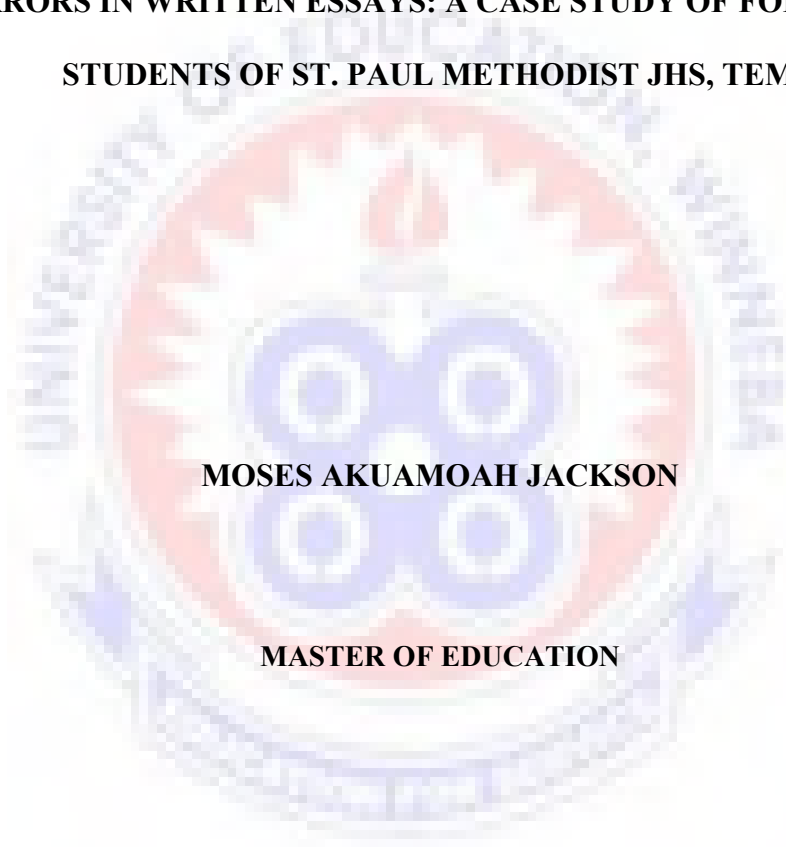**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

ERRORS IN WRITTEN ESSAYS: A CASE STUDY OF FORM TWO

STUDENTS OF ST. PAUL METHODIST JHS, TEMA

MOSES AKUAMOAH JACKSON

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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STUDENTS OF ST. PAUL METHODIST JHS, TEMA

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(7170080014)

A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign Language Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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SEPTEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

Signature:…………………………….

Date:………………………………….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Charlotte Fofo Lomotey
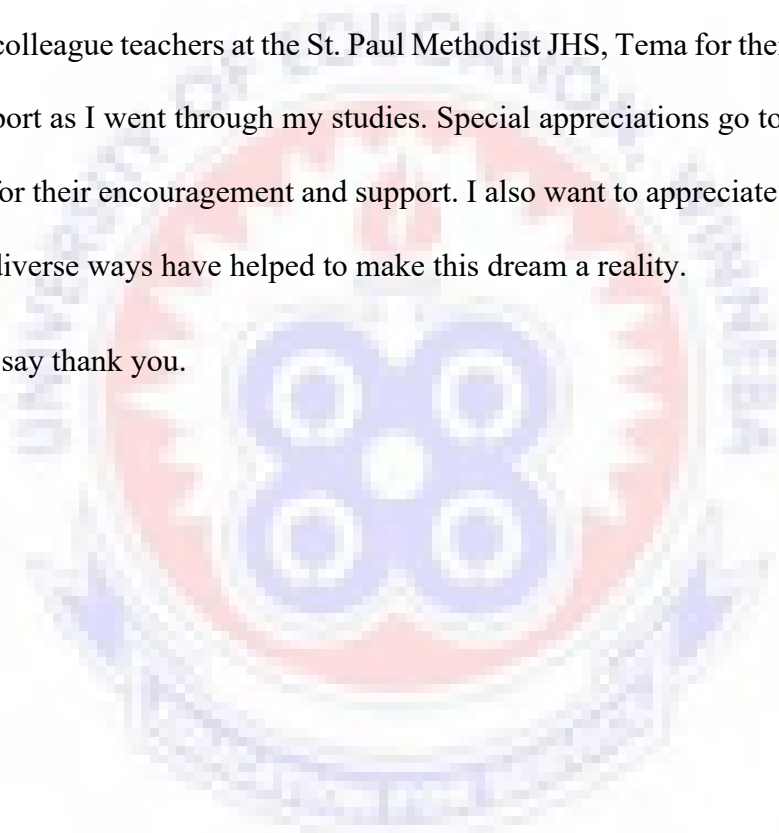
Signature :…………………………

Date:………………………………

DEDICATION

I dedicate the entire work to my dearest wife Mrs. Gloria Akuamoah Jackson and my unborn children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the support of these individuals who made it possible for a successful completion of this work. Special thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Charlotte Fofo Lomotey for the support, guidance and the encouragement accorded me through the entire process of proposal and the dissertation writing. I am also heavily indebted to my dearest my Mrs. Gloria Akuamoah Jackson for all she has done and continue to do for me. Further, my sincere gratitude goes to my special friend Mr. Afa Issah Salifu and my colleague teachers at the St. Paul Methodist JHS, Tema for their encouragement and support as I went through my studies. Special appreciations go to my families and friends for their encouragement and support. I also want to appreciate my course mates who in diverse ways have helped to make this dream a reality.

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ABSTRACT

English Language has emerged as an important means of communication enjoying the status of a second language as it is offered as a compulsory subject in Ghanaian schools from the upper primary to the SHS. This is a qualitative study aimed at finding the common errors form two students of Saint Paul Methodist JHS in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana commit in their essay writing. The study also sought to examine the causes of the errors and how they can be remedied to improve the teaching of L2 writing in the school. The study used a corpus of essay writings of 40 form two students. The school and the participants were purposively selected. The data were analyzed using the error analysis approach. The study identified these common errors spelling, word-omission, tense, punctuation, article and capitalization. The study also found that the most frequently committed error was spelling errors followed by word omission errors. The implications of these findings to the teaching of English writing are that teachers, where possible should have sufficient understanding of both the L1 and L2 of the students and teachers should explicitly teach for transfer, have adequate knowledge of how to identify students' writing errors, and use effective teaching strategies to improve students' English writing. Additionally, teachers should serve as worthy models of using appropriate English for students to emulate and also create a conducive classroom environment for students to participate in class activities. Lastly, teachers should create more opportunities for students to write.
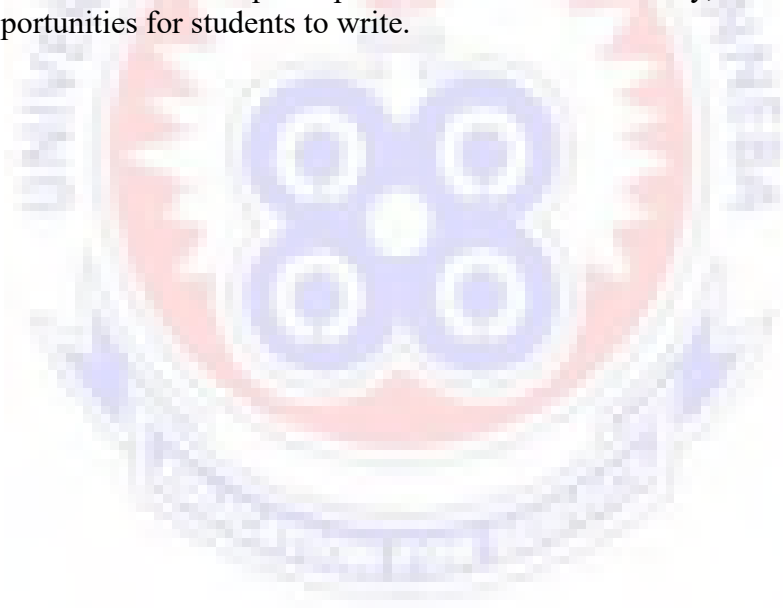
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the Study

The four language skills which every learner must master are listening, reading, speaking and writing. Of these, writing is the most difficult, which produces ideas through written form. Hamp-Lyons in Nunan (1991, p. 91) explains that it is true that writing is commonly a difficult activity for most people, both in mother tongue and in foreign language. In fact, according to Meyers (2005), writing is a way to produce language, just as humans do naturally when they speak. Writing is communication with others in a verbal way. In addition, Byrne (1979) states that writing is one of the language skills that turns writer's ideas into written form. It is also an action or a process of discovering and then reshaping and revising them. According to Bello (1997), writing is a productive language skill that plays an essential role in promoting language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and large chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar vocabulary they learn in class.

Again, writing is a difficult process even in the L1 and it is a bit more complicated to write in a foreign language than in the L1. Many studies indicate that for the beginning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, there tends to be interference from their first language in the process of writing in English (Benson, 2002; Cedar, 2004; Chen & Huang, 2003). Writing in a foreign language often presents the greatest challenge to the students at all stages, particularly essay writing because it is usually extended and therefore becomes very demanding. In the opinion of Palmer (1994), "writing is difficult to learn and so authors should utilize a process that includes planning, organizing, and revising to present meaning in words form" (p. 1). In line

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with Palmer, Richard and Renandya (2002, p. 303) state that there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. That, the difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating notions into legible text. As mentioned earlier, writing is a complex task; it is the most difficult of the language abilities and skills to acquire.

Similarly, (Bjork & Raisanen, 1997, p. 8) argue that "we highlight the importance of writing in all university curricula not only because of its immediate practical application, i.e. as an isolated skill or ability, but because we believe that seen from a broader perspective, writing is a thinking tool. It is a tool for language development, for critical thinking and, extension, for learning in all disciplines.' It can therefore be proposed that errors are inevitable features in Second Language learning. Thus, research on errors in L2 writing should play an important role in order to enable L2 learners to better understand their problems and produce better written texts (Darus, 2009). Namely learners' errors should be identified, categorized and analyzed for investigating the causes of errors and to find out the ways to reduce errors (Pongsiriwet, 2001). Moreover, as L1 interference is one of the biggest influences which cause L1 writers to produce errors, the examination of second language learning and teaching in EFL/ESL context is critical (Corder, 1996). Therefore, it is worth investigating errors in L2 writing with a focus on the interplay of errors and L1 interference.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Form 2 students of St Paul Methodist JHS encounter a myriad of challenges in their attempt to construct simple and meaningful sentences. This is often seen in their written essays and exercises where they constantly make errors such as spelling, punctuations, tenses, articles, word-omission and capitalization. It has therefore become somewhat difficult for teachers to read their work or scripts, let alone make

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meaning of their writings. This unfortunate turn of events goes a long way to affect their performance in class exercises, tests and examinations and later their promotion and other important examinations. The effect of this is that they are always marked down due to these errors which some teachers rather see as mistakes. These errors are prevalent in the written essays of the learners partly due to the nonexistence of a free writing time in the classroom for the learners except composition lessons.

Libraries, which could have helped the learners with the space and resource or reading materials, are either not available or ill-stocked. This situation does not motivate or encourage the students to read widely to enable them enrich their vocabulary stock, which will reflect in the learner writing good essays. Teachers insistence on keeping the approved textbook or course book away from the learners till when it is time for English Language lessons does not help matters. The excuse sometimes is that, when the textbooks are misplaced by the learners, they, the teachers are held accountable. This is definitely untenable and thus contributing to the numerous errors committed in almost all aspect of the Target Language. These apparent difficulties feature prominently in such areas as capitalization, tenses, spellings, articles, omission of words and punctuations errors among others. In fact, Kahn (2005) investigated errors of 30 form five Malaysian students in a similar study and found out that the students were weak in grammar. It is also a fact that generally speaking, learning a Second Language is a gradual process filled with a lot of errors at all levels. It is against this background that error analysis and the most effective and appropriate corrective measures must be used to help the teaching and learning of the English Language.

Presada & Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that error analysis could help them sort out the real problem. It was

confirmed that error analysis could lessen the number of errors in their students' written essays. From these errors that learners commit, teachers can determine accurately the learners' level of mastery of the L2 and discover what they still have to learn, unlearn or relearn. Teachers need to pay critical attention to these errors which would help them understand the different processes through which they were caused. These errors were committed based on the following; borrowing patterns from the Mother Tongue, extending patterns from the Target Language, and expressing meanings using words and grammar which are already known (Richard & Schmidt, 2002). According to Corder (1974), systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching. It is therefore important for the teacher to investigate the errors that students commit, identify the types of errors and the frequency at which these errors appear in the writings of the students.

It is an undeniable fact that learners committing errors is part and parcel of the teaching and learning process. However, it is important to realize that these errors if not identified, analyzed and remedied, the long term effects on our spoken and written English will be dire. Learners must pass the English Language paper at both the BECE and WASSCE levels to be able to move from one stage to the other. The performance of students in the English Language paper over the years has not been dwindling year in year out. Many stakeholders in the education sector feel that the standards of education are falling. It is against this notion that the Ghana Education Service under the Director-General held a forum dubbed 'National Forum on the Falling Standards of English in Ghana on 17, 2008. Similarly, the Chief Examiners' Report on English in the BECE from 2011 to 2017 points to the fact that students' performance in the English Language paper, especially in the paper 1 (Composition) leaves much to be desired. This study, being the first to analyze the errors in the written essays of form two students

of St Paul Methodist JHS, will go a long way to expose and equip the teacher to identify the errors learners commit in their essays, the causes of these errors and their implications in the teaching of English Language since knowing the source of learners' errors is an effective way to help reduce them (Bennui, 2008; Penny, 2001).

1.3   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the errors that form two students of St Paul Methodist JHS commit in their written essays. It analyzed and discussed the causes of the errors as well as the pedagogical implications of the findings, and made necessary suggestions to help both teachers and learners going forward.

