

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**EXAMINING THE SOURCES OF ERRORS IN THE WRITING OF JUNIOR HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS**

PASCALINE DIANA AHIAWODZI



2020

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SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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190012406

**A Dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics,
Faculty of Foreign Languages and Communication, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies, in partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
MASTER OF EDUCATION
(Teaching of English As A Second Language)**

in the University of Education, Winneba

NOVEMBER, 2020

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation 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: DR. CHARLOTTE FOFO LOMOTÉY

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A countless number of personalities have influenced my academic life in various positive ways. Whereas I may not be able to mention all of these great mentors, I wish first of all to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Charlotte Fofu Lomotey for her wonderful mentorship and supervision of my M.Ed. dissertation. I would like to offer my special thanks to other academic and non-academic staff of the Department of Applied Linguistics. I must acknowledge the assistance those data was collected from. Without their participation in responding to the research instruments, this study would have been a catastrophe. I would like to thank my fellow M.Ed. students for their feedback, cooperation and of course friendship. Finally, I wish to thank my husband for his support and encouragement throughout my study.



DEDICATION

To My Husband, Dr. Jones Apawu

And To My Sons, Jayden and Jace



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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the sources of errors that Junior High School students in Awutu-Senya District make in writing in order to establish the actual problem areas for attention and redress. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the data collected from the essays written by the students and also the information obtained from teachers of English during interactions with them. The findings of the study, disclosed that generally, students in Junior High Schools in Ghana have insufficient or little knowledge of the English language code and therefore, they will not be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other users of English and this can hinder their interaction with other Anglophone students and friends. The study proposes that ESL learners have peculiar needs such as training on the formal properties of the English language and therefore, require immediate intervention by way of organising English language clinics for students and in-service training for teachers of English to update their skills. It is hoped that if the recommendations in the study are heeded, standard of English will improve.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to study

The English language is widely used by people of different socio-cultural backgrounds. As a result, it has become a unifying force and also a vehicle for international communication. This is because the language makes it possible for people of diverse language backgrounds to communicate and participate in economic, political and cultural activities far beyond their local areas. In Ghana, English has assumed a central position in our national life. According to Dakubu (1988) the country is linguistically heterogeneous as there are about forty five (45) different indigenous languages. To break the language barrier, English has become an effective medium of communication in our multilingual setting. Therefore, acquiring a high proficiency in English in Ghana is essential. It is for this reason that Junior High School (JHS) students in particular and Ghanaians in general should be well equipped with the rules of the language so that they can function effectively and efficiently both in Ghana and around the world.

Our contact as a nation with the English people dates as far back as the second half of the 15th century. Like many other contacts situations, English was “*transported*” and “*transplanted*” in the country when Europeans through trade, evangelization and colonialization penetrated the African continent and came to the shores of the Gold Coast. The voyages became very frequent in the 16th and 17th centuries, leading to the establishment of trading posts and the construction of forts and castles by European governments. For their trading business to go on smoothly, the Europeans needed interpreters, middlemen and clerks who would assist them to link with the local people. By the 18th century, attempts were already in place to establish schools for Gold Coast children and by 1788 a castle school at Cape Coast had been established with twelve (12) mulatto children in school. This step marked the beginning of formal education in the Gold Coast, now Ghana.

The missionaries namely the Basel, Wesley, Bremen and later the Catholic spread across the country to propagate the gospel. In 1835 the Wesleyan missionaries established a school in Cape Coast and taught the pupils through English, hence the spread of English language in Cape Coast and its environs. Throughout the 1850s, English language continued to be used as the medium of instruction in government schools; however, mission schools which used the indigenous languages as medium of instruction could not qualify for grant-in-aid, i.e. money given by the colonial administration to support mission schools. Lord Derby, put it in the records of the colonial office in Britain in 1883 that, “*instruction in the native language may safely be left to the stimulus of self-interest and government subsidies are not required for its encouragement*”.

It must be pointed out that the missionaries supported the colonial language policy in education particularly, the Wesleyans, who encouraged the use of English as the language of preaching in their churches. African preachers often spoke to their indigenous congregation through interpreters. In fact, the English language was described by Smith (1929, p. 42) as “*the road to knowledge and wealth*”. Notwithstanding the importance of English to the Europeans, it was also the desire of the missionaries in the 18th century to develop the local languages alongside the English language. This received the British government’s approval and the teaching of Ghanaian languages was given a pride of place in the curriculum of schools. According to Macmillian and Kwamena Po (1978) in 1925 Sir Gordon Guggisberg, the governor of Gold Coast, directed that in order not to denationalize the country’s children the local languages should be taught in our schools. In view of this, the missionaries developed some of the local languages by putting them into writing. Johannes Zimmerman for example, developed the Ga language by putting it into writing while J.G. Christaller of the Basel Mission also put the Twi Language into writing and subsequently came out with the Twi dictionary.

Since the beginning of the colonial administration, the English language has become the official language of government, commerce, law, and the media and also as the medium of instruction in our schools from the upper primary four (4) to the university. Furthermore, in Ghana, it is the language for inter-ethnic communication as well as international communication. The English language, in fact, acts as a cohesive force for people of diverse backgrounds. The study of English is therefore crucial for all students, as well as all sections of the population. In Ghana, the system of education is organized in three levels namely: basic, second and tertiary cycles. The primary and the Junior High Schools constitute what is known as basic education. The Senior High School is the second level of education in Ghana. The basic language skills such as: reading, writing, listening and speaking are introduced at the basic level. This implies that by the end of the first cycle of education, the products of the school system should be able to express themselves and socialize in English, but many of the students however, come out inarticulate, inhibited and insecure because they cannot express themselves in speech and writing. It is essential that these skills are improved considerably to give students the confidence to communicate in the English language.

The general aim of teaching English as a subject at the JHS among others is to improve students' level of proficiency in English usage and their ability to communicate with other users of English so as to make them function efficiently and effectively. Therefore, the importance of a high level of competence in English in a country such as Ghana, especially for purposes of education and communication, is a well-recognized fact. Dolphyne (1989, p. xi) maintains that "the aim of teaching English in West Africa should be to make it possible for West African speakers to understand and be understood by other users of English". English is also the language for educational placement and career advancement in Ghana. One needs the English Language in order to qualify for admission into either the College of Education, the

Polytechnic, Nursing College or the university. Hence mastery of English Language is a necessity.

Furthermore, we live in a world of inter-dependence; hence, a mastery of English Language is a great tool to break the communication barrier. The fact that English is the language of international communication par excellence cannot be denied for example, it is used greatly in most scientific researches and presentations. Although English is a second language in Ghana, because of its significant role, a high premium is placed on its acquisition. To promote the use of English in Ghana, government language policy in education has been explicit. English is the medium of instruction in Ghanaian schools from primary four to all higher levels, and also it is a subject from the kindergarten (Kg) to the university. The importance placed on the study of English in Ghana is summed up in the rationale for teaching English in the Junior High School English Language syllabus as follows, CRDD (2007, p. 11) *“Success in education at all levels depends, to a large extent, on the individual’s proficiency in English”*.

The English language indeed occupies a pride of place in our developmental agenda as a nation. It is for this reason that the government and other stakeholders of education will have to do everything possible to improve our students’ performance in English. Over the years, several attempts and efforts have been made to improve both the oral and written competence of our students in the use of the English language. However, in spite of various interventions put in place by the government and other stakeholders to improve the quality of education in Ghana, such as: the supply of textbooks, supplementary reading materials and the provision of library facilities in schools and communities, including the organization of in-service training (INSET) for teachers, there seem to be little or no improvement in arresting the falling standard of English in our schools.

The unprecedented falling standard of English in recent times is of grave concern, hence the clarion call from educationists, heads of institutions, NGOS, the churches, Ghana Association of Teachers of English (GATE), parents and the general public to remedy the situation. It is interesting to note that stakeholders of education have discussed this regrettable development at different fora, seminars and meetings, yet there seem to be no solution to the problem. Owusu-Ansah (2012), a renowned columnist *English For You* in the Daily Guide, Thursday, June 7th expressed his dissatisfaction about the way people carelessly use the English language. He laments:

A group of people went on a trip to Agona Nyakrom by bus recently. Someone asked another whether he had joined the bus. “Join a bus”? I asked. My mind raced to the joinery or welding shop. I tried to imagine which part of his bone (perhaps the tibia or the fibula) could fit into any part of the bus. Did he rather wish to ask whether he had boarded the bus (or got on the bus or embarked on a journey by bus to Nyakrom? (p. 20)

He went further to stress the importance of improving the teaching of English in our schools. The Chief Examiners for English language of the West African Examination council (WAEC) consistently report about students’ abysmal performance in English and cite several examples of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The gravity of the problem is captured in the report of Chief Examiner for Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) English which states that:

The general performance of the candidates revealed that many of them have still not grasped the rudiments of English. The performance of the majority was disappointing. A good number of candidates could not write full essays. Some of the candidates mixed capital and small letters at random. There were poor syntactic structures or faulty

constructions. There was also ample evidence of the wrong use of tenses, error of concord as well as the poor handling of the direct and reported speech. (2009, p. xii).

The Chief Examiner's report cited above succinctly lays bare the state of English language in our schools today as the trend had not changed. The picture painted in the above report shows that the standard of English of Ghanaian JHS students has fallen below acceptable level. This is very embarrassing and therefore calls for drastic and holistic intervention to salvage the situation. However, Khansir (2012) states that errors are bound to occur in writings of learners of English as a second language. They commit various types of errors including spelling errors. Learners' lack knowledge of standard spelling in English because the spelling of English words is different from the way they are pronounced. It is based on this that this study examined the sources of errors in the writing of JHS students.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The general perception of many Ghanaians is that the standard of English of students in our JHS has fallen considerably. The proponents of this view quickly compare the language competence of JHS students to those who hold the Junior Secondary School (JSS) or Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) which existed some years ago to arrive at their conclusion. They are of the view that the JSS or M.S.L.C holders were by far better than the JHS holders as far as proficiency in English is concerned. Cook (1999, p. 1) asserts that "unlike native speakers, students may not know the actual system of English, and will appear to use the wrong letter". Also, 2017 BECE Chief Examiner's report stated that "Some of the candidates resorted to all manner of sub-standard usage of the English Language and, even, sometimes outright vernacular (Twi) translation" (p. 2). Writing well is really a big challenge for both native and non-native students. In general, it is much bigger with the students of English as a foreign language (Muslim, 2014). The following or related weaknesses: "Essays of weak candidates reflected faulty paragraphing, misuse of punctuation marks and wrong

amalgamation/separation of words among others. Spelling and control of sentences and grammar were also work.” were found in the BECE Chief Examiner’s 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2018 Reports.

