

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**TENSE ERRORS IN THE WRITINGS OF STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY
OF ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign
Languages Education and Communication submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education
(Teaching English as a Second Language)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Christiana Abagpoka Atugumyuure, declare that this thesis with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for any other degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declared 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.

Dr.Kwaku Ofori (Supervisor)

Signature:.....

Date:.....



DEDICATION

I specially dedicate this study to my lovely children: Mildred Ateiweh Tangwam, Simon Wedam Tangwam and Mary Grace Asaleweh Tangwam for all their support, love, and prayers and for being my source of inspiration.



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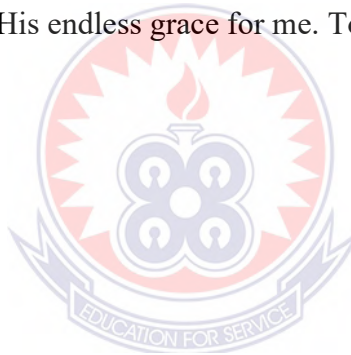


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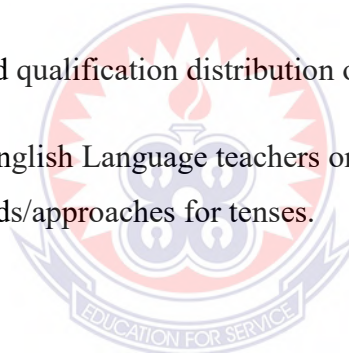
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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the tense errors in the writings of students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute in order to establish the exact problems for redress. The researcher used the qualitative approach for the data collection and analysis. Questionnaire, observation and class exercises and test formed the instruments mainly used for the study. The respondents for the study were fifty (50) students and six (6) English Language teachers in St. Bernadette's Technical Institute whose data were collected, interpreted and analyzed. The study revealed that students make errors in all the tense forms even though the progressive forms recorded the least. They mostly used the suffixes “-ed” or “-d” as a past tense marker for all verbs as well as for their participles and the third person singular present form marker “-s” as a plural marker. These errors are caused by many factors which include; interlingual and intralingual factors as well as inappropriate teaching methods and approaches by the teachers. The use of student centered approach and variety of teaching methods, applying tense usage in all aspects of the language, deductive approach and improved knowledge and techniques of teaching are some of the activities to help students overcome tense errors. It is hoped that if the recommendations that this study came out with are given the needed attention, it will go a long way to improve the performance of students in the use of tenses and the English Language as a whole.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The English Language teachers owe it a duty to teach all aspects of the language to enable students communicate effectively with minimal difficulties or errors. It is language that affords human beings the ability to communicate anything that they can imagine. Tense forms an integral aspect of English Language and if students make errors in its usage, it is necessary for the teacher to address the situation with all seriousness. This chapter begins the introduction to the study. The researcher looks at the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study as well as the objectives of the study. Others are; research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study and finally the organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Even though English Language is not the mother tongue of Ghanaians, it has become necessary and compulsory for especially students to learn to speak and to some extent write it for a number of reasons. Quagie (2010) states that English Language can be looked at as a subject where it is taught and learned in our educational institutions. It can also be seen as a language where it is spoken by both natives and non-natives in communication. As such, speakers and writers of English Language must take into consideration, what tense to use in expressing ideas at different times, thus, present and past tenses. From the above, it is certain that the English Language is used for a lot of purposes and its proper use matters so much if one really wants to make good communication to the listener or reader.

Language is a spontaneous social activity that expresses thoughts, ideas, emotions, mood, and humors, and conveys these either in vocal symbols or non-vocal symbols which include gestures, body movement, rise or falls of voice with varying stress and pitches (Opara, 2004). This implies that any person who wants to use language should be abreast of the structure of the language in question. It is its structure that informs one to use the right tense to express thoughts, ideas, emotions, as and when they take place. Chirakezim (2015) indicates that every language particularly the English Language deals with rules to make its use functional. Thus for one to be able to use the language for its intended purpose, the person should be able to apply the rules appropriately.

As such, once it is necessary for students to use the English Language both in writing and oral communication, a study into the major components of it which include grammar and for that matter, tenses is very necessary too. The study will enable students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute identify the causes of their errors and also help them overcome most of the errors they make in their writings.