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to identify the errors form two students of St Paul Methodist JHS commit in their written essays.

2. to Examine the causes of the errors found.

1.5   Research Questions

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions

1.   What common errors are frequently found in the written essays of form two students of St Paul Methodist JHS?

2.   What are the causes of these errors?

1.6   Significance of the Study

There are a number of benefits this study is likely to bring. First of all, it creates awareness among English Language teachers on the kinds of errors form two students make in their written essays as well as the sources or causes of these errors. Again, it

enlightens language teachers on the role errors play in the language acquisition process. Also, the findings of this study reveal to the language teacher aspects of the subject that need more attention in order to devise the appropriate remedial measures to help the learners. On the part of students, it will bring to light the various errors they commit in their written essays and this will prompt them on what makes them loose precious marks unnecessarily. In other words, it helps learners identify and correct their own errors with time. It is also envisaged that the findings of the study will help provide language curriculum planners with enough inputs on how to design appropriate language programs and resources at the JHS level. Finally, it is hoped that the results will serve as a source of reference and add to knowledge on errors and error analysis.

1.7 Delimitation

The study seeks to identify errors made by form two students of St Paul Methodist JHS in their written essays. It also looked at the causes of the errors and the pedagogical implications of these errors on the teaching and learning of English Language. The researcher limited himself to errors like spelling, word- omission, tense, punctuation, article and capitalization due to time and other constraints.

1.8 Limitations

This study focuses on only form two students of St Paul Methodist JHS in the Tema Metropolitan Assembly in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The findings therefore cannot be generalized as all Ghanaian students. The Form 2 class had a total population of 255. With this kind of population, it is difficult to go through individual essays to identify the errors the learners committed. To overcome this hurdle, the researcher has reduced the population to a sample size of 40 students with a representation from all the form two classes (A, B, C & D). Finally, time constraints

made it impossible to focus on the whole form two students and by extension the whole school.

1.9   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 error analysis. It includes what constitutes an error, sources of error, 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 students committed spelling, capitalization, punctuation, article, tense and omission of word errors. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the study. This includes the summary of findings of the study, the role of errors in English teaching and learning, the pedagogical implications, as well as suggestions for future research study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter provides theoretical basis of this research. It seeks to discuss the concept of error, distinction between errors and mistakes and the relevance of errors in second language learning, focuses some attention on various types of errors. The chapter 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 Error

According to Brown (1994), linguistic errors are 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 spoken or written language that deviate from the norms of language performance. The definitions by Brown and Burt et. al, differ from that of Corder (1981), who considers errors in the context of the effectiveness of the utterances made by language users and refer to them as "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.

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James (1998) opines that the concept of intentionality plays an essential role when defining an error since an error arises only when there was no intention to commit one. Therefore, an erroneous utterance is that which was made unintentionally, whereas when there is an intention to produce a deviant utterance, we simply call it deviance. As mentioned by Maicusi and Maicusí (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 the 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 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 their errors.

2.2   Errors and Mistakes

In linguistics, it is always important to distinguish between errors from mistakes. A distinction is always made between errors and mistakes where the former is defined as resulting from a learner's lack of proper grammatical knowledge, whilst the latter as a failure to utilize a known system correctly. According to Brown (2000), a mistake (in performance) refers to a performance error in that it is the learner's failure to utilize a known system correctly while an error (incompetence) is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner. It is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and

errors because they are technically two very different phenomena (Brown, 1980, p. 165). James (1998, p. 78) further adds that the basic distinction between a mistake and an error is also based on the concept of corrigibility. If the learner is able to self-correct after using an incorrect expression or utterance, we are talking about a mistake.

On the other hand, when the learner produces an unintentionally deviant utterance and is not able to self-correct, he or she has committed an error. Corder (1971 in James, 1998, p. 78) associates the error versus mistake distinction to the issue of competence versus performance. In this way, errors are seen as failure of competence and mistakes as failure of performance. Like an error, a mistake is also a deviation of the norms of the language but it is not systematic. Norrish (1983, p. 8) says that a mistake is an inconsistent deviation, that is, sometimes the learner *'gets it right'* but sometimes wrong. Richards et al (1985, p. 95) state that mistake, made by a learner when writing or speaking, is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or other aspects of performance. So we can say that a mistake is made by a learner because he does not apply the rule (s) that he actually knows.

Chomsky (1965) made a distinguishing explanation of competence and performance based on which, later on, the identification of mistakes and errors will be possible. Chomsky stated that "we thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)" (1965, p. 4). In other words, errors are thought of as indications of an incomplete learning, and that the speaker or hearer has not yet accumulated a satisfied language knowledge which can enable him or her avoid linguistics misuse. Relating knowledge with competence was significant enough to represent that the competence of the speaker is judged by means of errors that concern the amount of linguistic data he or she has been exposed to. However, performance

which is the actual use of language does not represent the language knowledge that the speaker has. According to Richard et al (2002), people may have the competence to produce an infinitely long sentence but when they actually attempt to use this knowledge (to 'perform'),- there are many reasons why they restrict the number of adjectives, adverbs, and clauses in any one sentence.

The actual state of the speaker somehow involves and influences the speaker's performance by either causing a good performance or mistakes. Thus, it is quite obvious that there is some kind of inter-relationship between competence and performance; somehow, a speaker can perform well if he or she has had already satisfied linguistic knowledge. As a support to this, Corder (1967) mentioned that mistakes are of no significance to 'the process of language learning' (P. 167). Sevor (1988, p. 3) similarly contends that an error is a kind of deviation one is not aware of and will therefore continue to repeat it if no purposeful teaching is done to halt the incidence of that error. Linguistically, an error is a deviant form which occurs regularly in the learner`s speech and or writing. If the deviant form occurs once, it is known as a mistake. A slip of the pen or tongue is an example of a mistake. Lennon (1991, p. 182) also defines error as a linguistic form or combination of forms which in the same context and under similar conditions of productions would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers' native speakers counterparts.

It is thus becoming obvious from the above views and propositions that it is nearly impossible and almost inevitable that learners of a foreign language, especially English cannot do without errors. Corder (1967 cited in Karra, 2006) refers to mistakes as unsystematic errors and systematic ones as errors. Unsystematic errors occur in one's native language and are not significant to the process of language learning. Systematic ones, on the other hand, occur when learning a second language. It can therefore be said

that errors are systematic deviation from the norms. An error cannot be self-corrected but for a mistake, if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker/writer, it can be corrected. Another way of identifying the difference between an error and a mistake is by looking at the frequency of a deviation. The identification of an error by observing, analyzing, and classifying to reveal what actually are operating within the learner's writing leads to error analysis.

A learner's errors are a reflection of a lack of understanding of the underlying competence in the language that is being learnt (Mezrag, 2013). Likewise, Ellis (1997) explains that errors reflect the gaps in the learner's knowledge; that is, an error is produced due to the fact that the learner cannot identify what is correct and incorrect. In contrast, a mistake reflects a learner's inefficient performance. This occurs because the learner is not able to correctly perform what one already knows. Jie (2008) also notes that a mistake occurs as a result of processing an undesirable habit rather than a lack of competence while an error is the breaches of rules of code. According to Jie (2008), an error happens from lack of requisite knowledge of a language learner. As such, one makes such errors in one's writing because one does not know the grammatical properties in the new language. The rules of L1 knowledge are then employed in L2 writing. From this explanation, it is reasonable to say that in language learning, an error is what learners commit in their L2 writing because they do not know the syntactic as well as the lexical structures of the second language whereas a mistake is in relation to the learners' low competence in using a second language. This distinction is crucial in this study because the researcher has to give a threshold of what becomes an error and what will be termed as a mistake.

2.3   Types of Errors

In error classification, different models have been adopted by different authorities in the field. For Brown (2000), errors can be viewed as global or local errors. Global errors are those ones that hinder communication and they affect the structure of the entire sentence, such as a missing essential part of the sentence, subject or verb. They prevent the sentence from being comprehended. On the other hand, local errors do not necessarily prevent the message from being understood because there is usually a minor violation of one segment of a sentence that allows the hearer to guess the intended meaning. The proposition of Brown (2000) appears rather limited for it has failed to cover wider grounds when compared with Dulay et.al (1982) who proposed four types of errors to explain how sentences deviate from the correct forms. These categories include:

- ❖ Errors in linguistic taxonomy
- ❖ Errors in surface strategy taxonomy
- ❖ Errors in comparative taxonomy
- ❖ Errors in communicative taxonomy

2.3.1   Errors in Linguistic Taxonomy

As far the linguistic taxonomy is concerned, classification of errors is on the basis of either or both the language components and the particular linguistic constituent the error affects. The language components include phonology, grammar, semantic and lexicon as well as discourse. Constituent on the other hand includes language elements that comprise each language component. For example, if an error occurs in a sentence, the question to ask is whether it occurs in the main or subordinate clause and which constituent is affected; noun, verb preposition. For the surface strategy taxonomy, emphasis is placed on ways surface structures are affected. Advocates of this surface

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strategy are of the view that cognitive processes play important role in the learner's reconstruction of the new language. The perspective roots for psychological influences that facilitate or hinder learning and types of errors committed under this category as follows:

➢ Omission errors

➢ Addition errors

➢ Misformation errors

➢ Misordering errors.

2.3.1.1 Omission Error

An omission is a type of error which has to do the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. In the process of writing or speaking, people's mental state may cause them to omit constituents such as verb, noun, adjective, etc. The omitted constituent could be on the content or grammar. This usually happens in the early stages of second language acquisition. Example:

a. *Kofi read African novels* instead of *Kofi reads African novels.*

b. *My father is good man*instead of *my father is a good man.*

c. *Our neighbor dog barks* instead of *our neighbor's dog barks*

d. *The driver here*instead of *the driver is here*.

In the sentences, some items which are required have been omitted. Verbs are inflected with an –s when the third person singular pronoun like she, he and it, is used but this was omitted in the first sentence. Again in English, countable nouns especially singular forms must always have articles. This was not done in the second and third sentences

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2.3.1.2 Addition errors

Errors relating to additions are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al, 1982). Errors usually occur in the later stages of L2 learning, when the learner has already acquired some target language rules. This happens when the learners overuse certain grammatical rules of the target language. Example: *We must to see the doctor* instead of *He must see the doctor*. Haryono (2011) categorizes addition errors into three types as below:

2.3.1.1 Double marking

These addition errors are described as the failure to delete certain items which are not required in the linguistic construction. Examples:

a. *I didn't saw anybody there* instead of *I didn't see anybody there.*

b. *My friends wanted to killed me* instead of *my friends wanted to kill me.*

In both sentences, two items rather than one are marked for the same feature.

2.3.1.2 Regularization

Regularization errors refer to those having exceptional items of the given class that do not take a marker's form. In other words, regularization occurs when learners apply rules used to produce the regular ones (adding –s) to those exceptions to the rules. For example,

a. *gooses* instead of *geese*(plural for goose)

b. *louses* instead of *lice* (plural for louse)

c. *Ranned* instead of *ran*(past tense for run)

d*. Sweeped* instead of *swept* (past tense for sweep)

In the examples above, it is realized that irregular names and tenses rather took regular form markers respectively in (a), (b) and (c), (d).

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2.3.2   *Simple addition*

These errors refer to the addition of an element to the correct utterance. Examples:

a. *I am is a dressmaker* instead of *I am a dressmaker.*

b. *Mum can to cook the rice* instead of *Mum can cook the rice*.

In addition, James (1998) suggests a category which is; Misformation. These errors occur when learners use wrong form of the morphemes or structures in instances the learner supplies items which are incorrect. For example, learner using **cutted** instead of **cut** to express past tense. Examples of misformation are indicated by the use of wrong forms of certain morphemes or structures. In misformation, the learner supplies an item though it does not conform to the accepted norm. There are three sub-types of misformation errors. They are as follows:

2.3.2.1 *Archi–forms*

Here, the learner selects a marker of one member of a class to represent another in the class. The form selected by the learner is called archi–forms. For instance, in the use of demonstrative adjectives this, that, these, and those, the following are what the learner produces;

a. *This tables are mine* instead of *This table is mine.*

b. *That cats came here* instead of *That cat came here.*

c. *These dress is nice* instead of *These dresses are nice.*

d. *Those bottle got lost* instead of *Those bottles got lost.*

This and *that* should be followed by singular forms, while *these* and *those* should be followed by the plural forms but as in the sentences above, they were wrongly used.

2.3.2.2 Alternating forms

As learners develop more vocabulary and grammar, the use of archi-forms often develop into free alternation of various members of the class with each other. Examples:

a. *I have seen her yesterday* instead of *I saw her yesterday*.

b. *We would have came earlier* instead of *we would have come earlier.*

Finally, Dulay et al (1982), state that misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. They usually occur consistently in both L1 and L2 learners' constructions that have already been acquired. For example, in "I don't know what is that", the learner intends to construct "I don't know what that is". Therefore the position of **is** and **that** are misordered. Misordering is indicated by the incorrect placement of certain morphemes. Examples:

a. *Adwoa all the time breaks the plates* instead of *Adwoa breaks the plates all the time.*

b *We are leaving now?* instead of *Are we leaving now?*

On comparative taxonomy errors classification, attention is focused on comparison between the structure of language learner errors and certain other types of construction. The types of errors that fall under this include;

a) Intralingual or developmental errors

b) Interlingual errors

c) Ambiguous errors

d) Unique errors

Dulay et al (1982), indicate that communicative effect taxonomy looks at errors from the perspective of their effect on the listener or reader. It focuses on distinguishing between errors that seem to cause miscommunication which include global errors and

local errors. For Brown, global errors hinder communication and they affect the structure of the entire sentence, such as a missing essential part of the sentence, subject or verb. They prevent the sentence from being comprehended. On the other hand, local errors do not necessarily prevent the message from being understood because there is usually a minor violation of one segment of a sentence that allows the hearer to guess the intended meaning.

