concord errors in students' written essays were identified. They include subject-verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated subject-verb concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, inverted subject-verb concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, and construction with more than one concord errors. Students' responses as collated from the essays regarding the type of errors and number of errors on each type were 72 for subject-verb concord errors, 11 for determiner noun concord errors, 10 for coordinated subject verb concord errors, 17 for noun pronoun concord errors, 10 for Inverted subject verb concord errors, 20 for verb-verb concord errors and 13 for Construction with more than one concord errors.

4.1.1 Subject-verb concord errors

Subject-verb concord errors recorded a greater frequency, indicating the students' inability to get the appropriate verb to match the subject so as to make the sentence grammatically correct. This was clear in the students' scripts, particularly in

singular subjects with their singular verbs in the present tense. Subject-verb concord errors in the data gathered are discussed as follows.

4.1.1.1 Singular subject with plural verbs.

It was very clear from the scripts that getting a singular verb to match with a corresponding singular verb was difficult for them. Students use plural verbs to match subjects contrary to the concord rule which states that singular subjects take singular verbs and plural subjects take plural verbs. Examples 1.5 illustrate this.

1. The mother write a letter of appreciation to the teacher
2. My teacher buy my uniform for me.
3. The class prefect read the letter
4. The book are dirty for use.

Although the subjects of the sentences are all singular, the students disregard the concord rule and match them with plural verbs. Following the subject-verb concord rule, all the singular subjects are supposed to be matched with their corresponding verbs in the singular form. This may be due to teachers' style of teaching concord. Most teachers emphasize the use of the third person inflection –s- after pronouns (he, she, it) than their corresponding nouns. Because this appears to be fossilized in the brain of the students, when the subject of a verb is singular, the students become confused as to which verb to consider. Therefore, teachers need to vary their emphasis when teaching subject-verb concord. Also, students need to be careful and devote extra attention and effort towards understanding the subject-verb rules in order to apply them well in their sentences.

The sentence 'my teacher buy my uniform for me' is an example of a grammatical rule that in a structure where the same subject controls a series of verbs,

all the verbs must agree with the subject. Very often, they transfer their L1 habits into the target language they learn, which may result in errors. This is very true because all the students of Bulinga basic school speak Kusaal. In Kusaal verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense. Consider the following examples in Kusaal;

- i. Atinga mon sa'ab. (Atinga prepares T.Z)
- ii. Atinga ne Azure mon sa'ab. (Atinga and Azure prepare T.Z).

The verb 'mon' (sell) maintains the same form in both examples above even though a singular subject, Atinga is used in the first example as against a plural subject, Atinga 'ne' (and) Azure in the second example. The verb remains the same in Kusaal regardless of the plurality and singularity of the subject in used. English, on the other hand, has a different grammatical rule. Students however match singular subjects with plural verbs because they often have erratic use of the third person –s. With this, students think that some verbs create a phonetic environment that makes them sound more third person friendly than others.

4.1.1.2 Plural subject with singular verb

Universally, in English language, countable nouns take an -s- to form plural and the absence of -s- renders a count noun singular. Example, stone (singular), and stones (plural). The direct opposite of this is to verbs. With verbs, it is the third person singular form in the present tense that takes -s-. The fact that a plural count noun usually takes an –s does not universally mean verbs should also have –s at the end to form their plurality. 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, thus, singular or plural. An agreement error occurs when a plural subject is used with a singular verb as in the following extracts.

In the following examples, the students mismatched the subjects and their verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verb is singular. Examples;

5. All the teachers likes the brilliant but poor student in this school.
6. Chief and the headteacher supports the poor student
7. The community members offers him gifts.
8. The extra classes grants us the opportunity to learn more after school
9. Students does well when they attend extra classes.

It can be concluded based on the above that the students have mistaken the –s addition rule in count nouns to that of verbs. Haydari (2012) asserts that these are errors that occur during the learning process of the second language. So, 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 can also be considered as intralingual errors because the students made faulty generalization of the rules of -s inflection of nouns. These students may be operating intuitively by thinking that the first –s of the noun attracts a second one of the verb.

4.1.1.3 Relative pronoun-subject with singular verb

With respect to the proximity law, attraction occurs when a sentence has two clauses; the main clause and the subordinate clause and the subordinate is a relative clause. A relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun, who, whom, that, which or whose. A relative pronoun can be either singular or plural. They take their number from antecedent- the word to which they refer. This means that, if the antecedent is

plural, the pronoun is plural and therefore takes a plural verb. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun is singular and therefore takes a singular verb. There should be an agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun. The principle of ‘proximity’ also termed as ‘attraction’ denotes agreement of the verb with a closely preceding noun phrase in reference to agreement with the noun phrases that function as subject (Quirk et al, 2005). The proximity concord may be extended to mean that concord is determined by whatever immediately precedes the verb. In other words, it is the position of the subject which normally determines the concord.

Wiredu (1998, p. 13) has the same view that “proximity concord refers to the agreement between a subject and its verb based not on notion but on the fact that there is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb”. That is, grammatical concord is established between these elements instead of the normal formal agreement with the head of the noun phrase/subject (NP/Subj). As stated above, the important thing to keep in mind is that there should be an agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun as in:

The senior prefect punished the students that were late to school today.

The antecedent of ‘that’ is ‘students’ in the sentence. Since the noun, ‘students’ is plural, the pronoun ‘that’ is also plural because it (pronoun that) stands for or in place of the noun students which is plural.

In a different sentence, the antecedent of that could be a singular noun. For example,

The senior prefect punished the student that was late to school today.

Since the noun, ‘student’ is singular, the pronoun, ‘that’ is also singular and therefore takes a singular verb. This rule was violated by the students as follows:

1. The teachers who **supports** the poor but brilliant student are kind

2. The teachers who **punishes** the criminals is on transfer
3. Students and teachers who **absents** themselves from school takes permission from head
4. The community members who **wishes** students well are responsible parents
5. The masters on duty that **comes** to school so early gives us numbers.

4.1.1.4 Demonstrative pronoun subject-verb agreement

Demonstrative pronouns are used to refer to locations or places of things and persons in space. They have number contrast and have two sets; **this** and **these** on one hand and **that** and **those** on the other hand. 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 (far 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 with the verb. Sadly, the students did not apply the rule. They realize that the pronouns **this** and **that** are singular subjects and so should take singular verb form but their plural counterparts **these** and **those** should take their corresponding plural verb forms. A possible cause of this violation could be **fossilization**. This has become the case because this error may have become imprinted in their brains that they find it difficult to change. The sentences are grammatically acceptable if the verbs are changed to agree with their corresponding subjects as in:

6. This **makes** the poor student happy
7. These **were** some of the materials the chief bought for him
8. That **was** how the student graduated
9. Those **were** the prefects who punished us

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

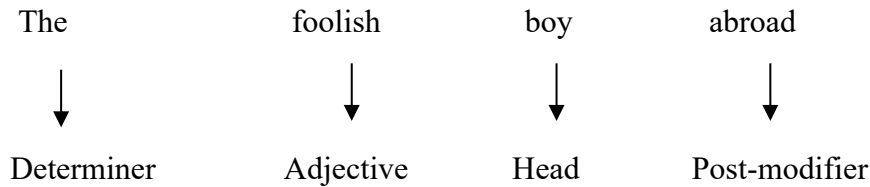
10. This make the poor student happy
11. These is some of the materials the chief bought for him
12. These was the reasons the teacher supported him
13. This were how the student graduated
14. Those is the prefects who punished us

In the examples, students could not apply the rule of the demonstrative pronouns being in agreement with the verbs that they follow. This therefore ended up constructing deviant structures. *This* and *that* are singular pronouns and so must take singular verbs. Also, *these* and *those* are plural pronouns and so must take their corresponding plural verbs to make the sentences grammatically correct.