Errors are natural, inevitable outcome of second language learning process. Therefore, students in JHS make errors of one form or another in varying degrees of frequency due to a number of factors. No good teacher who is interested in the improvement of the students’ learning process will continue to ignore students’ errors if s/he wants to assist them to improve their standard of proficiency in English. The study is necessary because as a teacher, it will help identify the writing problems of our students and the findings and recommendations of the study, if fully implemented, will improve the general standard of English in the country.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives formulated for this study are to:

1. identify, classify, and explain students’ errors;
2. investigate the causes of the errors in the writing of JHS students.

1.4 Research questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the errors that can be found in the writings of JHS students?
2. What are the possible causes of errors in the writing of JHS students?

1.5 Significance of the study

Language acquisition studies, both first and second, are very much interested in how competence is developed. It is therefore imperative that at every stage of the learner’s language development, we should be concerned about his/her progress. The study is therefore relevant to the learner, syllabus designer, textbook writer and the teacher. To the learner, the study will enable him/her to know his/her errors and why s/he made them. Learners’ errors also provide the syllabus designer and textbook writer with an authentic and reliable input because errors

give a fair picture of the problems associated with second language learning. To the teacher, the study will assist him/her to correct the students' errors because without the knowledge of why errors are made, no teacher can device effective measures to eliminate them. The study also provides the tool for remedial teaching of the English language in JHS. The findings will give adequate knowledge about the precise difficulties that learners' face and this will be a useful guide for the teacher to focus on those areas that pose problems. The data compiled in the research will assist the JHS teacher to identify areas that need reinforcement and emphasis.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The focus of this study was to examine the sources of errors in the writing of JHS students. This study did not involve all Junior High Schools (JHSs) in Ghana. The choice of the three (3) JHSs was based on proximity and easy accessibility.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The selected schools for this study are only just three out of several JHS in the country, therefore, there can be no strong validity to the findings of the study since the schools are not representative enough to make a definitive conclusion or claims. Another limitation of this study is time. The researcher had less than a year to complete the study. This accounted for the limited number of schools and the size of respondents selected for the study. A longer period of time preferably, two years would have been ideal to study students' language development at successive points. The current study makes it difficult to determine accurately the different errors that learners' produce at different stages of their language development. However, notwithstanding these limitations, the findings provide a fair idea of errors in JHS students' writing in the country.

1.8 The organization of the study

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents a discussion of the

relevant literature review. The researcher described the research design and methodology in Chapter 3. Results and discussion are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 consists of summary of key findings, implications for practice, conclusion, recommendations, and areas for further research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The chapter focuses on how the topic has been discussed in some selected works such as Corder (1974), Richards (ed.) (1974), Ellis (1985), Anyidoho (2002), Agor (2003), Nimako (2008) among others. As part of the literature review, two theoretical frameworks namely: Error Analysis theory and the Structural Theory or Structuralism which guided this study have been discussed in detail. An attempt has been made to examine the distinction between an *Error* and a *Mistake*. This chapter also looked at the broad issue of sources of errors and critically examine Contrastive Analysis (C.A) assertion that the L1 is the sole source or prime cause of errors in foreign language learning. Finally, the current English syllabi for basic schools in Ghana have been reviewed to ascertain how teachers are coping with students' errors.

2.1 Conceptual framework

The aim of the study is to investigate the primary sources of English errors in the writing of JHS students. In view of this, the Error Analysis (EA) theory of second language acquisition (SLA) was suitable theoretical framework that guided this study. Error Analysis is an approach to the study of language teaching. It involves the method of collecting, identifying, classifying and explaining second language learners' errors in order to discover any inherent peculiarities operating within the language learner's language (i.e. inter-language) so that the language learner could be sufficiently or adequately helped to overcome those errors (Corder 1960, Nemser 1970; Selinker 1972). EA holds the view that errors are natural phenomena or outcomes of SLA and therefore, students be made aware of them else they cannot learn them.

2.2 Background to the concept of Error Analysis

Ellis (1985) reckons that the post-second world war period through the 1960s witnessed a strong assumption by linguists that most of the difficulties that L2 learners encounter were imposed by his/her first language. Therefore, a procedure called Contrastive Analysis (CA) was developed in order to identify areas of difficulties. This was based on the assumption or belief that it was possible to predict what problems the learner of a particular L2 would face by establishing the linguistic differences between the learner's L1 and the L2. For example, it was assumed that where there were differences between the L1 and the L2, the learner's L1 knowledge would interfere with the L2 and where the L1 and L2 were similar, L1 would actively aid L2 learning (Ellis, 1985). As a solution to the problem, contrastive analysts such as Brooks (1960) and Lado (1964) opined that classroom teachers should focus their teaching on the areas of difficulty created by negative transfer by adopting vigorous practice in order to overcome the challenges. According to Lado (1957) cited in Ellis (1985, p. 23) "the teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them".

Contractive Analysis (CA) hypothesis has strong and weak forms. The weak form claims that some but not all the L2 errors are the result of interference. The strong form, however, says that all L2 errors can be predicted by identifying the differences between L2 and L1. In support of the strong form, Lee (1968) cited in Ellis (1985, p. 23) laments that, "the prime cause or even the sole cause of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner's native language". Researchers such as Dulay (1973) and Burt (1974) also raised serious doubt about negative transfer as a major factor in SLA because according to them many grammatical errors could not be traced to L1 influence. Their findings paved the way for the emergence of Error Analysis (EA). In the 1970s, a methodology for investigating the learner's language surfaced. This method known as Error Analysis was

seen as the appropriate starting point for the study of the learner's language and second language acquisition. Ellis (1985) is of the view that Error Analysis consisted of "common" errors and their linguistic classifications. Therefore, the goal of (EA) is pedagogic and researchers began to show interest in the learner's errors. It was also around this time that structures of child language production began to be described and analysed as grammatical systems in their own right rather than in terms of how they are "deficient" in comparison to adult norms. Corder (1967, 1971, 1974) an ardent proponent of EA through a series of articles, for example contributed greatly in the field of Error Analysis (EA) by giving it direction (cited in Ellis 1985).

2.2.1 Procedure for Error Analysis

In 1974, Corder came up with the procedure for Error Analysis (EA) and also suggested the following stages in (EA) research. They are: identification, description, explanation and evaluation stages. In the collection of errors, samples of the learner's language are selected. Some studies use samples collected from few learners over a period of weeks, months or years in order to determine the patterns of change in the occurrence of errors. Secondly, the errors are identified. Corder (1974) is of the view that there should be a distinction between systematic errors and haphazard mistakes. The third step in EA is the description of the errors. For the purpose of analysis, errors are classified by their grammatical behaviour, whether an error is phonological, morphological or systematic. The next stage is the explanation of the errors. An attempt is made to understand why an error is made. Is the error interlingual (between languages) as a result of negative transfer or interference from L1 and most importantly if the error is intralingual (within a language) that is factors not caused by cross – linguistic influence? The final step is that errors are evaluated. That is, what effect has the error on whoever is being addressed? In other words, how serious is the error? Does it affect

intelligibility or social acceptability? It must be stated that error evaluation is necessary only if the purpose of EA is for pedagogy.

2.2.2 Contribution of Error Analysis to knowledge

Error Analysis which supplanted Contrastive Analysis provided an appropriate methodology for investigating the learner's language. According to Ellis (1985), EA constitutes the starting point for the study of language learner and second language acquisition. The study of errors has revealed conclusively that there is no single or prime cause of errors, a claim strongly pontified by Contrastive Analysis hypothesis. The study has traced other sources such as: over generalization, chaotic system of the L2 orthography, ignorance of selection restricted rules, false hypothesis, language loyalty, perception blind spots and so on.

Furthermore, the study of errors has proved that the second language learner is not passive in the learning process rather, he/she is an active participant. The L2 learner adopts the same or some strategies by which L1 acquisition takes place. In the process "hypothesis testing" takes place which sometimes may lead to errors. Corder (1967) cited in Ellis (1985) suggests that both the L1 and L 2 learners make errors in order to test out certain hypothesis about the nature of the language they are learning. It must also be reckoned that Error Analysts has made us aware that the L2 learner's language i.e. interlanguage is a system in its own right. The L2 learner's language is different from the L1 and the L2. It lies in between the L1 and the L2. This language, that is the learner's language is stable, systematic, dynamic and permeable (Ellis 1985).

Again, EA has encouraged "creativity" of the learner's language and has helped to give respectability to errors, to be seen not as a sin but an inevitable feature of the learning process. It is also significant to note that Error Analysts have established a procedure for conducting error analysis. According to Lee (1957) hitherto, common learner errors were "hurriedly grouped into categories". Lee (1957) argued that though such an analysis puts the

teacher in a better stead to decide how teaching time is better spent, such a traditional analysis lacked the rigorous methodology and the theoretical framework to explain the role played by errors in second language acquisition.

In addition, EA is very useful to the L2 learner, the language teacher, textbook writer, the syllabus designer and the education policy maker. To the learner, it affords him/her to know his/her systematic and recurrent deviant structures, what construction rules of the L2 he has violated and why? So, EA helps the learner to monitor his own language development. To the course designer and textbook writer, it provides them with authentic and reliable raw materials to work with because errors are features of second language acquisition. For the language teacher, EA shows not only the magnitude but also the causes of errors. This helps the teacher to assess the effectiveness of his/her teaching materials and methodology. The education policy maker through EA formulates suitable and appropriate policies that improve teaching and learning and ensures quality education. Finally, another area where EA has contributed to knowledge is the distinction between error and mistake. Applied Linguistics differentiates between error and mistake. This knowledge has helped teachers to focus on problem areas that pose great difficulty.