2.4   Causes of 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 hypothesis. 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

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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. Haydari 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) who 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 differences between words and sentence structures of the mother tongue and those of the target language. Finally, James (1998:178) identifies the following as sources of second language errors: interference errors or interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, communication strategy-based errors and induced errors. These error sources 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 have pen (Mewɔ kyeredua)* instead of *I have a pen,* omitting the article 'a'. This happens because theoretically, Akan 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 *Girl beautiful (Ababawa fɛɛfɛ)* instead of *A beautiful girl.* This is due to the fact that in Akan, adjectives mostly appear after nouns 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 analyze 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 in the, 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 errors caused by learning strategies include;

2.4.2.1 *False analogy*

Many learners' errors can be attributed to wrong hypothesis formed by these learners about the target language. For example, some learners think that *s* is the marker of the present tense. So,they produce; He is talk to the teacher. Similarly, they think that was is the past tense marker. Hence they say; it was happened last night. Again, the learner assumes that a new item behaves like the one already learnt. For instance,

he or she has learnt that the past tense of *play* is *played* and so assumes that the same rule applies to *sing*. So, this child writes *singed* as the past tense of *sing* which is not right.

2.4.2.2 Misanalysis

Learners resort to wrong hypothesis. For example the sentence, *ICT tools and its uses* shows that the learner assumes that when an *s* is added to it, you have a plural form, hence a false concept is formed. This results in the learner misanalysing the target language.

2.4.2.3 Incomplete rule application

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. Similarly, Richards (1971) explains that when he talks about incomplete application of rules, it is the occurrence of structures whose deviancy represents the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable utterances. An example is seen in: They showed me *who is the manager of the place* instead of *who the manager of the place is*. Here, learners have used a wh – element but have failed to invert the subject and verb.

2.4.2.4 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. Selinker (1972) refers to the process of overgeneralization as an 'extension' of the rule in the TL to an 'environment' in which it does not apply. Jakobovits (1969) defines generalizations or transfer as: "the use of previously available strategies in new situations… in second language learning…

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some of these strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the second language, but others perhaps due to superficial similarities, will be misleading and inapplicable" (p. 62). Examples of overgeneralization include the use of comed 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 as in he go. Again, this can occur when learners misuse words or grammatical rules. For instance, in the sentence, *The people that beat us up,* the learner used a relative pronoun *that* instead of *who* and that is an error.

2.4.3   Communication strategy-based errors

This source is characterized by holistic strategies or approximation. Here, learners lack the required form of the language item so they tend to use an equivalent or another near item in the target language. It takes a number of forms. The first is to use a synonym. The second is to coin a word.

2.4.4   Induced errors

These errors are the result of learners being misled by the way teachers give definitions, examples, explanations and present a structure as well as wrong pattern of drills. In other words, these errors are caused mostly by the teaching and learning process as follows:

2.4.4.1   Teacher–talk induced errors

This kind of errors might be caused by both, native or non–native teachers if they do not provide models of the standard target language in class.

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2.4.4.2 Materials–induced errors

Teaching materials such as textbooks, pamphlets, pictures and flash cards with errors make the learners confused and they make similar errors in their course of learning the target language.

2.4.4.3 Exercise–based induced errors

The learners make errors while doing exercises especially on sentence combination when the teacher has provided the learners with two different sentences to put together. For instance, if learners have been taught that *if* is equivalent to *when*, and they are given these sentences (*I will eat* and *the food is rice*) to combine, this is what they will produce; *I will eat when the food is rice* instead of *I will eat if the food is rice*.

2.4.4.4 Errors induced by pedagogical priorities

Learners' achievement tends to match with teacher expectations based on what they wish to achieve. Some teachers choose to prioritize one of the following: accuracy, fluency or the idiomatic in teaching communication. Thus, if fluency is considered as superior, accuracy would have lower priority or vice versa.

2.4.4.5 Look–up errors

There are many learners' dictionaries and grammar books which provide guidelines on how to search aspects of the L2. However, learners fail to read them and as a result, they are unable to build their vocabulary stock. In addition, the learners sometimes incorrectly use the new words from the dictionary or get incorrect references from the grammar books, leading to the errors in their writings/utterances.

2.5   Approaches to the Study of Errors: Error Analysis (EA)

To fill the gap created by Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis (EA) emerged in the 1960s to demonstrate that the errors L2 learners make are not always due to the learners' native language but due to other complex factors. Maicusi, Maicusi and Lopex (2000) suggest that Error Analysis supplanted Contrastive Analysis (CA) and becomes a recognized part of applied linguistics. According to Corder (1975), EA is reserved for the study of erroneous utterances produced by groups of learners' language. Keshavarz (1997) suggests that there are two branches of Error Analysis; theoretical and applied. According to him, theoretical error analysis is concerned with process and strategies of second language learning and similarities with first language acquisition. Applied error analysis, on the other hand, deals with organizing remedial courses and adapting appropriate materials and teaching strategies based on the findings of theoretical error analysis.

James (2001) describes Error Analysis as the alternative approach used to investigate the errors in the target language which are ignored by L2 students. In other words, this ignorance is occasionally from the misuse of the linguistic properties that the users do not know how to deal with. Jie (2008) endorses Error Analysis, which has been prominently selected to analyze the errors caused by the influence of the mother tongue. Clearly seen, error analysis does not only assist researchers to identify L1 interference in the target language but also helps L2 learners understand why they make such errors and start learning to correct them. As stressed by AbiSamra (2003), Error Analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the target language and the target language itself (Abeywickrama, 2010). This indicates that language errors do not only result from L1 interference but other sources which include overgeneralization,

simplification, development, communication, avoidance and overproduction (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

Error Analysis deals with the learners' performance in terms of cognitive processes. It recognizes the input learners receive from the language. The basis of Error Analysis is the fact that learners provide us with an understanding of the underlying process of second language acquisition (Erdogan, 2005). Xu (2004) states that trained and sophisticated language teachers have undoubtedly applied Error Analysis to one degree or another for decades since it came to being. They have studied their students' recurring mistakes, classified them into categories and used them as the basis for preparing lessons and materials designed to remediate such errors. In support of this, Nonkukhetkong (2013) asserts that the analysis of errors found in learners' pieces of writing can be very helpful. Some scholars employed Error Analysis, one of the famous methods in writing classes, to improve students' writing performance. Presada and Badea (2014) for instance, analyzed the causes of errors made by students in their translation classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They confirmed that Error Analysis could lessen the number of errors in their students' work. Again, Zafar (2016) states that Error Analysis is an effective tool to improve her business students' writing ability after a two-month remedial writing course.

Another scholar who approves Error Analysis is Hinno (2004). Hinno confirms that Error Analysis is beneficial after her long period of study of literature related to Error Analysis. She mentions that error analysis can help teachers to prepare accurate and precise teachings which are suitable for their students. Nevertheless, Error Analysis is also criticized as a model with confused explanatory (process) and descriptive aspects (product) and that the error categories lack precision and specification (Dulay, Burt &

Krashen, 1982). James (1998) indicates that EA does not take into consideration the strategy of avoidance in L2 learning. Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977, cited in Owu-Ewie & Lomotey, 2016) identified six potential weaknesses in Error Analysis. These are the analysis of errors in isolation, the classification of identified errors, statements of error frequency and identification of points of difficulty. Others are the ascription of causes of systematic error and biases nature of sampling. Notwithstanding, error analysis has added a layer to the analysis and classification of L2 students' errors (Owu-Ewie &Lomotey, 2016). The concept of error analysis hence helps to reveal the types and sources of errors which could lead to an effective way of reducing errors made by L2 learners.

2.6   Importance of Errors in Language Learning

Language learning, like any kind of human endeavor, 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)

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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.

Studies by Karra (2006), Mohammed (2013) and Jabeen, Kazemian and Shahbaz (2015) have identified the following as the importance of errors in language teaching and learning: They help the teacher to know a student's progress, provide feedback; they tell the researcher something about the effectiveness of one's teaching techniques, and show one what parts of the syllabus has been inadequately learned or taught and thus need further attention. 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 remedial syllabus or a program of re-teaching. Again, errors show how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner uses to help him or her to learn from these errors.

Closely linked to these significance of learners' errors above are L1 acquisition and L2 learning are parallel processes, they are ruled by the same mechanisms, procedures and strategies. Learning a foreign or second language is probably facilitated by the knowledge of the L1. Others include the fact that errors reflect the learners' inbuilt syllabus or what they have taken in, but not what the teachers have put into them. Therefore, there is a difference between 'input' and 'output.' It is worth mentioning also that errors show that both learners of L1 and L2 develop an independent language system – a transitional competence'. And the terms 'error' and 'mistake' should not be used interchangeably. Also, errors are important because they (a) tell the teacher what

he or she should teach, (b) are a source of information for the researcher about how the learning proceeds, and (c) allow the learners to test their L2 hypothesis.

Errors, both in first language and target language, are inevitable in the language learning process. Errors, handled in error analysis, are significant in three different ways. Firstly, learners' errors are significant to the teacher, as Corder (1987), the forerunner of EA, explains, "…to the teacher in that they (error) tell him (the teacher), if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed, and consequently what remains for him (learner) to learn. Secondly, errors are important to the researcher as Corder (1987), remarks: "…they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language". Thirdly, errors are the most momentous to the student as Corder (1987), comments; "…they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn."

2.7   Related Studies

The analysis of the production of errors shows quite clearly that all systematic errors produced by the learner have a source. According to Xu (2004), such errors provide evidence for a much more complex view of the learning process, in which the learner is considered as an active participant in the formation of and revision of hypotheses regarding the rules of the target language. As indicated earlier, some of the errors second language learners commit come from the L2. Kim (1998) in a study to investigate errors in English verbs with reference to tense, mood, and voice found that mood were the most frequently committed errors followed by errors in tense. This study was conducted among Korean EFL students who were asked to translate Korean sentences to English. Kim noted that the errors originated from overgeneralization

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which occurred most while L1 transfer and simplification had the least occurrence. Again, Kim (2002) conducted a study to examine the sources and the nature of learners' errors. He used 30 writing samples of Korean students from college freshman students who were registered for TOEIC class. Most of the learner's errors were in the areas of verbs, prepositions, articles, plural/singular agreement, adjectives and conjunctions. The study showed that most of the learners' errors were developmental errors.

Another research worthy of study for this research is the work of Bataineh (2005). Battaineh in a study to identify the kinds of errors committed by Jordanian first, second, third and fourth year minority EFL students identified nine types of errors. The nine types of errors identified were deletion of the indefinite article, writing *a* as part of the noun/adjective following it, substitution of the indefinite for the definite article, and substitution of the definite for the indefinite article. Other errors were substitution of *a* for *an*, use of the indefinite article with unmarked plurals, use of the indefinite article with marked plurals, use of the indefinite article with uncountable nouns, and use of the indefinite article with adjectives. Chuang (2005) in a similar study identified a number of errors and an examination of all the errors showed that the foundation of students' formal errors fell into broad categories. The top ten categories were determiners, nouns, verbs, grammatical prepositions, lexical misconceptions, punctuations, sentence parts, tenses and aspects, modals and lexical-grammatical prepositions, and lastly syntactic complementation of a word. A further examination showed that the top ten most frequently error features were missing definite article, bare singular count noun for plural, redundant definite article, mis-selection of preposition, lexical misconception, wrong tense and aspect non-agreement, wrong collocation, missing a/an and lastly comma splice all in the target language.

Likewise, Huang (2006) presents an analysis of 34 Taiwanese English majors writing errors based on web-based writing programme. They included categories of grammar, mechanics, style and usage. He then concluded that the most EFL students' errors were not due to insufficient command of linguistic complexity. On the contrary, the students made basic errors such as subject-verb agreement or incomplete sentences indicating intralingual errors. Of the three elements of writing; content, organization and language, it is reasonable to say that language has been considered the most difficult for L2 writers due to their limited language proficiency or limited linguistic knowledge. Silver (1993) explains that inadequate language knowledge at times, leads to ineffective L2 writing on account of the difference between the first and second language.

Furthermore, Weigle (2002) advocates that because of the constraints of limited second language knowledge, writing in a second language may be hampered due to the need to focus on language rather than content. She also confirms that it is impossible for L2 students to write properly in a second language without linguistic knowledge regarding grammar and vocabulary. That is, L2 writing can be more difficult if learners are not able to acquire the syntactic properties of the English language, which makes them rely on their first language as well as overgeneralize rules when writing in a second language. Obviously, from the above discussion, it is realized that there is a peculiar problem impeding the effective writing of second language learners. The causes can emanate from ignorance and inappropriate use of L2 rules as well as the difference between the L1 and the L2 systems. Sarfaz (2011) argues that though students are taught grammatical rules of target language, they lack practice and positive feedback. Due to this, L2 writers employ their own systems, eventually leading to errors in their writing.

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter deliberated on the concept of error and the distinction between error and mistake. It also conferred the importance of errors in second language learning, the causes of errors as well as their categories. The chapter finally presented the approaches to studying errors as well as related studies on errors in second language acquisition. The use of Error Analysis in identifying and describing the source of the learners' errors has received much attention by researchers. 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 sources of the errors as well as what causes 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

This chapter presents the methodology and research design adopted to carry out the research. The chapter also discusses the sources of data, population and sampling, sample size of the study and the factors that informed the researcher's choice of procedures that were used to collect data for the study. Reliability and validity of the research instruments are discussed as well. The research method used is a qualitative one. Catherine (1999, pp. 2-3) states that qualitative research is an approach to the study of social phenomena: its various genres are naturalistic and imperative, and they draw on multiple methods of inquiry. Some characteristics of qualitative research are; take place in a natural world, use multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, it is

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emergent rather than prefigured and fundamentally interpretive. Louis (20007, p. 168) states that qualitative research has some purposes, which are describing and reporting the creation of key concepts, theory generation and testing. Sugiyono (2008, p. 8) states that the term naturalistic shows that the research is natural, on the normal situation without manipulating the condition emphasizes on the natural description.

