UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

THE USE OF ASPECT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE: FOCUS ON FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN SANKORE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL.

IBRAHIM SHAHADU

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A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, FACULTY OF LANGUAGES EDUCATION, SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE.

DECEMBER, 2016

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, IBRAHIM SHAHADU, hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published work which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and that it has not been presented, in part or whole, elsewhere for the award of another degree.

SIGNATURE:…………………………………………………….

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR………………………………………

SIGNATURE……………………………………………………

DATE……………………………………………………………

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A work of this nature can never be accomplished without the support of experienced and distinguished personalities. However, before mention is made of anyone, permit me to appreciate the glory of Allah for this work is a true reflection of His Wisdom, Support and Spiritual Inspiration. It is my hope that He will always afford me the opportunity to forever remain His faithful servant.

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Permit me to also appreciate all individuals who have supported me in many diverse ways to see this fruit of my hard work. May Allah bless you all.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Mr. and Mrs IBRAHIM FUSEINI for instilling discipline in me to ensure my holistic development. Your names shall forever remain soft on my lips.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the problems of the use of aspect in English Language among first year students at Sankore Senior High School in Asunafo South District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The study was conducted using descriptive survey design. A sample size of 70 students was selected for the study using lottery method of simple random sampling procedure. Questionnaire was developed and used to collect data from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics in a form of frequencies, and percentages. The computed results were presented in tabular form for discussion in chapter four. The results of the study showed that students have several challenges with the use the progressive types of aspect. Most of the students agreed to have problems with combining 'WILL BE' with the '–ing' form of the verb and 'WILL + HAVE + BEEN' with the -ing form of the verb.Most of the students are aware of the negative effects of their inability to use the English aspect correctly and hence adopt strategies (both direct which are prescribed by their teachers and indirect which are developed by students themselves) to overcome this challenge. Based on the findings, it was concluded among others, that teachers should expose students to the various forms of the aspect of the verb in different contexts. This will enhance their use of this area of English grammar.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

"Most of the world's languages mark the structure of events, using linguistic device known as grammatical device (Sekyi-Baidoo 2002, p. 45)". A variety of possible aspectual distinctions are attested, but among the more common ones is to mark whether an event is to be understood as ongoing or completed. For instance, the English progressiveaspect, as in 'I was writing a book'indicates that the event is to be conceived of as ongoing in the past, while the perfect, seen in 'I hadwritten a book', marks the event as completed but still relevant at the time of speaking. Note that aspect is distinct from tense, which marks when an event occurred relative to the time an utterance is produced. "Linguists who have looked closely at grammatical aspect have argued that using the progressive, as contrasted with the perfect, increases focus on the internal structure of the event, or increases the granularity or detail with which people think of events (Langacker 2002, p. 209)".

There has not been any work on how speakers represent events while producing different grammatical aspects. However, there has been a bit of recent work on language comprehension. For instance, Bergen and Wheeler (2010) compared the extent to which comprehenders represent the details of motor actions when presented with progressive sentences (such as; John is opening the drawer) and perfect sentences (John has opened the drawer). They found an increased action-sentence compatibility effect with progressive sentences; progressive sentences led to faster performance of subsequent compatible actions, but perfect sentences did not show such an effect. The authors interpreted this as evidence that the progressive encourages comprehenders to

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mentally simulate the nucleus of an event (in this case, a motor action) with greater detail than the perfect does.

It is noted that learning to acquire the competence of a second and foreign language is undoubtedly very difficult to achieve. This is because different elements such as verbs, nouns adverbs, adjectives and so on and the rules of using and arranging these elements to produce grammatically acceptable sentence structures differ from one language to another.

This assertion is attested to by several researchers and linguists. For instance, Durich (2005, p. 1) stated that;

> The expression of time in languages is universal, whereas the means of expressing time is language specific. Hence the acquisition of a foreign language always involves the acquisition of different linguistic means to express time. Generally the writer/ speaker of a language can apply lexical means to do so. That is, she/he may apply temporal adverbs, adjectives, substantives, prepositions, conjunctions, particles and verbs, and grammatical means such as tenses, aspects, and syntactical means. Usually time is not conveyed by the use of only one of these means, but by employing several means which makes the acquisition of a second language more difficult.

Bardovi-Harlig (2000) noted that the aspect of the verb of a language is apparently a major issue in the teaching and learning of that language. As a result, it occupies a major part in almost every language teaching syllabus. Yet, in many foreign language teaching contexts such as English language, little effort is rendered to the factors that facilitate or hinder the acquisition systems and usage of the aspect of the verb. Therefore, a lot of learners of English as a Foreign and Second Language fail to master this category of the language even though they spend substantial amount of time in order to master it.

Senior high school students also have difficulties in understanding and using aspectual sentences of the English Language. The aspect part contributes greatly to the poor performance of the students when it comes to answering the comprehension questions in the English Language paper of senior high school certificate examination. Thus, the focus of this study is competency of acquisition of the English aspect system by senior high school learners.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The students of Sankore senior high school have serious problems regarding the use of the English grammar aspectual sentences.

This becomes evident in both their speech and written communication in and outside of the classroom.

This problem may be due to a number of reasons; Sankore is a small town surrounded by many villages from which a large number of students come and so it may be that after school they do not have the opportunity to practice what they learn in school since they are surrounded by non-English speaking population, and once there is no practice, perfection cannot be ensured. It may also be that students find it difficult to identify and use the various types of aspects of the verb in English language properly. Or may be due to the poor approach or pedagogy employed in teaching and learning of this area of English language. It could also be that students lack interest or are not motivated to develop interest in the study of this area of English.

Generally, the issue of grammatical aspect in English has become an albatross hanging around the necks of both teachers and students in Ghana, particularly teachers and students in senior high schools. So endemic is the problem of grammatical aspect to the extent that Owusu-Ansah (1997, p. 30) citing Yankson (1994) has argued "tense and

aspect errors are damaging to one's reputation than other errors". This observation, with regard to the use of grammatical aspect, will be relevant to this study in that issues about grammatical aspect in English grammar have become age long grammatical challenges, which will need to be tackled properly and efficiently by teachers and students in senior high schools teaching and learning English as a second Language. However, it is sad to mention that although issues about grammatical aspects continue to 'torment' both teachers and students, adequate measures have not been put in place by teachers, students, educationists and other stakeholders to improve the way and manner aspect of the verb in English grammar should be taught, especially in Ghanaian senior high schools.

Hence, this research will address the proper use of aspect in English Language among students at Sankore Senior High School in Asunafo South District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana.

1.3. **Objectives of the study**

Objectives of this study are to:

 1. Identify the types of aspect of the verb in English and how they are correctly used

2. Examine students' problems in aspect; and

3. Look at the various strategies that can be adopted to improve students' learning of aspect in the English Language.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to address problems on the correct use of aspect in English Language among first year students at Sankore Senior High School in Asunafo South District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. This is because the researcher

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observed that errors they commit with respect to aspectual sentences in both their oral utterances and class exercises were too rampant that the meaning they always intended to put across was affected

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions which provided the focus and direction for the study.

1. What are the various types of aspect which students have difficulties in mastering?

2. What problems do students face in using aspects in the English Language?

3. What strategies can be adopted to improve students' use of aspects in English Language learning?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it aims at addressing certain key areas with regard to grammatical aspect in Ghanaian senior high schools for better attention to enable students to overcome such challenges in both verbal and written communications. Identifying students' problems in the use of aspect is one way of attempting to find solutions and hence addressing the problem to improve students' use of those areas of the language. The theoretical frame for this study would help us to understand that the comprehension of language learning is a cognitive process, in which errors occur as an indicator of language development.

The results of this study would also help us to understand that transfer from previous linguistic knowledge may be utilized to comprehend and produce linguistic structures in the second language, and also to uncover areas of divergence where no such transfer

is possible and the learner has to construct new knowledge and to make this knowledge available for practical use. Nevertheless, transfer may also result in the production of errors if learners transfer linguistic knowledge from their mother tongue to the target language where it is inappropriate. Additionally, target language structures which are distinct from the learners' mother tongue might be avoided in their production of language.

The strategies to be recommended would also help the students to learn the language in a better and faster way devoid of errors. The outcome of the study would also attempt to recommend more useful ways or pedagogical approaches to the teaching of aspects in English grammar. This study will be of great importance to educational planners like Ministry of education, Ghana Education Service, West African Examination Council, beneficiaries of education as well as organizations that have roles to play with the promotion and development of English Language education in Ghana. The results and findings of this study would add to the existing literature of other researchers who may intend to conduct the same or similar study elsewhere.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The issue of grammar takes many forms and this study focused on aspects taught in senior high schools. This study is delimited to one senior high school in the Asunafo South District of the Brong   Ahafo Region. Grammatical elements such as the use of present, past and future tenses, use of verbs, prepositions and adverbs as well as concord did not form part of this study. The respondents were limited to students in senior high school in the study area.

1.8 Organization of the Study

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The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one would be introduction which would deal with background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. Scope and organization of the study also form part of the text in the chapter.

Chapter two reviewed literature relevant and related to the study. The literature review focused on theoretical and empirical review of the study. The literature review came mostly from books, academic essays of some scholars and from internet materials. Chapter three would be made up of research methodology that would be followed to conduct the study. It would focus on research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection procedures and analysis.

Results and findings of the study would be presented in Chapter four. It would describe data analysis, interpretation and discussions of the results in relation to the research questions. The discussions would be supported by relevant literature to be cited from chapter two. Chapter five would be a summary and findings of the study. Conclusions to be made and recommendations for policy implementations would also be presented. Some areas for further research would also be suggested.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two reviews literature related to the study. The review focuses on the following areas: Concept of Aspect, Types of Aspect, Perfect and Progressive Aspects Combined, Perfective and Imperfective Aspects, Studies Conducted on Non-Native English Speakers about the Use of the English Aspect System, Aspect Errors and Problems in Learning and Mastering English Aspect.

2.2. Concept of Aspect

Aspect is a grammatical category that is concerned with the manner in which the verbal action is expressed. That is, the verbal action may be expressed as complete or ongoing. This idea is alluded to by Quirk and Greenbaum (1976, p. 40) when they stated that " aspect concerns the manner in which the verbal action is experienced or regarded (for example as completed or in progress)".Many authors and researchers have described the subject of aspect in different ways. Leech, Benita and Roz (2001) for example described aspect as "the way we view an action or state in terms of the passing of time". Comrie (1976, p. 3) defines aspect as "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation". What all these definitions have in common about the aspect of the verb in English language are;

I. That the aspect indicates an ongoing action or event, and

II. That aspect indicates that the verbal action is complete.

One must note the difference between ***completed*** and ***complete'***. For instance, when I say the action of the verb is ***completed***, it means it took place somewhere in the past and no more relevant to me at the time of speaking. Consider the sentence 'I slept this morning'. Here, the action of the verb (slept) happened in the past and no longer relevant hence it is ***completed*** but when I say 'I have slept this morning'. Here, even

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though the action took place somewhere in the past, it is still relevant to me at the time of utterance.

2.3 Types of Aspect

Aspect is a grammatical category that is concerned with the manner in which the verbal action is expressed. That is, the verbal action may be expressed as complete or ongoing. This means in English language, there are only two major types of aspect: the progressive and perfect aspects. This is confirmed by DeCarrico (2008, p. 70). Mostly, it is the verb that determines whether an action is progressive or perfect hence Berk (1999, p.107) noted that" Like the terms *present tense* and *past tense,* the terms *progressive* and *perfect* refer to specific forms of the verb. If a verb does not have the required form, it does not have aspect". Berk also asserts on the same page that "aspect in English is marked by a combination of inflectional suffixes and auxiliary verbs (i.e., periphrastic constructions)". According to Biber's *et al* (1999) as seen in Hinkel (2004, p. 153) "analysis across various types of language use (e.g.news reportage or academic writing), about 90% of the most common verb phrases have zero aspect"

2.3.1The progressive aspect.