4.1.1.5 Headword–verb concord errors

The inability of the students to identify the headword in a string of words within the subject zone is attributable to errors like this. The head or the headword is the most important element in a string of words. For example, a noun phrase is a string of words whose head is a noun as in **the foolish boy**. Students who 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 to agree with a 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 multiple pre-modification and post-modification. Pre-modifiers precede their heads. In English grammar, a post modifier is a modifier that

follows the word or phrase it limits or qualifies (Nordquist, 2019). Consider the following:



The complex subject poses problems because it makes students lose track of the headword. Memory limitation could also prevent them from employing the correct verb, to get into a 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 also be singular. On the other hand, if the head is plural, the verb in the present tense should also be 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 also be singular and if the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural. The following are examples produced by the students:

1. Some of my classmates **does** not want to identify themselves with the poor student
2. The school **have** kind teachers
3. Therefore, he **were** not happy
4. Almost all of my school friends **does** not like him.
5. And there we **goes**

In example 1, the headword is my classmates and it is plural. This headword is followed by a pre-modifier some of. The pre-modifier that comes between the subject and the verb may be the cause of confusion in determining the appropriate verb. It is important for students to note that the verb agrees with its subject but not a word in the

phrase or a clause. They should learn to cross out the interrupting group of words in their brains because these serve as modifiers of the subject and do not add to the number. Since the headword, *my classmates* is plural, the verb must also be plural.

Table 4.1.1 A summary of subject-verb concord errors

Concord Error	Frequency	Percentage
singular subject with plural verb errors	18	25%
head word verb concord errors	17	23.6%
plural subject with singular verb errors demonstrative pronoun (subject)	15	21%
verb concord errors	12	16.4%
relative pronoun (subject) with singular verbs errors	10	14%
Total	72	100%

Table 4.1.1 shows the different concord errors committed in subject-verb agreement by students in this study. The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is difficult for the students, particularly singular subject with third person singular verb in the present

tense. The information in Table 4.1.1 is presented in Figure 4.1.1

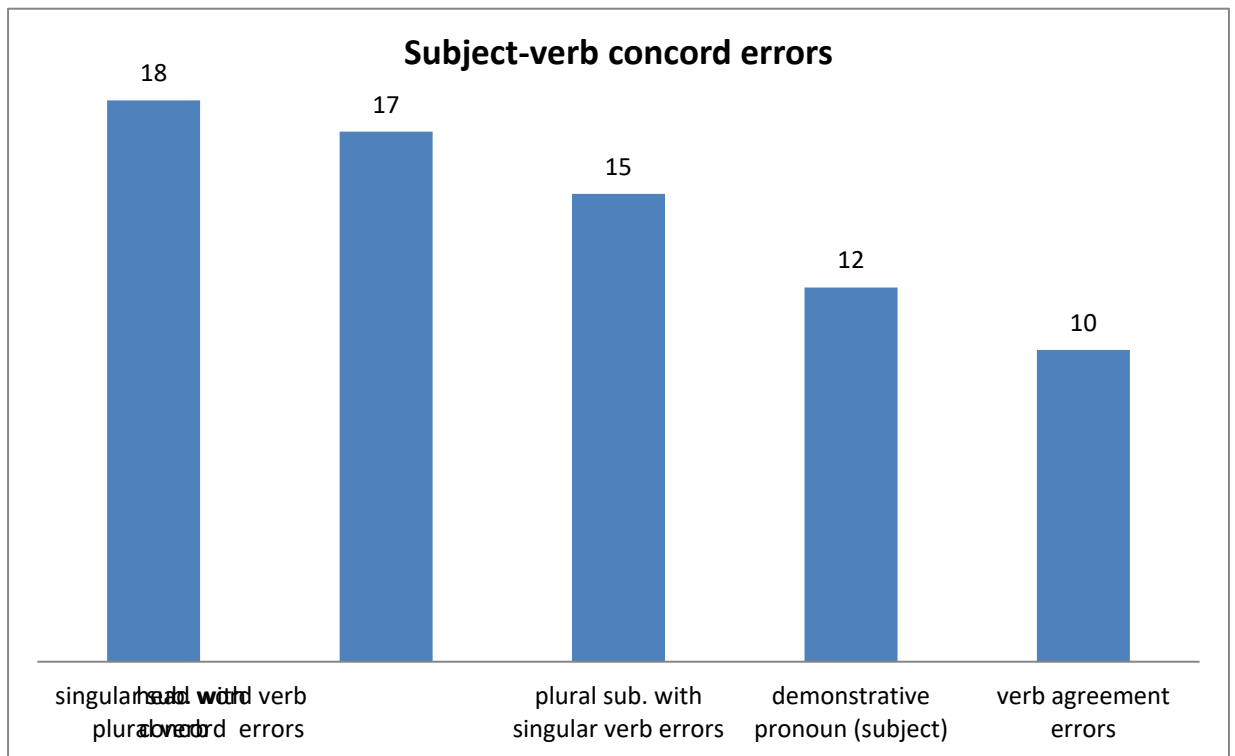


Figure 4.1.1. Subject-verb concord errors

The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is a big problem from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense. With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences under singulars subjects with plural verbs are singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In a related study, Wu and Garza (2014) investigated types and attributes of English writing errors in the EFL context. The findings of the study revealed that subject-verb concord errors were the most frequent errors that occurred in almost all the students' scripts. They indicated that these participants did not start to learn English until 3rd grade; therefore, their literacy skills in the first language affected their learning of English. In

the present study, Basic 7 pupils of Bulinga Basic School seem to have the same problem with the students in that study for students of Bulinga Basic 7 did not get the opportunity to start the study of English at the early stages of their schooling, hence their problems in matching verbs with the right subjects.

They mismatched plural verbs with singular subjects and singular verbs with plural subjects and this distorted the meaning of their utterances. In the category of demonstrative pronoun, subject verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but they violated the rule of subject-verb agreement. *This* and *that* are one of the classes of determiners that can take both. The headword-verb concord errors are also attributed to the inabilities of the students to identify the head-word from the string of words. The headword is the most important element of a string of words in a sentence. In the relative pronoun-subject with singular verbs, the principle of proximity (attraction) is applied when a sentence has two clauses; the main and the subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the relative clauses which must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

4.1.2 Determiner-noun concord errors

According to Downing and Locke (2006), English obliges us to make a distinction with regards to how a referent is cognitively perceived: whether as a discrete, countable entity such as stone or as an individual, non-countable ‘mass’ entity, such as sheep. This difference constitutes a feature which is salient in speakers’ experience of ‘things’. Other languages make a count-mass distinction, but we must not assume that particular items are conceptualized or lexicalized in the same way in

different languages. News, for example, is a singular mass noun in English language, (the news is good) *one news, *a news, *many news are ungrammatical. Students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count, and non-count nouns in sentences and that led to the students committing errors.

4.1.2.1 Count-nouns

This is basically one whose referent can be counted, as in one cow, two cows but not *one sheep, *two sheeps. The referents of these nouns are viewed as individuated in things or in persons. The following count nouns include both regular plurals in –s or invariable or ‘zero’ plurals: 5 cyclists, 3 trouts, a dozen eggs, three new television series, 7 minutes, 4 salmon, 3 crossroads, five and a half kolos, a hundred sheep, two US aircraft, five spacecraft. Countable nouns are nouns that can be quantified in units and in numbers; that means they can be counted.