This research is a case study. Yin in Nunan (1992, p. 76) states that a case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Merriam in Nunan (1992, p. 77) states that the qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. In addition, Deddy (2008, p. 201) states that case study is the comprehensive explanation of some aspect of individual, group, organisation (community), programme or social situation. The case study in this research is that the researcher wants to analyze the various errors committed by form two students in their written essays.

3.1   Research Design

Research design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance (Kellinger, 300). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) also define research design as the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. Similarly Owu Ewie (2012) explains research design provides the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research question stated. This work hinges on qualitative research largely. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (1998), is defined as an inquiry of understanding based on a clear methodological process that was a social or human problem by building on a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports, detailed

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views of informants and conducted in the setting. Also, Hollloway and Wheeler (1985) opine that qualitative research involves deriving information from observation, interviews or verbal interactions and focuses on the meaning and interpretation of the participants responses. The descriptions above fits into the researcher's aim of using interviews and exercises in collecting data from the participants to find out the errors committed in their written essays.

This study analyzes the errors made by Form 2 students of St Paul Methodist J.H.S, Tema. For Owu-Ewie (2012), a qualitative research implies a detailed verbal description of characteristics, case and setting by using interviews, observations and documents as the data collecting procedure. However, two of the above mentioned strategies were employed to identify errors in the written essays of the learners. A qualitative content analysis of the students' writings was conducted based on the error analysis approach. As Ary et al (2006 p. 464) state, "content or document analysis is a research method applied to written or visual materials for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material". For this, the written essays of the learners were analyzed for the common errors they commit.

3.2   Population and Sampling

Best and Kahn (2006) defined population as a group of individuals who have one or more common characteristics and of interest to the researcher. For Creswell (2013), it refers to the group of interest to the researcher; that is, the group to which one would like the results of the study to be generalized. The school has a population of about 701 students. Form 2 was chosen for a number of reasons including the fact that it has the biggest population size and serves as the mid- point in the JHS system. It is the researcher's hope that the Form 2 students would form a good sample to determine the generalizability of the study. Again, the school and class were chosen mainly

because of proximity. Therefore, the target population for the study is the JHS two students and the forms one and three English teachers of St. Paul Methodist JHS in the Tema Metropolitan Area of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The researcher is the Form 2 English teacher at the school.

3.3   Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted the random sampling technique so that students got equal chance to be selected for the study. The process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population is known as sampling (Polit et al, 2001). It can also be referred to as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behaviour with which to conduct a study. The sample size for the research consists of 40 students from the Form 2 class which involves girls 22 and 18 boys. In sampling, a portion that represents the whole population is selected (Polit et al, 2001). In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select the form two students since he needed to "choose who to include in the study based on their ability to provide necessary data" (Parahoo, 1997, p. 232). The researcher selected the Form 2 class because that is the class he teaches and it involves students of different intellectual abilities and therefore serves as a better representative of the students. The researcher also considered time and money in selecting this sample rather than trying to study the entire population. The target population was 40stuents out of a total of 255 students.

3.4   Source of Data

Creswell (2013) affirms that research instruments involve data collection and are designed to answer research questions. This study made use of students' written essays, forming the basic source of data to answer the research questions. Written essay was given to students since they are the outcome of a planned language production. The

researcher informed the school authorities and the two teachers about the study in order to ensure some level of co-operation throughout the study. The chosen site for the study is the St. Paul Methodist JHS in the Tema Metropolitan Assembly in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The school is a public-private partnership between the Methodist Church Ghana and the GES, represented by the Tema Metro Education Directorate. The school currently has a total population of 701. It is a mixed one and among the top ten in the Tema Metropolis, in terms of infrastructure, personnel, academic performance and others.

3.5   Instruments for Data Collection

Data collection as used here means the modes through which data were collected. These strategies included interviews and exercises. A research instrument is a systematically prepared document purposely designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data (Parahoo, 1997). Parahoo argues that a research instrument is a systematically prepared form or document purposely designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data. Hence, the researcher used students' written essays for the study. The main objective of this study is to identify and analyse students' writing errors, hence the use of written essays as the major instrument of the study. The students were given a written test. They were given adequate guidance on how many words to write. They were then given a time limit within which to work. The purpose of the essay was to identify the types of errors students commit and classify them accordingly. The students were asked to write on 'what I will do differently to improve on my academic performance in form two'. The researcher scored the written essays per the West African Examination Council's marking scheme. The breakdown

of the marks were as follows: Content (10 marks), Organization (5 marks), Expression (10 marks) and Mechanical Accuracy (5 marks).

3.6   Data Analysis

Patton (2002) mentions different forms of data analysis which include unique case orientation, holistic perspectives, context sensitivity, voice perspectives and reflexivity. Other data analysis strategies are inductive analysis and creative synthesis. Owu-Ewie (2012) describes inductive qualitative analysis as the type where the researcher groups responses based on his judgment that the responses are similar. However, the Error Analysis Approach which is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the forms of language writing and speaking (Richards & Schmidt, 2002) was used to analyze errors in students' written essays. The written essays were collected from the 40 students who form the sample for the study. The following steps as outlined by Gass and Selinker (2001) were used: Data collection, identification of errors and a statement of error frequency. The written essays were read, marked and analyzed. In line with the Taxonomy of Error Analysis designed by James (1998, p. 304), categorization and sub-categorization were used to record all the occurrence of errors which were committed by the students. The errors were categorized into tense, articles, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and omission of word errors.

3.7   Reliability and Validity

Reliability, according to Polit et al (2001), is referred to as the degree of consistency with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure. On this note, the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to write on the same essay topics within a period of two weeks. This was to ensure consistency of results.

(De Vos, 1998, p. 85) refers to reliability as the extent to which independent administration of the same instrument yields the same results under comparable conditions. It is observed that the less variation the instrument produces in repeated measurements of an attribute, the higher the reliability. There is therefore a relationship between reliability and validity since an instrument which is not valid cannot possibly be reliable (Polit & Hungler, 1999, p. 250).

Validity, on the other hand, is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. The researcher presented the essay topics to the head teacher and other two teachers in the school to evaluate in order to ensure their content validity based on. It can also be defined as a measure of truth or falsity of the data obtained through using the research instrument. It is classified as internal and external validity of measuring instrument (Burns & Grove, 2001, p. 226). In this study, validity refers to the measure of truth or falsity of the data collected and the instrument used. The instrument's validity can be regarded as the extent to which the data collection "instrument actually reflects the abstract construct being examined" (Burns & Grove, 2001, p. 814). Validity of the measuring instrument, according to De Vos (1998, p. 83) is a valid instrument which measures the concept in question and it measures it accurately. The three major classifications of estimating the validity of the data-collecting instrument are the self-evident measures, pragmatic measures and construct validity (Brink & Wood, 1998, p. 175). The researcher presented the essay topic (question) to the Head of the English Language Department of the school, though that is not the norm, to evaluate in order to ensure their content validity based on the standardized level of the students.

3.8   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology and examined the methods adopted in collecting the data. The research design was broadly looked at since a qualitative study was done. The population and sampling techniques, the particular people selected and how they were selected. The other areas included the source data, the instrument used in collecting the data and the data analysis method used. Reliability and validity issues were also addressed briefly.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected and findings made during the research process. The findings have been derived from the analysis of data collected from exercises of students. This therefore served as the basis on which the analysis was done. The section discusses the common errors identified in the written essays (exercise) of the form two students, the causes of these errors based on the findings and the remedies thereof. After a careful analysis of the findings, it was realized that several factors accounted for the errors in the learners' written essays. Spelling errors were due

to incomplete learning of rules which led learners to add incorrect elements, omitted elements needed and in other cases substituted letters in words. On word omission, learners omitted such words as simple prepositions and linking verbs making their utterances/writing incomplete. Tense errors also occurred due to over-generalization where learners used verbs wrongly leading to distortion of the meaning of their utterance/writing. Ignorance of rule restrictions and incomplete learning could have contributed to these errors. Punctuation errors were committed in cases where learners used the marks/signs wrongly. This was due to the ignorance of the rule of restriction, incomplete learning of rules as well as L1 interference. With article errors, learners used them wrongly and in some cases, where articles were required, they were omitted. Finally on capitalization, the analysis showed that learners could not differentiate between proper and common nouns or those that must be capitalized, no matter where they appear in a particular sentence. This was due to incomplete learning of rules. The analyzed data have been represented in simple percentage and bar charts. These are further explained with examples in their various sections.

4.1   Categories of learners' errors

The errors were identified and categorized into different error types by the researcher. The errors identified in students' essays were counted and rated in percentages in relation to their frequency. They were spelling errors, word-omission errors, tense errors, punctuation errors, article errors and capitalization errors. The individual error types are discussed here.

4.1.1   Orthography/spelling errors

Jordan (2002) explains spelling as trying to write what one hears. According to him, spelling involves a whole lot of guessing which leads to errors. Also, spelling is a

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set of conventions that regulate the way of using graphemes to represent a language in its written form. In other words, spelling is the rendering of speech sound into writing. It is one of the elements of orthography, and highly standardized spelling is a prescriptive element. It is the art of forming words from letters. Spelling is a key component of writing because a wrongly spelt word may change the meaning of the message a writer intends to convey. Again, Wasowicz (2007) contends that a major problem of learners is their inability to draw a phoneme distinction and many vowel sounds with the same letter. In all, a total of 93 instances were recorded. The commonest spelling errors identified in the data collected are spelling errors due to addition of letters (e. g. attentivelly instead of attentively), omission of letters (e.g. pratical instead of practical), and substitution of letters (e.g. reduse instead of reduce).

4.1.1.1   *Spelling errors due to addition of letters*

This particular category deals with the inappropriate addition of letters which resulted in the words being misspelt. It was discovered from the analysis that learners added extra letters that were not required hence rendering them wrong. The sentences below illustrate this situation:

1. I will listen attentivelly. (attentively)

2. I am writting to explain. (writing)

3. I will excell. (excel

4. I want to concentreat. (concentrate)

5. So that I will be one of the interlligent students. (intelligent)

It is estimated that the students' inability to read widely and consistently often limits them as to the number of words they encounter, thus affecting their spelling.

4.1.1.2   Spelling errors due to omission of letters

This category has to do with the words learners spelt omitting some letters that make up the words. This can be seen in the following sentences:

1. I am fin. (fine)

2. I want to concetrate. (concentrate)

3. My colleges and I. (colleagues)

4. So that we can do pratical work. (practical)

5. We go swiming. (swimming)

A careful study of the sentences above reveal that letter(s) got omitted from certain words leading to them being spelt wrongly. This situation can be attributed to the fact that the learners spelt words based on how they hear them being pronounced and not necessarily the way they are spelt.

4.1.1.3   Spelling errors due to substitution

Here, the analysis showed that spelling errors occurred when certain letters were replaced with other similar ones. Below are some examples:

1. He will advice me. (advise)

2. I will revice.(revise)

3. I will reduse the time for watching tv. (reduce)

4. Will be attentive when class in section.(session)

5. Some of the subjects tought. (taught)

The analysis reveal that the substitution is due to the fact that learners write the words just as they pronounce them or hear them being pronounced. The summary of these errors are presented in Table 4.1.1 and Figure 4.1.1 respectively.

Table 4.1.1: Summary of Spelling Errors

Type of spelling errors	Frequency	Percentage
Spelling due to addition	32	34.4
Spelling due to omission	40	43
Spelling due to substitution	21	22.58
Total	**93**	**100**

Table 4.1.1 and Figure 4.1.1 represent the summary of spelling errors found in the study. The information in table 1 is illustrated in figure 1. Spelling errors due to omission recorded the highest in this category with 40 out of 93 occurrences representing 43% of the total number. Spelling errors due to addition recorded 32 cases representing 34.4%. The lowest here is the spelling errors due to substitution which also had 21 instances representing 22.58% of the total number of spelling errors in the data. According to Hassan (2014), the way learners of a language pronounce words to a great extent, influences how such words are written. This makes comprehension virtually impossible. Due to this, there is a considerable effect of pronunciation on writing and this is because English Language does not contain a single instance of one-to-one correspondence between sounds and letters (Norman, 2000). One cannot gloss over these spelling errors since they invariably affect the meaning of the text concerned.

Summary of Spelling Errors
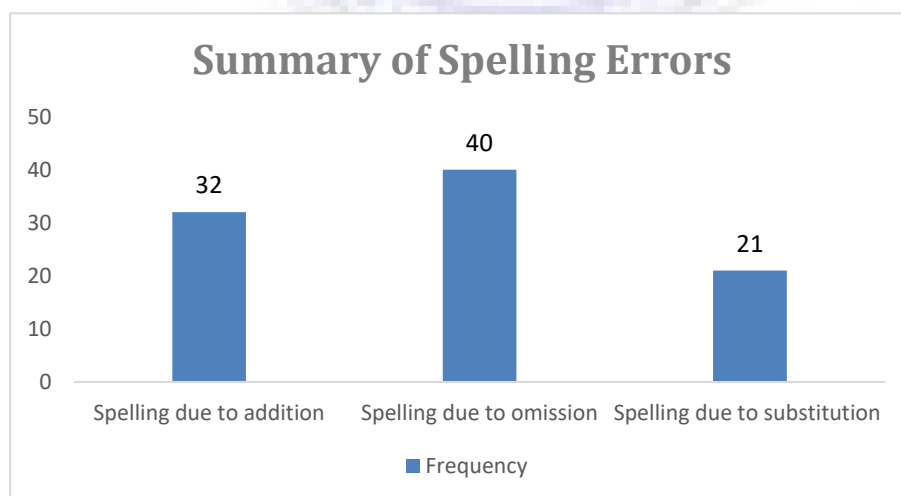
Figure 4.1.1: Summary of spelling errors

In a related study, Benyo (2014) examined spelling errors made by students of Dongola University. The result showed that the students committed errors of letter omission, addition transportation and substitution. He thus concluded that the errors were due to irregularity of English spelling, ignorance and incomplete application of rules. It was also revealed that the difference in the sound and spelling system of English is the main source of students' spelling errors. The researcher therefore agrees with the view that English spelling is difficult and irregular (Macline, 2001). There is no doubt however that spelling plays an essential role in communicating one's ideas and so any impediment in the way of both teachers and learners in the course of learning must be thoroughly dealt. One cannot over stretch the point that a misspelt word may affect the written product and may lead to misunderstanding. Again, these spelling errors can be regarded as overt and covert errors. According to Brown (2002, p. 220) and Ellis (1996, p. 710) covert errors are grammatically correct but not interpretable within the context of communication, whereas overt errors refer to the obviously ungrammatical utterances. Brown (2000) again suggests that L1 interference in spelling could be due to morphosyntatic rules of the language of the learner being different from the L2. Owu-Ewie (n.d.) supports this line of thinking that L1 speaker encounter difficulty producing certain sounds in the L2, especially when they do not exist in the L1. Additionally, Randall (2005, p. 142) confirms that phonological differences between L1 and L2 play a role in the error production regarding orthographic knowledge of users, especially vowel distinction clusters.