The progressive aspect, as the name indicates is used to express actions that are in progress or ongoing. Bybee and Dahl (1989) defined the term 'progressive' as "indicating the situation is in progress at reference time" (Bybee *et al* 1989:55). It has the form: BE + "ing" -participle. This is confirmed by Hinkel (2004, p. 154) when he stated that "progressive verb phrases consist of at least two elements: the auxiliary verb *be* and the main verb + -ing. The tense of the verb phrase is reflected in the form of the auxiliary verb (e.g. *am/is/are* [present] and *was /were* [past])"."The progressive is

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formed by means of auxiliary 'be' followed by a gerund-participle (Huddleston & Pullum 2007,p. 51)".This type of aspect is used in reference to an action that is ongoing and incomplete at the time of speaking. Consider the sentence below;

- Mary<u>is going</u> to school.

Since the action Mary is undertaking is ongoing and incomplete, it is termed *aprogressive aspect*.

Many authors including DeCarrico (2008, p. 67) and Quirk *et al* (1976, p . 41) refer to the underlined part of the above sentence as the *present progressive aspect* but it rather consists of a *present tense* and *progressive aspect* ; the form of BE(i.e.; *is*) is the *present tense* and the *-ing* verb (i.e.; *going*) is the *progressive aspect* . This idea is confirmed by Berk (1999) when he stated that "Technically there is no tense called 'present progressive'. When grammarians use phrases like *present progressive*, they are exploiting terminological shorthand; it is understood that two different grammatical systems are reflected in the label (Berk 1999, p. 108)". It is always necessary to provide this distinction in the classroom to enhance students' understanding of the progressive aspect.

Now, depending on the tense form (whether present or past) of **BE**, we have present progressive aspect (i.e.; present tense and progressive aspect) or past progressive aspect (i.e.; past tense and progressive aspect).

2.3.1.1 Forms of Progressive

Depending on which auxiliary verb that precedes the '-ing' participle verb, the following three forms of the progressive can be identified;

- **Present progressive**

- **Past progressive**

- **Future progressive**

2.1.1.1.1   The present progressive

The present progressive aspect has the form BE + ing participle. For example.

- They <u>are sweeping</u> the classroom.

The part of the sentence underlined consists of the verb BE (which is **are**) which indicates the present tense and the *-ing* participle (which is **sweeping**) which also indicates the progressive aspect. Now , since BE is *present* , the verb phrase '*are sweeping'* results in what is termed the ***present progressive*** which technically means a present tense (represented by the auxiliary 'are') and a progressive aspect (represented by the main verb in the '-ing' form '*sweeping'*).

Other forms of BE (i.e. in sentences where such forms act as auxiliaries) that can result in the *present progressive* construction are <u>am</u> and <u>is</u> and so the underlined part in each sentence below is a present *progressive* (i.e.; present tense, progressive aspect)

❖ I <u>am reading</u> a storybook.

❖ Amanda <u>is preparing</u> the food.

When the present form of be is used in a sentence, it refers to an action that is ongoing and incomplete at the moment of speaking as seen in each of the above sentences. "When the progressive is combined with the present tense, the activity takes place at the present moment (Hinkel 2004, p.154)". Another use of the present progressive according to DeCarrico (2008, p.67) is;

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To indicate an action that began in the recent past and may or may not be ongoing at the actual moment of speaking, depending on the meaning of the verb and the circumstance in which it is used. For instance, a sentence such as I am working in the cafeteria now can be taken to mean "I am working in the cafeteria 'these days'", rather than at the actual moment of speaking. We would recognize this meaning, for instance, if the speaker is not in the cafeteria at the moment of speaking or is comparing this job with a previous one working in the library, and so on.

Again, present progressive can be used to talk about planned events yet to take place in the future. For instance, a sentence like;

'I **am leaving** for Accra this *evening'*, would mean that;

all plans and adequate preparations have been completed for my departure. Huddleston *et al* (2007, p. 53) refer to the use of the present progressive in this way as the PROGRESSIVE **FUTURATE** and explain that in these cases, progressive form does not have the usual "in progress" meaning. They gave the following examples to explain this fact.

 a. I see my broker today. b. I'm seeing my broker today.

"In both clauses we are concerned with a future act of seeing someone. Version [a] is an ordinary futurate use of the present tense, and conveys that an appointment has been set up or is regularly scheduled, whereas [b] may suggest simply that I intend to go and see my broker today(Huddleston et al 2007, p. 53)". Leech and Svartvik (1975, p.55) noted that "when these constructions have no time adverbials, they often suggest the near future: *The smiths are leaving* (= soon)".

Alexander (1998, p.124) summarized the uses of the present progressive into the following four ways;

1. For actions in progress at the moment of speaking. **He's working** at the moment.

2. For temporary situations /actions, not necessarily in progress at the moment of speaking:

My daughter **is studying** English at Durhan University.

3. For Planned actions (+ future adverbial reference):**We're spending** next winter in Australia.

4. For Repeated actions with adverbs like *always*, *forever*: **she's always helping** people.

2.1.1.1.2   The past progressive

The past progressive (i.e. 'past tense' indicated by BE and 'progressive aspect' represented by the '-ing' verb) is formed by either using *was* or *were* (i.e. the past forms of auxiliary BE) preceding the '-ing' participle. For example in;

➢ 'I <u>was reading</u> a storybook' and

➢ 'Amanda and Araba <u>were preparing</u> the food'.

The past progressive, is used to refer to issues or events ongoing and incomplete in the past. This idea is agreed upon by Quirk et al (1976, p. 46) when they used the following contrasting sentences to illustrate this fact;

- He *read* a book that evening (implies that he finished it).

- He *was reading* a book that evening (implies that he did not finish it).

 "When the auxiliary *be* of the progressive is in the past tense form, the hearer assumes that a past event was ongoing and incomplete at the time in question or when the event

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was interrupted or terminated (Berk 1999, p. 108)". This means when the past form of *be* is used together with the progressive, it can be used to specify the duration of the event or action. For example;

I *was reading* when you entered the room.

Alexander (1998, p.128) summarized the uses of the past progressive into the following five ways;

1. For temporary actions in the past: I *was living* abroad in 1987.

   We often use *all* to emphasize continuity (*all* day, *all* summer): it *was raining all* night.

2. For actions which were in progress when something happened.

   Just as/when I *was leaving*, the phone rang.

   These are often introduced by conjunctions like *when, as*, and *while*, but the shorter actions can be introduced by *when:* we *were having* supper when the phone rang.

3. For actions in progress at the same time. While I *was reading*, Joan *was playing* the piano.

4. For repeated actions with e.g. *always*: When I worked here, I *was always making* mistakes.

5. For polite inquiries: I *was wondering* if you could give me a lift.

2.3.1.1.3The future progressive

This type of progressive is formed by using the modal auxiliary WILL or SHALL which connotes future time interpretation only together with the verb *be* and the '-ing' participle.   Thus, the future progressive has the structure*:   WILL* or *SHALL + be + ing- participle.*

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Example;

❖ The students *shall/will be writing* their exam next week.

❖ My father *shall/will be coming* home in October.

Note that both sentences have future interpretations only.

In terms of pronoun subjects whereas **will** can take all pronouns, most grammars argue that **shall** must go with only the 1stPerson Pronoun. This is supported by Quirk et al (1976) who stated that "**will** for future can be used in all persons throughout the English-speaking world, whereas **shall**(for 1st person) is largely restricted in this usage to southern BrE (Quirk et al 1976, P. 47)". See Below;

➕ I shall/will be going to school tomorrow. (acceptable)

➕ *You shall be going to school. (mostly unacceptable)

Another way of referring to activities that intend to take place in future is to use the future progressive. In this case, just as the present progressive, all plans and preparations are completed for such activities to happen or occur in the future time. Thus, the future progressive is used to refer to planned events yet to happen or take place.

Alexander (1998, p.136) has identified the following uses of the future progressive.

1. We use it to emphasize actions that will be in progress in the near distant future especially when we imagine ourselves doing something:

    By this time tomorrow, ***I'll be lying*** on the beach. (Not   * I willlie).

2. The progressive softens the effect of will + verb and sounds more polite:

    When 'will you finish' these letters? (e.g. boss to assistant)

    When ***will you be seeing*** Mr. White? (e.g. assistant to boss)

    If we say 'I'll work on this tomorrow' we may be stating an intention.

If we say **I'll be working on this tomorrow**, we are simply referring to future time.

3. We use the future progressive like the present progressive for planned actions:

We'll be spending the winter in Australia is the same as:

We're spending the winter in Australia

2.3.2 The perfect aspect

This refers to an action that took place in recent past but knowledge or information about it is still relevant at the time of speaking. It has the structure *have* + *verb* in *–en* form. This means any form of *have* (i.e. 'have',' has' and 'had') together with the '-en' verb in a construction gives the perfect aspectuality. Note that for regular verbs, the '-en' has the form as the '-ed'. However, for irregular verbs, both the '-en' and '-ed' have distinct forms. The '-en' form of some special irregular verbs such as *come, run, burst, broadcast, let,* and *quit*is the same as their infinitives. See the sentences below;

- Saratu has <u>swept</u> the classroom. (*sweep* is regular: *-en* and *-ed* have the same form).

- Saratu has <u>gone</u> home. (*go* is irregular : *-en* form is different from *–ed* form).

- Saratu has <u>come</u> to school. (*come* is irregular : *-en* and *infinitive* have the same form but *-ed* form is different-**came**).

- Saratu has <u>burst</u> the football. (*burst* is irregular : *infinitive* , *-en* and *-ed* have the same form).

In each of the above, the underlined verb is the '-en' form since each of them is preceded by a form of *have.* However, if the '-en' form is used in a sentence without 'have', then, it does not indicate the perfect aspect but rather it refers to a passive form. Look at how the verb 'write' appears in the following sentences:

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I. Hassan has <u>written</u> a novel.

II. A novel was <u>written</u> by Hassan.

Whereas in sentence I, *written* is the '-en' form and hence, the perfect aspect, in sentence II, it is the passive form of 'write'**.**

Berk (1999, p. 110-111) identified the following verb forms that co-occur with *have* to form the perfect aspect.

{ed} ending: walked, turned, nestled, mingled, carried, washed.

{en} ending: written, fallen, given, ridden, gone, thrown, been.

vowel change: rung, sung, drunk, stung, swum, sunk, fed.

no change: cost, quit, cut, shut, put.

vowel change +
{t} ending: sought, bought, taught, slept, kept, wept, crept.

2.3.2.1 Forms of perfect aspect

Three types of this aspect identified;

- Present perfect

- Past perfect

- Future perfect

2.3.2.1.1 The present perfect aspect

This is formed by the present form of 'have' plus the '-en' form of the verb (i.e. **has** /**have** + **V** -**en**). This means the present perfect aspect, consists of the *present tense* which is represented by *have* and the *perfect aspect* which is indicated by the '-en' verb. Note that the only forms of *have* that form this aspect are *have* and *has*.

Examples;

♦ I have eaten my food.

♦ Erica has left the classroom.

Notice that in each sentence above,' have' is in the present tense form followed by the '-en' verb forms which are 'eaten' and 'left' respectively.

DeCarrico (2008, p.70) says that the present perfect aspect is used to indicate "an action that occurred at some unspecified time in the past, some time before now ; action that began in the past and is not completed at present". For instance, when I say 'Ato has written two novels'. This may suggest that possibly '*Ato'* is not done with novel writing yet but only that so far he's written only two. Perhaps in future, he may write more novels. In this case therefore one can say that the present perfect aspect could be used to discuss an event that took place somewhere in the past and continues up to the time of utterance and may possibly extend into future.

However, to say "*William Shakespeare has written* 37 *plays* is inappropriate, since Shakespeare won't be writing any more plays (Berk 1999, p. 112)".

Huddleston *et al*(2007, p. 49) note that when the present perfect is used, "the concern is with present results of past events". This is what Berk (1999) refers to as "**the perfect of current relevance** (Berk 1999, p. 112)".

Penston (2005, p. 22) also identifies another use of the *present perfect aspect* as to show "an experience or achievement anytime in one's (present) life". For example, in a sentence like;

'Ken has won two gold medals so far in this competition', one must notice the time of Ken's success is not mentioned since that is not our concern. What interests us here is his achievement so far in the competition .However, a question like; *when did he win the medal? can be asked* if one's interest is now in the time of his achievement.