Examples of the determiner-count noun errors:

- i. The poor students comes to school early
- ii. The teachers likes the poor student
- iii. Some porridges were bought for the poor boy
- iv. The girls in the school does likes him
- v. But the boys does likes him

In the examples, students mismatched the verbs to their referent nouns and noun phrases. In the first example, the noun phrase ‘ the poor student’ is a plural count-noun and therefore requires a correspondent plural verb, ‘come’ and not a singular verb, ‘comes’ as used by the students. In the third example also, porridge is a non-count noun and so needed a singular verb, was, to match it and not a plural verb, were, as the students used. Porridge is a non-count noun and so does not require a plural marker –s.

the correct sentence should have been ‘some porridge was bought for the poor boy,’ and not the other way round.

4.1.2.2 Non-count nouns

This is one whose referent is cognitively perceived as not countable. We don’t therefore say, for example, three furniture, two luggages. Both *furniture* and *luggage*, as well as *news*, can be individuated by a preceding counter-‘a piece of’. Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be quantified in units and numbers. Some errors that students committed are

- i. The informations was given to my teacher
- ii. The class prefect clamped on the furnitures
- iii. The teacher gave us advices against insulting the poor boy
- iv. The poor boy was following sheeps
- v. The childrens insulted the poor student

The underlined words in the above sentences should have been written without the plural marker –s as in:

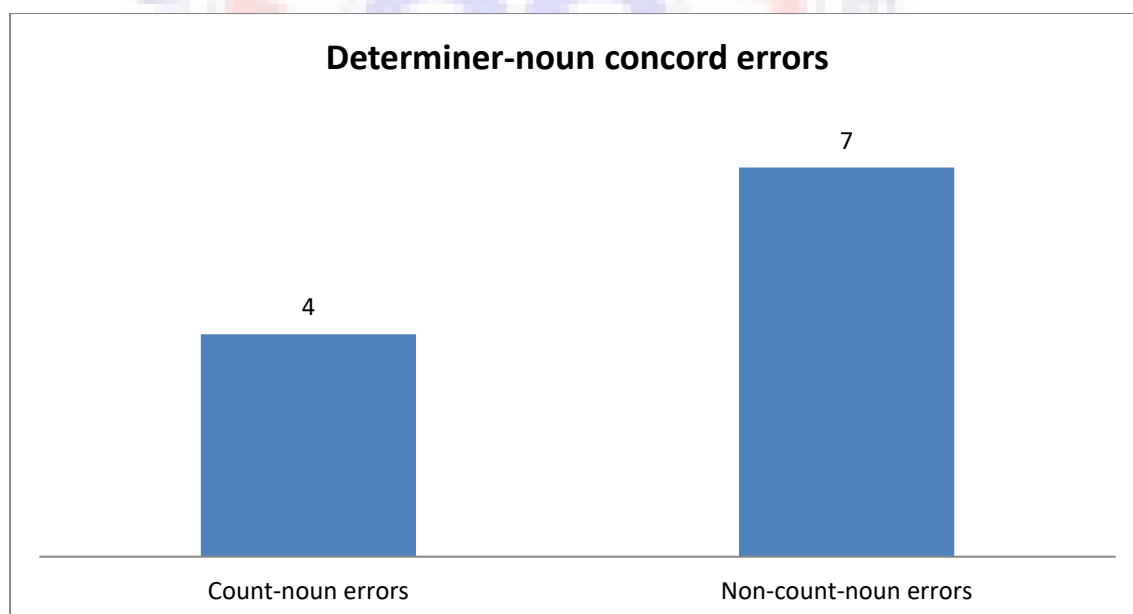
<u>Wrong ones given by the students</u>	<u>Correct form</u>
Informations.....	Information
Furnitures.....	Furniture
Advices.....	Advice
Sheeps.....	Sheep
Childrens	Children

Table 4.1.2 shows the sub categorization of the determiner noun concord errors.

Table 4.1.2. Determiner-noun concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage
Count-noun errors	4	36%
Non-count-noun errors	7	64%
Total	11	100%

Table 4.1.2 shows the different determiner-noun concord errors committed by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 4.1.2. The different types of determiner-noun errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns.

**Figure 4.1.2. Types of determiner-noun concord errors**

The different types of determiner-noun concord errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns. In a related study, Quagie (2014) presents an analysis

of concord errors in the examination scripts of 200 students and the major errors found included determiner noun concord errors among others. He then concluded that the most EFL students' errors were not due to insufficient command of linguistic complexity. In addition, the study reported the major causes of EFL learners' errors as overgeneralization, ignorance of rules restrictions, simplification, and incomplete application of rules of the target language.

4.1.3 Coordinated-subject concord errors

Concord with subordinated subject has been discussed by Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) as a process where equivalent units are linked by 'and', 'or', 'but'. They further explain that it may occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements, words. Some of the common errors that students committed could be classified under the following sub headings: coordinating with 'and', coordination with a 'singular subject and coordination with 'or' and 'nor'.

4.1.3.1 Coordinating conjunction 'and' concord errors

Any time subjects in a sentences are joined by 'and', all the subjects collectively control the verb, hence, a plural verb should be used. Consider the example below:

It will be wrong to write,

Atinga and Gilbert enrolls on an M.Ed. programme at Winneba.

The sentence is very wrong because there are two subjects, 'Atinga and Gilbert' making it a plural subject, which per concord rules, needs a corresponding plural verb to match with. The correct sentence should therefore be

Atinga and Gilbert enroll on an M.ED programme at Winneba.

Despite the above rule, there exists an exception, which states that when you use ‘and’ to link or join two subjects and both subjects refer to the same person (i.e the person has two titles), use a singular verb and not a plural verb. Following this, it will be inappropriate to write:

The senior boys prefect and class prefect of form three are at the volleyball court.

Here, the senior boys prefect and the class prefect are two titles referring to the same person, making it a singular subject requiring a corresponding singular verb to make it appropriate. But if the definite article, ‘the’ is used before the second title, it means both articles refer to separate persons or things and so should be considered a plural subject. For example,

The senior prefect and **the** class prefect are at the volleyball court.

With this example, the senior prefect stands as a separate subject and the class prefect also stands alone as a separate subject thereby rendering them a plural subject, and so a plural verb should be used to match it. Examples of some faulty construction by the students are;

- i. My class teacher and the chief is supporting the poor but brilliant student in my class
- ii. Books and pens was costly
- iii. Uniform and shoes costs our head teacher
- iv. The head teacher and chairman of the school’s disciplinary committee are absent from school
- v. Parents and siblings is quarreling

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

4.1.3.2 Subordinating conjunction concord errors

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

The students were happy when the teacher did not come to school

The sentence is in parts; the part that makes complete sense and the part that does not express complete meaning. Thus; ‘The students were happy’ is an independent clause because it carries a complete meaning while the second part ‘when the teacher did not come to school’ is a dependent clause because it must be connected to the independent clause for meaning to be made complete. When you join the subjects in a sentence with any of the subordinated conjunctions, only the subject before the subordinating conjunction controls the verb. When both a coordinating conjunction (i.e. ‘and’) and

any of the subordinating conjunctions (e.g. ‘with’, ‘also’, ‘together with’ etc.) appear in a sentence, whichever of them appears first, controls the verb. If ‘and’ appears first, the rule of ‘and’ applies, and that means **all** the subjects collectively control the verb. For example,

The head teacher and his assistant together with his students are serious in school.