4.1.2   *Punctuation errors*

According to Sekyi-Baidoo (2013), punctuation constitutes a set of symbols and marks which are used to clarify meaning in text by separating strings of words into clauses, phrases and sentences. In fact, they communicate the author's intentions and show how a sentence is constructed and should be read. Similarly, punctuation marks include comma, colon, exclamation mark, question mark, semicolon, quotation marks, apostrophe, and full stop (Christensen, Gotoh & Renals, 2001). Additionally, punctuation is the use of special marks that you add to writing to separate phrases and sentences, to show that something is a question, etc. In fact, to write well, you must punctuate well. Punctuation errors occur when any of these marks is omitted (McCuen & Winkler, 2000). The analysis revealed that 57 errors were committed with respect to punctuation, involving wrong use of punctuation marks and omission of punctuation marks. Below is the break down.

4.1.2.1 *Wrong use of punctuation*

This kind of error occurs when a learner uses a punctuation mark inappropriately in written text. Some of these errors are seen in the sentences below;

1. My mum see's to it. (sees)

2. How are you.(How are you ?)

3. I will end here, hope to hear. (I will end here. Hope to hear)

4. Everydays lesson. (Every day's lesson)

5. How about your family. (How about your family?)

In the sentence (1) and (4), the apostrophe, usually used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word, or the genitive case, was wrongly used by some of the learners. The comma which is used to separate a list of items or show pause in a sentence was wrongly used in sentence (3). In sentences (2) and (5), the full stop

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which among other things indicates the end of a sentence was used in place of a question mark, which is used to indicate the end of a direct question.

4.1.2.2 Omission of punctuation

This situation arises when an item which must be present in a well formed sentence or utterance is conspicuously absent. According to (Woods, 2001), punctuation marks are put in a sentence for a reason, thus, to make the meaning clear. Therefore, the omission of any of them in a given sentence will make it difficult to understand or derive its meaning. Here, learners omitted punctuation marks such as the comma, full stop, question mark, apostrophe which were required to make meaningful sentences. The sentences below illustrate instances where such errors were made by learners.

1. First of all I will create. (First of all, I will create)
2. How are you doing.(How are you doing?)
3. Its me. (It's me)
4. Everybody is well (.)
5. Thirdly I will make sure. (Thirdly, I will make sure)

In sentences (1) and (5), the comma which is used to separate linking or connecting words or phrases at the beginning of paragraphs among others, was omitted. In (3), the apostrophe which shows possession as in 'it's me' was omitted. Finally, in sentence (4), the full stop which marks the end of a statement, abbreviation, etc was omitted. These are all errors in that they do not indicate completion of the sentence in the case of the omission of the full stop, omission of the comma did not help indicate the tone and the pause in the sentence, the omission of the apostrophe did not help indicate possession and the omission of the question mark did not help indicate a direct question. These errors are partly attributed to the ignorance of the rule of restrictions. The

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findings therefore show that punctuation is very important in writing; without it, it would be difficult to make sense out of what is written (Awad, 2012). Table 4.1.2 and Figure 4.1.2 show the sub-categorization of punctuation errors made by learners.

Table 4.1.2: Summary of Punctuation Errors

Type of Punctuation Errors	Frequency	Percentage %
Wrong use of punctuation	19	33.92
Omission of punctuation	37	66.07
Total	**56**	**100**
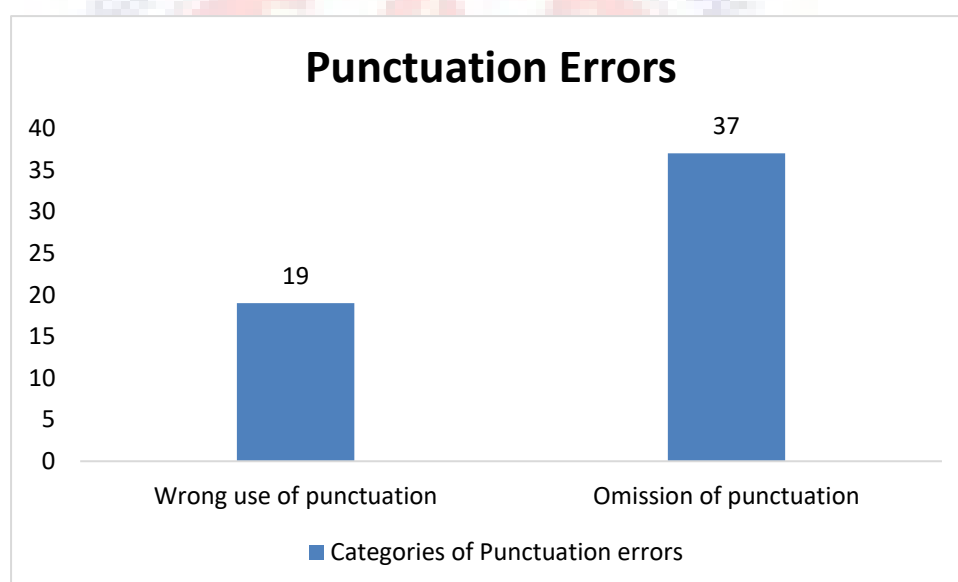
Figure 4.1.2: Summary of Punctuation Errors

Table 4.1.2 and Figure 4.1.2 represent the summary of punctuation errors discussed in this section which is illustrated in Figure 2. It is evident that punctuation errors due to omission are the highest recorded in this category with 37 out of 56 occurrences representing 66.07% of the total while wrong use of punctuation recorded the lowest with 19 out of 56 instances representing 33.92% of the total errors found in the data. Avomah and Apam (2014) in a similar study examined the level of punctuation

errors among students in Ghanaian Polytechnics. Data were collected using test results on an unpunctuated passage and a written speech. The results revealed that students of the Polytechnics have great challenges in identifying punctuation marks in written text. Awad (2012) also investigated the most common punctuation errors which the English and the TEFL majors at An- Najah National University make in their writing. He found out that the participants used punctuation marks inappropriately by using commas in place of full stops. These findings indicate that students really have difficulty in the use of punctuation as seen in this study.

To help reduce errors of punctuation, the researcher agrees with Stevenson (2005) that students should be encouraged to use punctuation marks since it is very necessary in language production. Many students do not know how to place the right mark at the appropriate place. On the part of teachers, short pieces of unpunctuated texts should be provided to the students to help them apply punctuation marks correctly. Williams (2008) observes that without terminal punctuation marks, ideas and sentences might be very difficult to be understood. For Robinson (2002), rules are very important, but the rules only are inadequate. Students need to know the functions of the rules, so that they are not easily forgotten. In this regard, Pumki (2005) opines that teachers should teach students to value punctuation marks as much as letters and words for conveying meaning since the wrong use of punctuation can interrupt the meaning of ideas. These errors can thus be attributed to context of learning and interlingual.

4.1.3   *Tense error*

According to Downing and Locke (2006), tense is anchoring an event to the speaker's experience of the world by relating the event time to a point of reference. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) also explain the relationship between the form of the verb and our concept of time. Wiredu (2005) on his part looks at tense as the verb takes in

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order to show whether the action is past or the action is taking place in the present. Carson (2001) and Kutz et al (1993, pp. 879-903), suggest different ways in which tense errors occur. First of all, they suggest that learners tend to over-generalize the rules for stylistic features when acquiring new discourse structures. They also claim that learners are often unsure of what they want to express which would cause them to make mistakes in any language. Finally, they suggest that learners may try out what they assume is legitimate structure of the target language. The tense errors therefore occurred partly because the students used the wrong verb tense form, did not master the rules of tenses and that tense pattern and English tense forms are quite different from the $L_1$and so second language speakers are bound to commit a lot of such errors.

In language learning, knowledge of grammar, particularly tense, is considered to be the crucial part for non-native learners to master properly (Muftah & Rafik-Galea, 2013). Verb tense refers to the way a verb is formed to communicate when an action takes place. They can also be said to be words that tell us what a subject does or is. They describe an action and state of being. Tense errors in sentences are part of a group of errors commonly committed by learners, especially second language learners. These errors occur when the learner uses the wrong verb tense. Tense errors in the study have been grouped into misuse of verb tense (e.g. I stop watching TV instead of stopped) and subject-verb agreement (e.g. when the teacher finish instead of when the teacher finishes).

4.1.3.1 Misuse of verb tense

This research work suggests that most learners used the present tense in place of the past tense which could partly be attributed to the fact that they have difficulty determining when to use any of them. The sentences below contain such occurrences:

1. I stop watching TV. (stopped)

2. I just arrive. (arrived)

3. I use to watch TV. (used)

4. When I was in form one, I do not sleep early. (did not)

5. We disturb a lot in form one. (disturbed)

A close look at the sentences above reveals that the simple past tense which is used to express an action or a situation in the past, was replaced with the simple present tense. This aberration changes the meaning of the message that should be conveyed to the reader. Such errors are from faulty comprehension of the distinction in the target language arising from the poor graduation of teaching items (Renadya, 2002). The learners, it was observed that the use of the inflectional *s* could not thus distinguish the present tense from the past tense and therefore used them wrongly.

4.1.3.2 Subject-verb agreement

According to (Elliott, 2006), in English grammar, subject-verb agreement is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural). The principle of subject-verb agreement applies to finite verbs in the tense and, in a limited way, to the past forms of the verb` to be` `was` and `were`. Concord errors partly occurred due to L_1 interference and the students in ability to select the subject from a particular sentence/ construction to agree with the verb may have accounted for the errors. Ezu (2008) posits that concord has to do with the relationship between verbs and their subjects in terms of number in a sentence. Mensah (1996) adds that concord is the agreement between words, especially with regards to number. According to Wiredu (2005), the agreement relationship which exists between two grammatical units, so that when one unit displays a particular feature, the other unit will also display a similar feature.

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By this, it means that if a sentence has a singular subject, its corresponding verb must as well be a singular one. On the other hand, if the subject of the sentence is plural, the accompanying verb should also be a plural one so that there would be some kind of agreement between them. Similarly, this is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (1st, 2nd or 3rd) and number (singular and plural). On the contrary, the analysis showed that most learners had difficulty determining which verb tense was appropriate in a sentence at a particular instance. Wiredu (2005) states that the present tense can be used to express an action that is regular or habitual. He elaborates further that the simple present tense uses the infinitive form of the verb such as write, play, come and wash and only changes with the third person singular. He again explains that the verbs are inflicted with – *s* when the third person singular pronoun like *she*, *he* and *it* is used. It was observed that the use of the inflectional *-s* posed a challenge to most of the learners. This exceptional rule in the simple present tense was seen to be a problem for most of the learners in the study. Below are some examples of this:

1. Class prefect write names. (writes)

2. This few measure. (these)

3. It build my speaking skills. (builds)

4. If a teacher come to class. (comes)

5. All this will make learning easier. (these)

From the examples, it is quite evident that learners chose the verb form which they deemed right due to the overgeneralization of forms learnt. They also seem not to have a clearer understanding to determine when to use which form. This could partly be due to inadequate exposure and practice in terms of learning a target language. It is the expectation of the researcher that constant practice of the structure, such errors will

be limited. Table 3shows the sub categorization of tense errors made by learners in this study.