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2.3.2.1.2 The past perfect aspect

Just like the present perfect aspect, the past perfect aspect consists of a past tense and a perfect aspect. The past tense is represented by the past form of 'have' (which is *had*) and the perfect aspect is represented by the '-en' verb. The form of this structure is therefore: **had + V –en.**

Berk(1999, p. 112) asserts that:

> The past perfect behaves very much like the present perfect, except that the entire event andany result take place in past time. In the sentence *I have read three pages of thereport,* the reading begins in the past and continues up to the present moment;in *I had read three pages of the report [when Jerry walked in],* the reading starts inthe past and continues up until another moment in the past. In other words, the present perfect reflects a past event that somehow bumps up against the present, while the past perfect communicates a past event which bumps upagainst another, more recent past event.

Quick *et al* (1976, p.44) observe that in the past perfect tense, "the point of current relevance to which the past perfect extends is a point in the past".

Again, the past perfect is used "when talking about two actions or events in the past, one of which occurred before the other. Pastperfect, is used to indicate which one happened first (DeCarrico 2008, p.68)".

Swan and Walter (nd, p.51) confirm that "when we are already talking about the past, we use the past perfect to talk about an earlier time". For example, one can say'I left school at 2pm yesterday because I had received the resources from the headmaster to prepare the TLMs'. This means I received the resources before leaving school.

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Alexander (1998, p.132) notes that "the past perfect is used to indicate which of the two events happened first in order to avoid ambiguity and went on to exemplify this as ;

*When I **arrived**, Ann **left***(i.e. at that moment*).

*When I **arrived**, Ann **hadleft** (*i.e. before I got there)".

The examples below illustrate the use of the past perfect aspect;

1. Before you arrived (PASTTENSE) yesterday, I had left (PAST PERFECT ASPECT) already.

2. My sister visited(PASTTENSE) me at home, when we had closed (PAST PERFECT ASPECT) from school.

Notice that in each of the above, the ideas expressed by the past perfect precede those of the past tense. Again realize that conjunctions such as *when , after, as soon as, by the time that*, etc and adverbs like *before, ever, already , never* etc are   often used to introduce the past perfect aspect.

2.3.2.1.3 The future perfect aspect

This type of aspect has the structure; ***will/would + have + V –en***. This means the future perfect aspect consists of the auxiliary ***will*** plus ONLY 'HAVE' as the form of 'have' and the verb in the '-en' form.Note that the other forms of **have** which are**has** and ***had*** are not used in this construction.

Examples;

   ♠ If I had gone, I ***would have returned*** by now.

   ♠ She ***will have eaten*** the food.

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Notice that constructions that make use of the future perfect aspect, will often also require the **ifclause** as seen above.

Penston(2005, p. 28) identified two uses of the future perfect aspect as;

1. We use the future perfect to look back on a recent event or life experience from a future point in time (compare with the present perfect).

2. The future perfect may also be used to express the likelihood of the completion of an event (at a distance) before now, e.g. 'they *will have arrived* by now'.

2.4 The Progressive Verb

There are some prototypical verbs (for example; action verbs) that take the '-ing' to form progressives others do not take the '-ing' (for example; statives) and hence cannot form the progressives and if they form the progressive they offer specific meaning. Any verb therefore that takes the '-ing' and hence forms a progressive within a particular environment of a sentence is what I refer to as *the progressive verb*. This means, stative verbs such as 'feel' and 'live' can be used progressively but in such cases they do not refer to the usual 'in progress notion'. See below:

- I *feel* ill.
OR
- I *am feeling* ill (temporary ill-health).

- ❖ I *live* in Accra (refers to permanence).
But
- ❖ I *am living* in Accra now (refers to a temporary situation)

2.4.1 The Stative Vs Dynamic Distinction of Verbs

Based on the progressiveness of events, the English verb has been classed into stative and dynamic. Downing and Locke (2006) based the 'Stative - Dynamic Distinction' on these two factors: "*temporal boundaries*: whether the situation is bounded (i.e. has an

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end-point) or unbounded (has no end-point) and*duration or non-duration* through time (Downing et al 2006, p. 371)". This can be illustrated using a sentence like, 'I have built a house'. The idea expressed here is unbounded since its end time or point is unspecified but in 'I have built a house in three years', the idea is bounded because it has its end boundary stated (i.e. 'in three years'). Again, in 'I have built a house', The period covering the beginning of the activity to the end refers to the *duration* of the building process. A situation is *non-durative* when it has no time period of occurrence or has sharp boundaries; that is, there is a relatively little or no time interval between the beginning and end points of the event under consideration. Punctual verbs are used to achieve this and so in 'the light flashed' which means the light went on and off, can be said to be non-durative since the time interval between the light going on and off is relatively insignificant.

To be able to make the 'Stative - Dynamic Distinction' obvious, Downing *et al* (2006) developed the diagram below.
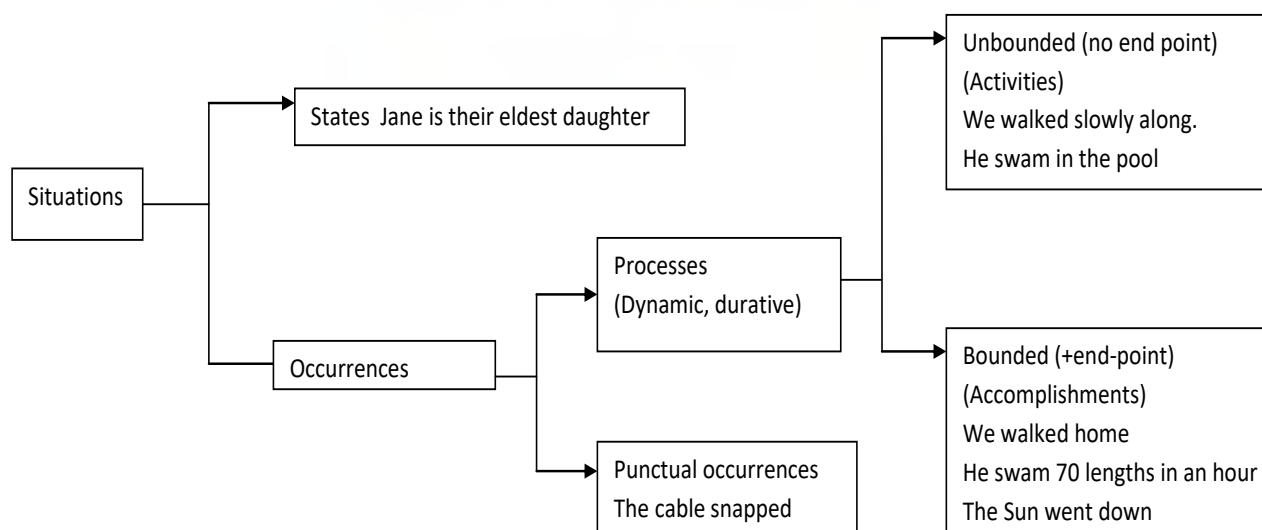
Reading from left to right of the diagram, it can be observed that situations described can be classified as whether states or occurrences; (i.e. states vs. occurrences). States do not occur in the progressive. They are presumed to have a continuous duration and as such have no boundaries. For example in 'Jane is their eldest daughter'. 'Jane' is and will always be the eldest daughter.

Occurrences on the other hand can be divided into those with relatively long period of occurrence (i.e. long duration) and those with relatively short period of occurrence (i.e. short or non-duration). Occurrences can therefore be divided into two as shown in the diagram, as durative and non-durative ('non-durative' also termed 'punctuals'). So for instance, a sentence such as; 'Amina is walking a 100-mile distance', can be said to be durative, as already explained above and that of 'the cable snapped' is punctual and hence, has no or little duration (i.e. non-durative). Here too, we can talk about the durative vs. punctual occurrences. Note that, it is the dynamic verbs that yield the durative results in sentences.

Again, the durative occurrences can further be subdivided into those with no end point; (i.e. unbounded activities) as in 'He walked slowly along' and those with end point; (which is always realized by achievement verbs) as in 'He walked home'. In the latter, two phrases are recognized; the durative phrase, 'the walking' and terminative phrase, 'the arrival home'. Unless when combined with progressives, the durative phrase is usually not in focus.

Downing *et al* (2006, p. 371)" gave verb examples that correspond to the above as:

1. **Stative verbs**: be, belong, seem, stand, lie, have, want, know, understand, see, hear, feel, like, dislike, hate, love.

2. **Punctual or momentary verbs**: cough, blink, flash, hit, tap, slam, slap,

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kick, shoot.

3a. Unbounded-process verbs: bend, dance, drive, read, sleep, write, walk, work.

3b. Bounded-completion verbs: be born, die, fall, drop, arrive, sit down, stand up.

Huddleston *et al* (2007) noted that the progressive aspect "presents the situation as being in progress. This implies that the situation has the following two properties: it has *duration*, rather than being 'instantaneous', or 'punctual'; and also it is *dynamic*, rather than 'static': *states* don't progress, they simply hold or obtain (Huddleston *et al* 2007, p. 52)".

A **punctual** verb is a verb which describes situations which do not persist over a period of time.

One must note that stativity refers to verbs that are unbounded; that is, they have no beginning and ending and therefore presumed to continue to exist except terminated by an external force. Durativity refers to bounded verbs and is defined in terms of how long or how briefly a situation persists. Telicity is defined in terms of whether an event involves a natural endpoint. If a verb is not telic, then it is atelic.

Vendler (1997, p. 28) stated that;

> A stative verb (e.g., *love*) describes a non dynamic situation that is viewed as continuing to exist unless some external force makes it change. An activity verb (e.g., *run*) describes a dynamic and durative situation that has an arbitrary endpoint (i.e., it can be terminated at any time). In contrast, an accomplishment verb (e.g., *make a chair*) describes a situation that is dynamic and durative but has a natural endpoint involving a change of state, after which the particular action cannot continue.
>
> Finally, an achievement verb (e.g., *die*) describes a situation that can be reduced to a point on a time axis (i.e., it is instantaneous and punctual).

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Classifying the aspect of the verb using the nature- of -verb criterion; that is, whether the verb is stative, durative or telic is what some linguists refer to as 'Lexical Aspect' while using grammaticalized linguistic devices, often in the form of inflections and/or auxiliaries (e.g. English *-ed /-en* and *be* + V-*ing*) that allow the speaker to impose a *bounded* or *unbounded* perspective on a situation or event is referred to as the 'Grammatical Aspect'. Smith (1997) refers to this as *viewpoint aspect*.

As already stated above, verbs that refer to the state of being of events and situations are called stative verbs. These verbs do not form the progressive aspect because they have no beginning and ending and if they do, as shown above, they refer to different meaning rather than the 'in progress realization' and that situation the stative refers is only temporal and not permanent.

Eastwood (2002, p.13) says "A state means something staying the same". He gave the following examples to illustrate his point;

- *The flat **is** clean*.

- *The farmer **owns** the land*.

- *The box **contained** old books*. "State verbs cannot usually be continuous. NOT ~~The farmer is owning the land.~~ (Eastwood 2002, p.13)".

Kruisinga (1931, p.361-362) refers to statives as "verbs expressing feelings and mental or physical perception (not sensations)". He exemplifies the following as statives *love, have, detest, like, prefer, see, hear, believe, belong to, consist, contain, possess, resemble, suffice*. Sweet (1903, p.98) describes statives as verbs which "express feelings, physical and mental perception", and gives examples such as *feel, like, think*. Brinton (1987, p.203) on the other hand, views the stative verb as:

> States are characterized by the inherent qualities of duration and homogeneity, as well as by the lack of change, limits and agency. States exist or endure for an undefined period of time. They do not change or develop during that period; the temporal phases of a state are undifferentiated. States do not happen and are not done, but simply are.

All these linguists allude to the fact that statives really have neither beginnings nor endings. However, one must note the ability of some statives to form the progressive and the meaning they carry in each context. DeCarrico (2008, p. 71) confirms that;

> Certain stative verbs can appear in the progressive. However, when verbs that are ordinarily statives do occur in the progressive, they adopt a dynamic meaning. The verb *have*, for instance, can appear in sentences such as *I am havingdinner*, but in this case the meaning is the dynamic one synonymous with "*eating*". Likewise, in *I am feeling pain in my knee;* the meaning is dynamic in the sense of physical sensation, as opposed to stative sense.