Verb tense errors constitute the highest percentage (36.6%) of all errors committed in the English Language. Thus, grammatical errors, spellings errors, punctuation errors and the rest are also there but tense errors are mostly committed by many students (Nunan, 2005). This indicates that tense errors is quite serious in the writings of students but some us take it for granted or we are not even aware of them. It therefore demands that more attention should be given to it so that it does not get worse. Though it has not been given the needed attention yet in many schools once some teachers are aware of the problem there is the need for some measures to be put in place to address it and a study into it is therefore very necessary.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The use of English Language as a medium of instruction and communication in all our Ghanaian Educational Institutions have made it necessary for all to learn and write it appropriately as far as tenses are concerned. As we keep communicating in English Language everyday, we carry out activities at different times or periods. It is therefore prudent that every individual should be able to express present event in the present form likewise past event in the past form. The Chief Examiner's report (2010) says that the performances of students of Senior High Schools (SHS) in grammar have been going down every year because candidates do not have adequate knowledge of the basic rudiments of the English Language. In most cases, they apply the rules of the Language inappropriately which leads to the formation of unacceptable structures.

Thus, tense errors cannot be left out as far as poor performance in English Grammar is concerned and so the students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute are no exception in the predicament. Abudu (2009) in his research work asserts that in the acquisition of any skill, practice and frequency are very significant determiners in as much as the successful understanding and use of the skill is concerned. It is therefore assumed that the students have not acquired the rules governing the use of tenses adequately which lead to their inability to communicate properly using the right tenses. This therefore leads to the tense errors in their writings.

Again, the inability of Senior High School (SHS) students to use tenses appropriately has posed a lot of problems in general as Ghanaian Students study English Language as a core subject and also a medium of instruction for most subjects in our educational systems with the exception of French and Ghanaian Language(Chirakezim, 2015).

Pomeyie (2007) asserts in her research work that students in Senior High Schools have serious problems with the use of tenses and unfortunately many teachers are not aware of it. Thus, the students need firm knowledge of the rules of the language to be able to use it interactively. This goes to confirm that errors in tense usage is a problem everywhere but just that some of us do not pay attention to it. In another view, teachers might be in the known that tense errors are mostly committed by students but lack the courage and knowledge to help the situation. So a study into it will help the students and teachers to be able to address the issue appropriately. The researcher looked at the written works of some students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute and realized that they make errors in the use of tenses: They form inappropriate past and participle forms of verbs especially with the irregular verbs. They also use the third person singular present marker as a plural marker. Hence, the need to research into tense errors in the writings of students

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Creswell (2008) states that the purpose is the most significant statement in every study that points out its intent to readers for easy evaluation of the study. Without this it becomes difficult for people to identify the main issue in the study. The purpose of this study is to research into the causes of tense errors in the writings of first year students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute and the activities to help students find solutions to their challenges. This is necessary because students need to be proficient in all the aspects of English Language and any aspect that poses problems to them should be investigated into for the benefit of the students.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Communication is a process that allows people to exchange information through several methods which are in five communicative dimensions: content, source, form, channel, and destination (Yemeh, 2007). The third dimension which is form deals with tense which the researcher is researching into.

The objectives of this research work are to:

1. Identify the types of tense errors students make in their writings.
2. Find out the causes of tense errors in the writings of students.
3. Explore activities that can be used to assist students to address the issue of tense errors in their writings.

1.5 Research Questions

The research aims at addressing these questions below:

1. What types of tense errors do students make in their writings?
2. Why do students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute make tense errors in their writings?
3. What activities can be used to help students overcome tense errors in their writings?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research aims at helping students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute to speak and write English Language fluently and effectively with the right tenses. This means that, when students are taught an aspect of the English Language and given the chance to practice under the guidance of the teacher, they become conversant with it. The research will also let teachers encourage students to use English Language in their everyday activities as teachers teach their students various tenses which will enable

them get motivated to use them. The results will as well help teachers adapt appropriate methods and approach of teaching English Grammar and particularly tenses to aid the students understanding.

Corder(1981) states that a study into error analysis will give the teacher pedagogical benefits as he or she will be guided by the errors identified to be able to organize and attend strategic remedial courses to upgrade his or her knowledge, teaching methods and approaches. Finally, the results will be of great help to other researchers in similar studies as a guide to get better results.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study which researches into tense errors in the writings of students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute is just a part of grammar and only limited to first year students. Under normal circumstances, a study should be conducted over a reasonable period of time, adequate enough to really unearth the problem at the various levels of education. That is to say ,it should start from primary through to junior high before the second cycle level or better still, it could have covered the entire student population in the school because other students also make tense errors. This would have provided more findings on the influences of the lower levels to the problem. However, due to the limited time within which the research should be conducted, investigating the other levels or the whole student body will render the results unreliable.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

As stated above, the researcher did the study on only the first year students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute in the Kasena–Nankana Municipality in the Upper East Region where she has been teaching English Language for the past three years.