In the sentence, both ‘and’ which is coordinating conjunction and ‘together with’ which is a subordinating conjunction, appear in the same sentence, but then, ‘and’ appears first, therefore all the subjects collectively should be controlled by ‘and’ and this renders the subject a plural one which requires a corresponding plural verb, ‘are’ to make it grammatically appropriate. However, if a subordinating conjunction appears first, only the subjects which appear before the subordinator control the verb. For instance,

The head teacher with his students and assistant head is serious in school.

In this example, the subordinating conjunction *with* appears first before the singular subject *the head teacher*. Therefore, as the rule of concord implies, a singular verb ‘is’ must be used and not a plural verb ‘are’. Some of the deviant constructions from students’ scripts include:

- i. Head teacher with staff buy uniform for the poor student
- ii. The poor boy were happy when the chief shook his hand.
- iii. The head teacher and chairman of the disciplinary committee are kind
- iv. The head together with staff are in
- v. Mr. Sammy and the form master is in town

The sentences indicate clearly that they could simply not decipher the rules governing the use of subordinating conjunctions structures in sentences where the subject controls

the verb in each case. As a result, their structures could not agree in terms of subject and verb as the rule of concord states.

4.1.3.3 Correlative conjunction concord errors

Correlative conjunctions connect similar parts of a sentence, such as adjectives, nouns, and clauses. However, unlike coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions are combinations of coordinating conjunctions, not only a single word. They always come in pairs and link grammatically equivalent items. Some commonly used correlative conjunctions are; ‘As.....as,’ ‘Both.....and’, ‘Neither.....nor’, ‘Either..... or’, ‘Not only.....but also’, ‘Not...but’, ‘Whether...or’ etc.

Consider the following examples:

- i. We like playing volleyball **as** much **as** football
- ii. **Both I and** wisdom went to the festival
- iii. **Neither** Wilbert **nor** Gijebert fails to make me happy

For correlative conjunctions only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb. So if the subject after ‘nor’ or ‘or’ as the case may be is singular, use a singular verb, but if the subject after ‘nor’ or ‘or’ as the case may be is plural, use a plural verb. Some wrong constructions the students made are:

- i. Neither the female students nor male students in my class **likes** the poor but brilliant student
- ii. Either our form master or head teacher **buy** his uniform
- iii. Neither the class prefect or the teacher **are** present
- iv. Either the poor boy or the slim girl **sleep** in class
- v. **Either** the boys or the girls **loves** him

The sentences are faulty and this could be attributed to the students’ failure to apply appropriately, the rule governing the usage of correlative conjunctions which states that

when two subjects are found in a sentence, only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb. Table 4.1.3 is a summary of the coordinated-subject concord errors identified in the data.

Table 4.1.3. A summary of coordinated-subject concord errors

Type of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage
1.coordinating conjunction concord errors	2	20%
2.subordinating conjunction concord errors	3	30%
3.correlative conjunction concord errors	5	50%
Total	10	100%

Table 4.1.3 shows the different coordinated subject concord errors made by the students in their construction and the different coordinating subject concord errors are presented on fig4 below. The different types of coordinated-subject concord errors realized shows that few of the students could not decipher between the use of the conjunctions to agree with the verbs in the English language. The information Table 4.1.3 is presented in Figure 4.1.3.

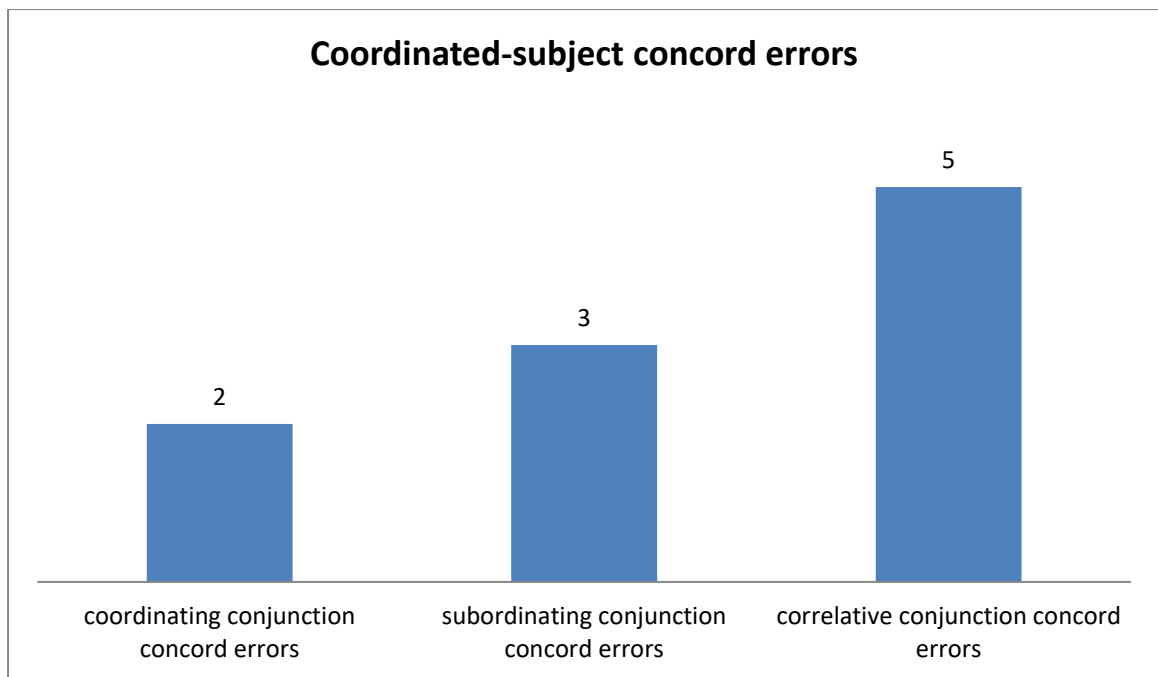


Figure 4.1.3. Types of coordinated-subject concord errors

Figure 4.1.3 shows the different coordinated subject concord errors made by the students in their construction and the different coordinating subject concord errors are presented on the figure. The different types of coordinated-subject concord errors realized show that few of the students could not decipher between the uses of the conjunctions to agree with the verbs in the English language. In a similar study, Arthur (2009) looks at teaching concord at junior high schools. One of her findings revealed that coordinated subject concord errors were among the various concord errors identified in the scripts of her subjects. Her study also revealed that students, on the area of coordinated subject concord errors, could not appropriately apply coordinators well in their constructions to match with their right subjects. From this, she recommends that the Basic Education English Language syllabus should include more of the rules of concord.

In her study, Concord Problems in Madina Two Junior High School, Annor (2011) found that J.H.S. pupils have more problems relating subject-verb, especially

proximity concord, coordinated subject concord and pronoun-antecedent concord. She adds that teachers find it difficult explaining the rules of these categories of concord for their pupils to understand. She explains that most teachers may not be quite familiar with the explanations behind the application of particular concord rules though they may be proficient in their use of these rules. Annor (2011) infers as reported in the literature e.g. Agor (2003), that the inability of some teachers to adduce correct reasons for their answers may also be an indication of the carry-over effect of the not too encouraging performance in English concord among some teacher-trainees.