Hinkel (2004, p.155) identifies the following as common non-progressive verbs:

Agree	belong	dislike	have	matter	promise
Appear	concern	dissolve	hear	mean	realize
appreciate	conclude	doubt	include	need	recognize
associate	consist(of)	equal	initiate	owe	resemble
attain	contain	exist	interest	own	see
attribute	correlate	fear	invent	perceive	seem
base	cost	finds	know	possess	sound
believe	desire	guarantee	like	prefer	surprise
weigh	understand				

Alexander (1998, p.123) asserts that statives are of five groups referring to:

a. Feelings (like, love etc).

b. Thinking / believing (think, understand, etc). This group also known as
    Psych-Verbs or Mental State Verbs by Berk (1999, p. 108).

c. Wants (want, prefer etc).

d. Perception (hear, see, etc).

e. Being /having/owning (appear, seem, belong, etc).

Dynamic verbs, as has also been seen above, refer to verbs that indicate action; i.e. they show that something is taking place or happening. This is confirmed by many linguists including both Walker and Elsworth (2000, p. 29) and Leech *et al* (1975, p.46). Verbs that are normally used dynamically include.;

Go	run	buy	sit	fight	shoot	talk
eat	laugh	drink	dance	sing	cook	walk
sweep	wash	write	clean	sleep	roof	relax
do	work	look	play	bath	sew	sow
speak	repair	drive	fly	ride	fry	watch
build	shout	ring	explain	kill	shine	cry
preach	pick	move	fetch	bring	read	hold

2.5 Perfect and Progressive Aspects Combined

"The perfect aspect can, of course, be combined with progressive aspect, in order to express perfect aspect as ongoing action (DeCarrico 2008, p.69)". "When the perfect

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and progressive constructions are combined, the **have** of the perfect always precedes the **be**of the progressive (Berk 1999, P. 113)".

2.5.1 Forms of the combination

When the perfect and progressive aspects are combined, three different forms are realized which are;

- The present perfect progressive

- The past perfect progressive

- The future perfect progressive

2.5.1.1 The present perfect progressive

This consists of the perfect aspect in the present form (which is **have** or **has**) plus 'been'and the progressive aspect (which is the *–ing verb*). Thus, the structure is; **has/have + been + v –ing.** The tense of this construction is determined by the form of 'have' (which is **has** or **have** in this case). " we use the 'present perfect progressive' in place of the simple present perfect when we want to emphasize that something has been in progress throughout a period : instead of saying : '*I've typed all day'*, we can say, for emphasis**,** *'I've been typing all day'* . Depending on the context, this may mean 'I'm still typing or I've just recently stopped'(Alexander 1998, p. 130)".Berk (1999, p. 113) offers the following examples;

- *Those children have <u>been</u> throwing rocks at dogs.*

- *Dave has <u>been</u> sleeping all day.*

- *We have <u>been</u> studying organic chemistry.*

And continued to explain that"the word *been* participates in both the perfect and progressive constructions; it carries the {-en} of the perfect and the {be} of the progressive (Berk 1999, p. 113)". When we combine both the progressive and perfect aspects in one verb phrase (or verbal group), as in ".... Has been going...." the progressive part{i.e. 'be going'} tells the "in progress" nature of the situation whilst the perfect aspect{i.e. has been} indicates that the situation starts at an unspecified time in the past up to the current moment of speech and probably may travel beyondthis speech time.

Downing *et al* (2006, p. 376) notedthe following the possible situation categories with thepresent perfect progressive combination.

a. continuous state lasting up to the present

I *have been wanting*to meet him for ages.

He *has been hearing* better since he got the hearing-aid.

b. continuous habitual process

The government has been spending beyond its means.

She has been going to therapy since she was about two.

c. iterative occurrence (sic)lasting up to the present

You have been coughing since you got up.

d. unbounded situations lasting up to the present

We *have been waiting here* for some time.

e. normally bounded situations become unbounded

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I have been fixing the lamp.

So people *have been taping* this talk?

[Downing et al spelt **occurrence** with one *c***].**

2.5.1.2The past perfect progressive

This type is realized when 'have' is in the past form. Thus, the structure is; ***had*** + ***been*** + ***V-ing***.

Walker *et al* (2000) compare the past perfect progressive or continuous to the present perfect progressive and postulate that while the present perfect progressive describes an activity looking back from the present, the past perfect progressive describes an activity looking back from the past:

- ✓ I'm very tired. I've been working all day (present perfect progressive).
- ✓ I was very tired.I had been working all day (past perfect progressive   )
  (Walker *et al* 2000, p.51).

Eastwood (2002 p.55) identifies the following two uses of thepast perfect progressive;

1. For an action which happened over a period of time.
   o I found the calculator. *I'd been looking* for it for ages.
   o Vicky felt tired because *she'd been working* all day.
2. We normally use the continuous with a phrase saying how long.
   o When the company went bankrupt, it *had been losing* money for months.

In effect, one can conclude based on Walker *et al* (2000) and Eastwood (2002) that the past perfect progressive is used to describe past events in the past.

2.5.1.3The future perfect progressive

This combination has the structure;***will/would + been + have +ing verb.***The future perfect progressive is a strict combination making use of **only**'have' as a form of HAVE.

Penston (2005, p.28) indicated the use of this combination using the story below;

> Sue is doing well on her course. By the end of next week, she **will have mastered (FUTURE** PERFECT SIMPLE) how to teach relative clauses, the conditionals and other points without 'teaching grammar'. Her course leader, Alan, will also have reason for celebration soon: by the end of this course he **will have been training** (FUTURE PERFECT CONTINUOUS) at the same school for 25 years!

2.6 Perfective and Imperfective Aspects

An event or situationthat is ongoing and incomplete is a form of imperfectivity. In this case, "the situation is viewed as an internal stage, without boundaries and is conceptualised as ongoing and incomplete; the beginning and end aren't included in this viewpoint – we see only the internal part (Downing *et al* 2006, p. 370)".

Again, Huddleston *et al* (2007, p. 52) confirm that the "progressive aspect involves a specific kind of imperfectivity". However, we talk about perfectivity when the event is viewed as a complete whole from outside of it with sharp boundaries and not necessarily completed and hence past. This is where many authors such as Huddleston *et al* (2007) and Downing *et al* (2006) argue that 'perfectivity' and 'perfect' are two different terms. For instance, Huddleston *et al*(2007) recognize that even though both terms are from the same root word which means 'complete', the perfectivity does not only refer to a

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kind of past event as does the ***perfect*** but also it represents future actions (Huddleston *et al* 2007 , p. 44). This means an example such as

I have come to school will be said to be both ***perfect*** and ***perfective***, whiles ***I will come to school*** is regarded as only ***perfective*** since the situation is viewed as a 'complete whole'. However, this difference is not seen by Berk (1999) when he stated that "the terms *perfect* and *perfective* refer to an action that is seen as an unanalyzed whole, an action that is over and done with, complete (Berk 1999, P.106)". Again, as defined in Comrie (1995), perfective aspect allows us to view an event as a completed whole (*bounded* or *external* perspective), whereas imperfective aspect constrains us to focus on the internal stages of an ongoing situation (*unbounded* or *internal* perspective). This means that both the '-ed' and '-en' verb forms together with the future constructions all indicate perfectivity. Thus, 'perfectivity' incorporates 'perfect aspect'and the ***be + V-ing*** indicating progressiveness, marks 'imperfective aspect'.

 Notice that the 'perfect' and 'perfective aspects' are commonly associated with ***completion***. Dahl (1999) stated that "the difference between them being that in the perfective aspect a situation is complete while the situation is already completed in the perfect aspect (Dahl 1999, p. 82-83)". A situation is said to be 'complete' when it has both beginning and ending; it is whole and does not need any further explanation about its boundaries. However, a situation is 'completed' when it is over and done with; that is, the situation is in the past time.

Remember that the fact that English does not have a grammaticalized perfective aspect does not mean the absence of a possible perfective meaning of the English sentence.

2.7 Studies Conducted on Non-Native English Speakers about the Use of the English Aspect System

Several researches have been carried out to identify the kind of difficultiesnon-native English speakers face in the use of the English aspect. One of such studies was conducted by Kristiane Dürich in 2005 in Chemnitz University of Technology (TUC), Germany.

In his paper, Dürich (2005) undertook a study which focused on the acquisition of among others, the English aspect system by German adult learners. The main aim of this study was to find out the extent to which it is possible for German adult learners of English as a second language to achieve competence in the field of the aspect of English. Thus, the study was directed to discover whether German adult learners are able to achieve full competence in the English aspect system during formal English interaction process. This means, the study expected errors these learners were likely to commit in their use of the English aspect.

The participants of this study according to the paper were 21 German University students who were into British and American studies in Chemnitz University of Technology (TUC) and were taking their exams in the university. The data for the study were therefore consisted of 21 written essays from each participant.

At the end of the analysis of participants' errors in aspect use, it was discovered that out of the 37 aspectual errors that were identified, 33 of them were as a result of the progressive and only 4 were as a result of the perfect.

By this study, one can conclude that for the adult German learner of English as a second language in Chemnitz University of Technology, the type of aspect that poses the most difficulty is the progressive. Another study that has shown the effects of participants' understanding on processing different aspectual sentences was that conducted by Magliano and Schleich (2000).In Magliano *et al* (2000), participants were asked to read English passages and to subsequently decide whether target verb phrases (either perfective or imperfective) appeared in those narratives. The results showed that the participants responded significantly more quickly to imperfective versions than to perfective ones. This showed that participants understood the imperfective versions than did perfective ones.

Also, in Madden and Zwaan (2003), participants responded asymmetrically to perfective and imperfective sentences. Using a series of sentence–picture matching tasks, they found that participants were significantly faster in matching perfective sentences (e.g., *He made afire*) with pictures depicting completed situations, as opposed to pictures depicting ongoing situations(e.g., *He was making a fire*). Madden *et al* (2003) findings suggest that perfective sentences are more quickly matched to completed than to ongoing pictures.

The findings from these previous studies thus clearly show that aspectual asymmetry in sentence processing is fairly common. As was reported in Magliano *et al* (2000), imperfective aspect imposes an ongoing perspective for events, enhancing their retention in active working memory, whereas perfective aspect, with its terminative (or bounded) focus, yields a shorter retention rate, with activation of the events in working memory decaying much more quickly. It is thus not surprising that perfective sentences are typically used to foreground and rapidly advance a story plot, whereas imperfective

sentences are frequently used as specificational or backgrounding information in narratives to enhance text cohesion (Hopper, 1999)

It is important to note that in both Magliano *et al* (2000) and Madden *et al* (2003), the verbs used to test the effect of grammatical aspect (perfective vs. imperfective) were accomplishment verbs (e.g., *makea fire*), and the role of lexical aspect itself (e.g., accomplishment vs. activity) was not independently evaluated. "It is well known that, cross linguistically, there is a strong interaction between lexical and grammatical aspect in both acquisition and use of aspectual marking (Li &Shirai, 2000)". Research has shown that in terms of use, telic verbs (i.e., verbs with an inherent endpoint focus, such as accomplishments) are more frequently used with perfective aspect, whereas atelic verbs (i.e. verbs with no inherent endpoint focus, such as activities) are more often used with imperfective aspect, and that in acquisition, "perfective markings are acquired earlier with telic verbs, whereas imperfective markings are acquired earlier with atelic verbs (Andersen &Shirai1996, p. 532)". It is thus possible that the use of different verb types may yield different results in sentence- processing studies.

Note that grammatical aspect is expressed through morphological inflection and as such both perfective and imperfective are the two main classes of grammatical aspect. The prototypical representation of grammatical aspect occurs in Slavonic languages, where verbs can take different forms according to the characteristics of the situations they refer to. The traditional distinction made in Slavonic languages between perfective and imperfective aspect, is "overtly and morphologically marked (Binnick2001,p. 136)". "One crucial difference between Slavonic and Western European languages is that aspect is not overtly marked in the latter (Binnick2001, p. 136)". Lexical aspect on the other hand, is realized in reference to whether the verb is stative, durative and so on.