This study has covered only tense errors since effective communication depends on the appropriate application of language rules. While hoping that the findings and recommendation will improve the proper use of tenses, similar research could also be carried out on other forms, and areas in the English Language like methods and approaches of teaching tense and the grammatical errors of students since limited time and inadequate resources will not permit all that at once.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The researcher organized the study in five chapters: Chapter one deals with the introduction, the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study and organization of the study. Chapter two touches on literature review which comprises; introduction, the frame work, the major concepts which deals with errors, causes of errors, categories of errors, procedure for error identification and tenses as well and finally, review of relevant related studies and summary.

Chapter three is the methodology that the researcher uses. It includes the research design, study population, sample and sampling techniques, research site, sources of data and collection protocol and strategies and finally data processing and analysis. The findings of the study are presented in chapter four. Thus, the types of tense errors, the causes of tense errors, the activities to help students overcome tense errors and the pedagogical implications for stakeholders are discussed. Chapter five takes care of the summary of the whole study. This includes; summary of results, recommendations, suggestions for future research and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Chapter two of the study looks at what other writers or researchers on grammar have said about tense errors and to review them. The chapter deals with the framework, the major concept, and related studies to the topic. It thus, uses the secondary sources that are relevant to the topic for the study.

2.1 The Framework

The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. It introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. In other words, the main issue that compels the researcher to undertake this study forms the framework of it (Creswell, 2008). The framework of this study is basically error analysis as discussed in detail below.

2.2 The Concept of Error Analysis

Zumakpeh (2018) sees an error as a natural part of a second language learning which involves a process unlike learning a first language. In this new system of language, learners will directly connect with a new vocabulary, a new grammatical patterns and foreign pronunciation which differ from their mother tongue. It will therefore be inevitable to them to produce errors.

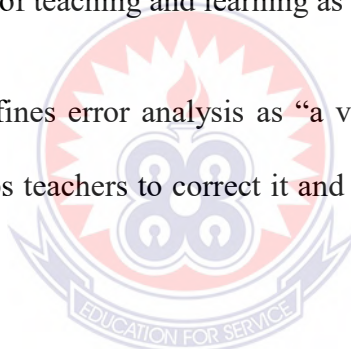
This means that for every learner of a second language it is obvious that there will be errors in the process of learning. It will then be the duty of every English Language teacher to make constant efforts in helping these learners to reduce or overcome their errors. For once errors are made by learners they certainly do not know that what they

have said or written in the target language is not appropriate. As such, they must be corrected by someone else because the learner cannot realize the error all by himself/herself.

Corder (1981) states that error analysis is a process based on analysis of learner's error with one clear objective: involving a suitable and effective teaching and learning strategy and remedial measure necessary in certain clearly marked out areas of the foreign Language.

The above says that once the learner's errors are identified, it is necessary that the teacher tries to help the learner come out of the situation by getting appropriate methods and approaches of teaching and learning as well as other measures.

Brown (2000, p.218) defines error analysis as “a valuable source of information on learners error which helps teachers to correct it and also improve the effectiveness of their teaching ‘’.



That is to say that, error analysis is a way that teachers and researchers used in determining whether learners are understanding concepts and the processes or methods they are using are successful or not.

Error analysis consist of a set of procedures for identifying , describing and explaining learner's errors which are technical and can occur in a way that makes it difficult to detect as it is impossible for the learner to locate the precise linguistic source of the error (Ellis, 2005).

Endogan (2005) explains error analysis as dealing with the differences between the way people learning a language speak and the way adult native speakers of the language use it.

That means, when a learner speaks a target language and it is not the same way as an adult native speaks, then there is error in the learner's usage.

“Error analysis is a study to identify, describe and systematically explain the learners' errors by using any of the principles and techniques provided by linguistics” (Sanal, 2007, p.597).

From Sanal's definition, it could be said that in language teaching and learning when attempts are made to look into the errors of the learners using laid down methods, with the aim of helping the learners to overcome such errors then it is error analysis. Thus, inasmuch as errors are inevitable in a second language learning there is the possibility for them to be reduced.