2.2.3 Criticism levelled against Error Analysis

Criticisms of Error Analysis fall under two main categories namely: weakness in methodology and limitation in scope. In terms of methodology, there are practical difficulties to identify what an error or mistake is. George (1972) cited in Ellis (1994, p. 47) states emphatically that whereas learners' errors are generally viewed as "unwanted forms" children's errors are seen as "transitional forms" and adult native speakers "errors are regarded as slips" of the tongue. This is the difficulty in identifying errors and also who makes an error or a mistake. Another criticism levelled against Error Analysis is that the focus is on written materials such as students' essays, class test and other exercises and not on speech. However,

research has proved that errors that learners make can be influenced by a variety of factors, for example, they make errors in speaking but not in writing as a result of the different processing conditions involved.

As far as limitation in scope as a criticism levelled against EA is concerned, it must be stated that, EA has failed to provide a complete picture of the learner's language. EA is only interested in what the learner does wrongly and not what he/she does correctly. In analysing the learner's language, it is very important to examine the totality of the learner's production and output. Again, EA is limited because most of the studies conducted are cross-sectional in nature thus providing a static view of L2 acquisition. Language learning is developmental and EA does not help us to understand how learners develop knowledge of the L2 over time (Ellis 1985).

2.3 The structural theory of language learning

The Structural theory of language learning referred to as structural linguistic or structuralism also guided this study. The theory views language as a system of structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning. According to Richard and Rodgers (1995), the Structural theory of language or structuralism has the following characteristics:

- a. That elements in a language were thought of as being linearly produced in a rule-governed (structure) way.
- b. Language samples could be exhaustively described at any structural level of description (phonetic, phonemic, morphological etc).
- c. That linguistic levels were thought of as systems within systems, that is they are pyramidally structured; phonemic systems lead to morphemic systems; and these in turn lead to the higher-level systems of phrase, clause, and sentence.

The Structural Theory of Language is therefore, an approach which analyses grammatical elements in terms of their form and order. That is to say that language involves a ruled-ordered process which includes addition, deletion and transposition of elements.

2.4 Distinction between error and mistake

It is good for a second language teacher to know exactly what errors his students make and why they make them. This will help him to adopt effective teaching strategies in order to handle his students' errors. Applied linguists differentiate between error and mistake. Every language has a set of rules or a code for generating a well-formed sentence. A violation of this set of rules may result in an error.

2.4.1 What is an error?

According to Yankson (1996) an error is a noticeable deviation from the rules of a target system. It is a breach of the language code. It may occur as a result of lack of knowledge or misapplication of the rules of the second language. Errors are recurrent, systematic and reveal one's level of competence in the language.

2.4.2 What is a mistake?

A *mistake* is a type of linguistic deviance, but it is a slip, the result of tiredness, emotional stress, nervousness, memory lapse or preoccupation with the subject. Native speakers also make mistakes. Mistakes are haphazard and unsystematic. The learner can oftentimes correct his own mistakes. The error analyst ignores learners' mistakes, sometimes referred to as "performance phenomenon" because they do not reflect the learner's competence (Yankson, 1996).

2.5 Sources of errors

Even though most linguists believe that establishing the sources of learner's errors is a very important endeavour, they are unable to come to an agreement on how to conveniently classify them. Many researchers have tried to distinguish between different sources of errors.

Richards (1995) identifies three different sources to include interference errors, but others make a distinction between transfer and intralingual errors. Ellis (1985) however, traces sources of errors to include, L1 interference, over-generalization, fossilisation, transfer of training, and inconsistencies in the target language. Examples of errors given under this section, were those picked from the social media, interaction with friends, students and the public domain. Safo-Adu (2009) and Nimako (2008) also provided useful examples.

2.5.1 Mother tongue interference

By the time the child goes to school he/she has already internalized the phonological, lexical and syntactic system of his/her mother tongue. Therefore, the child in learning a new language system, sometimes transfers consciously or unconsciously, certain features of his/her L1 systems into the L2. In other words, certain L2 errors can be traced to L1 influence. However, it must be admitted that the degree of this interference depends on the learner's educational background and the stage of his interlanguage development. Some examples of L1 interference may be seen in the following sentences.

1. My salary for September has not come
2. Please! cut me some wine
3. I am going to come. Take care, please!

The sentences are deviations from the target language (L 2). These errors are reflective of the native language structures and are not found in the target language acquisition data.

The correct renditions of these sentences should be:

1. My salary for September has not been paid.
2. Please! Serve me some wine.
3. I am going, but I will be back in a jiffy. Take care, please!

Phonologically, one often hears marked differences in terms of pronunciation of some English words among West African speakers of English, mainly due to L1 interference. For

example, there are certain English vowel sounds notably, the /æ/ the sound found in words like “man” /mæn/, “cat” /kæt/, “bank” /bænk/ and the schwa /ə/ the weak, unstressed English vowel sound which occurs in words like “annoyed” /ənɔɪd/, “against” /əgeɪnst/ and also the sound transcribed with an inverted “v” which is found in words like “bucket” /bʌkɪt/, “cupboard” /kʌbəd/, “butter” /bʌtə/ which do not exist in the phonological inventories of most West African vernaculars. In these cases, the tendency then, for the West African speaker of English is to substitute these English vowels sounds with similar sounds from his/her mother tongue is very high.

Similarly, the Akan dialect is tonal and does not sometimes permit consonantal clusters either at the initial, medial or final positions. So, when the Akan learner of English comes across a word which has consonantal clusters there is the likelihood for him/her to insert vowel sounds into the cluster, for example, a word like; “street” /stri:t/ has CCCVC structure. The Akan second language learner of English may pronounce the word as /sɪtɪrɪ:t/ by inserting vowel sounds in-between the cluster. Such an error at the phonological level is traceable to the influence of the L1 and this may lead to wrong spellings. If students are introduced to the correct pronunciation by the teacher, these errors would not occur.

Another L1 influence is language loyalty. Language is culture-tied, thus, learning a new language involves some kind of identification on the part of the learner with members of that new culture. To speak exactly like a native speaker demands a surrender of part of one’s identity. This view is supported by Cook (1978) who is also of the view that one’s native language is an important factor in one’s sense of identity as an individual and as a member of a group. Learning a new language therefore means adopting a new identity. However, language loyalty is built into our system in one form or the other and this explains why people do not give up their mother tongues easily. Therefore, the L2 learner’s loyalty to the mother tongue serves as a psychological block which prevents him from surrendering part of his cultural

personality.

2.5.2 Communal pull

English, which is spoken outside the four walls of the classroom, that is, extra mural English can be a potential source of learners' errors. The language of the media, that is, the radio, the television and newspaper to a large extent, can also affect the learner's written and spoken English. Research has shown that if the learner is continually exposed to wrong pronunciations on the local or national radio and the television, he is likely to accept these mispronunciations and copy them as the correct forms. A learner who always sees in the print media or hears from his teachers or pastors and lecturers some deviant utterances such as: "*Is somebody hearing me?*", "*Should in case*", "*It will tantamount to*" and so on, will be drawn by the communal pull to use such deviant structures thinking that they are accepted forms, unless corrected. Pidgin English spoken in the community can also be one such source of errors. That is, if the learner lives in a language community where pidgin is in vogue or serves as the people's lingua-franca, there is the likelihood that people living in that community, including the second language learner, will speak pidgin English.

2.5.3 Perception-blind spots

This refers to the inability of the L2 learner to auditorily perceive the new sounds heard in the target language. This occurs because the L2 Learner has been conditioned by his mother tongue sound system and therefore regards as relevant only the sound features of his L1. In such a situation he will disregard L2 sound features which are not distinctive in his L1. In Ghana, most L2 learners of English cannot produce the dental sounds as found in words like; "think" /θɪŋk/, "bath" /bɑ:θ/, "another" /ənʌðə/, "father" /fɑ:ðə/. Similarly, the palato-alveolar sounds /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ and the palatal sound /j/ pose great difficulty for Akan second language learners. This is the reason why words such as; "university" /ju:nɪvəsɪtɪ/, "judge" /dʒʌdʒ/ and "church" /tʃə:tʃ/ are very often mispronounced leading to wrong spellings. This is because

these sounds are not part of the Akan orthography.

It must be stressed here that an unguided L2 learner may not even know that he has heard the wrong sound. Such a learner needs to be systematically de-conditioned to enable him perceive auditorily the correct phonological structures of the new language and this will require the efficiency of an experienced and competent teacher. This does not mean that after the learner's receptive experience has been developed, he can speak acceptable English when he is left on his own. We should be cautious of Broughton's (1978, p. 18) assertion that "however good a listener may be at listening and understanding, it need not follow that he will speak well. A discrimination ear does not always produce a fluent tongue. There has to be training in the productive skill of speech as well".

2.5.4 Transfer of learning

In Ghana, L2 learning generally takes place in the classroom. The teacher is the model in the classroom. In such a situation if the teacher or the model has faulty speech habits or his grasp of the English language is weak, particularly in grammar, he will transfer his deviant utterances or habits to the students. Faulty teaching methods and inappropriate teaching and learning materials (TLM) can also induce errors. Incompetent teachers cannot only be the source of some errors but they can also reinforce them. Many school children are the recipients of wrong pronunciation of words such as; "appetite" /æpɪtaɪt/, "etiquette" /etɪket/ and "technology" /teknələdʒi/ among others. This type of error can affect generations if the model himself/herself is incompetent. It must however, be stated that transfer of training is very difficult to detect in E.A.

2.5.5 Overgeneralization

Some errors are not mother tongue induced. They occur as a result of ignorance of the construction rules of the L2, the formation of false hypothesis, ignorance of selection restriction rules and incomplete application of the target language rules. The errors are the product of the

learner's own inductive generalization based on his partial exposure to the linguistic data of the L2. The learner, faced with a complex linguistic system, sometimes with no codified rules governing a particular area of grammar, will hypothesize, analogise, and sometimes over-generalize, thereby producing incorrect forms of the target language. For example, the child learns that in forming the plural forms of nouns, "s" or "es" is added to the singular form, so as an active learner, he/she continues to form plural nouns in the same way, hence he derives such deviant forms like; "womans" instead of "women", "sugars" instead of "sugar" and "furnitures" instead of "furniture". These types of errors are inevitable because language learning is a creative developmental process.