The English language always integrates these two classes of aspect in most of its sentence constructions in order to acquire the intended meaning.

2.8 Aspect Errors

Errors in respect of aspectual sentences have been divided into two groups, the errors made in the field of progressiveand those in the field of perfect aspect. A further subdivision can be made into errors where the aspect was erroneously not used and where the aspect was erroneously used. This categorization is consistent with Dürich (2005) who also adopted the same method of aspectual error classification in his paper. Notice that the aspect errors discussed here are observations I made during my study and they are therefore exclusively peculiar to my school of study.

2.8.1Errors Involving the Progressive Aspect

The progressive aspect constitutes obviously the biggest problem for the students. The errors are divided into two; sentence constructions in which the progressive was used where it should not have been used and sentence constructions in which the progressive should have been used yet it was not used.

2.8.1.1 Erroneous use of the Progressive Aspect

In the sentences below, instead of the simple tense present, the present Progressive has been applied. These errorsare very common with students' communication.

a. I **am missing** you these days because of your absence.

b. If children **are** now **attending** school, the future will definitely be a good place for humanity.

2.8.1.2 Erroneous Non-Use of the Progressive Aspect

Students also normally commit errors due to the non-use of the progressive aspect. Sentences such as below are therefore very common;

    a. Amanda **has looked** at the picture when I entered the room.

    b. Koomson **came** to school when I saw him this morning.

In *a*, since the action was ongoing when Amanda entered the room, the form should have been "…**was looking** …." Instead of "…**has looked**…"

Also in *b*, it is obvious that **Koomson** had not arrived in school when the speaker saw him and that the speaker was not also even in the school premise when he /she spotted **Koomson**. The appropriate form that should have been used instead should have been 'was coming'. Failure to use the past progressive in both cases above therefore makes each of the sentences inappropriate and unacceptable.

2.8.2 Errors Involving the Perfect Aspect

Here too, two types of errors involving perfect aspect have to be distinguished, those in which the perfect was used in contexts where it was not necessary, and those in which the perfect should have been used, but it was rather not used.

2.8.2.1 Erroneous Use of the Perfect Aspect

This involves cases where students used the perfect aspect in sentences where it should not have been used and so cases such as below were common:

a. I have a pen which I bought yesterday. Several coins **had been spent**.

 b. My parents **have gone** to Accra last week.

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Instead of using the simple past in both cases, the perfect aspect has been used. The perfect aspect has therefore been applied wrongly.

2.8.2.2 Erroneous Non-Use of the Perfect Aspect

This refers to situations where the Perfect Aspect should have been used but is rather not used.And so utterances like below are very common:

    a.   The population of Ghana **is increasing** since 2010.

In sentence *a* above, the ongoing process of the increasing population in the past up to thepresent moment, which is the point from which the past development is viewed, could have been best described by the perfect aspect. **The present perfect progressive aspect** should have therefore been applied.

2.9 Problems in Learning and Mastering English Aspect

As already noted by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), that aspect is a major issue in language teaching and learning and for that matter it occupies a major part in almost every language teaching andlearning syllabus including English, sufficient time has not been devoted to the factors that facilitate or hinder the acquisition systems of aspect. This leads to a situation where a lot of learners of English language in particular, fail to master aspect even though they spend substantial amount of time in order to master this concept. The challenges students face in trying to master the aspect of the verb in English language may be due to the fact that they fail to understand the state of the situation and hence, aspect in most cases.

In Ghanaian senior high schools, L1 interference (mother tongue) can be a contributory factor because most Ghanaian languages have simple sentences that conform to both

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English present simple and present progressive.Hence, Senior high school learners of English are often seen to produce sentences like: *I study English for twelve years* instead of *I am studying English for twelve years.* Here, they fail to realize that since the activity started in the past and extends to the present and possibly will continue into the future, such activity is *ongoing* and hence the progressive aspect must be used to describe it. Another erroneous use of the present progressive and hence aspect caused by the L1 interference is seen in the sentence "I am reading everyday in the evening". This is what Cowan (2008) confirms in his book when he stated that;

> Ghanaians simple sentence conforms to both English present simple and present progressive; hence, Ghanaian speakers of English have troubles using the two English tenses in the appropriate context. A common error is to over generalize the progressive in context in which time expression requires a simple form'.Alternatively, Ghanaian speakers may make errors using simple present in the place of present progressive (Cowan 2008, p.356).

The challenges of teaching and learning English particularly aspect could be discussed under the following headings:

2.9.1Commitment constraints

According to Kannan (2009, p. 2), "students learn basic grammar at school level for the purpose of passing only in the tests and in the examinations and not to face any real life situations. Application-oriented advanced grammar such as aspect is not taught in schools. Furthermore, adequate practice is not given to students to learn the language". Most researchers totally align with Kannan's opinion. It is obvious that students only read to pass English language but are not totally committed to its mastery; probably

because learners are only taught and expect to reproduce the experience rather than allowing them to self–discover, for example, the ways of learning aspect in English Language.

2.9.2 Verb form confusion

Many learners of English language find it very difficult to identify the '-en' form of the verb. The verb form therefore poses a great deal of confusion to students.Both regular and irregular verbs present this difficulty to students leaving them with no alternative as to which form to select in their sentence construction.

2.9.3 Beliefs Constraints

Beliefs about foreign language learning play a major role in the success or failure of the teaching-learning process of English. Indeed, the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that students bring with them to the English classrooms are significant contributory factors in the language learning processes and their ultimate success. Senior high school students hold certain beliefs about learning English Language, which are by-products of anumber of internal and external factors, including poor student attitude and low motivation, both of which affect their classroom performance. These include (a) students' perceptions of English; (b) their experience with learning English; and (c) their expectations about studying English.

Since English is not immediately relevant to their needs, students usually do not pay serious attention to learning the language as a subject matter. Their efforts are devoted to acquiring the minimal competency needed to pass to the next gradeor level and pay no attention to other aspects of learning. As a result, they tend to memorize grammatical

rules, passages of written English, and vocabulary (Jan 1994 &Zaid1993). Elyas and Picard (2010, p. 138) maintained that "secondary-school-level students are asked to memorize four to five written passages as part of their preparation for the final written test in English". Maherzi (2011, p. 790) noted that "learners of English often ask themselves why they are studying English, as they see no link between their efforts and the desired goal, which is to become competent in the English language".

It seems, as pointed out by Al-Seghayer (2011, p. 120), that the key ingredient missing for most students is intrinsic motivation. The fuel that propels them through their study of English comes from an outer source, not inner sources. It is the extrinsic influence of the educational system that encourages them, not any personal interest within. Senior high students' lack of intrinsic motivation for learning and speaking English extends beyond the language classroom (Liton2012). They have no real purpose for or opportunity to use English outside of the classroom. This is very common with students from rural setting such as my study area. This assertion was confirmed by Javid, Al-Asmari, and Farooq (2012, p.285), who showed that "senior high students exhibited higher extrinsic, as opposed to intrinsic, motivation". This stance demonstrates the existing gap between the ultimate aim that policymakers present pertaining to teaching English, which centers around the notion of enabling learners to communicate using English to function in social or other situations, as well as in educational pursuit, and the fact that learners themselves regard the process of learning English as merely a means to pass the English final exam because it is a required subject matter. This can all be summed with the contention that since the only reason for senior high school students to learn English is external pressure, internal motivation is minimal and their general attitudes toward learning English is negative, as put forth by Shehdeh (2010)

and Khan (2011) and reemphasized by Shah, Hussain and Nassef (2013). This attitude affects all areas of English including aspect.

Additionally, the students' desire to learn English is adversely affected by the weak encouragement and support that they receive from their parents especially those who are uneducated (Shah *et al* 2013 & Khan 2011). A further hindrance that negatively affects the studyof the English language with enthusiasm and desire is the importance of the environment surrounding the student, including school administrators, teachers, and peers.

2.9.4 Curriculum Constraints

A close analysis of the senior high school curriculum reveals various constraints that impede the process of teaching and learning of the English grammar which *aspect* forms part.

Among the constraints include limited time for instruction, lack of teaching -learning material resources, inadequate competence and knowledge of the teacher, inadequate and improper teaching methodology as well as inadequate practice opportunities.

2.9.5Administrative Constraints

Administrative constraints stand as another major constraint confronting English teaching in senior high schools in Ghana. This is due to the centralization of the English teaching system.

The system of teaching English in Ghana is centralized and controlled by the Ministry of Education (MOE). At each grade or level, teachers of English languageare given an identical syllabus, with guidelines and deadlines that they are required to apply and

follow. Thus, teachers at public schools are tied by the MOE to a relatively fixed syllabus that provides guidelines in the form of learning objectives, teaching methods, and the scope and general order of the learning materials. "This strong centralization mechanism for English language education suggests that English teachers have less autonomy and are teaching within certain boundaries (Shah*et al* 2013)". In this regard, Al-Saadat and Al-Braik (2004, p.200) stated that "teachers are expected to adhere to and implementthe curriculum policies as they are handed down to themby the MOE". According to Al-Hajailan (2006), "the curriculum department of the MOE central offices undertakes the tasks of developing guides, establishing standards, and planning instructional units". This discourages the development of teacher-made materials and provides no opportunities to especially, trainee teachers in material development techniques. Furthermore, it encourages teachers to be rushing through the syllabus in order to complete the tasksprescribed for them by the developers leaving only inadequate time for student practice activities in grammarincludingaspect. This practice is derived from the tenets of a top-down model of curriculum development, instead of a bottom-up model where the classroom teacher, the student the community and so on should have been involved in the curriculum development process since they comprise the main implementing team. The MOE also assigns and distributes textbooks to senior high school students throughout the country. Al-Seghayer (2005, p.128) suggested that "this is done to ensure that students are receiving similar instruction". Even though this may be good in onebreadth, in another breadth, it restricts the teacheras to type and number of supplementary resource materials he or she should use in the teaching and learning process since the experts who are engaged toauthor these books definitely will only select or prepare content thatmeets their set objectivesusing specified instructional

materials. This is what I refer to as ***disintegration*** where experts who prepare the curriculum are different from the experts who implement it as well as those experts who assess the students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section of the study discusses the techniques employed during data collection, analysis and interpretation. It explains the procedures that were used to conduct the study which focused on research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures and analysis of data.

3.2 Research Design

The design employed, for a study like this, as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) was descriptive surveydesign which employed quantitative data format and specifies the nature of the phenomenon and for this study, addressing problems on the use of aspects in English Language among first year students in Sankore senior high school. The descriptive design involves the collection of data to answer research questions formulated to guide the research. The descriptive survey design was appropriate

because according to Gay (1992), "descriptive survey involves collection of data to answer research questions formulated to guide the study".

As Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) noted "Descriptive research is used to describe the characteristics of a population by directly examining samples of that population (Glatthorn *et al* 2005, p. 101)". Descriptive statistics primarily use surveys, interviews, and observations to report frequencies, averages, and percentages of an occurrence. Survey research was used due to the exploratory nature of the study (Portner& Watkins 2000). "Survey research is a planned method of data collection that involves entering a subject population and measuring a specific set of responses (Fraenkel &Wallen 2006, p. 11)". Roche (2009, p.40) affirmed that "survey research allows the participants to freely express doubts, opinions, and memories without fear of reprisal".

Survey research provided descriptions, explanations, predictions of relationships through interpretation of participant facts, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. A descriptive survey involves asking a large number of individuals the same set of questions either by mail, telephone or in person. It is appropriate when a researcher attempts to describe some aspects of a population by selecting unbiased samples who are asked to complete questionnaires, interviews and tests. The advantage of the descriptive survey design is that it provides a lot of information from quite a large number of individuals (Fraenkel &Wallen 2006).

One weakness of the descriptive survey design is that getting an adequate number of questionnaires completed and returned so that meaningful analysis could be made is difficult. The descriptive survey also tends to examine respondents' private life and therefore most people tend to avoid it. In spite of these identified weaknesses, the

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descriptive survey design was considered the most suitable for this study. The use of descriptive survey helped to determine the opinions and attitudes of the respondents on the variables under study using questionnaires. The descriptive survey also helped in acquiring the much needed information from the chosen sample and the result used to generalize for the entire population.