Khansir (2012) states that error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors of learners. This consists of a comparison between the errors made in a target language and the language itself with the learners' errors been the central point.

In this case it seeks to imply that there are basically two factors to be considered in error analysis: The learners at one side and the target language at another side. So there cannot be error analysis when these two are not present. Thus, the learners are as important as the target language in this and they play important roles in language development.

2.2 The Major concepts

Major concepts refer to the main or basic issues that are closely related to the research work which need attention in the study. These include; errors and tenses which would be discussed into details below.

2.2.1 Errors

Errors occur when learners are not able to respond correctly to a particular stimulus in the second language and it could serve as a negative stimulus which reinforces habits in the process of second language acquisition.(Fang & Jiang, 2007).

Example:

The ‘-ed’ or –d suffix is a past or participle marking for regular verbs but not all verbs so when learners apply this rule inappropriately it results in the formation of unacceptable structures such as one below.

I*goed to school yesterday.

This is a negative stimulus in the application of the past tense marking rule because “go” is not a regular verb and so the application of “-ed” suffix as past tense marker cannot be possible with it. However the learners’ understanding of the formation of past tense has no restriction and so the error is made.

Ali (2012, p.25) defines error as “a systematic deviation, when a learner has not learned something and consistently gets it wrong”.

The above means that even though the learner might have been taken through something the concept has not been established since the learner makes errors in his or her application of that thing just as in the example above. “Errors are deviations that are made by a second language learner without realizing and it is not due to carelessness” (Mohammed, 1998, p.21).

From the above definition, the learner does not know that he or she has made a structure that is not appropriate in the target language. That means the learner cannot detect the error alone without the help of another person in this case the teacher.

Komala (2014, p.15) sees errors as “parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance”.

Example:

*I didn't ate it.

*I didn't came with a phone.

From the above examples, it means that there is actually something that is not right even though one may grasp what the speaker tries to say or write. This is because, though the learner knows the past form of the verb eat and come he or she does not know that once the grammatical verb is in the past form the lexical verb cannot be in the past again.

Errors are unacceptable and less frequent forms of language usually made by second language learners without realizing that they have applied some rules wrongly or transferred their mother tongue rules to the target language resulting in such forms (Corder, 1974).

Examples:

* I must to go home early resulting form: I ought to go home early.

*You will go? Fu wan siŋe? (Gureŋe) resulting from transfer of mother tongue forms or literal translation from mother tongue to English Language..

The above shows that some learners make errors because they apply certain rules learnt to all or take structures from their mother tongue to the target language which does not conform to the rules of that language.

Errors are seen as the use of language in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as faulty or incomplete learning. That means the error is seen to be a

systematic error of competence that deviates from the norms of the language.
(Richards & Schmidt, 2002)

2.2.1.1 Categories of errors

James (2013) says that there are some errors that hinder the communication and understanding of the meaning of utterances and some other errors do not. These can be termed global and local errors respectively. Thus, the global errors involve wrong word order in sentences whereas the local errors involve inappropriate nouns and verbs inflections, the use of articles and prepositions and auxiliaries.

Examples;

*You will go? is a global error because the pronoun should not come before the auxiliary verb in English questions.

The *sheeps* are grazing in the field. is a local error because the noun sheep has taken an inflection which should not be so.

Corder (1981) has also classified errors into two broad types as:

2.2.1.2 Interlingual errors

English Language learners sometimes make errors as a result of the first language they have acquired at early stages. As such, language transfer inference, and cross-linguistic inference do occur leading to what is termed interlingual errors. These errors come about when learner's patterns, rules or systems from the mother tongue interfere with those of the target language leading to negative transfer or influence from the mother tongue to the target language (Corder, 1981).

Erdogan (2005, p.263) defines interlingual errors as been "the result of language transfer which is caused by the learners first language" This means that by the time a child goes to school, he/she has acquired some features of the mother tongue such as

the phonology, lexis and syntax and therefore transfers these to the target language sometimes consciously or unconsciously.

Interlingual errors are committed by literal translation of mother structures to the target language (Rao, 2007).

Richard (2015) states that errors occur when learners of a target language make inappropriate structures due to effect of the mother tongue. That means their mother tongues have influence on their use of the target language.

Many students across all levels of education commit various kinds of tense errors which involve substitution of one tense with other. These tense errors occur due to interference from mother tongue (Zumakpeh, 2018).

Swan (2005) also states that interlingual errors come about as a result of language transfer which is caused by learners' first language.