2.5.6 Fossilization

Research shows that some L2 learners fail to reach target language competence. That is to say that, they stop learning at a time that their interlanguage is still active. It must be noted that as soon as the L2 learner stops "learning", his/her interlanguage becomes fossilized and any deviant structures he/she has developed already will become part of his/her terminal competence.

2.5.7 Inconsistencies in the target language

This can be looked at in two areas; the orthography vis-à-vis the phonetic system and the syntax of the L2. The English language orthography does not always give clues to the pronunciation of words and this can be a source of confusion for the L2 learner, resulting in errors. In many West African languages, there is almost one-to-one relationship between letter and sound. This is to say that the orthography of West African languages is more phonetic than English, which is sometimes quite illogical. The phonetic differences between the two orthographical systems are sometimes the cause of graphological and phonological confusion which are seen in the writing of West African learners of English. For example, the sound /k/ assumes various pronunciations as in: "King" /Kiŋ/, "Knife" / naif/ and "knight" /nat/. Also,

if the syntax of the target language does not lend itself to clear rules as in English, the L2 learner in an attempt to understand certain phenomena can create false hypotheses which will result in errors.

2.6 Review of current English syllabus for Basic Schools

The review of the syllabus will help the researcher to analyse and interpret appropriately the research data collected.

2.6.1 The primary school English syllabus

According to the Primary School English syllabus the pre-requisite skills for studying English are those skills that the pupils bring to the classroom. These include the ability to express themselves in the mother tongue, tell stories, riddles, do role-plays and be conversant with their environment. The structure and organization of the syllabus for each year of the six-year primary education, is put under appropriate headings or topics. For Primary 1-3 (Lower Primary) the topics are: Listening and Speaking, which include story telling; drama, singing, reciting and conversation. There are also grammar topics which include: naming words (nouns), doing words (verbs) simple prepositions, pronouns, demonstratives and simple qualifiers. Reading topics also include: pre-reading activities, recognition of words, introduction to formal reading and making and using picture dictionaries.

At the lower primary, the pupils are also introduced to writing and composition. Some of the topics covered include: writing patterns, drawing and labelling, writing short descriptive essays and copying words in both lower and upper cases. The Upper Primary level (P4-P6) reinforces and intensifies all the topics discussed at the lower primary with the inclusion of additional topics. The primary schools are opened for 40 weeks in a year and the syllabus is expected to be completed within that time. It must be stated that the Primary school English syllabus is pupil-centered and therefore the specific objectives have been stated in terms of the pupil. That is, “what the pupil will be able to do after instruction and learning in the unit” which

is now called strands. Each specific unit, starts with the expression, “*The pupil will be able to...*” This, in effect, means the teacher will have to address the learning problems of each individual pupil. It also means, individualizing the instructions as much as possible so that majority of the pupils will be able to master the objectives of the syllabus.

2.6.2 The English syllabus for Junior High Schools

The teaching syllabus for English (Junior High School 1-3) also reinforces the need to improve the “receptive skills”, that is those skills through which a pupil receives some communication from reading a book or listening to other persons and the “productive skills” which are skills which require pupils to produce knowledge or information through speaking the language and through writing letters or compositions. The pre-requisite skills in listening, speaking reading and writing English are assumed to have been acquired adequately at the primary level. It should be noted here, that since 2008, the study of literature has also become one of the components of the Junior High School course. Students are introduced to both African and non-African novels, poetry and drama.

2.7 Related studies

In recent times a lot of research work has been undertaken in the area of Error Analysis. These researches have delved much into errors recurring in the written essays of second language users. While most of the researchers in Ghana have focused on the errors made by undergraduates, a few of them have also examined the pattern of errors of Ghanaian students in JHSs and Senior High Schools. The researchers do agree that error analysis is a necessary tool for better proficiency in language acquisition. Yankson (1994) analyses the errors in the use of English by students of the University of Cape Coast and University of Nigeria, Nsuka campus. In this study, the researcher identified common errors made by these students which include: concord errors and errors involving complex noun phrases. However, Yankson (1994) went further to trace the plausible sources of these errors as “intralingual” and

“developmental”. According to Yankson (1994, p. 2), “developmental errors” refer to errors that are typical of all second language learners while “intralingual errors” are those committed as a result of the learner’s partial knowledge of the data of the target language”.

Edu-Buandoh (1996) on the other hand, provides a preliminary report on the study of error patterns in the written essays of Senior High School students in the Central Region of Ghana. The rationale behind the study was to identify the most frequent recurring errors and possible causes. The researcher grouped the identified systematic and recurrent errors into categories of spelling, concord, preposition, vocabulary and expression, article and other errors. The study went further to examine the effects of gender, length of stay in school and the type of school on the general level of proficiency in English of students in Senior High Schools. According to Edu-Buandoh (1996), the purpose of her study was to draw the attention of teachers of English, policy makers of education, and even students to the problem of poor standard and to recommend appropriate ways of attending to the problem.

Similarly, Anyidoho (2002) also studied the writing of final year university students – University of Ghana, Legon. According to Anyidoho (2002, p. 64), “in order to avoid the attendant problems of relying on the results of external examinations in evaluating the proficiency level of students in English, a long-term research project ... embarked upon”. The study identified faulty sentences in the students’ writing and categorized them under the following headings in descending order of prevalence: concord, word choice, omission, preposition, punctuation, and spelling errors. What was unique about this study was that the investigation went beyond identification and classification of students’ errors. After some time, the students were given the opportunity to correct their own deviant sentences when the scripts were later returned to them. The reason for asking the students to correct their own deviant sentences according to the researcher was based on the distinction that has been made between “error and mistake”. The study assumed that if the deviant forms that emerged in the students’

writing were mistakes, they would be able to rectify them when they were given the opportunity to review them. Conversely, if the errors were the result of the students' incompetence in English, they would go unnoticed. This study in some way answers the pertinent question, what constitutes a mistake and an error?

Another study in Error Analysis is Agor (2003). In this study, the researcher examines the English concord problems in the writing of Ghanaian Teacher-Trainees in Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana, now referred to as Colleges of Education. The researcher used a diversified range of data collection techniques to collect data from a random population of 150 trainees. The findings of the study revealed monumental problems and that even at post-secondary level, second language learners of English have not grasped the rudiments of the English language. According to the researcher, the subjects lack both the explicit and implicit knowledge of the rules of concord in English. The study projects a gloomy future for education in Ghana since the models themselves (future teachers) are deficient in terms of competence. A government white paper on the report of the Education Reform Review Committee (2004) attests to the findings of this study that "there has been almost unanimous agreement that under the latest reforms, public education in Ghana has failed to meet expectations in terms of its coverage, quality, equitableness and economic utility."

Dzameshie (1997), in his study "Towards a Communicative Approach to Teaching English as a Second language in Ghana" addresses the crucial question "What should be the primary goal of teachers who teach English as a second language in Ghana.?" The researcher argues that the current approach in ESL pedagogy in Ghana that sees language as grammar rather than as a means of communication is deficient and therefore advocates that a communicative, skill-oriented approach, whose ultimate goal and mission should be not merely to equip the learner with grammatical competence but more crucially with adequate communicative competence in the language. According to the researcher, this will enable ESL

learners to communicate in socio-culturally appropriate ways in English with both native and non-native users of English. The findings in this study indicate that teachers view language primarily as a means of communication rather than as a grammar. It is for this reason that Dzameshie (1997) suggests that because of the dominant role that English plays in Ghana, it is imperative to adopt a communicative approach in ESL in Ghana.

Pomeyie (2007) also examined tense usage errors in the written English of students in Senior High Schools.” To her, the Senior High Schools are the gateways to the universities and other tertiary institutions; therefore, there is the need to improve the status of English language of the SHS students. According to her, tense is a very important aspect of English language. Her study confirmed that indeed students in SHS have serious problems with tenses and surprisingly many teachers are not aware about it, so to get out of this problem, she suggests that students should have a firm knowledge of the rules governing tenses.

Darko (2009), examining the impact of the Process Approach to the teaching and writing of composition in JHS, bitterly laments that in spite of the crucial nature of writing, most students have difficulty in writing because they seem to believe that it is a difficult process. He supports his claim with the Chief Examiner’s Reports on JHS English language papers from 2001 up to 2006, which confirmed wrong spelling, faulty construction, misuse of tenses and misplaced punctuation as students’ weaknesses. He holds the view that the process approach to writing should be experimented on pilot basis as the starting point in the writing programme in some JHS.

Another revealing research in the area of error analysis is Nimako (2008). His latest book *Mind Your Language*, analyses a number of errors identified in some articles that have been published in newspapers, magazines, bulletins and books and also those heard on radio and television. The study which is a compilation of errors for many years, to him, is to make the reader sensitive to good English. The revelations in the book illustrate the lapses in both

the written and spoken English of the educated Ghanaian because some basic syntactic and semantic rules have obviously not been followed. Nimako (2008, p. xiii) emphatically states that, “we cannot deny mother tongue interference since local idioms have been developed and loan words and phrases have been introduced. These features have been described as Ghanaian because they are rare or absent in target or Standard English”.

Safo-Adu (2009), in his book *Your English is You* examines the error pattern of students in their essays. The purpose of his study is to draw attention to certain wrong expressions and grammatical errors which feature prominently in the speech and written works of many students and public speakers. He complains that:

in a country like Ghana where English permeates all aspects of our socio-linguistic life, the use of poor English is a serious social handicap. A single grammatical error in the speech of a public speaker, even if it is immediately corrected, leaves an indelible stigma on his or her public image (iv).