4.1.4 Noun-pronoun concord errors

Like a machine, for a sentence to be grammatically correct, all its parts should agree with one another. When a pronoun is used to refer to a noun used, there must be an agreement. A pronoun which refers to a singular noun phrase is in singular, and a pronoun which refers to a plural phrase is in plural (Leech & Startvik, 2002). For example,

1. He goes to his work place
2. They go to their work place

A pronoun is generally defined as a word which can replace a noun. The definition may be considered appropriate at the basic level where the learners are studying mainly words or the parts of speech. However at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels, where phrases and clauses are taught, the definition must change accordingly. Hence, the pronoun may be defined as a word that can replace a noun or a noun phrase. Wiredu (1998) also defines pronouns as words which are used to replace a noun, especially where we do not want to repeat that noun. Instances of pronoun-noun concord errors are presented as follows:

4.1.4.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

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

Examples:

1. Atinga goes to Winneba (He goes to Winneba)
2. Alale exercises everyday (She exercises everyday)
3. The dog hunts on Fridays (It hunts on Friday)

This rule was bluntly violated by the students in sentences such as:

- i. Atinga go to Winneba (He go to Winneba)
- ii. Alale exercise everyday (She exercise everyday)
- iii. The dog hunt on Friday (It hunt on Friday)

4.1.4.2 A pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase

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

1. Atinga and Gilbert do their exercise (They do their exercise)
2. The head teacher and his staff go for their salary (They go for their salary)
3. Students do not want studies (They do not want studies)
4. A smart phone does not like water (It does not like water)

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

1. Atinga and Gilbert *does their exercise
2. The head teacher and his staff *goes for their salary
3. Students *does not want studies

4. A smart phone and laptop *does not like water

Students who committed the errors in examples 1 and 3 thought that once the subjects are in plural forms, an –s should be added to the verb. In examples 2 and 4, some of the students also took the ‘2.the head teacher and his staff’ and 4. ‘a smart phone and laptop’ to be one subject and so matched them with singular verbs. Table 4.1.4 presents a summary of the noun-pronoun concord errors.

Table 4.1.4. Noun-pronoun concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Personal pronoun in the third person	5	30%
Pronouns which refer to a plural noun phrase	12	70%
Total	17	100%

Table 4.1.4 presents the different types of noun-pronoun concord errors committed by students and these are presented in Figure 4.1.4. The different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by students in their essays indicate that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for them.

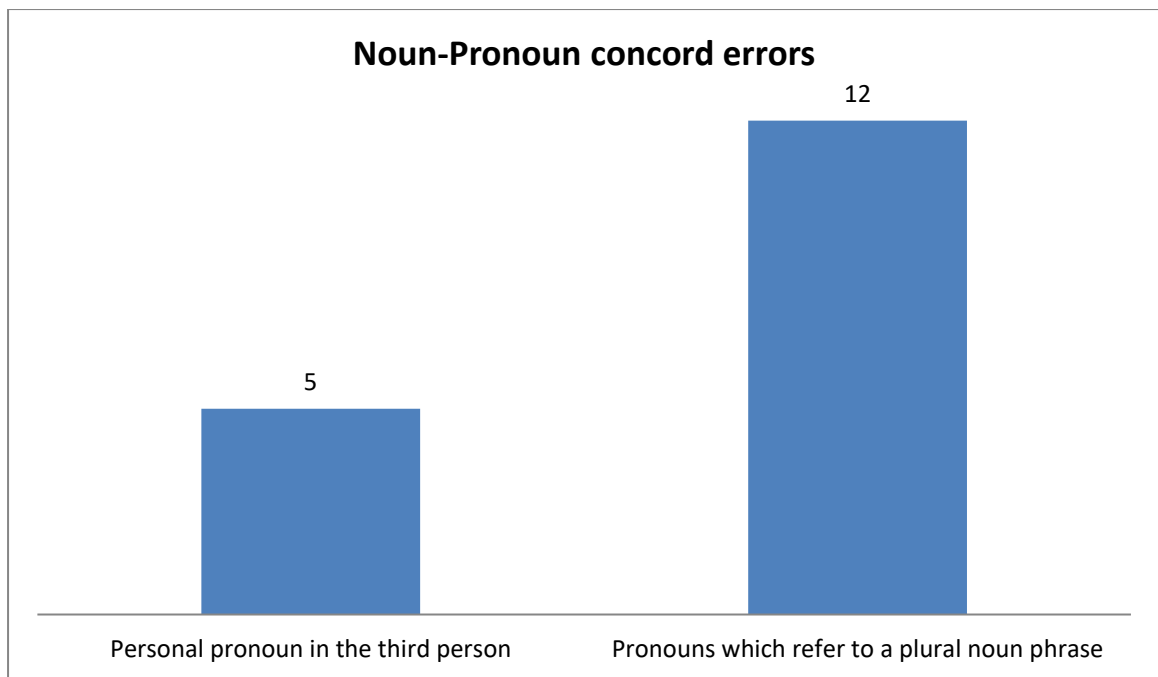


Figure 4.1.4. Noun-Pronoun concord errors

A pronoun is often used to mean a word which substitutes for the noun. This meaning explains why the pronoun shares a lot in common with the noun in both syntactic and semantic properties. One important property of the English pronoun which should be discussed in relations to this study is the pronoun paradigms or systems. Obi (2009), in a related study, discusses noun-pronoun concord errors and concluded that students' difficulties in noun pronoun concord had to do with their inability to get a nouns and their prospective pronouns to agree in number, person, gender and case. Her findings or conclusion is rightly linked with this present study as it was found in the scripts of the pupils of Bulinga Basic that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for the students.

4.1.5 Verb-verb concord errors

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,

- i. The robber raped the young girl and killed her.
- ii. Obed took his bath before he slept.

Looking at the two sentences, it is clear that there has been consistency with the use of the verbs that appeared first in the sentences and those that followed, especially in tense.

In sentence (i), it is seen that there is an agreement between the first verb (raped) and the second verb (killed) in tense (all in past tense). It also can be observed that in sentence (ii), the first verb (took) agrees with the second verb (slept) in terms of tense.

The following illustrate the verb-verb concord errors made by the students.

4.1.5.1 Verb-verb present tense concord errors

Verb-verb present tense concord has to do with being consistent with the type of tense one has chosen. It is against the use of multiple tense in sentences; the mixture of present tense and past tense is inappropriate in the English Language. Consider the following:

1. We go to market on market days and buy ingredients for cooking
2. He comes to school and carries out his lessons and goes back home
3. The dog barks at any stranger who disturbs it and even bites when it gets serious.

The students could not comply with the above verb-verb consistency order and so the mismatched the verbs or they mixed them (present and past tenses together thereby producing deviant sentences). These sentences are seen as follows:

- i. I cook the food and *ate it alone

- ii. The car stops at the station and we all *alighted
- iii. The car gets to the market and we *alighted safely
- iv. When we go to the head teacher, he says he *was from Bolgatanga.
- v. Madam and I advise them to be careful about what they just *got themselves into.

4.1.5.2 Verb-verb past tense concord errors

Verb-verb past tense concord has to do with being consistent with only the past tense that one has chosen. It is against the use of multiple tense in sentences; the mixture of present tense and past tense is inappropriate in the English Language. Consider the following:

1. We got to market on the market day and bought ingredients for cooking
2. He came to school and carried out his lessons and went back home
3. The dog barked at any stranger who disturbed it and even bit when it got serious.