Sutor (2013) asserts that interlingual errors are caused mainly by mother tongue interference.

From the above, it can be concluded that interlingual errors are caused by three factors:

Mother tongue interference; these errors are produced when the learner tries to discover the structures of the target language without making transfer of mother tongue models to the target language but have difficulties because the forms in the two languages are not the same.

Literal translation: This occurs when the learner translates his/her mother tongue structures or expressions into the target language directly.

Example:

*You will go? From mother tongue structure: Fu wan Kiɛ? (Gurenɛ) .

This structure is not appropriate in English but due to direct translation from the learner`s mother tongue where it is appropriate then, it appears to be right for the learner in the target language.

Transfer errors: This is when a learner has not acquired all the rules of a target language and so transfers some rules from the mother tongue to the target language or applies some of the rules wrongly in the target language.

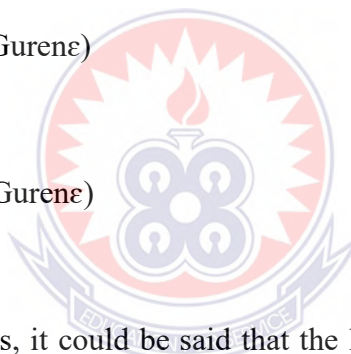
Examples:

N ta`am kiɛ? (Gurenɛ)

*I can go?

Mam kuli yire. (Gurenɛ)

*I go home.



From the above examples, it could be said that the learner made literal translation or transfer errors. This is because the mother tongue structures are the direct translations of the English visions.

The learner could have also applied the rule of English sentence structure which is subject + verb + object or complement (SVO/C) wrongly resulting in the inappropriate structures.

Odlin (1990) holds the view that interlingual errors are basically caused by the transfer of phonological and morphological elements from one language to another. He asserts that though two different languages could have similar phonological features, they could have new characteristics that make them peculiar from the other.

That means, no matter how two languages are similar phonologically and morphologically they can never be the same and so a learner of any of them will certainly have errors due to transfer or inference from one to the other.

2.2.1.3 Intralingual Errors

Students can also commit errors in the target language not due to transfer or interference from the mother tongue. When errors are produced due to the learner's inability to apply certain rules well but over generalize because of inadequate knowledge in the target language, then such errors are termed intralingual errors. That means the structures do not reflect that of the mother tongue structures but are not also appropriate in the target language (Richard, 2015).

Richard (1971) classifies intralingual errors observed in the acquisition of English Language as a second language as follows:

Overgeneralization: This refers to where the learner creates deviant structures on the basis of his or her experience of other structures of the target language.

Examples:

Forming plurals and past tense by adding 's' or 'ed'/'d' suffixes respectively are only applicable to regular nouns and verbs but learners sometimes extend these to irregular nouns and verbs which result in errors.

The sheeps are in their room.

The *furnitures are broken.

The *cattlesare grazing in the field.

The boy *goedhome.

I *eated the food.

The *mouses are destroying things.

Thus, in the above sentences, the nouns and verbs marked with star asterisks are not appropriate forms and the learners made them due to overgeneralization of a rule in the target language (Littlewood, 1984).

Ignorance of rule restriction:

This occurs when the learners fail to observe or is not aware of certain instances where some rules cannot be applied in some structures (James, 2013).

This means that though there are rules that are applied to some nouns or verbs in forming plurals or past tenses, there are instances where some nouns or verbs do not take those forms because they are not regular nouns or verbs.

The above cause can also be part of the examples given earlier because the ‘s’/’ed’/’d’ markers must be applied strictly to only regular nouns/verbs but not all nouns/verbs.

Incomplete application of rules

This arises when learners fail to fully or completely develop certain structures required to produce acceptable sentences.

Examples;

The child* has broken the glass when the woman entered the room.

From the above example, though the learner has used the participle form of the lexical verb the grammatical verb is not appropriate in the context above. Thus, incomplete application has caused the error.

The false concept hypothesized: This occurs when there is faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language. These errors are attributed to weaknesses or failure of memory (Gorbet, 1979).

It can be concluded from the above factors that, a learner of a target language is bound to make errors which could be as a result of mother tongue or the target language factors.

2.2.2 Procedure for error analysis

According to Corder (1974) the procedure for error analysis comprises five stages which are as follows:

1. Collection of a sample of learner language
2. Identification of errors
3. Description of errors
4. Explanation of errors
5. Evaluation of errors

Collection of a sample of learner language means that in error analysis data is collected on the learner language where the errors are made and so the type of data collected can have a marked effect on the results of an error analysis. This usually comes about as a result of different production processes which the learner usually found himself or herself in. Thus, there are differences in the type and number of errors in the learner's language by means of composition, translation, conversation and so on.