3.3 Population

The target population of the study was first year students of Sankore Senior High School in Asunafo South District of Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The sample size was made up of both boys and girls who were drawn from form one classes of the school. A total of 70 students were drawn from a population of 220 students which represents 31.8%. The 31.8 % of the sample size was greater than the 5% recommended by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007).

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Simple random sampling technique was used for the sampling of the students. The lottery method of simple randomization was used (Creswell 2003). The students in each form one class of the school were stratified into sex strata and the required number of students was randomly selected from each stratum. This was done in order to maintain certain representation of both sexes in the sampled population and also to avoid bias in the process of selection. Thus, each student in the first year class of the school was to have an equal chance of being selected for the study.

3.5 Research Instrument

The instrument employed for data collection was a questionnaire. The use of the questionnaire made it possible for the views of all the sampled students to be scanned at the same time on addressing problems on the use of aspects in English Language among first year students at Sankore Senior High School. According to Gay (1992), "descriptive survey study is usually conducted by administering questionnaire". The structure of the items on the questionnaire was closed ended type. The Likert type scale was used in constructing the items on the questionnaire. The content of the questionnaire was based on the research questions formulated to guide the study.

Items in section A of the questionnaire dealt with demographic characteristics of the students which were related to their gender, age, parental education and language often spoken at home. Items in section B were related to the identification of some specific types of aspect. The items were constructed using six point Likert type scale namely; present progressive (1),past progressive(2), future progressive (3),present perfect progressive (4), past perfect progressive (5)and future perfect progressive (6). Sections C and D were constructed using two and four Likert type scale respectively. Items in section C dealt with other types of aspect whilst those in section D were related to students' problems in the use of aspect and were constructed using; strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Items in sections E and F dealt with strategies to improve students' learning of aspect (direct and indirect strategies respectively).The items were constructed based on three point Likert type scale summated as Always (3), Sometimes(2) and Never (1).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered personally to ensure high return rate. Data was collected from primary source using the questionnaire. Permission was sought from the

head of the institution and head of department concerned before the instrument was administered. A covering letter from me was attached to the questionnaire to explain the objective of the study and the data needed.

After the students had been sampled, a fixed date on which respondents wanted to have the questionnaire answered was determined.

On the agreed date, students were assembled in one classroom and the content and structure of the items on the questionnaire were explained to them to ensure their comprehension and ability to provide the right responses. After the explanations, the students were given the questionnaire to answer. The questionnaire answered were collected on the same day to ensure high return rate.

3.7 Data Analysis

The responses from the questionnaire were keyed into SPSS 17.0 version and descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, and percentages were computed. The computed results are presented in tabular form in chapter four for discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings of the study. The presentation of the results involves analysis of the main data, interpretation of the analyzed data and discussion of the findings. The results are presented in two parts. The first part deals with analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents whilst the second part deals with analysis of the main data of the study.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics which were relevant to this study are gender of the students, ages of the students, educational background of students' parents and language often spoken at home.

The gender distribution of the students is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Students.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	37	52.9
Female	33	47.1
Total	70	100.0

As shown in Table 1, 37 (52.9 %) out of the 70 students used were males whilst the remaining 33 (47.1%) students were females. From the results it could be seen that more male students were used to conduct the study than females. There was however no special reason for this. The asymmetrical gender distribution of the students was therefore just a chance.

The study looked at the age distribution of the students. Table 2 presents the age distribution of the students. It is seen from this table that majority of the students used to conduct the study, 45 (64.3 %) were between the ages of 17-18 years whilst10 (14.3%) and 13 (18.6%) other students were between the ages of 15– 16 and 19 –20 years respectively. Only 2(2.8%) students were above 20 years. Thus, most of the students used for the study were between the ages of 15 – 20 years.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Students.

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage
15 - 16 years	10	14.3

17 - 18 years	45	64.3
19 - 20 years	13	18.6
Above 20 years	2	2.8
Total	70	100.0

The age distribution of students shown in table 2 confirms Antwi (1992). According to him, students in this age bracket were supposed to be in senior high schools basedon the system of education in Ghana .The system of education in Ghana according to Antwi (1992) is six years primary education, three years of junior school, three years of senior high school and four years of University education. Based on the above system, a student in senior high school should be between the ages of 16 – 19 years since a child at age 6 should be in primary school 1 in Ghana. This showed that majority of the students used for the study were in senior high schools.

The study delved into educational background of students' parents. The various responses given by the students on their parents' highest educational background is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Parents Highest Educational Qualifications

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterates	12	17.1
Basic Education	33	47.1

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Secondary Education	19	27.1
Tertiary Education	6	8.5
Total	70	100.0

As shown in Table 3, majority of the students' parents, 33 (47.1%), were basic education certificate holders (BECE) whilst 12 (17.1%) others were illiterates. In addition, 19 (27.1%) other parents were secondary school certificate holders whilst only 6 (8.5%) of the 70 parents attended tertiary institutions. From the data analysis it could be inferred that majority of the students' parents were either illiterates or semi-literates. Students from this low academic background are not likely to be supported or influenced by their parents' education. Therefore, parents' ability to support their children to learn aspect part of the English Language would be limiting at home.

Language often spoken at home by students was investigated. Table 4 indicates language often spoken at home by students.

Table 4: Language often Spokenat Home by Students

Type of Language	Frequency	Percentage
local languages	56	80.0
English	14	20.0
Total	70	100.0

The data analysis shown in Table 4 indicated that majority of the students, 56 (80.0%) often speak their local languages at home whilst only 14 (20.0%) students often speak English Language. Majority of students' inability to speak English often at home would reduce their proficiency and mastery of the Language. Students in this category would be poor users of the Language and hence aspect.

4.3 Types of Aspect Identified by Students.

The study examined the various types of aspects that the students were able to identify. The various types of aspect that students identified are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Types of Aspect Students Identified.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
I had been eating the food	0.0	82.9	0.0	11.4	5.7	0.0
I have been eating all day	17.2	11.4	14.3	44.3	5.7	7.1
I was eating the food	8.6	64.3	14.3	10.0	0.0	2.8
I will be eating the food	11.4	4.3	40.1	8.6	8.6	27.0
I am eating the food	81.4	4.3	4.3	8.6	1.4	0.0
I will have been eating the food	1.4	1.4	32.9	18.6	5.7	40.0

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1 = present progressive, 2 = past progressive 3 = future progressive, 4 = present perfect progressive 5 = past perfect progressive 6 = future perfect progressive.

It could be seen from the results presented in Table 5 that whilst as many as 82.9% of the students considered the sentence "I had been eating the food" as past progressive, none of the students recognized the sentence to be present progressive, future progressive or future perfect progressive. Similarly, 11.4% of the students considered the sentence to be present perfect progressive and only 5.7% recognized the sentence to be past perfect progressive. This implies that almost all the students were unable to correctly identify the past perfect progressive aspect since only 5.7% of the students were able to identify the correct option.

With regard to the sentence "I have been eating all day", 44.3% of the students were able to identify it to be present perfect progressive whilst 17.2% and 11.4% other students said the sentence was present progressive and past progressive respectively. This means, only few number of students (44.3%) can correctly identify this type of aspect. Also as many as 64.3% of the students were able to state that the sentence "I was eating the food" was past progressive. This means that most of the students know and hence can identify the past progressive aspect form in sentences.

Concerning, future progressive aspect, 40.1% of the students were able to indicate that "I will be eating the food" was a future progressive sentence. However, 27.0% and 11.4% other students indicated that the sentence was a future perfect progressive and present progressive respectively. This outcome showed that most of the students have difficulty in identifying the future progressive, since only 40.1% of the students were able to get the response correctly.

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For the sentence "I am eating the food", as many as 81.4% of the students were able to state that it was a present progressive type of aspect. Only 8.6 and 4.3% of the students indicated the sentence was present perfect progressive and past progressive as well as future progressive respectively. The results showed that majority of the students were able to identify the present progressive aspect correctly.

It was also found in the data analysis shown in Table 5 that only 40.0% of the students were able to find the sentence "I will have been eating the food" correctly as a future perfect progressive type of aspect. On the other hand, 32.9% and 18.6% of other students indicated that the sentence was future progressive and present perfect progressive respectively. The results indicated that majority of the students were again unable to identify the future perfect progressive type of aspect correctly.

The various outcomes of the students' ability to identify the progressive type of aspect is similar to that of Durich (2005) where it was revealed that students learning English as their second language have problems with the English Progressive Sentence.

4.3.2 **Perfective and Imperfective Types of Aspect**

The study further examined students' ability to distinguish between the perfective and imperfective types of aspects using the sentence 'I was walking to work'. Results of this analysis are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Perfective and Imperfective Types of Aspect

	Perfective		Imperfective	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%

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I was walking to work	37	52.9	33	47.1

When the imperfect sentence "I was walking to work" was presented to the students to identify its state, 33 (47.1%) of the students identified it appropriately as imperfective while 37 (52.9%), other students representing the majority were not able to identify the correct option. This indicates that most of the students have a challenge of differentiating between the perfective and imperfective types of aspect.

4.3.3 Progressive and Perfective Aspects

Another aspect types that students were to identify using the sentence 'I have gone to work' were the progressive and perfective aspects. Table 7 shows the results of students' responses.

Table 7: Progressive and Perfective Aspects

	Progressive		Perfective	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I have gone to work	32	45.7	38	54.3

Table 7 indicates that 32 (45.7%) of the students identified the sentence "I have gone to work" to be progressive type of aspect whilst 38 (54.3%) other students stated that it was perfective aspect. The correct option was perfective aspect. However, from the results, although majority of the students correctly identified this type of aspect, most of the students were unable to do so.

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4.3.4 **Progressive Continuous and Progressive Habitual**

The students were presented with the sentence "I am eating food" to identify the type of aspect. The responses given by the students are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Progressive Continuous and Progressive Habitual

	Progressive Continuous		Progressive Habitual	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I am eating food	64	91.4	6	8.6

The data analysis presented in Table 8 shows that 64 (91.4%) out of the 70 students identified the sentence to be progressive continuous type of aspect whilst only 6 (9.6%) of the remaining students said it was a progressive habitual type of aspect. The sentence is a progressive continuous type of aspect. This implies that majority of the students were able to identify progressive continuous type of aspect correctly in sentences.

4.3.5 **Present and Past Perfect types of Aspect**

The study further explored the students' ability to differentiate between present and past perfective types of sentences. The responses given by the students on the sentence "He has stolen the money" is shown in Table 9.

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Table 9: Present and Past Perfect types of Aspect

	Present Perfect		Past Perfect	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
He has stolen the money	15	21.4	55	78.6

As shown in Table 9, whereas only 15 (21.4%) of the students identified the sentence to be present perfect, as many as 55 (78.6%) of the students said it was past perfect type of aspect. The results show that majority of the students were unable to identify the sentence correctly. These results showed that most students used for the study have difficulties in the correct use of the present perfect type of aspect.

4.3.6 **Present and Past Types of Progressive Aspect**

The students were provided with the sentence "They were studying yesterday" to identify the type of aspect the sentence was. The responses given by the students are in Table 10.

Table 10: Present and Past Types of Progressive Aspect

	Present Progressive		Past Progressive	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
They were studying yesterday	5	7.1	65	92.9

Table 10 indicates that whilst only 5 (7.1%) of the students identified the sentence to be present progressive, majority of the students, 65 (92.9%) said it was a past

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progressive type of aspect. This outcome of the study indicates that majority of the students were able to identify the sentence correctly to be past progressive type of aspect.

4.3.7 Imperfective and Perfective type of Aspect

With regard to the sentence "I had returned home already", Table 11 presents the students' responses. Here, the focus was on the imperfective and perfective types of aspect.

Table 11: Imperfective and Perfective Types of Aspect

	Imperfective		Perfective	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I had returned home already	26	37.1	44	62.9

As shown in Table 11, 26 of the students representing 37.1% indicated that the sentence was imperfective type whilst 44 (62.9%) other students identified the sentence to be perfective type. It could be seen from the results that most of the students were able to identify the sentence correctly to be perfective type. Thus, most of the students have the ability to distinguish between the imperfective and perfective types of aspects in a sentence when the sentence consists of 'had+ '-en' verb'.