Table 4.1.3: Summary of Tense Errors

Type of errors	Frequency	Percentage %
Wrong use of tense	56	76.7
Subject-Verb Agreement	17	23.28
Total	**73**	**100**
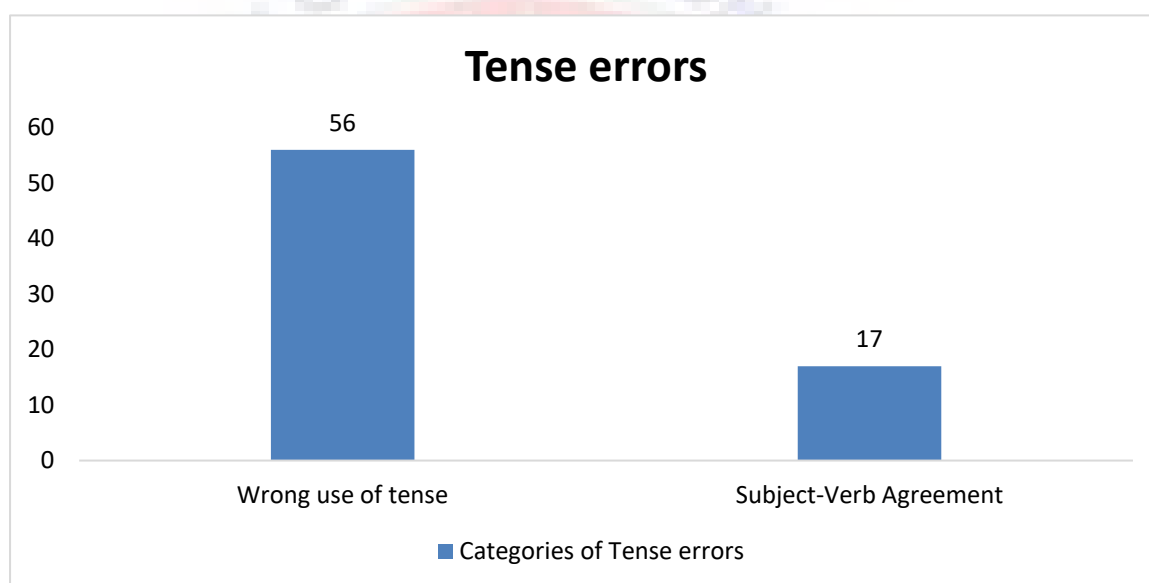
Figure 4.1.3. Summary of Tense Errors

Wrong use of tense recorded 56 instances representing 76.7% while errors under subject-verb agreement recorded the lowest with 17 instances representing 23.28% out of the total number of errors found in this category. The analysis shows that most of the tense errors committed were due to wrong verb form used. In a similar study, Huang (2001) presented an analysis of 34 Taiwanese English majors writing errors based on web-based writing programme. The errors included categories of grammar, mechanics, style and usage. He then concluded that the most EFL students' errors were not due to

insufficient command of linguistic complexity. On the contrary, they made big portion of basic errors such as subject-verb agreement or incomplete sentences indicating intralingual errors. From the results, it looks like the major causes of EFL learners' errors are overgeneralization, ignorance of rules of restrictions, simplification, and incomplete application of rules of the target language. This information showed that the different tense rules were not completely mastered by the learners, but they have already learned that these tense forms exist in English grammar.

Darus and Ching (2009) contend that it is not surprising that L2 learners who regard time as a separate entity by itself. It is against this background that Ratnah (2013) encourages English teachers to explain the English pattern structure clearly so that students could use the forms of English correctly. As a result of this, the researcher is of the opinion that the rules, structures and systems of the L1 should be thoroughly taught to avoid counter interference in L2 usage. L2 structures should also be given the needed attention to avoid developmental errors as well. It can also be said that some of the students are unaware of the different tense rules for tenses application. This view is supported by Carson (2001, p. 191-200) and Kutz et al (1993, pp. 879-903), that learners tend to try out what they assume is a legitimate structure of the target language. They also tend to over-generalize rules when acquiring new discourse structures. Negative transfer, also referred to as interference, (Selinker, 1969), is not ruled out. Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2016) in their work on L1 interference in the L2 writing of Akan Junior High School students confirm the result of this study with regards the interference of the learner's L1 in the acquisition of L2.

4.1.4 Capitalization errors

Capitalization means writing a word with its first letter as a capital letter (upper-case letter) and the remaining letters in small letters (lower-case letters). Therefore, an

error occurs when a letter is capitalized unnecessarily or left lowercased when it should be capitalized. Initial letter starting sentences and proper nouns (such as names of persons, places, organizations, books, movies, festivals etc) are usually capitalized. In fact, the correct use of capitalization is a basic requirement for every written sentence. From the errors made by learners in this study, those on capitalization were the least recorded. In some cases, students used the upper case where lowercase letters were to be used (e.g. **saturday** instead of **Saturday**) and vice versa (e.g. christmas instead of **Christmas)**. The analysis showed that 46 errors were made on capitalization. This involves omission of capital letters and the use of capital letters where they were not required.

4.1.4.1 Omission of capital letters

A critical look at the learners' essays revealed that a basic sentence which needs to begin with a capital letter, was rather written without it. In other cases, proper names did not begin with capital letters. These are some examples of such errors:

1. *My sister ama disturbs a lot. (Sister Ama)*

2. *When we attend saturday classes. (Saturday)*

3. The lord almighty god will help me. (Lord Almighty God)

4. I read the holy bible every day. (Holy Bible)

5. During the Christmas holidays. (Christmas Holidays)

From the examples, *sister ama*as in sentences (1), the learner uses lowercase to start both the title and the proper noun which should start with capital letters. This is wrong because a basic sentence must begin with a capital letter. Its omission therefore distorts its meaning since the reader will not know where a thought being expressed begins or ends. Also, *lord almighty god*as in sentence (3), holy bible as in sentence (4) and *christmas holidays* as in sentence (5) are proper nouns and must begin with

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uppercase letters. However, they were written beginning with lowercase letters. This problem is due to incomplete learning of rules which resulted in the learners' inability to distinguish between proper and common nouns.

4.1.4.2 Incorrect use of capital letters

Here, some learners used uppercase letters where they were not required. Examples of such cases are found in the following sentences;

1. I will go to the Library every day. (library)
2. We shall also do Experiments there. (experiment)
3. I am Also fine. (also)
4. Serious Mental on Mondays. (mental)
5. By the gracE of God. (grace)

The sentences show that the words library, experiment, also, mental and grace are written with a capital either at the beginning or ending which is grammatically wrong. This is due to the ignorance of the rules of restrictions. It could also be attributable to the learners' improper hand writing, among others. Table 4.1.4 and Figure 4.1.4 present the sub-categorization of capitalization errors in terms of omission and incorrect use of capital letters.

Table 4.1.4: Summary of Capitalization Errors

Type of Errors	Frequency	Percentage %
Omission of capital letters	29	63.04
Incorrect use of capital letters	17	36.95
Total	**46**	**100**
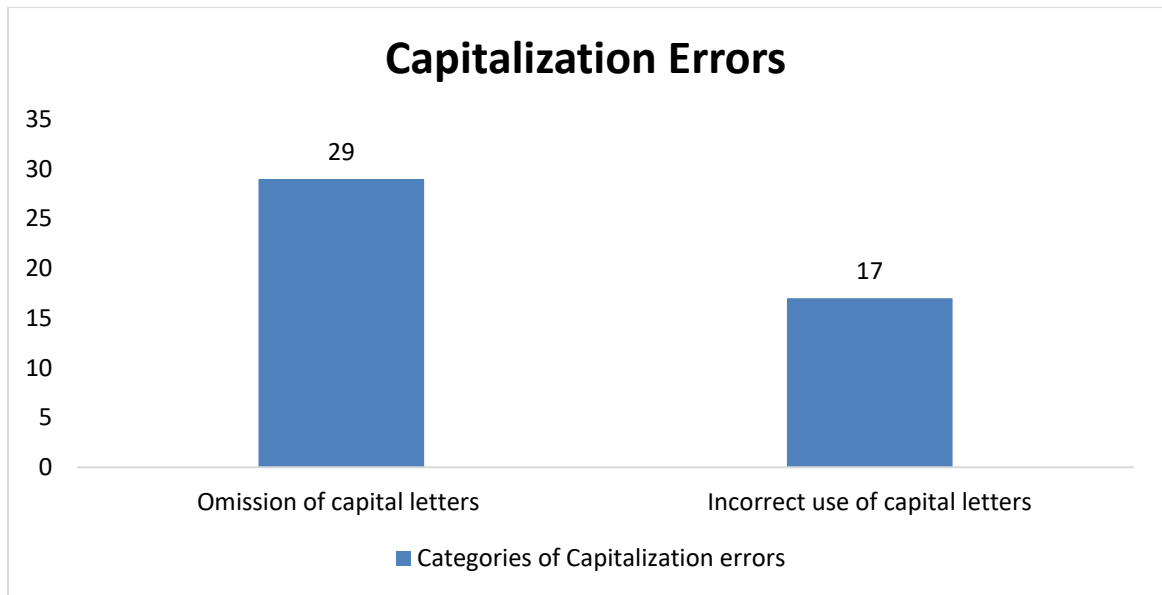
Figure 4.1.4: Summary of Capitalization Errors

The information in Table 4.1.4 and Figure 4.1.4 is the summary of the errors. Omission of capital letters is the highest recorded in this category. It recorded 29 out of 46 occurrences representing 63.04% of the total number while errors with regards to incorrect use of capital letters recorded 17 instances representing 36.95% out of the total number of errors found in the data. With capitalization errors, a similar study conducted by Hazarika and Mohammed (2016) on difficulties of learning English revealed that students always struggle with capitalization. It shows that students are not even aware of the fact that they commit mistakes in capitalization. They unconsciously make mistakes while writing a paragraph. For them, realizing one's mistake is the first step to its correction'.

Hence, students need to develop awareness regarding the use of capitals. In summary, they suggested that teachers must explain the rules of capitalization and make students practice them in the classroom. For instance, exercises on the identification of capital and lower case letters as well as rewriting proper names with capital letters can help limit the capitalization errors of the students. It is quite difficult to fully explain

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the source of this problem. It may therefore be one of the errors Dulay et al (1982) call *other errors*.

4.1.5 Word-omission errors

An omission is indicated by the absence of one or more items that must appear in a well-formed sentence as in '*when I return… school'*. Here, the learner omitted the preposition *from*. In the present study, learners omitted certain morphemes required in their sentences. Such morphemes include linking verbs and prepositions. This study recorded a total of 86 errors under this category. The following sections reflect some instances where learners omitted morphemes which were needed to enhance understanding and equally used some wrongly

4.1.5.1 Omission of preposition

Prepositions are grammatical morphemes which connect nouns or pronouns with other words within a sentence. They can also be described as words which are used to' show a relationship or connection between a noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence' convey (Quagie, 2010). Prepositions, therefore, have relational functions and they often refer to location (under the table), direction (to the south), or time (at midnight). They can also be used to convey other relationships: agency (by); possession (of); purpose (for); source (from, out of). A sentence does not show such relations when prepositions are omitted or misused within a sentence usage.

The sentences below show omitted prepositions

1. Give account whatever I have read. (of)

2. A bit difficult me. (for)

3. Tell you three things. (about)

4. When I return school. (from)

5. I intend emphasize on reading. (to)

It is obvious that the omission of such key grammatical elements go a long way to affect the meaning of each sentence. The most probable reason is that though the learners wrote in English, they used word ordering in their L1 to express their ideas. The cause of this error category could be attributed to negative transfer of the learners' L1.

4.1.5.2 Wrong use of prepositions

Below are examples of instances where prepositions were used wrongly;

1. Improve *about* my academic work. (on/ upon)

2. Mathematics is a bit difficult *to* me. (for)

3. Pass my B.E.C.E. *in* distinction. (with)

4. *In* the academic ladder. (on)

5. Thank you *of* the laptop. (for)

In the utterances above, the learners show clearly their inability to use the grammatically correct prepositions as demonstrated in *improve **about** my academic work, mathematics is a bit difficult **to** me, pass my B.E.C.E. **in** distinction**, in** the academic ladder and thank you **of** the laptop.* The study revealed that the L1 negatively affected the learners' in their attempt to do a transfer from their L1 to L2.

4.1.5.3 Omission of linking verbs

The omission of major constituents, such as verbs in a sentence hinders communication (Dulay et al, 1982). Since the function of linking verbs is to add grammatical content to an utterance, their omission may prove costly in communication. Under this category, learners omitted linking verbs that were required

to make their sentences complete. The sentences below show the omission of linking verbs in learners' writing.

1. Nobody …. willing to help me at home. (is)

2. She …. in charge of the books. (**is**)

3. The teachers…. doing their best. (are)

4. Because I….not good in mathematics. (am)

5. My friends ….. always disturbing me in class. (are)

In the utterances given above, the linking verbs, *is* as in (1), (2), *are* as in (3) and (5) as well as *am*, as in (4) are left out; therefore, there is no connection between the subjects and the predicates. Table 4.1.5 presents word omission errors found in learners' essays.

Table 4.1.5. Summary of Word Omission Errors

Type of omission of word errors	Frequency	Percentage %
Omission of preposition	30	34.9
Wrong use of preposition	41	47.7
Omission of linking verbs	15	17.4
Total	**86**	**100**

The information in Table 4.1.5 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.5. Errors based on omission of preposition recorded amounted to 30 representing 42.3%. Errors in the wrongly used preposition had 41occurrences representing 57.7% as the highest and omission of linking verbs recorded 15 occurrences as the lowest, representing 17.4% of the errors found in this category.
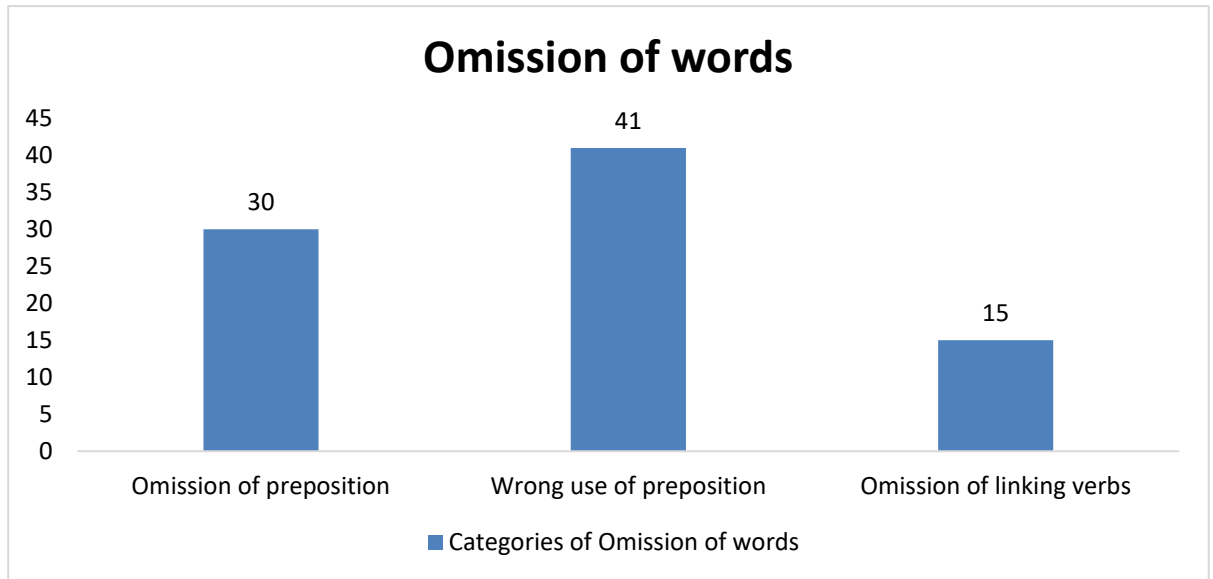
Omission of words

Figure 4.1.5: Summary of Word Omission Errors

This error category can be attributed to lack of vocabulary to express ideas since the target language is seldom used. Ellis (1996, p. 710) states that incomplete application of rules by learners account for omission errors because learners fail to develop a structure fully. In a related study conducted by Wu & Garza (2014), they investigated types and attributes of English writing errors in EFL context. The findings of the study revealed that the fourth and fifth most frequent errors were verb omission and subject omission. They indicated that participants did not start to learn English until 3rd grade; therfore, their literacy skills in the language affected their learning of English. In the present study, Form 2 students of St. Paul Methodist J.H.S. though have been through a number of English lessons, omitted linking verbs and prepositions. It appears that uncertainty in the students as to the correct preposition to use accounted for some of the errors in using prepositions. The influence of the L_1 from all intents and purposes cannot be over looked. They omitted, used it wrongly or could not decide which one to use at which point. That is to say the students failed to use preposition when it was required, used it when it was not required and when it was required it was wrongly used.