The revelations of the various studies have confirmed that indeed the standard of English of JHS students has fallen considerably since most of them find themselves in SHS and therefore proper investigation and recommendations be given so that eventually standards will improve once more hence the current study.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at two theoretical frameworks that guided the study. It has also given detailed explanation of these frameworks. In addition, the chapter has made a distinction between an *error* and a *mistake*, two important words that form the basis of this investigation. Again, the chapter has given us an insight into the general sources of errors and how they arise. There is also the review of some research works that have been done in the area of error analysis. Finally, the chapter has also looked at the current English syllabus of the basic schools in Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter principally focuses on the various procedures employed in this study. The chapter is organized under research approach and design, data source, population, sampling and sample size, and data collection. The rest are data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research approach and design

The study adopted qualitative research approach and a case study design. Qualitative research is concerned with multiple perspectives. The choice of this research approach is because it produces the detailed description of participants' feelings, opinions and experiences and interprets the meanings of actions (Denzin, 1989). For example, Bachman (1998) shows in his study that qualitative research results provide the relationship of information processing with performance specifically and deeply. Parahoo (1997, p. 142) describes research design as "a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed research data". To examine the sources of errors in the writing of JHS students, analytical and content methods were used to identify and interpret the sources of errors in the students' writings.

3.2 Data source

The data for the research, specifically, were obtained from students of three Junior High Schools and their English language teachers in the Awutu-Senya District. The selected schools are: JHS A, JHS B, and JHS C (pseudonym for the schools).

3.3 Population

Population is the people within an area with a given characteristics. In research, population is defined as a collection of individuals or objects known to have similar or a common, binding characteristics. The population for the study was all JHS for two students and English teachers of the Awutu-Senya District.

3.4 Sampling and sample size

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population (Alhassan, 2006; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Muijs, 2004). The purposive sampling technique was employed to select three Junior High Schools (JHS A, JHS B and JHS C). The simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) form two students from each school. The simple random sampling technique provides everyone in the population equal opportunity of being selected in order to avoid favouritism and discrimination. In fact, the JHS 2 participants were carefully selected to ensure that the results were representative, accurate and as reliable as possible. The JHS Form 2 was considered because they were in school during the COVID-19 executive instrument. The 24 teachers were purposively selected. To ensure gender balance 150 of the students were boys while the other 150 were girls. Out of the 24 teachers, 17 of them were males and 7 were females. In all, the total sample for the study was 324 made up of students and teachers.

3.5 Data collection methods and instruments

To get a comprehensive and better picture of the sources of errors in the writing of students in Junior High Schools, it requires that a variety of techniques and tools should be employed and analysed from several angles. The tools that were used to collect data for the study include: take-home-essay, end of term examination, an objective test, interview, and classroom observations.

3.5.1 Take home essay

This is an assignment given to students to be completed at home and to be submitted at a given date. Because such assignments are usually devoid of the pressure and stress of the classroom situation, they afford the students the opportunity to critically explore and analyse the topic very well. As a result, the answers produced are very often well written and more detailed than those written in class. Each student was expected to write an essay on the topic;

Write a story that ends, “This is the day that I will never forget in my life”. This essay was not to be less than 250 words. Because this was a take home assignment, it enabled the students to do self-editing of their work. The students were required to submit their work in seven days.

3.5.2 End of term examination essay

An end of term examination essay was used to collect data for the study. In all, 300 scripts from the three selected schools were released and vetted for the study. This enabled the researcher to identify and trace the sources of errors in the writing of students and the ways to overcome them. Admittedly, end of term examination essay does not give the true picture of the linguistic competence of some of the students due to ill-health, fear, stress and possible fore knowledge of the questions. On the other hand, it could be reliable because the outcome is a true reflection of the students’ spontaneous communicative competence in the English language. Another reason why this technique was used by the researcher was that students attach serious importance to this examination since the final score will be used to rank them.

3.5.3 Objective test

The researcher used an objective test to gather data for the study. The nature of the test was in the form of a multiple choice. The purpose of this type of test was to find out if students when given the chance to select the appropriate grammatical item from a number of possibilities would be able to do so. The test for the study focused on spelling, concord, tense, appropriate lexical item and the correct use of prepositions. Essentially, all objective tests come in two formats - supply type and selection type. Stanley and Hopkins (1972) gave two types of objective test formats as: free response items and fixed response items, that is, multiple choice and matching type and rearrangement. In this study the multiple-choice type was used. The students were provided with options out of which they were expected to choose the correct answer. The multiple-choice items are the most popular and versatile of the objective tests. In fact, people seem to be aware and used to multiple choice tests than any type of objective test.

3.5.4 Interview

Semi-structured interview was carried out with each teacher right after each lesson observation, with each lasting between 20-30 minutes, depending on a given teacher. The first part of the interviews consisted of pre- arranged questions which dealt with the personal and professional data of teachers, but the second part, which was the main interview, was not pre-arranged, thus allowing for spontaneity and for further questions to develop during the course of the interview.

3.5.5 Class observation

The results of 12 classroom observations were given in narrative summaries. The purpose of this technique was to find out which method(s) the teacher use(s) to teach English and to assess how effective and appropriate the method(s) is/are to improve teaching and learning of English. The observations also helped the researcher to get first-hand information about how students respond or react to teaching and learning in the classroom.

3.6 Data analysis

The data collected for the study has been analysed carefully. After the collection of samples of errors, the researcher classified them for analysis. This includes recording the pattern of the errors, finding their percentage density and plausible sources. This is guided by the research questions and the objectives set for the study. The Error Analysis approach was followed to carry out the analysis. This researcher decided that in analysing the data, the frequency and distribution of the errors need to be carefully evaluated. The analysis covers the statistical representation of the data captured in the three tests namely; Take Home Essay; End of Term Exams and an Objective Test. The analyses have been measured in terms of percentage of error density.

The data were sampled from three selected schools namely: JHS A, JHS B and JHS C. The respondents for the study were given a take-home assignment (essay) and they were

allowed one week to submit it. The topic was; write a story which ends with the statement that “This is the day I will never forget”. The basis for the choice of this topic was to give the respondents the free opportunity to explore their world of imagination and creativity. This also allowed the researcher to analyse the essays for errors. The topic is narrative and the predominant tense that would be used by the respondents is the past tense. Because students were not confined to the classroom, working without any time limit, and under no supervision, it encouraged them to do the assignment at their own pace and freedom. These conditions enabled them to have access to the dictionary and also to do self-editing of their work.

An end of term examination (essay) was also administered to collect data for the study. In all, 300 scripts were received and marked. The researcher then identified, classified and analysed the errors and also traced the possible sources or causes of these errors in the writing of students. The researcher chose end –of –term examination because students attach great importance and seriousness to school examinations. The final test was an objective one. Answers were provided for students to make their choices. The purpose of the test was to find out if students could select appropriate lexical and grammatical items when given the opportunity.

3.7 Ethical concerns/considerations

The purpose of the study was also communicated to the respondents. The students were promised absolute anonymity and confidentiality. In view of this, they were strictly advised not to write their names or any form of identification on the answer sheets except the end of term examination where their marks need to be recorded in their terminal reports and copies put on students’ files. The 24 English language tutors were equally promised anonymity and total confidentiality. The researcher was responsible for maintaining confidentiality (O’Brien, 2001; O’Brien, 2010). The confidentiality of information provided by all respondents were protected by reporting only group data without any major form of identification.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The study sought to examine the sources of errors of JHS students' writing. Two research questions guided the study. These questions are:

1. What are the errors committed by JHS students in their writings?
2. What are the possible sources of errors in the writing of SHS students?

4.1 Categories of errors identified

When the essays were marked and assessed, the researcher grouped the identified, systematic and recurrent errors into categories. To make the analysis simple, and easy to understand, the focus was on phrases and sentences containing grammatical, spelling and mechanical inaccuracies as well as inappropriate use of words. The deviant forms were ringed or underlined in the students' essays where necessary. The categories of errors identified and analysed in the corpus were:

1. Spelling Errors
2. Concord Errors
3. Preposition Errors
4. Vocabulary and Expression Error
5. Article Errors.
6. Other Errors.

4.1.1 Spelling errors

The English Language owes its richness to the vast number of words it has borrowed from other languages. The cost of this richness, however, is a wide variety in spelling. Words that sound alike are, all too often, not spelled alike. Also, the English language is known for its irregularity, and as a result of this, both native and second language users make mistakes in

spelling English words. Students also, in general, make a lot of spelling errors in their essays and it has been proved in this study. In all the sample essays, it was identified that spelling errors accounted for the highest error density. Tables 1 and 2 which show the categories of errors and their density indicate that spelling error was the most frequent error in the students' essays. The spelling errors could be due to the sources enumerated below with examples identified from the corpus provided. The misspelled words are marked with asterisk (*).

4.1.1.1 Spelling errors due to incorrect pronunciation

* emage	image	* trassers	trousers
* imerge	emerge	*trustworthy	trustworthy
* diser	desire	* soo	so
* nusty	nasty	* consive	conceive
* solo	sorrow	* runabout	roundabout
* woak	woke	* alltimate	ultimate
* anoid	annoyed	* seperation	separation
* plyte	plight	* receipt	recipient
* marriade	marriage	* concernt	consent
* airoplane	aeroplane	* roome	room
* lauf	laugh	* acedemic	academic
* jumb	jump	* imform	inform
* mobilise	mobilize	* nestday	next day
* noice	noise	* allways	always
* askin	asking	* defferent	different
* chech	check	*drunkingness	drunkenness
* further up	fed up	* talken	talking

4.1.1.2 Spelling errors due to confusion between homophones

* eminent	imminent	* wandering	wondering
* fateful	faithful	* where	were
* share	sheer	* other	order
* fond	found	* living	leaving
* bear	bare	* alms	arms
* though	dough	* steel	steal
* taught	thought	* know	no
* saw	sore	* seem	seam
* poor	pour	* told	toad
* weather	whether	* us	as
* caught	cot	* rush	rash
* price	prize	* son	sun
* quite	quiet	* frying	flying
* buy	by	* clash	crush

4.1.1.3 Spelling errors due to confusion over double letter and non-double letter words

* dinning	dining	* accomodation	accommodation
* stoped	stopped	* cassette	cassette
* dismissal	dismissal	* ocasion	occasion
* diner	dinner	* supper	super
* comit	commit	* comitee	committee
* scrubing	scrubbing	* wining	winning
* personel	personnel	* posession	possession

* asistance	assistance	* asurance	assurance
*accross	across	*proffessor	professor
*habbit	habit	*ofer	offer
*scrubing	scrubbing	*suced	succeed
*coruption	corruption	*terible	terrible
*imediately	immediately	*imensely	immensely
*sucessor	successor	*surrounding	surrounding