4.3.8 **Future Progressive and Future Perfect Progressive**

Students' ability to show the differences between future progressive and future perfect progressive is presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Future Progressive and Future Perfect Progressive

	Future Progressive		Future Perfective Progressive	
Sentence	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I will have been leaving for Accra	39	55.7	31	44.3

The data analysis presented in Table 12 shows that 39 (55.7%) of the students identified the sentence to express a future progressive ideaand31 other students representing 44.3% identified the sentence to be expressing a future perfect progressive idea. The sentence expresses a future perfect progressive idea. The results show that majority of the students, 39 (55.7%) were unable to identify the sentence correctly. These results imply that most of the students used to conduct the study cannot identify the future perfect progressive type of aspect correctly.

From the results presented above, a total of 13 questions representing 10 progressives and 3 perfectives were presented to students to identify the various types of aspect they contain. At the end of the analysis, as many as 6 out of the 10 questions expressing the

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progressive ideas were wrongly answered and only 4 were correctly answered. However, for the sentences expressing perfective ideas, 2 out of the 3 were correctly answered. These results imply that students in this study area have a difficulty in identifying the English progressive or the imperfective type of aspect. These outcomes of the study are consistent with those of Durich (2005) and Madden et al (2003) who also found similar results.

4.4 Problems Students Face in the Use of Aspect.

The study delved into the kind of difficulties students, in their own opinion face in using different aspect types. Table 13 shows the students levels of agreement to the challenges presented to them.

Table 13: Students' Problems in the Use of Aspects

Type of Problem	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Difficulty in the use of the various forms of 'BE'	11.4	42.9	41.4	4.3
Difficulty in the use of -ing form of the verb	20.0	52.9	20.0	7.1
The -en form of the verb is confusing	17.1	12.9	28.6	41.4
L1 influence	24.3	18.6	25.7	31.4
Difficulty in the use of the various forms of 'HAVE'	11.4	47.1	22.9	18.6

Inability to combine various forms of 'HAVE' with 'BEEN'	15.7	31.4	32.9	20.0
Inability to identify stative verbs	12.9	32.9	37.1	17.1
Inability to use 'WILL BE' with the -ing form of the verb	10.0	22.9	51.4	15.7
Inability to combine 'WILL + HAVE + BEEN' with the -ing form of the verb	10.2	20.0	42.7	27.1
Overgeneralization of the progressive and perfective	23.0	24.1	23.7	29.2

The results presented in Table 13 indicate that the students showed different levels of agreement to the problems shown to them. It could be seen from the data analysis that 54.3% of the students disagreed to the challenge of having difficulty in the use of the various forms of 'BE'whilst 45.7% other students agreed that they have problems with the use of "BE". This results show that some of the students have difficulties with the use of "BE" and as such strategies need to be put in place to help such students overcome their problems.

Similarly, 72.9% of the students disagreed that they have a problem of using '-ing' form of the verb. This means that the students' problem of using '-ing' form of the verb is minimum in the school used for the study. Again, 70% of the students agreed that their problem of using '-en' form of the verb is due to confusion. This confirms the assertion that the '-en' verb form confuses students and hence, they are unable to identify such forms in most cases. Also, 57.1% of the students agreed that their problem in the use of aspectual sentences was due to L1 interference. This is consistent with the assertion that in Ghanaian senior high schools, L1 interference (mother tongue) can be a contributory

factor because most Ghanaian languages have simple sentences that conform to both English present simple and present progressive.

With regards to students' problem relating to the difficulty in the use of the various forms of 'HAVE', 58.5% disagreed that their problem with aspect had to do with difficulty in the use of the various forms of 'HAVE'.

The problems of the students found in the study were their inability to combine the various forms of HAVE with BEEN and identify stative verbs. These problems could be seen from the students' responses. The data analysis in Table 13 show that 52.9% of the students agreed to have a problem with the use of HAVE combined with 'BEEN' whilst 54.2% of other students indicated that their problem had to do with their inability to identify stative verbs. This outcome confirmed those of Binnick (2001) who reported that stative verbs do not occur in progressive aspect except for some idiomatic uses and with aspectual auxiliaries which occur in the infinitival forms.

67.1% of the students agreed with the fact that their problem with aspect is as a result of their inability to use 'will be' with the '-ing' form of the verb.

The data analysis shown in Table 13 also revealed that 69.8% of the students agreed to have the problem of combining WILL + HAVE+ BEEN with the '-ing' form of the verb. The results indicate that most of the students agreed to have such problems. This means that the students find it difficult to use the combination of 'WILL+ HAVE + BEEN' with the '-ing' form of the verb.

It was also found that 52.8% of the students agreed to have the problem of over generalization of the progressive and perfective types of aspect. This finding agreed

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with those of Ungerer (1999) who asserted that the progressive might be overused. According to Ungerer (1999) the overuse of the progressive and perfective aspects constitute a major problem for learners of English Language as a second language.

In general, out of the 10 problems presented to students, it was revealed that students agreed to have challenges in the use of 7 of them.

The students' problems related to the use of aspects found in this study need to be addressed if students' performance in English Language in West African Senior School Certificate Examination is to be improved.

4.5 Strategies that can be Adopted to Improve Students' Use of Aspects in English Language Learning in the Classroom.

The study sought for various strategies (both direct and indirect) that could be put in place to improve students' performance in the use of aspect.

4.5.1 Direct Strategies

The following strategies are referred to here as *direct* because their use is as a result of the instructions of the teacher and their effectiveness are checked regularly. In all, the students were presented with 11 direct strategies and asked to indicate how these strategies were applied by their teachers to mitigate their problems in the use of aspect in the classroom. These strategies are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Direct Strategies Used to Mitigate Students' Problems of Aspect

Strategy used	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
Reading novels and storybooks and summarizing them periodically	5.7	67.1	27.2
Applying rules in constructing aspectual sentences	55.7	25.7	18.6
Reviewing well-structured sentences	30.0	57.1	12.9
Speaking English both in and outside of the classroom	32.9	64.3	2.8
Practising recombination	24.3	72.9	2.2
Receiving and sending messages to get ideas quickly from your teacher	11.4	42.9	45.7
Analysing and reasoning deductively in both speaking and writing	21.4	61.4	17.2

Asking your teacher of grammar questions for comprehensive explanation of aspectual sentences	74.3	18.6	7.1
Contacting friends for assistance on aspectual sentences	21.4	57.1	21.5
Guessing intelligently by using linguistic clues	12.9	41.4	45.7
Overcoming limitation in speaking and writing by getting help in the classroom	28.6	60.0	11.4

The data analysis of the strategies presented in Table 14 show that whilst 67.1% of the students indicated that they read novels and story books sometimes and summarize them periodically to improve their use of aspects, 55.7% of other students stated that they apply rules in constructing aspectual sentences always to improve their use of aspects. Similarly, 57.1% of the students indicated that they review well structured sentences sometimes as means of bettering their use of aspect whilst 64.3% of the students stated that they sometimes speak English language in and out of the classroom using some form of aspect. This, students hoped will help them to better their use of aspect.

In addition, 72.9% of the students stated that practicing of recombination sometimes can be used as a strategy to enhance their proficiency in the use of aspect. It was found in the data analysis in Table 14 that 61.4% of the students reported that they analyse and reason deductively in both speaking and writing to improve their use of aspects whilst 74.3% stated that they always ask their teacher of grammar questions for comprehensive explanation in order to improve their use of aspectual sentences.

Again, 57.1% and 60.0% of the students indicated that they sometimes contact friends for assistance on aspectual sentences as well as overcoming limitation in speaking and writing by getting help in the classroom respectively. Thus, students' participation actively in classroom discussions can help them to improve their use of aspect. Table 14 also shows that 45.7% each of the students stated that they never used receiving and sending messages to their teachers to get ideas quickly and guessing intelligently using linguistic clues respectively to improve their use of aspect.

The different strategies used by the teacher to deal with the students' problems related to aspects are in line with those of Collins (2005) and Cowan (2008). According to Cowan (2008), in order to solve the problems of students, teachers should take into account the various strategies provided so that the learners have an opportunity to have extensive examples from all the types of aspect and experience how the different types can produce different meaning when they appear in a particular form. Collins (2005) was of the view that it may be more productive to expose students to relevant strategies in context. Collins (2005) further indicated that instructional activities that require learners to supply and manipulate context for given forms may help address the difficulty learners have in mastering the aspect forms.

4.5.2 Indirect Strategies

The study further looked at the different types of indirect strategies students use to improve their learning of aspect. They are *indirect* in the sense that their use is based on the student and their effectiveness is not directly measured by the teacher both in and outside of the classroom. Table 15 presents the various indirect strategies often used. In all, 12 indirect strategies were presented.

Table 15: Indirect Strategies Used to Improve Students Learning of Aspects

Indirect strategy	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
Linking topics with already known materials	28.6	51.4	20.0
Paying attention and listening carefully during English lessons	82.9	11.4	5.7
Delaying speech production to focus on listening	21.4	57.1	21.5
Finding out about language learning organization using different reference materials at your leisure	18.6	57.1	24.3
Setting goal and objectives for yourself outside the classroom	34.3	44.3	21.4
Identifying the purpose of a language task	22.9	65.7	11.4
Planning for language task	21.4	54.3	24.3
Seeking practice opportunities from your teacher after school hours	20.0	57.1	22.9
Self-monitoring and evaluation	37.1	41.4	21.5

Listening to radio programmes in English language frequently	37.1	47.2	15.7
Watching television programmes in English language frequently	37.1	51.4	11.4
Cooperation with proficient users of the English language	31.4	54.3	14.3

As shown in Table 15, 51.4% of the students said they sometimes link topics with already known materials to improve their learning of aspect whilst as many as 82.9% of other students indicated that they always pay attention and listen carefully during English lessons as a way of learning aspect. Another 57.1% of the students indirectly sometimes used to delay their speech production in order to focus on listening as an indirect strategy to improve their correct use of aspect. Similarly, 57.1% of the students indicated that they sometimes find out about language learning organization using different reference materials at their leisure time to learn aspect.

For setting goals and objectives for themselves outside the classroom, 44.3% of the students indicated that this was sometimes one of the means they used to learn aspect indirectly. Also, 65.7% of other students stated that they indirectly sometimes learn aspect by identifying the purpose of a language task whilst 54.3% of other students said they sometimes learn aspect by planning for language task. In addition, 57.1% of other students stated that they sometimes learn aspect by seeking practice opportunities from their teachers after school hours.

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The data analysis in Table 15 also indicates that 41.4% of the students sometimes learn aspect by self-monitoring and evaluation. Apart from the indirect strategies mentioned, 47.2% and 51.4% of the students stated that they sometimes learn aspects by listening to radio and watching television programmes in English respectively. It was also found in the study that 54.3% of the students sometimes learn aspects by cooperating with proficient users of the English language. By doing this, the proficient users of the language serve as mentors for the students.

The results presented in Table 15 show that students indirectly learn aspect sometimes through their own efforts or from others and organizations. This implies that most of the students were aware of their limitations in the use of aspect and therefore seek various ways indirectly to improve their performance. The indirect strategies adopted by the students are consistent with those of Collins (2007) who posited that teachers and students ought to place greater focus on aspect in which students find as a problem by using both direct and indirect strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the final work of the study. It involves summary and conclusions drawn from the findings. It also includes recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The study investigated the problems on the use of aspect in English Language among first year students at Sankore Senior High School in Asunafo South District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The research was undertaken with the view to finding answers to the challenges and making suggestions that could help improve the students' use of aspects in the school. A survey was conducted in Sankore Senior High School in the Asunafo South District in the Brong Ahafo Region. A sample size of 70 students was selected for the study. A questionnaire was developed for the respondents to complete. The questionnaire was pilot tested, revised and later administered to the respondents.

The data collected were analysed by using descriptive statistics and the computed results presented in tabular form for discussion.

The main findings of the study were organized according to the research questions.

It was found that students were unable to identify in sentences, most of the progressive types of aspect namely: future progressive, present perfect progressive, past perfect progressive, and the future perfect progressive. The only progressive aspect types students were able to successfully identify were the present progressive and the past progressive. This indicates that students have a major problem in identifying the progressive aspect in sentences. However, students were able to identify sentence constructions expressing perfective ideas and could identify the past perfect but the present perfect type of aspect was a challenge for them to identify in sentences.