The students could not comply with the above verb-verb past tense concord consistency order and so they mismatched the verbs. Thus, instead of keeping to only the past tense that they started with, they mixed them (past tense and present tenses together thereby producing deviant sentences). These sentences are wrongly constructed:

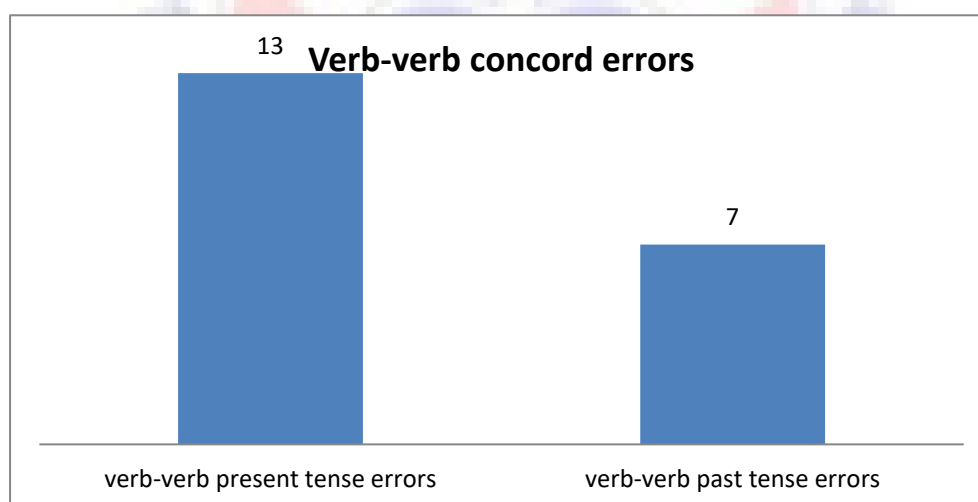
- i. I cooked the food and *eat it alone
- ii. The car stopped at the station and we all *alight
- iii. The car got to the market and we *alight safely
- iv. When we went to the head teacher, he said he *is from Bolgatanga
- vi. Madam and I advised them to be careful about what they just *get themselves into

Table 4.1.5 presents a summary of the verb-verb concord error that students committed.

Table 4.1.5. A summary of verb-verb concord errors

Type of error	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
1. verb-verb present tense errors	13	65%
2. verb-verb past tense errors	7	35%
Total	20	100%

The different types of verb-verb concord errors identified indicate that getting a second verb in the right tense to agree with the first verb used is a challenge to the students. The information in Table 4.1.5 has been presented in Figure 4.1.5.

**Figure 4.1.5. Verb-verb concord errors**

In a study by Abdulmumini (2018), concord errors committed by 200 Level English University students in Northern Nigeria revealed that concord errors are the commonest grammatical errors committed by students. He also stated that this has been a regular report made by researchers on error analysis in English. He revealed from his findings that verb-verb concord errors were the most occurred types of errors in his analysis of the students' work, and as a result advised that teachers in their bid to teach concord

should pay particular importance to verb-verb concord as it dominated the other concord errors in his study.

4.1.6 Inverted subject-verb concord errors

Downing and Locke (2006) explain that this type of concord involves sentences whose subjects are interrogative pronoun, the adverbial *here* or the unstressed existential *there*, interrogative pronouns what, which, who, and whose. If any of these is used as subject of verb of a sentence, it is the noun phrase that follows the verb that acts as the subject. Therefore, if the noun or the noun phrase that follows is singular, the verb must be singular and the vice versa. For instance,

- i. Who is your favorite **author**?
- ii. Here lies the oak **tree**.
- iii. What were the **reasons** for his actions?
- vi. There is no **girl** in the classroom.
- v. There are no **girls** in the classroom.

The students however, could not abide by this rule and constructed deviant sentences as follows;

- i. Who *is your **classmates**?
- ii. Here *lies your **books**
- iii. There *is many **students** in the library
- iv. What *is **they** doing there?
- v. Here **they** *comes

4.1.7 Construction with more than one concord errors

This talks about constructions with more than one type of concord errors. It could be one construction with a plethora of different types of concord errors. This could be subject-verb concord errors and verb-verb concord errors and determiner noun

concord errors, or coordinated-subject concord errors and Inverted subject concord errors or noun-pronoun concord errors together in one construction. Examples of such constructions in the students' essay include

- i. People loses their life in that accident
- ii. It leads to many problem that leads to death
- iii. In recent times, there has been occurrence of road accidents which has send many people to his grave.
- iv. 2000 people has kill theirselves
- v. Most people thinks vocation classes is ineffective

The parts underlined are the faulty areas in the above constructions of the students

4.1.8 Summary of the categorization of concord errors

Table 4.1.6 and Figure 4.1.6 present a summary of the categories of concord errors identified in students' scripts.

Table 4.1.6. Summary of the categories of concord errors

Categories of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Subject-verb concord errors	72	47%

Determiner noun concord errors	11	7%
Coordinated subject concord errors	10	17%
Noun-pronoun concord errors	7	11%
Verb-verb concord errors	20	13%
Inverted subject concord errors	10	7%
Construction with more than one errors	13	8%
Total	153	100%

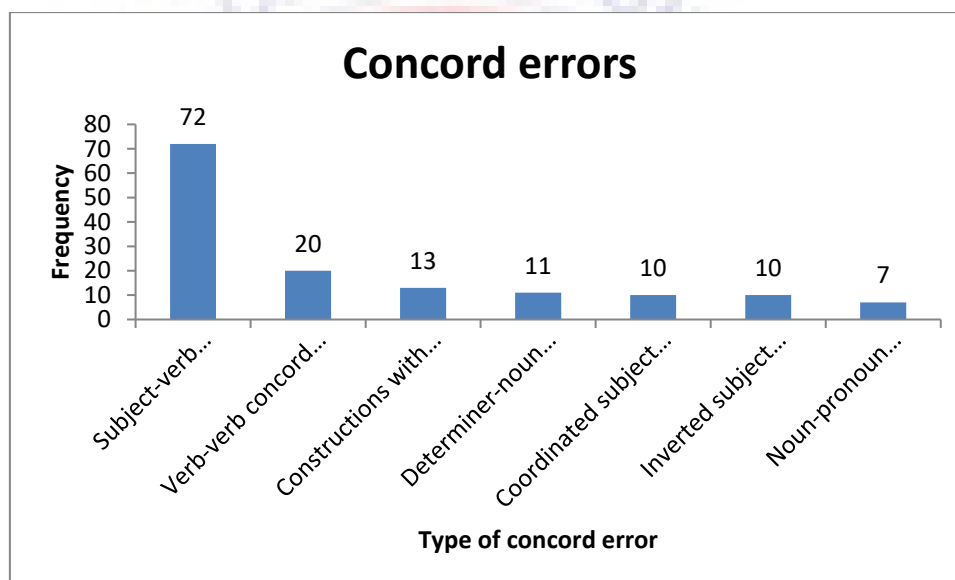


Figure 4.1.6. Summary of the categories of concord errors

Table 4.1.6 and Figure 4.1.6 show that subject-verb concord errors constitute the highest error which could be found in the students' written scripts. This has a percentage of 47% with 72 cases recorded in this study. It can be said that the concord errors may be due to simplification strategy and over generalization of English language rules. Some substitution errors like give instead gave, come instead of came and went instead of go might have resulted from inadequate competence and practice in the target language. They also reveal that verb-verb concord errors have a total of 20 errors occurrences representing 13% was due to lack of knowledge of the basic rules on verb-

verb concord, therefore resulting in students producing deviant construction of sentences.

The next is noun-pronoun concord errors constituting 11% representing 17 cases clearly shows that students are not familiar with the rules of concord in terms of verb-verb tense agreement. Also, constructions with more than one concord error recorded 13 cases of errors representing 8%. Determiner noun concord however recorded 11 cases of errors representing 7% of determiner noun concords committed by the students in their written essays. Finally, coordinated subject concord errors and inverted subject concord errors recorded the same number of cases. They both recorded 10 cases of error occurrence each representing 7% of errors identified in the students' written essays.