4.1.1.4 Spelling errors due to lack of firm grasp word division (amalgamation)

* a lot	a lot	* through out	throughout
* infact	in fact	* inturn	in turn
* overthere	over there	* somany	so many
* inspite	in spite	* eventhough	even through
* no one	no one	* along time	a long time
* alittle	a little	* inconclusion	in conclusion
* infront	in front	* infuture	in future
* incharge	in charge	* inaddition	in addition
* aswell	as well	* loveones	love ones
* to day	today	*every body	everybody
*trust worthy	trustworthy	*how ever	however
*in deed	indeed	*sofar	so far
*be hold	behold	*for ever	forever

4.1.1.5 Spelling errors due to carelessness

* abroab	abroad	* namly	namely
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* breez	breeze	* foriegn	foreign
* allways	always	* arived	arrived
* happend	happened	* roome	room
* until	until	*seriously	seriously
* boyes	boys	* centry	century
*also	also	*gote	got
*shool	school	*kindom	kingdom
*askin	asking	*ofen	often
*dat	that	*shooe	shoe

4.1.2 Concord errors

Leech (1989, p. 33) defines concord “as the matching relationship between the subject and verb”. Leech (1989) goes on to say that the main rule of concord is simple. This is because singular subjects go with singular verb phrases while plural subjects go with plural verb phrases. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) also define concord as the relationship that exists between two grammatical elements such that if one contains a particular feature, the other must also have the feature. Yankson (1994, p. xi) says concord errors “reflect badly on the speaker’s personality, they tell us something about his educational background, they portray his interlanguage as a “developing grammar” that borders on illiteracy”. Yankson (1994) goes on to state that the subject - verb agreement is very basic in an English sentence and it is therefore taught at the early stages in the primary school. So, for this type of error to persist in the interlanguage of JHS students, SHS, as well as university graduates and many highly educated Ghanaians should be a matter of great concern to the English language teacher.

In this study, concord errors did not score the highest frequency, but because such errors reflect badly on the speaker’s personality, there is the need to correct the situation. The concord

errors picked from the corpus have been sub-grouped in the sub-divisions listed below with examples. The correct verbs/subjects have been *italised* and put in brackets ().

4.1.2.1 Singular subject with plural verb

- He *was* sent to the police station where there *were* only one police man. (*was*)
- I *were* all afraid. (*We*)
- I *were* advised neither to touch the TV *nor* the deck. (*was*)
- A restaurant which *have* many workers collapsed. (*had*)
- She agrees to go to the party and *celebrates* the occasion. (*celebrate*)
- One teacher *stay* on campus. (*stays*)
- The big hotel *are* decorated beautifully for the occasion (*was*)
- If the student *are* in class learning the seniors will come there. (*is*)

4.1.2.2 Plural subject with singular verb

- Some of the tourist attractions *was* not developed. (*were*)
- New things *has* to come (*have*)
- The people *likes* the president (*like*)
- We should *participates* in all school activities. (*participate*)
- All these things *was* burnt into ashes. (*were*)
- We *was* given several injections (*were*)
- The man and his wife *was* working on their farm that morning. (*were*)
- The two events coincided so I decided to *celebrates* it. (*celebrate*)
- All these monies *has* been spent. (*have*)
- The activities of illegal mining *has* destroyed the land. (*have*)
- The enraged students *was* able to control their temper towards the teacher. (*were*)
- The laws of this country *is* ineffective. (*are*)
- They always *makes* them over work after class (*make*)

4.1.2.3 Concord errors involving tenses

- Some women also *feels* sad. (*felt*)
- We *reach* Accra safely. (*reached*)
- We were warmly *welcome* (*welcomed*)
- She *wake* up early (*woke*)
- I did not *realized* the father was there. (*realize*)
- As I *blowed* the candle. (*blew*)
- I would have *buy* one for you. (*bought*)
- I did not *expected* that. (*expect*)
- The injury was *very* so serious *that* he finally *die*. (*died*)
- I could have *reverse* it (*reversed*)
- Once upon a time, there *lives* an old man called Opanin Kwakye. (*lived*)
- I could not *controlled* my tears. (*control*)
- They have *build* their new house. (*built*)
- They *leave* me and went to bed. (*left*)
- My father *breaked* the news to me. (*broke*)
- After thirty minutes my doctor *call* me. (*called*)
- The wicked man came and *see* the boy. (*saw*)
- On December 26th an incident *happen* in my life. (*happened*)
- I didn't *stepped* into the river. (*step*)
- He catches fishes and *brought* them home every morning. (*bring*)
- The pots *fell* and *breaks* into pieces. (*broke*)
- The teacher *beatted* all the late comers. (*beat*)

4.1.3 Prepositional errors

Prepositions perform the important job of showing the relationship of a noun or pronoun

to some other word within a sentence. They enable a speaker or writer to show the relationships between separate things. The relationships may involve such things as location, direction, cause or possession. In other words, a preposition is a word that relates to the noun or pronoun following it to another word in the sentence. The most common errors identified in the corpus were prepositions that indicate place and time. Most of the preposition errors committed by the students were due to wrong selection and sometimes unnecessary addition of prepositions. Examples identified from the corpus are listed below with the correct prepositions in bracket.

4.1.3.1 Wrong selection of preposition

- He went to the scene in order to take a look *of* the accident. (*at*)
- He died *in* a tender age. (*at*)
- I saw gold *at* the first time. (*for*)
- The man was stoned *into* death. (*to*)
- They reported to school *at* the morning. (*in*)
- He broke *out* in tears. (*down*)
- *At* arrival the seniors asked him to kneel down. (*On*)
- I was encouraged by the fans *of* the crowd. (*in*)
- Diana was admitted *to* the Sunyani Regional Hospital. (*at*)
- He was thinking *on* how to pass the examination. (*of*)
- The thief was moving *at* my direction. (*in*)
- He recovered *by* about twenty minutes time. (*in*)
- The light went *of* during prep time. (*off*)
- The school was built *in* cement blocks. (*with*)
- My uncle passed on *in* the dawn. (*at*)
- *In* the other hand the journey was very interesting. (*On*)

4.1.3.2 Redundant of prepositions

- She does not respect *to* her seniors
- We were discussing *about* the results.
- He was poised *up* for action
- This happened *from* ever since she started school.
- When we reached *to* the house
- When Osei reached *at* stage five
- He approached *to* me...
- I have never toured *to* this place before
- Two days *up* to the competition
- On my way *to* home
- Our school lacks *of* facilities
- The headmaster emphasized *on* good manners.
- *The items comprises *of* books, clothings, provisions and drugs.

4.1.4 Vocabulary and expression errors

Every language has a repertoire of vocabulary and expressions available to its users for effective communication. It is therefore necessary that users of the language draw adequately and accurately from this stock. The wrong use of lexis and expression in this study also recorded a significant density of errors. In this study, students made errors which include wrong choice of vocabulary and expressions. Examples from the corpus are as follows:

4.1.4.1 Wrong lexical items

- The *small* days ahead. (*few*)
- They will increase the *cost* of the items (*price*)
- I have passed through many days of *remembrance* (*difficulties*)
- I *issued* my sister to open the door (*instructed*)

- The doctor *tested* her and she was HIV positive (*diagnosed*)
- We *dropped out* of the car (*alighted*)
- The *agents* of the Ghana fire service arrived very late. (*officers*)
- She was promoted because of her *intelligency*. (*intelligence*)
- He was *overspeeding* when the accident occurred. (*speeding*)
- I went to the stadium to *see* my favourite team. (*support*)
- He *labbled* his problems before the headmaster. (*listed*)
- She was full of *confidences*. (*confidence*)
- The mother warned the child *vividly*. (*seriously*)

4.1.4.2 Wrong expressions

- I *stand by* my grounds (*stood on*)
- My father was *admitted out* of the hospital (*discharged*)
- The house was *filled to the brim* (*full to capacity*)
- I *collected* a lot of insults from her (*received*)
- We *met* some few potholes on the road (*came across*)
- His only *left* relative was very old (*surviving*)
- It was a *two weeks* excursion (two-week)
- I ran straight to the room to *gather* myself for the trip. (*prepare*)
- I thanked the sports master for *letting* me play the match. (allowing)
- She woke up very early so that she *can be able* to go to school. (*could*)

4.1.5 Article errors

In English, the word class of articles is a closed class. In fact, there are only two articles. They are sub-grouped into definite and indefinite articles. These are; the definite article “*the*” and the indefinite article “*a*” or “*an*”. Articles in English positionally precede the noun phrase as determiners. However, the phonetic environment and the semantic nature of the noun phrase

also determine the article that should precede it. In the essays written by the students, quite a number of errors involving wrong use and omission of articles were identified. Examples from the corpus are given below.

4.1.5.1 Wrong use of articles

- My mother prepared *a* soup (*some*)
- That was *a* very first day (*the*)
- My friend was eating *a* orange (*an*)
- My school has *the* computer laboratory (*a*)
- This is *the* one of the problems (-)
- The school has *the* population of one thousand, five hundred students. (*a*)
- *There are *a* very beautiful tall buildings in the school. (-)
- *The accident happened *a* very first day he reported for work. (*the*)

4.1.5.2 Omission of articles

- My mother and I went to ----- bookshop (*the*)
- The school has ---- school bus and ----- mower. (*a* ----- *a*)
- His parents have cultivated----- large cocoa farm. (*a*)
- The accident happened ----- 6th of March, 2012. (*on the*)
- The rest of ----- students ran away. (*the*)
- Everybody was carrying ---- bucket of water (*a*)
- ----- Senior prefect called me. (*The*)
- We were sitting in my father's car when..... accident occurred. (*the*)
- The hunter was chased by..... elephant in the forest. (*an*)

4.1.6 Other errors

Some errors were also identified but they were not significant as those already mentioned. Hence, they have been categorized as other errors. However, together they form quite a significant group. These errors include:

1. Wrong use of the apostrophe.
2. Incomplete sentences
3. Wrong capitalization
4. Wrong idiomatic expressions

4.1.6.1 Wrong use of the apostrophe

- I bought the dress because of *it's* attractiveness (*its*)
- The *student's* were singing (*students*)
- I *had'nt* eaten for days (*hadn't*)
- She claimed that the money was *her's* (*hers*)
- They took me to the *boy's* dormitory (*boys'*)
- The *books'* were given to the students. (*books*)
- **Its'* difficult to read Science. (*It's*)
- The *girls'* behaviour was questionable. (*girl's*)
- The *questions'* were difficult. (*questions*)

4.1.6.2 Incomplete sentences

- A small village a few kilometers away from home
- The day I shall never forget, 6th July 2012.
- Being sure that the forest is near my hometown
- When I arrived and my mother said that
- Three strong men all with guns
- On my way to the school
- The day that I will never forget

- The doctor that we saw.