 The results also showed that most of the students had a challenge in differentiating between the progressive and imperfective on one hand and perfect and perfective on the other hand.

Most of the students had problem of using '-en' form of the verb. Another problem found in the study was students' inability to combine the various forms of HAVE with BEEN, WILL BE with the '-ing' form of the verb and their inability to identify stative verbs was also problematic. The data analysis also revealed that most of the students agreed to having problem of combining WILL + HAVE + BEEN with the '-ing' form of the verb and as well as   L1 interference posing a substantial difficulty. The problem of overgeneralization of the progressive and perfective was also obvious as seen in the data collected.

The results of the study revealed that most of the students apply rules in constructing aspectual sentences always as a strategy to deal with their challenges and improve their use of aspects in the school. It was also found that the students sometimes use the following strategies: Reviewing well - structured sentences, speaking English both in and out of the classroom, practicing recombination, analyzing and reasoning deductively in both speaking and writing, Contacting friends for assistance on aspectual sentences and overcoming limitation in writing and speaking by getting help in the classroom: as a way of mitigating their aspectual problems. The results also showed that students always ask their teachers of grammar questions for comprehensive explanation as a way to solving their problems in aspect.

Indirectly, it was found that students pay attention and listen carefully during English lessons always as a strategy to improve their use of aspects. On the other hand the students were found to sometimes use the following strategies indirectly to improve their use of aspects: Delaying speech production to focus on listening, finding out about language learning organization using different reference materials at their leisure, identifying the purpose of a language task, planning for language task, seeking practice opportunities from teachers after school hours, watching television programmes in English language frequently and cooperation with proficient users of the English language.

5.3 Conclusions

It could be concluded that language acquisition is a process that requires informal and natural input, but research has demonstrated the significance of grammar instruction in foreign language learning and second language acquisition that serves not only to develop a fluent, but also an accurate use of language (Krashen 2003). It has been found

that explicit grammar instruction can be presented to learners who have already acquired certain level of language by integrating direct and indirect approaches that focus either on form or meaning.

From my discussion under the concept of aspect, one understands that aspectis a grammatical category that focuses on whether the verbal action is complete or ongoing. This, as seen already is consistent with Quirk et al (1976). That means the action or situation may be seen as complete, in progress, having duration (i.e. beginning, and ending,) or being repeated (iterative).

English has two aspects, progressive and perfect. Verb phrases can be marked for both aspects at the same time. Usually, grammars contrast the progressive with the perfect aspect on the basis that the former refers to an action or event as in progress and ongoing, while the latter tends to indicate the completeness of an action; to see actions and events as a completed whole; (e.g. DeCarrico 2008, p. 70 and Berk 1999, p.107). It is also realized from this study that whereas perfectivity incorporates perfect aspect and that both the '-ed' and '-en' verb forms together with the future constructions all indicate perfectivity, the *be + V-ing* indicating progressiveness, marks *imperfective aspect.* This idea is consistent with that of Berk (1999) and Comrie (1995). Again, as found in this study, students' challenges in aspect can be ameliorated by the use of direct and indirect strategies.

Language should be considered as the most integral part of human existence as it serves as a vehicle of social and educational communication that needs to be used in both formal and informal settings. It is relevant however, to bear in mind that the decision about where, when, and how to use aspect is primarily made by speakers. Thus, teachers of the English language are encouraged to provide students with the necessary

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knowledge to produce not only fluid speech in certain contexts, but also to produce standard, coherent and acceptable statements in formal and informal settings based on the various types of aspect.

5.4 Recommendations

1. It was found that students have challenges with the identification of the progressive aspect. It is suggested that teachers should help students practice that aspect in more varied contexts. Although strategies , such as picture descriptions, information gap activities, authentic listening and interpreting activities, storytelling, and games did not surface in this thesis , many grammars such as Eastwood (2002, p.17-58), Alexander (1998, p. 124-137) and Walker *et al* (2000, p. 27-55) recommend the use of these strategies to solve problems arising from the use of the English aspect . This is why I wholly adopt these methods in order to increase students' competence in the correct use and hence, identification of the English aspect. For example, in the use of these methods to teach the progressive, the teacher may give students pictures of people engaged in ongoing activities and ask them to construct sentences out of what they see.

   Their constant practice this way will help them be able to identify them in sentences. Let students understand, out of these sentence construction activities, that the progressive aspect shows a kind of imperfectivity. The teacher can also ask some students to draw pictures depicting actions in progress so that their

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colleagues can make sentences out of it in class. If these activities are used, students are likely to grasp the use of the progressive aspect and subsequently, be able to identify it in sentences. Another method is to ask students to listen to a speech on a tape recorder consisting of the description of incompleted situations of varied forms in the classroom , let students identify such sentences and interpret each to further enhance their understanding of the imperfectivity. By practicing sentences in contexts such as these, students will become more aware of the different forms of the progressive aspect in different contexts.

2. The students had a difficulty using '-en' form of the verb. Based on this finding of the study, it is recommended that picture description activities can still help. Here, the teacher only shows pictures depicting completed events of current relevance to students and asking them to describe each. The guided method can help in which case the teacher may provide the '-en' form of some verbs to students. Several such activities will help the students to be more conversant with the '-en' verb form and its uses. Another strategy recommended is Exposure. Exposing students to the '-en' verb forms of both regular and irregular verbs through conscious extensive reading effort will be the best panacea to solving this problem of students. Teachers of English language must, as a matter of urgent concern, therefore, encourage their students to do so. This will not only assist them identify and recognize the '-en' verb forms but also other areas of the English grammar.

3. With regards to L1 interference. Teachers must use relevant situations and set-ups both in and outside of the classroom to demonstrate the distinction between the English

progressive and the simple sentence of students' mother-tongue. Teachers can obtain and engage proficient speakers of such local languages to assist in this direction.

4. Concerning the students' problem of using the combination : WILL + HAVE + BEEN with the '-ing' form of the verb, it is suggested that the teacher can ask students to look at a poster or photo that is hung on the board depicting planned future activities of people. Students are then asked to make sentences using the structure; WILL + HAVE + BEEN with the '–ing' verb form. Students can produce sentences like: *By this time tomorrow, Ramatu will have been travelling for 15 hours to Accra from Tamale.* The teacher can ask students to translate sentences of the form; WILL + HAVE + BEEN with the '-ing'. Based on these sentences, the class can practice the formation of sentences of the same structure using pictures depicting similar planned future activities in pairs or groups. To enhance students understanding and use of this form, the teacher can also design a table from which students make sentences using this form. Students can also talk with their friends about their family members in order to practice WILL +HAVE + BEEN with the '–ing' form in real life contexts.

5. With the rest of the problems students face with the use of aspect discovered in this study, the teacher should adopt the appropriate method to assist students master the English aspectual sentences.

6. Generally, in order to improve the students' use of aspects, students should be made to read more storybooks and novels to improve their English Language skills in both spoken and written settings particularly those related to the use of aspects.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

From the conclusions and recommendations, it is suggested that this study should be replicated in other senior high schools in the district, the region and the whole nation to look at the problem holistically. It would be interesting to explore the idea of stative verbs further as used in aspects. In order to give a more exhaustive description of the progressive in English, it is also necessary to continue with the analysis of the following forms: 'Forms of HAVE + BEEN + -ing', 'WILL BE + -ing' and WILL+ HAVE + BEEN + -ing' which forms the infinitival progressive aspect. Again, it will be interesting to understand how specific Ghanaian languages affect and interfere with the learning of English language. The study did not look at types of aspect students often use in both spoken and written language settings. It is therefore necessary to find out this about the students. It is also suggested that a study be carried out to explore teachers' views about the problems associated with both the teaching and learning of aspect in English in Ghanaian schools.

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APPENDIX (SPECIMEN OF QUESTIONNAIRE)

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This study looks at the use of aspect in English Language among first year students of Sankore Senior High School in Asunafo South District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana.

Instruction: Read through the items on the questionnaire carefully and provide your responses as you deem fit for you. There are no wrong or correct responses.

All responses provided would be treated as confidential materials.

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Students

Tick [√] in the appropriate box .

1) What is your gender?
   a) Male   [   ]
   b) Female   [   ]

2) How old are you?
   a) 15 – 16 years   [   ]
   b) 17 – 18 years   [   ]
   c) 19 – 20 years   [   ]
   d) Above 20 years   [   ]

3) What is the highest academic qualification of your parents?
   a) Illiterates   [   ]

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b) Basic education   [   ]

c) Secondary education   [   ]

d) Tertiary education   [   ]

4) Which language do you often speak at home?

a) Local Languages   [   ]

b) English   [   ]

B: Identification of the various types of Aspect

Determine which type of aspect is the following sentence. **Use present progressive (1), past progressive (2), future progressive (3), present perfect progressive (4), past perfect f progressive (5) and future perfect progressive (6) for your responses.**

Statement	Present progressive 1	Past progressive 2	Future progressive 3	Present Perfect progressive 4	Past perfect progressive 5	Future perfect progressive 6
5) 1 had been eating the food						
6) I have been eating all day						
7) I was eating the food						
8) I will be eating the food						
9) I am eating the food						
10) I will have been eating the food						

C: Identification of other Types of Aspect

Indicate the type of Aspect which the following sentences belong to. Choose only one option

11) I was walking to work (Perfective / Imperfective)

12) I have gone to work (Progressive / Perfective)

13) I am eating food (Progressive Continuous / Progressive Habitual)

14) He has stolen the money (Present Perfect / Past Perfect)

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15) They were studying yesterday (Present Progressive/Past Progressive)

16) I had returned home already (Imperfective/ Perfective)

17) I will have been leaving for Accra(Future Progressive/Future Perfect Progressive)

D: Students' Problems in the use of Aspects

To what extent do you agree with the following problems which affect students' use of aspect in English Language. Use strongly agree (4), Agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) for your responses.

Type of problem	Strongly agree 4	Agree 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
18) Difficulty in the use of the various forms of BE				
19) Difficulty in the use of –ing form of the verb				
20) The –en form of the verb is confusing				
21) L1 influence				
22) Difficulty in the use of the various forms of HAVE				
23) Inability to combine various forms of HAVE with BEEN				
24) inability to identify stative verbs				
25) inability to use WILL BE with the –ing form of the verb				
26) inability to combine WILL+ HAVE+ BEEN with the ing form of the verb				
27) Overgeneralization of the progressive and perfective				

E: Strategies to use to improve students' learning of Aspect in the English Language

Indicate how frequently you use the following direct strategies during learning of English language. Use always (3), sometimes (2) and never (1) for your responses to the strategies listed below.

Type of strategy	Always 3	Sometimes 2	Never 1
28) Reading novels and storybooks and summarizing them periodically			
29) Applying rules in constructing aspectual sentences			
30) Reviewing well-structured sentences			
31) Speaking English both in and outside of the classroom			
32) Practising recombination			
33) Receiving and sending messages to get ideas quickly from your teachers			
34) Analysing and reasoning deductively in both speaking and writing			
35) Asking your teacher of grammar questions for comprehensive explanation of aspectual sentences			
36) Contacting friends for assistance on aspectual sentences			
37) guessing intelligently using linguistic clues			
38) Overcoming limitation in speaking and writing by getting help in the classroom			

F: Using indirect strategies to improve learning of Aspects.

State how often you apply the follow indirect strategies in your English Language lessons to overcome difficulties in Aspect. Use Always (3), Sometimes (2) and Never (1) for your responses to the statements indicated below.

Statement	Always 3	Sometimes 2	Never 1
39) linking topics with already known materials			
40) Paying attention and listening carefully during English lessons			
41) Delaying speech production to focus on listening			
42) Finding out about language learning organization using different reference material at your leisure			
43) Setting goal and objectives for yourself outside the classroom			
44) Identifying the purpose of a language task			
45) Planning for language task			
46) Seeking practice opportunities from your teachers after school hours			
47) Self monitoring and evaluation			
48) Listening to radio programmes in English language frequently			
49) Watching television programmes in English language always			
50) Cooperation with proficient users of the English language			