4.1.6   Article errors

An article is a word that is used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. English language has two articles*; the* and *a/an*. *The* (definite article) is used to refer to specific or particular nouns*; a/an* (indefinite) is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns. The learner is therefore confronted with which of these articles to use for a particular noun. The article *'a'* because of the noun it collocates with is indefinite. It is this article which becomes *'an'* when the next word begins with a vowel (with some exemptions), as in *an orange*, *an egg* and *an umbrella*. The article *'a'* can be said to be similar to the number one, but there is more emphasis. One can say 'They have a meeting' or 'They have one meeting' but there is more emphasis on the second sentence which explains that, the subject, 'they' do not have two or any other number of meetings. The article *'the'* specifies things as stated earlier. For instance, in the sentences *'she bought a car'* and *'she bought the car'*, the first sentence refers to just any car but the second one refers to a particular or specific car. Many nouns, especially singular forms of countable nouns, must have an article. In English language, it is wrong to say *I have book* without an article, however, a possessive adjective can be used instead of an article as in the sentence, *I gave him his pen or I gave him that pen*. These errors are grouped as omission of some required articles, addition of incorrect articles and misuse of articles.

4.1.6.1 Omission of articles

This kind of error occurs when a learner omits an article in a well formed sentence where it is required. This was caused by learners' inability to decide where and when to use an article in a sentence. Some instances where learners omitted articles are indicated in the examples as follow:

1. By the grace of Almighty God. (the Almighty God)

2. I am in classroom. (the classroom)

3. I study for less than hour. (an hour)

4. I want brand new school bag. (a brand new school bag)

5. I will read topic every night. (a topic every night)

The examples above clearly indicate that learners omitted articles in their sentences. In sentences (1) and (2), the definite article *'the'* is omitted while *'a'* and *'an'* are also omitted in sentences (3), (4) and (5). These errors might have occurred due to forgetfulness or ignorance of the use of the rule in article usage in English. The rule indicates that a singular noun requires articles to introduce them, e.g. a bag, a stone, a boy, etc. (Downing & Locke, 2006).

4.1.6.2 Wrong use of articles

1. Learn for *an* extra two hours. (extra two hours)

2. To be *a* excellent. (an excellent)

3. Promoted to *a* next level. (the next level)

4. I will devote *a* hour each day. (an hour each day)

5. I was *an* truant. (a truant)

It is obvious from the sentences above that learners misused articles. This could be traced to the fact that the learner does not know which kind of article to be used for a particular noun or word. According to Raehan, Chodorow and Leacock (2006), mastering the English article is one of the most difficult tasks facing the non-native speakers, especially when the L1 does not have articles. Table 4.1.6 presents the sub-categorization of article errors made by learners in the study.

Table 4.1.6: Summary of Article Errors

Type of article errors	Frequency	Percentage
Omission of article	33	63.46

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Wrong use of article	19	36.53
Total	**52**	**100**

The information in Table 4.1.6 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.6. Errors in omission of articles recorded the highest number with 33 occurrences representing 63.46% while errors under misuse of articles recorded the lowest with 19 instances representing 36.53% out of the total of errors found in this category.
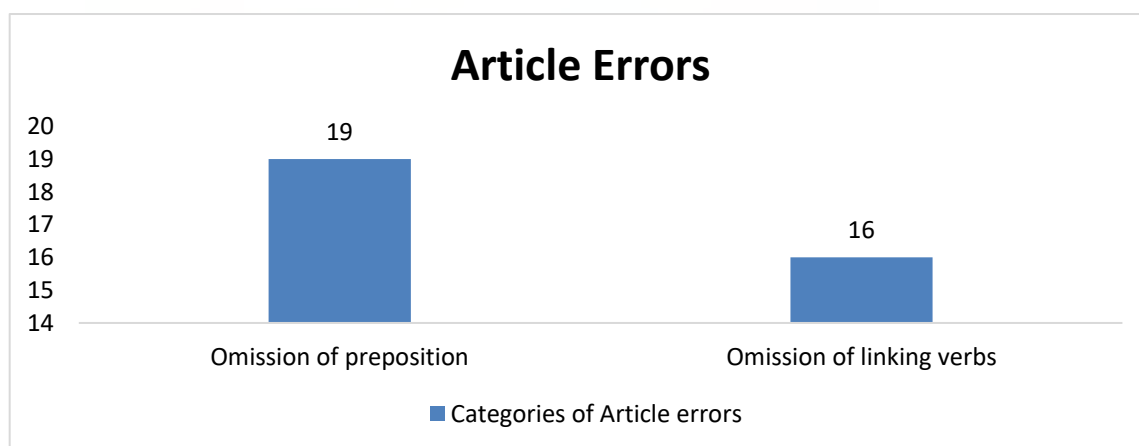
Figure 4.1.6: Summary of Article Errors

The English definite article, 'the', indefinite 'a/an', and zero can often be a problem for English language learners to master, especially in longer texts. Thomas (1989) demonstrated that English as Second Language (L2) learners do not have the equivalent of an article system in their L1 and so encounter more problems using articles in their writings. Barrett and Chen (2011) in a similar research finding observed that learners overused both the finite and infinite articles but underused the zero articles. The definite article was substituted for the indefinite article in specific environments. In the present study, learners constructed sentences without the required articles; they omitted the articles that were needed to make their sentences complete and in other instances, the articles were misused.

According to Corder (1974, p. 22), errors fall into four categories: omission of some required elements, addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements; selection of an incorrect element; and misordering of elements. Articles are believed to be a source of difficulty for learners and teachers of English as a second/foreign language, especially for those whose native languages do not have articles or do have articles or article-like morphemes which are used in ways that differ from English articles. (Celce-Murcia & Larsen- Freeman, 1999). Finally, article errors could be said to be L1 interference and context of learning among others.

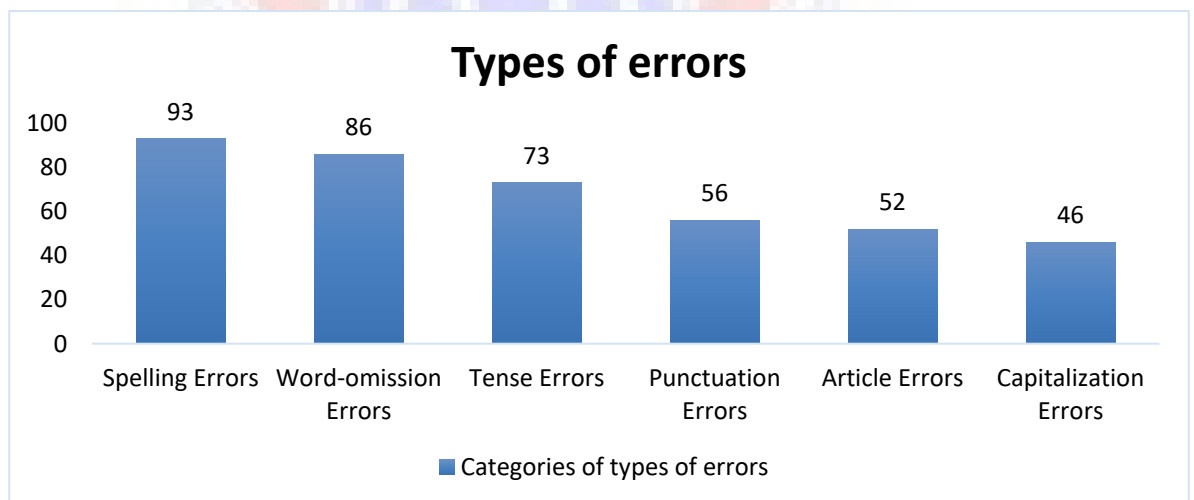### 4.1.7   Errors in learners' writings

Table 4.1.7 presents the summary of the main errors identified in the essays of learners in the research work. It is drawn with the highest on top and the lowest at the bottom. In all, 40 essays of the learners were analyzed. A total of 406 errors were identified. From the analysis, spelling errors had the highest with a total of 93 cases representing 22.90%. Here, the learners omitted certain letters that part of a word, added letters that were not required and in other cases replaced letters with other letters. Word-omission errors ranked second with a total of 86 errors representing 21.1% of the total number of errors identified. In this category, the learners omitted plural morphemes and prepositions that were needed to make their sentences complete and meaningful. These errors emerged from learners' overgeneralizing grammatical rules. It was also due to their poor handwriting. Tense errors came third with a total of 73 representing 17.98%. Under this type of errors, learners used the present tense where they were expected to use the past and vice-versa as well as inconsistent agreement of verbs with subjects

Table 4.1.7: Frequency of Errors in Learners' Writings

Type of error	Frequency	Percentage

Spelling Errors	93	22.90
Word-omission Errors	86	21.1
Tense Errors	73	17.98
Punctuation Errors	56	13.79
Article Errors	52	12.80
Capitalization Errors	46	11.33
Total	**406**	**100**

Punctuation errors came fourth with a total of 56 errors representing 13.79% of the total number of errors recorded. Here, punctuation marks were omitted and were also used wrongly. Article errors came fifth with 52 errors recorded representing 12.80% of the total number of errors. In this instance, learners omitted articles where they were needed and used articles wrongly in some cases. Finally, capitalization errors were the lowest recorded with a total of 46 occurrences representing 11.33%. Here, the learners used upper cases where lower cases were to be used and vice-versa. Figure 7 represents the error types and their frequencies.

Figure 4.1.7: Errors in students' writings

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 causes of grammatical or 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 done by Neda (2012) revealed that Malaysian ESL students have problems in writing tasks, especially in language use 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 St Paul Methodist JHS have difficulties in the use of articles, concord, punctuation, and vocabulary register.

Others were wrong organization of ideas, orthographic and semantic errors. These errors as said earlier, hinder the meaning of ideas in learners' 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. Similar studies, though not directly linked to the present study, indicate that L1 lexical and grammatical structures are transferred to L2 writing of students (Chen, 2000; Fang, 1999; Liu et al, 1998; Sauter, 2001). Additionally, results of studies conducted in Ghanaian universities indicate that grammatical and lexical errors do exist in students' writing (e.g. Awuah-Boateng, 1998; Edu- Boandoh, 1997; Gogovi, 1997; Mahama, 2012; Mireku- Gyimah, 2008, 2014). Finally, from the analysis so far, it can be deduced that the causes or sources of learner errors are varied and numerous. However, overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, ignorance of rule restrictions and regularization probably stand out among the lot.

4.2   Causes of Errors

The analysis of the work has put into perspective two major categories of errors; the orthographic and grammar errors. The orthographic errors are basically the various spelling and punctuations errors while the grammatical errors range from concord errors to tense errors, preposition errors and article errors. From the analysis, it can be inferred that the causes of learners' errors are usually attributable to teacher-induced and learners-induced as well as the influence of their first language. There are linguistic factors such as interlingual and intralingual interference that account for L2 learning difficulties as well as context of learning and communication strategies (AbiSamra, 2003; Brown, 2000; James, 1996;).

4.2.1 Interlingual errors

Errors caused by the impact of the L1 or the transfer from the native tongue or any other acquired language into learning the L2. The issue is that learners relapse when there are linguistic challenges in the process of learning the target language (Brown, 2000). They are those errors caused by the influence of the learner's mother tongue on production of the target language in presumably those areas where languages clearly differ (Schachter & Celce-Murcia 1977). Some examples captured in the data include:

1. Class prefect write names.

2. This few measure.

3. It build my speaking skills.

The above examples are fraught with errors; the subjects do not agree with their respective verbs and this is usually considered as interlingual. Al-khresheh (2010), indicates that such a negative transfer can be attributed to a rule of pattern in the L1 that leads to an error in the target language. The L1 of the students are varied due to its

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location. However, Ga and Twi dominate and one can attribute their shortfalls to their L1 backgrounds.

4.2.2   *Intralingual transfer*

Al-Tamimi (2006) and Brown (2000) assert that the errors that do not reflect the structure of their native language or mother tongue are caused by intralingual interference from the target language itself. He considers this type of interference as one of the major factors that might affect the process of second language acquisition. They are independent of learners' L1 (Jiang, 2009). This category of errors is caused by the effect of the target language itself. This occurs when learners begin to acquire new structures in the target language. As learners progress in the target language, their previous experiences begin to include structures in the target language. This causes negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization. In English, it is only count nouns which take an –s to form the plural. When a verb takes an –s, it is in the third person singular in the present tense. The fact that plural nouns take –s does not mean that a verb that takes an –s is equally plural. Types of intralingual errors include false analogy, Misanalysis, over-elaboration and hypercorrection.