4.1.6.3 Wrong capitalisation

- The *Economic* situation of the country is bad.
- It was a beautiful *Hotel*
- They were *Armed robbers*
- The *Agricultural* sector needs support
- I was called to the *Headmaster's* office
- We went to the Kotoka International *airport*
- The *fiema monkey sanctuary* at Nkoranza
- My father is a *Businessman*
- We visited the *bank* of Ghana during the excursion
- The accident occurred on the Berekum – Dormaa *Road*

4.1.6.4 Wrong idiomatic expressions

- Emmanuel was *Dutch courage*
- All the pieces of advice *fell on dead ears* .
- The *bit* said about it the better.
- He was *picking his nose* into the conversation
- Birds of the *same feathers flew together*.
- To *air* is human
- The hen that lay the *gold* eggs
- The last but not *least*
- You have to cut your coat according to your *size*

Table 4.1. Error patterns and percentages of schools in Test 1 (Take-Home Essay)

School	No. of Students	No. of Words	Errors Total	(%Total Spelling)	C	P	A	WWE	O
JHS B	100	4364	1601	576(36%)	272(17%)	128(8%)	80(5%)	161(10%)	384(24%)
JHS A	100	4314	2004	741(37%)	240(12%)	160(8%)	101(5%)	261(13%)	501(25%)
JHS C	100	4281	2095	775(37%)	272(13%)	146(7%)	68(3%)	272(13%)	565(27%)

C = Concord, P = Preposition, A = Article, WWE = Wrong Word & Expression, O = Others

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 4.1 shows the analysis of the Take Home Essay, referred to as Test One, according to schools, in terms of type of errors, error density, pattern of errors and observations or findings. The researcher found after analysing the data that wrong spelling is the most frequent error in the writing of students in all the three schools. Incidentally, all the schools recorded a percentage between 30% and 40% as spelling error, with JHS B 36% the lowest in this category. JHS A recorded 37% while JHS C also had 37%. The second highest category of errors is the group captioned or referred to as Other Errors. This group is made up of miscellaneous errors that individually were not significant enough to merit a broad division. The errors here include; wrong capitalization, pidgin construction, wrong use of the apostrophe; incomplete sentences and category rule violations. The high density of errors in this category is quite understandable because together they form a significant group. Under this

category, all the three schools recorded a percentage above 20%. JHS C scored the highest of 27%, JHS A 25% while JHS B recorded 24% the lowest.

From Table 4.1, the next group is the group of Concord Errors. It could be observed that concord errors also recorded a high density. All the schools recorded a percentage above 10% with JHS B recording the highest percentage of 17%, JHS C and JHS A recorded almost equal percentage of 13% and 12% respectively. JHS B's situation may be understandable because they recorded the highest number of words in the essay i.e. 43, 645 (Forty-three thousand, six hundred and forty-five words) as compared to that of JHS A which recorded 43,146 words and JHS C 42,815 words. This may explain why the error density for concord is higher in JHS B than the other schools.

The other categories, namely; Prepositional Errors, Article Errors, and Wrong use of words and expressions recorded almost equal error percentages. All the three schools recorded less than 10% error density. It could be observed from the analysis of Test One that only a few students were able to write a full script essay of about 250 words as required by WAEC standard. It should be clarified here that WAEC is the external examining body for JHS students in Ghana. Again, it was observed that there was not a single error-free essay in spite of the fact that this was a Take-Home Essay where students worked at their own pace and leisure, they had access to the dictionary and other reference materials and had enough time to do self-editing.

Table 2

Error Pattern and Percentages of Schools in Test 2 (End-of-Term Examination)

School	No. of Students	No. of Words	Errors Total	(%Total) Spelling	C	P	A	WWE	O
JHS B	100	4281	2031	751(37%)	345(17%)	142(7%)	81(4%)	205(10%)	507(25%)
JHS A	100	4266	2483	943(38%)	297(12%)	173(7%)	49(2%)	376(15%)	645(26%)
JHS C	100	4086	2606	1016(39%)	263(10%)	156(6%)	78(3%)	390(15%)	703(27%)

C = Concord, P = Preposition, A = Article, WWE = Wrong Word & Expression, O = Others

Source: Field Data, 2020

Statistical analysis of essay in test two

Test 2 is an End of Term Examination which was conducted by the schools during the extended third term of the 2019/20 academic year. The essay topics vary from school to school. What is common is that in all the three schools' students were given two essay topics and they were asked to choose one. Samples of the essays have been provided in the appendix.

The focus of the researcher in this test was to identify and classify the errors from the corpus when students work under pressure, or under examination conditions. Examination conditions include, working within a time frame, working under supervision, without textbooks and availability of dictionary and sometimes outside your classroom. Table 2 provides a pictorial view of the statistical analysis of test 2. The test may be the best indicator of linguistic competence of the students because the test outcome was a true reflection of the students'

language competence. Even though a test taken under strict examination conditions has its merits and demerits such as: stress, ill-health, fear, and sometimes possible fore knowledge of the questions which can affect students' competence, it is a standard way of assessing fairly, students' language acquisition. The reason is that students attach much seriousness to school examinations.

Pattern of errors

In Test 2, it was observed that the error density was higher due to the problems enumerated (e.g. stress, ill-health, etc.). There was an increase in the density of spelling errors in the End of Term Exams than in the Take- Home essay. In test one JHS B, JHS A and JHS C recorded 36%, 37% and 37% respectively of error density in spelling. This increased to 37%, 38% and 39% respectively in Test 2. This was due to the fact that students were working under examination conditions and had no access to the dictionary or assistance from colleagues or from somewhere else.

Again, it was observed that the total number of words recorded in Test 2 reduced considerably. For example, JHS B recorded 42,812 words as compared to 43, 645 words in Test 1 a difference of 833 words. There was also a reduction in the number of words in the essays written by students of JHS A and JHS C from 43,146 to 42664 and 42815 to 40868 respectively. As said earlier on, the reasons may be due to examination pressure and inadequate time. This is also an indication that many students cannot write a full essay.

The error pattern in Test 2 was not quite different from that of Test 1 except that in most cases, the percentage of error density increased in that of Test 2. For example, under other errors, which again recorded the second highest density of errors, it increased from 24%, 25% and 27% recorded in Test 1 to 25%; 26% and 27% as illustrated in Table 3.

There was also an increase in the total number of errors recorded among all the three schools. For example, in Test 1, JHS B recoded 1,601 errors. These errors increased to 2,031

in Test 2. Total errors recorded for JHS A in Test 1 were 2,004. They increased to 2,483 in Test 2. JHS C recorded 2095 total errors in Test 1. Undoubtedly, the errors increased to 2,606 in Test 2. Furthermore, in Test 2, preposition and article errors recorded low percentage density. For example, all the schools recorded less than 5% for article errors and also less than 10% of prepositional errors. Concord errors did not register any significant increase due to reduction in the total number of words recorded. However, it was still the third highest error density recorded from the corpus. From the discussion of Test 2, it is clear that a majority of the students could not write a full script essay of 250 words. Spelling errors again recorded the highest density and therefore pose a great problem for our students. Even though the essay was written under strict examination conditions some of the spelling errors could have been avoided.

Analysis of essay in test three

An objective test was administered as part of the study. According to Mehrens and Lehmann (1972) one of the main reasons for developing an objective test is to overcome the numerous criticisms levelled against essay tests such as, poor content validity, difficult to score, time consuming to grade and encouragement of bluffing. The test was the selection type or the multiple-choice type. The purpose was to find out if the respondents could select appropriate lexical and grammatical items when given the chance. Table 3 shows the statistical analysis of the objective test.

Table 3

Error Pattern and Percentages of Schools in Test 2 (Objective Test)

School	No. of Students	Errors Total	(%Total) Spelling	Concord	Preposition	Wrong	
						Word and Expression	Others
JHS B	100	184	33(18%)	345(17%)	42(23%)	34(18%)	40(22%)
JHS A	100	220	37(17%)	49(22%)	39(18%)	47(21%)	48(22%)
JHS C	100	217	37(17%)	48(22%)	38(18%)	46(21%)	48(22%)

Source: Field Data, 2020

One striking observation made from the objective test was that in this test, spelling errors recorded the lowest error density. The statistics show that JHS B, JHS A and JHS C recorded 18%, 17%, and 17% spelling error density respectively. It is important to reckon that in Test 1 and Test 2 both essays, spelling errors recorded the highest density of above 35% as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. The reason for this sharp decline is not far-fetched. This development means that when students are predisposed to reading and it becomes a habit, they will not only identify correct spelling of words but also their correct usage. Furthermore, percentage density of errors recorded under other errors shows a drop but it still occupies the second place on Table 3. Understandably, this group is made up of miscellaneous language items. Concord and tense errors continue to pose problems for our students, as reflected in the objective test. Therefore, teachers have to work hard in order to solve this problem. In all, the performance of the respondents in the objective test was quite encouraging as compared to the written tests (essays).