In a study to identify learning deficiencies in English writing, Nganbam (2016) examined 60 native Arabic speaking students. In all, 15 categories of errors were classified to find out the cause of syntactic errors, which type of errors are more frequent, areas of weaknesses and the problems that tend to occur in writing compositions. The findings show that errors made by the learners were due to mother-tongue interference, misuse of sentence fragments, and lack of grammatical knowledge, formation and development errors. The findings of a similar study conducted by Neda (2012) revealed that Malaysian ESL students have problems in writing tasks, especially in language use regarding concord and punctuation. The first language interference also contributed to errors in their writings. In relation to this, the findings of the present study have revealed that learners of Bulinga Basic School have difficulties in the use of concord, punctuation, articles and vocabulary register. Others were wrong organization of ideas, orthographic and semantic errors. These errors as said earlier, hinder the meaning of ideas in pupils' essays, however, their identification, through Error Analysis

helped the researcher to realize the causes of such errors and helped to rectify the problem through constant practice in class exercises, test and homework.

4.1.9 Summary

This section of the chapter presented the results obtained from the analysis of the data collected. The section presented an analysis of concord errors committed by learners in their writing. Such errors included subject verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun- pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors and construction with more than one concord errors. From this, subject verb concord errors had the highest frequency with coordinated subject concord errors and inverted subject concord errors being the lowest.

4.2 Causes of students' errors

Selinker (1972) as quoted in McDough (1986), Taylor (1975) and Brown (1980), have identified the following factors as the common causes of errors; interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, the learner's background, the context of learning including both teaching materials and teaching methods adopted by teachers.

4.2.1 Inter-lingual transfer

The transfer of the features of one language to the foreign one results in inter-lingual error. Such transfer can be either positive or negative. Positive transfer leads to the facilitation of learning while the negative transfer leads to errors. Interference (negative transfer) is the negative influence of the mother language on the performance of the target language learner. Brown (1980) and Yankson (1994) argue that it is committed by all learners irrespective of their mother tongue. Interlingual transfer (that is, transfer from the mother tongue or any other previously learnt language) in second language learning is a major cognitive strategy that learners fall back on when their

linguistic means falls short of achieving their communicative ends.. The influence of the mother tongue and the pervasiveness of interlingual transfer are indisputable, especially in learning situations where students' exposure to the second language is confined to a few hours per week of the formal classroom instruction (Mahmoud, 2000).

Thus, interlingual transfer is a strategy that is readily available to the learners to compensate for the inadequacies when attempting to communicate in the foreign language. Deviations resulting from interlingual transfer have been recorded at all linguistic levels, Gass and Selinker (1994). The interlingual errors that students committed under this structure are singular subjects with plural verbs. The following examples show that students committed errors in their use subject-verb concord.

1. The teacher support the poor but brilliant student
2. The mother write a letter of appreciation to the teacher
3. My teacher buy my uniform for me.
4. The class prefect read the letter
5. The book are dirty for use.

Although the subjects in each of the above constructions are singular, the students matched them with plural verbs. And this could be as a result of the absence of the third person singular inflection –s in the students' L1. Erkaya (2000) describes this kind of errors 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 Kusaal, and in Kusaal, verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense.

4.2.2 Overgeneralization

This is the use of one form or construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. Examples of overgeneralization include the use of *corned* and *goed* as the past tense forms of *come* and *go* and the

omission of the third person singular s under the heavy pressure of all other endless forms. It should be noted that simplification and overgeneralization are used by learners in order to reduce their linguistic burden. For example, the learner already knows that the plural of “dog” is dogs, in the same way, he or she thinks that “sheeps” is the plural for the singular noun “Sheep”. Richard (1974) affirms this, that they are items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalization based on partial exposure to the foreign language

4.2.3 Hypercorrection

Sometimes the zealous efforts of teachers in correcting their students' errors induce the students to make errors in otherwise correct forms. Stenson (1978) calls this type of error "induced errors." For example, the teacher's insistence that the third person takes verbs with the –s- marker in English language, makes learners produce sentences with the –s- marker in all verbs, regardless of whether or not the nominal group is plural.

4.2.4 Context of learning

Teaching methods and materials within the classroom can be a cause of errors. Taylor (1975) thinks that the faulty presentation of structures or words in a textbook, improper contextualization of patterns, and teachers' ignorance might lead to errors. Taylor (1975) thinks that the faulty presentation of structures or words in a textbook, improper contextualization of patterns, and teachers' ignorance might lead to errors. Brown (1987) explains that students make errors because of misleading explanation from teachers' faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook or even because of a pattern that was rudely memorized in a drill but not properly contextualized. James (1998, p. 191-200) divides induced errors into the following subcategories: materials - induced errors, teacher - talk induced errors and exercise- based induced errors. All these are factors that can promote errors in learning.

4.2.5 Learner's background

The background of a learner could be another cause of grammatical concord errors. Leech et al (1982) affirms this view by saying that the decline in students' standard of speaking and writing of the English language can be attributed to the background of the average learner. The learners' socio economic background, the fact that the parents are not able to be supportive in providing learning materials, books, computers, television at home for their children can also affect the learners' concord usage. This happens to be the case in Bulinga, where it is not common to find a radio set in some household to talk of computers, textbooks or pamphlets for the pupils to learn something.

4.2.6 Summary

The chapter focuses on the analysis of concord errors in the written essays of Bulinga Basic 7 students. The result of the findings indicated that students commit a lot of different types of concord errors in their scripts. Notable among these errors includes; subject verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, and coordinated subject concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, inverted subject concord errors and constructions with more than one concord errors. The analysis has also revealed that students' errors could be traced to lots of concord rules, overgeneralization, hypercorrection, context of learning, Lack of practice, Inappropriate teaching methods used by some teachers, Language transfer- interlingual and intralingual.

4.2.7 Conclusion

The chapter has analyzed the data which comprises the students' scripts, interview and observation and the general impression obtained was that Basic 7 pupils

of Bulinga Basic school had a lot of concord errors in their written and spoken language as a result of the influence of their first language on the English language, faulty teaching by teachers, overgeneralization of grammar rules by students, learners' background, hypercorrection, teaching methods and materials as well as the competence of teachers, L1 interference, and lack of motivation and practice by students in the classroom and at home. Waring (2001) highlights that the learning of vocabulary items should be consistent so that they are not easily forgotten. It is very important to practice and review previously taught vocabulary. Moreover, Schmitt (2000) claims that since forgetting is natural and vocabulary learning is incremental, words are learned gradually from numerous exposures. The study therefore suggests that learners should be given enough room to practice well, any grammatical structure learnt in order to limit the amount of error occurrences in their writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study, its conclusion and suggestions for future research. The purpose of the study was to identify the concord errors that learners commit in their writings. The study adopted a qualitative approach to examine pupils of Bulinga Basic School in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Data were gathered from 100 pupils. The concord errors

that were identified were categorized as subject-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, and constructions with more than one concord errors. The findings of the study are discussed in the next section.

5.1 Summary of findings

A total of 153 errors were recorded from the essays of the 100 pupils. Subject-verb concord errors had the highest frequency recorded 72 occurrences representing 47%. Errors in this category bothered on singular subjects with plural verbs, plural subjects with plural verbs, relative pronoun subjects with singular verbs, demonstrative-pronoun subject verb agreement, and headword concord errors. The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is a big problem from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense.