1. If a teacher come to class.

2. All this will make learning easier.

From the examples, it is quite evident that learners chose the verb form in (1) and head of noun phrase in (2) which they deemed right due to the overgeneralization of forms learnt. Developmental errors occur when the learner tries to build up hypothesis about the target language based on limited exposure. These errors are intralingual because the students generalize the use of *–s* as used to form plural count nouns to include verbs (Al-khresheh, 2013; Haydari, 2012).

4.2.3   *The context of learning*

The context of learning is a major cause of learners' errors in the L2 learning process. Teachers' deployment of wrong approach to teaching and learning materials in the classroom can also cause errors. Faulty presentation of structures, improper understanding of patterns and teachers' ignorance may lead to errors. According to Richards (2015), teachers' attempt to communicate in the target language without completely acquiring the grammatical form can cause errors. Also, during grammar lessons, learners are not always actively involved. Most of them do not answer or ask questions for fear of being laughed at by their colleagues. The few who answer questions produce a number of faulty constructions. This makes it difficult for them to grasp the concept taught leading to the construction of ungrammatical sentences. Poor handwriting in some cases also contributed to errors in the learners' essays. When learners do not practice writing often, they become deficient in the appropriate writing skills and these results in their inability to write clearly, making it difficult to read their essays. They omit letters, add letters that are not required to words as well as replace letters with inappropriate ones in the cause of writing.

Furthermore, most of the errors that learners made resulted from the context of instruction by teachers, sometimes right from the primary. This was seen in the techniques of language learning as the teacher tries to communicate or use it. Outside the classroom, some teachers communicate with learners and their own colleagues in the L1. This does not create enough room for learners to use the forms and structures learnt in class. In other instances, teachers who handled the languages had little or no knowledge of the learners' native language to enable them teach learners the similarities and differences between the L1 and the L2 structures to enable the learners to use them appropriately. Teachers could not expose learners to constant reading. Generally, unlike

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the SHS where teachers are assigned to their subject of specialization, teachers at the JHS section are assigned to any class to teach the English language, and there are some teachers who have specialized in Social Studies, Mathematics, Home Economics, etc. but are supposed to teach the L2. These teachers lack adequate content knowledge when it comes to the teaching of the various aspects of the English Language. When teachers lack adequate content of the English language, they make errors in their speeches (Richards, 2015). This results in an automatic transfer of error from the teacher to the learners. It could therefore be said that the teacher, teaching materials as well as teaching techniques play a major role in creating errors in the learners' essays. From this discussion, it is clear that learners' errors could be teacher-induced because most teachers have issues regarding the correct structure and form of the language.

Moreover, research has shown that L2 writers employ their L1 skills when writing in the L2. They adopt L2 composing strategies to recompense possible deficiencies in the L2 proficiency and as a tool to facilitate their writing process (Karim & Nasaiji, 2013). At the initial stage of L2 learning, learners frequently transfer L1 structures to the L2. This, according to Brown (2000), happens because the learners' native language is the only previous linguistic source they can draw from. Once a person tries to learn new habits, the old ones will definitely interfere with the new ones. That is, a learner's first language plays a significant role in L2 acquisition. Learners are likely to recall systematic resources from their native language for the synthesis of meaning, most especially in instances where they exhaust the L2 forms and structure. This probably is the most common cause of errors in language learning.

This assertion is not different in the case of the learners in this study. They over-generalize rules from structures in their L1 and use them in their L2 writings. The findings of Huang (2001)'s study stated earlier in this section also indicated negative

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transfer of L1 structures in some cases. Some punctuation errors committed by learners were due to the interference of the L1, especially when the apostrophe should be used to show possession. They are not familiar with the similarities and the differences between the L1 and the L2structures. For instance, the learner writes *excell* as excel which in effect is right in the L1 as required by the sounds of the L1 letters. Such errors, according to Brown (2000), can be detected if the teacher is familiar with the native language of the learners. However, teachers are advised to point out the differences between the L1 and L2 structures to the learners whenever these grammatical structures are being taught.

4.2.4 *Overgeneralization*

Selinker (1972) refers to the process of overgeneralization as an 'extension' of a rules in the TL to an 'environment' in which it does not apply. Jakobovits (1969) defines generalization or transfer as: The use of previously available strategies in new situations… in second language learning… some of these strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the second language, but others, perhaps due to superficial similarities, will be misleading and inapplicable(62). Below are some examples discovered in the learners' essay (data):

1. My parents *putted* off the tv. (put)

2. The class prefect *write* names of talkatives. (writes)

3. You *feeled* bad placing 20th. (felt)

4. The teachers *wastes* a lot of time. (waste)

5. Rose always *call* me. (calls)

It can be seen from the examples that the learners tried to create deviant structures on the basis of their experiences of other structures in the TL. They have thus overgeneralized the –d and –ed suffixes for past tense formation as in sentences (1) and

(3). In sentences (2) and (5), the –s third person which should have been applied was not while it was over applied in sentence (4) creating a restricted generalization in English to third person forms only.

4.2.5   *Ignorance of rule restrictions*

The concept of ignorance of rule restrictions says: 'Closely related to the generalization of deviant structures, is failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures, that is, the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply' Richards (1971, p. 208). Both incomplete application of rules and ignorance of rule restrictions focus largely on subject-verb agreement and tenses. Below are some of the errors that come under these two sources;

1   I *was reading* a story book when mom *arrive.*

2   Some of my mates *know* that and *tried* to correct me.

3   I was doing well yet my parents misunderstand me.

4   The teachers were trying to help but we pay no attention in form one.

5   When I was in form one, I *do* not sleep early.

In English, there are some restrictions on the tenses of verbs when more than one occurs in an utterance. This rule is referred to as the sequence-of-tenses rule. That is what is being seen in sentences 1 to 5 above. Yankson (1994) refer to these types of structures as systematic errors. The students lack complete appreciation of the concord rules.

4.2.6   *Regularization*

Regularization error is the type where a marker that is typically added to a linguistic item is erroneously added to exceptional items of the given class that does

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not take a marker. That is, if a learner regularizes the irregulars, regularization is said to have taken place. Below are some examples;

1. I will listen to advices instead of good/bad pieces of advice.

2. We will take good care of the furnitures in the class instead of furniture.

3. When they are giving us informations, I will pay attention instead of information.

4. The latecomers runned to school this time instead of ran.

5. The teachers *teached* us well but we messed up instead of taught.

In sentences (1), (2), and (3), the learners regularized the irregulars. Same with (4) and (5) where irregular verbs; have been used as though they were regular.

4.1.8   *Conclusion*

This chapter has presented details of results obtained from the analysis of data collected from students' written essays. The first section dealt with the analysis of data collected from students' exercises. In all, 406 errors were recorded from the written essays of 40 students. Spelling errors rated first with 93 occurrences. Word-omission errors recorded 86 cases while tense errors recorded 73 cases. Punctuation errors recorded 56 cases, article errors had 52 occurrences and capitalization errors recorded 46 cases. The second section presented a discussion on the causes of errors based on the findings. The causes of errors in learners' written essays were then identified to be from the teachers, learners themselves and the influence of learner's L1. Other causes realized were lack of exposure to reading materials as well as inadequate motivation to read, speak and write in the target language. Poor teaching techniques and teacher incompetence were not left out.

Some other errors occurred as a result of linguistic differences between English and the learners' first languages (Saville-Troike, 2006). At their level, learners need the appropriate structure to assist them in their writings. They can however not express themselves well because they have limited exposure to good Standard English both in school and at home. This does not grant them the opportunity to use the structure learnt appropriately in their daily expressions. This inconsistency in practicing the structure often leads to forgetfulness and misuse or overgeneralization. Waring (2001) observes 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, SUGGESTION, AND CONCLUSION

5.0   Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the outcome of the study which consists of the summary, implications, suggestions and conclusion. This is a qualitative analysis of the common errors committed by 40 form two students of St. Paul Methodist JHS in the Tema Metropolitan Assembly of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It was aimed at identifying, categorizing and diagnosing the common errors; tense error, article error, punctuation error, spelling error, capitalization error and omission of word errors made by the students in their written essays, the causes of these errors and the pedagogical implications

5.1   Summary of Findings

In all, a total of 406 errors were recorded from the written essays of the 40 students sampled. Spelling errors which had the highest frequency recorded 93 occurrences representing 22.90%. These errors were categorized into omission of letters, addition of letters and substitution of letters. These errors contributed immensely to distorting the meaning of the text being conveyed in the students' writing. This challenge is caused by the way learners hear words being pronounced, how these learners in turn pronounce these words, inconsistent reading resulting in learners not being familiar with a wide range of words, as well as illegible hand writing in some cases. Omission of words error came second with 86 occurrences representing 21.1%. These errors were committed because learners lack vocabularies to express ideas since the target language is sometimes not used by both teachers of English and non- English and the students. Tense errors placed third with 73 occurrences representing

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17.98%.The errors here were on wrong use of tenses and subject-verb agreement. Tense errors were due to incomplete learning of grammatical rules as well as wholesale over-generalization of rules learnt. This situation could also be attributed to L1 interference and negative transfer from the L1 into the L2.

Next is punctuation errors which recorded 56 representing 13.79%. These errors were mainly omission and wrong use of punctuation marks. In this category, punctuation marks were used where they were not required and in other cases they were rather omitted. This problem is attributed to the learners' inability to appropriately identify and use punctuation marks due to incomplete learning of rules. Article errors placed fifth with 52 occurrences representing12.80% of the total number of errors. Here, the learners omitted articles where they were needed and used them wrongly in some cases. These errors occurred mainly due to forgetfulness and ignorance of the use of the rules in terms of article usage in the English Language. Capitalization errors came last with 46 occurrences representing 11.33%.Errors in this category were wrong use of capital letters. Here, learners omitted uppercase letters in some instances and also used them where they were not required. Additionally, certain words were written beginning with the uppercase letters, some in the middle and others at the end of some sentences, when they were absolutely not required. This challenge can be attributed to the learners' inability to distinguish between proper and improper nouns and the various words that must be started with capital letters, no matter where they appear in a sentence.

5.1.1 Errors identified

Below are the errors identified in this study:

1. Spelling errors

2. Word-omission errors.

3. Tense errors.

4. Punctuation errors.

5. Article errors.

6. Capitalization errors.

5.1.2 Causes of errors

The following are the cause/sources of the errors identified:

1. Overgeneralization of grammatical rules.

2. Incomplete rule application of grammatical rules.

3. Regularization of grammatical rules.

4. Ignorance of rule restrictions.

5. Negative transfer from the L1 to L2.

6. L1 interference.

7. Teacher-induced.

8. Learner-induced.

9. Influence of the L1.

10. Context of learning.

11. Inadequate reading materials.

5.2   The Role of Errors in Learners' Writing

So far, the findings of the study have shown that learners' errors:

(i) Help teachers to identify the problems learners 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

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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 Error Analysis could lessen the number of errors in their students' work. Karra (2006), Mohammed (2013) and Jabeen, Kazemian and Shahbaz (2015) have also identified the following as the importance of errors in language teaching and learning: They help the teacher to know a student's progress, provide feedback; they make the researcher aware of the effectiveness of a teaching technique and what parts of the syllabus has been inadequately learned or taught and thus needs further attention.

(ii) Enable the teacher to decide whether he must devote more time to the item he has been teaching and provide information for designing a remedial syllabus or a program of reteaching.

(iii) Lastly, errors show how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner uses and thus help him or her to learn from these errors. According to Richards (2002), errors play the role of enabling the teacher to discover, identify and analyze learner's mistakes as well as designing the most appropriate methods for solving them. Again, 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 will be able to identify and correct their errors. Furthermore, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 61) suggest three significance of learner errors. These are (1) they serve a pedagogic purpose by giving teachers insight into 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 a lot of pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of English Language:

(i) 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 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 spelling of words can also be improved by encouraging them to practice pronunciation by drilling them on words and sounds, as well as listening using dictation. With this, their phonological awareness will be improved to help limit the spelling errors.

(ii) A conducive language learning environment, if created, will enable even the timid child in the class to use the language freely. 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-centered so that the learners will be actively involved in the learning process. Teachers should facilitate the learning process with all activity-centered of 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 so that he/she will be able to teach the learners the phonological, morphological, syntactic and the semantic rules pertaining to the language. Also, through in-service training and regular refresher courses, language teachers will learn new ideas and teaching strategies from one another.

(iii) 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 error.

(iv) Furthermore, the English Language syllabus only spells out topics but does not suggest how these topics can be effectively taught. Though there are handbooks, they do not provide enough information for effective teaching. The researcher suggests that the syllabus should include a variety of child- centered approaches to guide the teacher to teach learners based on their learning abilities. The syllabus should be designed with its corresponding textbooks to enable teachers get appropriate materials for learners. Information in the textbooks should also match the topics in the syllabus.

(v) There should be a cordial relationship between parents and teachers to enable them work hand-in-hand towards their wards' learning development.

5.4   Suggestions for Future Research

This study looked at the errors learners at the St. Paul Methodist JHS two commit in their written essays and the following suggestion made.

1. Researchers may also look at other categories of errors other than those found in the present study.

2. Future research may focus on the effects of phonological deficiency of both teachers and students' reading.

3. Again, researchers may investigate how errors in the writing of L2 learners are corrected by both teachers and learners in the classroom.

4. The researcher also suggests that this study be extended to other schools in the region in particular and the country as a whole.

5.5   Conclusion

The study aimed at analyzing the errors made by the form two students of St. Paul Methodist JHS in their written essays. The errors identified were spelling errors, word omission errors, tense errors, punctuation errors, article errors and capitalization 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 linguistics aspects in the classroom.

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