Interview

Twenty-four (24) English Language teachers from the the selected schools district were interviewed to solicit their views on the teaching of English in Junior High Schools. Some of

the questions asked were: Is it necessary to emphasize the teaching and learning of grammar in our schools? Do we have competent English language teachers in our schools? What problems do you face as a teacher of English? What are the causes of the falling standard of English among our students and the way forward? A majority of the teachers strongly agreed that a firm grasp of the rules of grammar, is an essential prerequisite towards achieving competence in the use of the English language, since every language is governed by rules. They are of the view that when students are well equipped with the rules of the language it will be of immense benefit to the students because they will be able to do effective self-editing of their essays. However, a few of the teachers observed that the teaching of grammar is unnecessary because too much emphasis will push teachers into the realm of linguistics. With respect to the falling standard of English, the teachers were unanimous that the reasons are not far-fetched. These include: teacher competence, class size, inadequate supply of teaching and learning materials, inadequate time allotted to the teaching of grammar on the time table and the interface between English and students' first language.

Class observation

The researcher was privileged to sit in class to observe the teaching and learning of English in all the three selected schools. In all, the researcher had six sessions during which the teachers taught grammar and composition writing. Many of the teachers admitted the lack of interest in teaching grammar because to them it is boring and rule-governed. Teaching grammar therefore requires adequate preparations. The teachers strongly believed that no single method whether ancient or contemporary provides the panacea to all the problems of second language learners since every method has its advantages and disadvantages. It was not surprising that many of the teachers used a combination of approaches such as the direct, situational and communicative methods in their teaching. With respect to composition writing, all the teachers admitted that the problem of large class size is a great hindrance to effective teaching and

acquisition of writing skills.

4.2 Plausible sources of errors

An attempt was made by the researcher to trace the sources or causes of some of the errors identified in the corpus. In as much as most of the errors could not be traced to any particular source, some few errors, however, could be traced to their likely sources or the error emanated from a combination of factors.

4.2.1 L1 Interference

The study could not rule out completely the role of the L1 as a contributory factor to some of the errors identified in the corpus. Ellis (1985, p. 21) states that; “according to the behaviorist theory, old habits get in the way of learning new habits. Therefore, in SLA situation, the grammatical apparatus programmed into the mind as the first language interferes with the smooth acquisition of the second”. The behaviourist predicts that transfer will take place from the first to the second language where there were differences between the L1 and L2; the learner’s L1 knowledge would interfere with the L2. This situation creates learning difficulties which result in errors. The following errors which are traceable to L1 interference were identified in the corpus.

- After the games we *changed ourselves*
- I *collected* a lot of insults from the seniors
- I did not find my name *inside* the list
- She asked me *to remove my mouth* from the discussion
- My father said his salary *had not come*.
- The girl *followed* her beauty and engaged herself in prostitution.
- Kojo helped the father to *cook* the medicine
- I heard the noise from *my back*
- One day I *went to visit her* in the house.

- *They did* a borne fire.
- The letter was holding my hand but I could not open it.
- You have to pour libation to the gods.
- You should cook the medicine before boiling it.

4.2.2 Overgeneralization

Many of the errors identified in the study could be traced to overgeneralization. Overgeneralization occurs when the L2 learner uses his previous knowledge of the L2 in situations where that knowledge does not apply. This results from false hypothesis, ignorance of selection rules and incomplete application of grammatical rules. Examples from the study include the following;

- She *cryed* the whole day.
- She *woked* up early.
- *As I *blowed* the candle
- We took our *lugguages* to the box room.
- The next *other* thing ...
- There were many *peoples* at the party
- We *catched* the thief
- The event was *broadcasted* on the radio/FM
- The hen had *runned* into the bush.
- They *cuted* it with a knife

4.2.3 Communal pull

Some of the errors captured in the study could be traced to extra-mural English, that is, the kind of English spoken outside the walls of the classroom. This includes English spoken or found in the print media, television, radio and newspapers or in the speech community. If the learner is continually exposed to certain wrong forms of the language, s/he internalizes them

as correct forms. The following examples were identified from the study. It must be stated that they were not significant enough.

- The driver was *overspeeding*
- You have to beat the *dateline*
- Cut your *coat* according to your size.
- He became my *new* friend
- He *dropped* from the car
- My father prepared *heavily* for the party.
- We *discussed about* the problem.
- I took another pen *should in case* this one gives me problems.
- The pastor shouted “Is somebody *hearing* me?”
- When I went to the office I met his absence.
- The incident occurred during the *inter-schools* games.
- He gave the thief a *dirty* slap.
- My father is a *pensioneer*

4.2.4 Intralingual transfer

There are errors or deviant structures which are not mother tongue-induced. They occur as a result of the learner’s partial exposure to the L2 linguistic data. These errors are across cultures and so it can affect all learners of the English language. Faced with a complex linguistic system, sometimes with no neatly codified rules governing a particular area of grammar, the second language learner would analyse, hypothesize, analogize or over-generalize, thereby producing incorrect forms. In the research very few intralingual errors were identified. They include the following:

- My mother packed my *lugguages* into the car
- There were plenty of *furnitures* in the school.

- There were several *equipments* in the science laboratory.

4.2.5 Influence of computer/technology

In recent times, students' essays are greatly influenced by computer or social media language. It was therefore, not surprising that, in the study some of these errors were identified in their scripts. The following are some of the examples.

- You don't ustand the problem
- I said, I don't like *dat*.
- It happened *be4* classes began
- I wish you safe *jeni*
- It is *ova* to you to *disid*

4.3 Conclusion

Basically, using the Error Analysis concept of second language learning and the theory of Structuralism, the researcher identified errors in the essays of the respondents from the selected schools. These errors were classified and analysed. The study has shown that the students have not completely mastered the rudiments of the English grammar. It has also revealed that the problems that the students have in the use of the English language may not be peculiar to them; therefore, there is the need for improvement in the teaching of grammar at all levels of our educational structure. The pattern of errors and their density have shown the low level of proficiency of JHS students as far as the English language is concerned. It is therefore essential for teachers of English to identify students' errors in order to work in unison towards achieving a high level of proficiency among students. There must be a collective and concerted approach at all the levels of education geared towards improving the standard of English, especially, at the basic levels since they form the foundation other levels.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The study provides adequate evidence that “falling standard” of English does not just exist in the imaginations of the older generations of Ghanaians who always view their performance during their time as far better than that of succeeding generations. It has been confirmed in the study that indeed falling standard of English among JHS students is a real in end of term examination and an objective test. The researcher also conducted interviews and observed English Language teachers in action in the classroom. This chapter provides the summary of the study, summary of key findings, implications of findings, conclusions and recommendations. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the errors that JHS students commit in their writings?
2. What are the possible sources of errors in the writing of SHS students?

5.1 Summary of key findings

After careful analysis of the data collected, the researcher made the following observations: In the first place, it came to light that wrong spelling was the most frequent error committed by students in their writing. From the corpus, evidence gathered, showed that respondents could not spell simple mono and disyllabic words such as “*incur*”, “*occasion*”, “*received*” “*discipline*”, “*disappoint*” and such errors greatly affected mechanical accuracy in their essays. Secondly, the study revealed that, the second highest density of errors is the group referred to as other errors. This is understandable because this category is made up of miscellaneous errors which when analysed individually were not significant enough to be given a broad division. The errors captured here include: wrong use of the apostrophe, incomplete sentences, wrong capitalization, pidgin construction, wrong idiomatic expressions and category rule violations.

The next group was concord errors. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate this phenomenon. It was observed that, respondents who resorted to the use of compound and complex sentences were the guiltiest of this offence. Again, it was noticed that, respondents who wrote a greater number of words in their essays often faced this problem because in many instances the sentences broke down since there were no agreement between the subject and the verb. Therefore, the length of the essay had some correlation with concord difficulties. Furthermore, the other three categories of errors namely: preposition, article, and wrong use of words and expressions recorded nearly equal percentage errors. The level of written expression of our students clearly indicates a lack of formal understanding of grammatical instructions. Tenses break down frequently thereby affecting reading and comprehension.

In addition, the study revealed a low level of proficiency in the written essay of Junior High School students. It was observed that many of the students could not write a single error-free sentence, let alone writing an error free essay. Again, majority of the respondents could not write a full-length essay of 250 words as recommended by WAEC. Another finding of the study was the problem of large class size. It was observed that in the schools, the teachers have to grapple with the problem of large classes and its attendant effects on both students and teachers. Further revelation worth discussing in the study is the social class of the school and its influence on the performance of students. The study revealed that students in urban old schools recorded low density error. This is due to the location of the school which enables the students to get access to more qualified teachers and other educational facilities such as well-stocked libraries, computer laboratory and decent accommodation which are not available in the rural schools. However, the difference in error density was not significant enough.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

The revelations from the study presuppose that students in Junior High Schools will not be able to perform well in their other subjects such as: Integrated Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Information and Communication Technology and so on since almost all the textbooks on these subjects are written in English and the students have to read and answer questions set in these subjects in English. Further implication of the findings is that, many students in Junior High Schools will not be able to communicate effectively with other users of English either intra or internationally because of poor grasp of the English language and this can also hinder their interaction with other Anglophone students and friends.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

The researcher also suggests that the teaching and learning of English at the various levels of education in Ghana should be properly and thoroughly investigated further and the recommendations given for implementation so that eventually standard in English will improve once again.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has given us a picture of the error patterns in the written essays of Junior High School Students. The study collated the analysis of the researcher based on the data sampled from three Junior High Schools in the Awutu-Senya District of Central region. The density of errors and their patterns confirmed the general perception that the standard of English in the country has indeed fallen considerably. From the study, it has been observed that the pattern of errors in the written essays of JHS students has shown a tilt towards wrong spelling and wrong use of words and expressions. It is for these reasons that, majority of the students perform abysmally poor, usually scoring zero mark under mechanical accuracy in their essays, either internal or external examinations. The study has also attempted to trace the sources of errors in the writing of JHS students, and the researcher has recommended some suggestions which

when fully implemented would considerably improve the teaching and learning of English. In spite of all these laudable recommendations, it must be stated that no educational policy will achieve the desired objectives, if the human factor, in this case the teacher, who is behind the implementation is dissatisfied. It is for this reason that I share the views expressed strongly by Owusu-Mensah (2013, p. 7) that, “no educational reform will succeed in the hands of teachers, the final implementers, who are not enthusiastic about their work as a result of either low levels of motivation or lack of genuine interest in the profession”. Therefore, I recommended that teachers should be highly motivated in the discharge of their professional obligation if as a nation, we want to seriously tackle the falling standard of English in particular, and education in general in Ghana.



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