With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences under singular subjects 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 pronouns as subjects but they violated the rule of subject-verb agreement. The demonstrative *this* and *that* are one of the classes of determiners that can take both. The headword- verb concord errors are also attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword from 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 the subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative

clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the relative clauses which must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

Verb-verb concord errors were second with 20 instances which represents 13%. Errors in this category were on the different types of verb-verb concord errors identified which indicated that getting a second verb in the right tense to agree with the first verb used is a challenge to the pupils. These errors were due to incomplete learning of rules as well as overgeneralization of rules learned. Noun-pronoun concord errors ranked third with 17 occurrences representing 11%. Noun-pronoun concord errors were categorized into personal pronouns with the third person and pronouns which refer to a plural noun phrase. These errors distorted the meaning of texts in pupils' writing. The different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by pupils in their essays indicated that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for them.

Constructions with more than one concord errors recorded 13 errors representing 8%. This talks about constructions with more than one type of concord errors. It could be one construction with a plethora of different types of concord errors. This could be subject-verb concord errors and verb-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, or any others. These errors were mainly caused by overgeneralization of rules and incomplete learning of rules by pupils.

The fifth error category is determiner-noun concord errors and it had 11 occurrences representing 7% of the total number of errors. Here, the different types of determiner-noun concord errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count, and non-count

nouns. These errors occurred due to forgetfulness and ignorance of the use of the rule in terms of determiners and their usage in English language. Coordinated subject concord errors and inverted subject concord errors were the types of errors that recorded the least frequency of occurrence of 10 representing 7% each.

Based on the findings of this study, several factors were identified to be the causes of errors in learners' writings. The first cause worth mentioning is the way English Language is taught at the lower primary level. Lessons in English, as well as other subjects, are taught mostly in the learners' native languages. It therefore becomes a problem when they get to the Junior High School and have to express themselves in English. This results in the transfer of forms from L1 to English. Most subject-verb concord errors, for example, were due to the context of instruction. Careless writing also contributed to the occurrence of these errors. Tense errors found in the writings of learners were also mostly due to incomplete learning of rules, overgeneralization of rules learnt and context of instruction. The learners' L1 also contributed to errors found in the study.

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

The findings of the study have shown that learners' errors help teachers identify the problems they face in the language class. Frequent exercises on the investigations of learners' errors and the frequency with which they occur will enable the teachers devise appropriate alternative strategies to organize remedial lessons on those errors to help reduce them. This is necessary because errors provide adequate feedback that informs the teacher on the effectiveness of teaching techniques. For instance, Presada and Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They confirmed

that Concord Error Analysis could lessen the number of errors in students' work. Karra (2006), Mohammed (2013), and Jabeen, Kazemian and Shahbaz (2015) have also argued that concord errors are important for several reasons. One of such is that they help the teacher to know a student's progress, provide feedback, show the effectiveness of one's teaching techniques, and show one what parts of the syllabus has been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

Also, the note that errors enable the teacher to decide whether he must devote more time to the item he has been teaching and provide information for designing a extra syllabus or a program of re-teaching. Again, errors show how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner uses and help the learner to learn from these errors. According to Richards (2002), errors play the role of enabling the teacher to discover, identify and analyze learners' mistakes as well as designing the appropriate teaching methods for solving them. Moreover, errors are very important to the learner. This, to Richards (2002), serves as a tool through which the learner discovers the rules of the target language which could not be understood earlier and with time, these learners are able to identify and correct their errors. In another instance, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 61) suggest three significance of learner errors: (1) they serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered; (2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and (3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

5.3 Pedagogical implications

This study has pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of English Language. When students are assisted to correct their errors, they become more

accurate in using the L2. Brown (2006) suggests that error correction can be very helpful in L2 learning. Since consistent practice leads to perfection, teachers should design learning tasks that encourage practice of forms and structures learnt. This can be done through role-play, drama, conversation, and peer-teaching. Teachers should also provide pupils with reading materials about things in their immediate environment to help them to read both at home and in school. The content of the reading material should communicate relevantly to the learners at their level. This will enable them enjoy the reading and as they read a lot, writing becomes easier and enjoyable because they will have knowledge on concord and enough vocabulary to express themselves. Teachers should also create opportunities for students to practice orally in the target language to make them efficient in the language. This can be done through self-talk and simulated conversation with peers. Their concord usage can also be improved by encouraging them to practice the rules on concord both in school and at home. With this, their knowledge on concord awareness will be improved to help limit errors in both their written and oral work.

A conducive language learning environment, if created, will enable even the timid child in the class to freely use the language. The researcher believes that with consistent practice through dramatization and peer interaction, the students will master the rules of the language to help curb the error occurrences in their writing. Again, language lessons should be learner-centred so that the learners will be actively involved in the learning process. Thus, teachers should facilitate the learning process with all activities centred on the learners' interest. The learning process should be made fun and interesting. To achieve this, the teacher should be innovative in order to devise effective learning activities for learners to practice. Most importantly, the teacher must be abreast with knowledge of the subject matter as well as the techniques to make him/her

proficient and a good model of the target language to learners. This would in turn help him/her to teach the learners the phonological, morphological, syntactic and the semantic rules pertaining to the language.

Moreover, teachers should have an in-depth understanding of the L1 structure of their learners to be able to identify the sources of their errors in order to provide the needed assistance to these learners where necessary. This way, they will help minimize such errors. Furthermore, the English Language syllabus only spells out topics but does not suggest how these topics can be effectively taught. Although there are handbooks, they do not provide enough information for effective teaching. The researcher suggests that the syllabus should include a variety of child-centred approaches to guide the teacher to teach learners based on their learning abilities. The syllabus should also be designed with its corresponding textbooks to enable teachers get appropriate materials for learners. Finally, information in the textbooks should also match the topics in the syllabus.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study examined the concord errors learners at the Basic 7 of Bulinga Basic School make in their writing. Researchers may also look at other categories of errors other than those found in the present study. Future research may focus on the effect of phonological deficiency on pupils' reading. Again, researchers may investigate how errors in the writing of L2 learners are corrected by both teachers and learners in the classroom. The researcher also suggests that this study could be extended to other schools in the Bawku West district of the Upper East Region with an increase in the number of participants.

5.5 Conclusion

The study aimed at analyzing the concord errors made by the basic seven pupils of Bulinga Basic School. The errors identified were subject-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors and constructions with more than one concord errors. Based on the findings of the study, it is prudent that language teachers are given adequate training on appropriate language teaching approaches for all levels to make them effective and efficient in the class they are assigned. With that, they will be able to help their students to become proficient in the target language. As this study adds to existing knowledge on learners' errors, it is envisaged that more research is conducted on other linguistic aspects in the classroom.

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APPENDIX

PART A

ESSAY WRITING (30 marks)

Answer one question only from this part, your composition should be about 250 words long.

1. Write a letter to the Municipal chief executive of your area complaining about the lack of basic social amenities in your municipality and how that affects the life of your people.
2. Write a story which ends 'we regretted venturing into it'.

PART B

COMPREHENSION (30 marks)

Read the following passage carefully and answer all the questions that follow.

Read the following passage carefully and answer all the questions that follow.

Once upon a time, a poacher went hunting in a thick forest. After walking many miles without seeing any animal, he decided to go home and rest till the following day.

As he sat on a rock to rest, he heard some rustle behind a tree, so he went closer to see a rabbit or a squirrel or a rat. But to his surprise, he saw a giant tortoise walking gently in a bush. 'What a way to show me luck! This tortoise can make a good supper for me and my family tonight', he said and made for the tortoise, but before he could touch the tortoise, it began to sing. Trouble decides to stay away from man; but man goes about looking for trouble.

The hunter was horrified. He took several steps back, still looking eagerly at the strange creature. Then as he grew more and more curious, the tortoise began to sing again. Trouble decides to stay away from man; but man goes about looking for trouble.