Identification of errors has turned to be more difficult than one would expect because it is difficult to define an error. In this case, should one define an error grammatically or pragmatically? So the type of error the learner commits must be detected as such but not seen in a different way. The appropriate criterion to consider becomes a problem.

Examples:

I *eats rice everyday. Such a sentence should be identified as grammatically unacceptable because the verb does not agree with the person. Hence the error committed by the learner is grammatical or tense error.

“I want to read your newspaper.” Such an utterance addressed to a complete stranger is grammatically appropriate but pragmatically unacceptable because it does not show respect to the owner of the paper.

Description of error deals with the comparison of the learner’s unusual utterances with a reconstruction of those utterances in the target language taking into consideration how the native speaker would say it. It is a stage where the errors are made explicit and indispensable for counting and bases for creating categories. Thus, errors are described using the native speaker’s language as the baseline. For example; is it a tense error or phoneme replacement error or others?

Explanation of errors has to do with the sources of errors or what accounts for the errors made. This stage is very important in second language acquisition research because it involves the attempts to establish the process responsible for second language acquisition.

Evaluation of errors involves a consideration of the effect that errors have on the second language learner. There are great differences in error gravity rankings among individual judges who may employ quite different sets of criteria. In particular, native- speaker judges who are not language teachers tend to use communicative criteria in judging an error as less serious if it does not impede communication and more serious if it does. By contrast, language teachers and more particularly those

who are not native speakers of English use formal criteria by judging errors that violate rules taught explicitly as with tenses.

From the above writers, it can be deduced that error analysis cannot actually be used as the tool to evaluate a learner's competence in a language because it only gives negative evidence in areas that the learner has not properly acquired at a particular time. However, if the learner does not want to take risk and so decides to avoid structures he/she is unsure of, such a learner may have relatively less or few error. Thus, evaluating learner's errors is quite a difficult task.

2.2.3 Significance of error analysis to the study

Corder (1967) and Richards (1992) have identified the usefulness of error analysis as follows;

It helps identify learner's linguistic difficulties and needs at a particular stage of language learning. This means that, learners of a target language can have difficulties because their mother tongue and target language have differences in their, phonemes, morphemes, syntax and so on and when this is realized, it helps the teacher in handling the learners better.

Teachers of the learners of second language are able to devise better strategies in their preparation so as to present their teaching in a sequential manner by presenting less difficult items first before more difficult items.

Both teachers and learners with the knowledge of errors committed by learners can assist learners who need more attention. This is to say that, a learner with special needs will be given more attention in that area to help the learner overcome that difficulty.

Finally, it will also help the teacher to plan and use more practical teaching methodology and learner centered approaches. This will enable the learners participate more and have more practice to be able to acquire the concepts and use them appropriately.

To sum it up, the usefulness of error analysis will help the researcher or linguist, the language teacher and above all the learner of English Language as a second language.

2.2.4 Tenses

Downing and Locke (2006) state that there are basically two types of tense:

The present tense and the past tense where present and past events are expressed. Aside these, the other forms are used to indicate aspect and modality. It will then depend on the type of tense and the aspect that will determine whether the verb will have any marking or not.

This confirms that in the English Language all events are either expressed in the present tense with its aspects or in the past tense with its aspects and the markings verbs take do not make them different tenses but they only differ in the aspect.

Examples:

I clean the room.

Amaccleans the room.

Amaccleaned the room.

I dance “yongo”.

Atidances “yongo”.

Atidanced “yongo”.

From the above explanation and examples it is clear that tense can have “zero” or “s” markings as well as “ed” or “d” markings as present and past forms respectively for the regular verbs only.

“Tense is a term that refers to the way verbs change their forms in order to indicate the time an event takes place” (Sackey, Agordjor & Kpogo, 2016, p.99) .

Examples:

Base: I eat food everyday.

Present: Kofi eats food everyday.

Past: Kofi ate food yesterday.

From the above, one can see it clearly that the verb eat has undergone some changes in sentences two and three. Thus a “s” is added to it in sentence two to indicate third person singular whereas the spelling changed completely in sentence three to form the past tense.

Wiredu (1999, p. 39) states that “tense refers to the forms a verb takes in order to show whether the action took place in the past or the action is taking place in the present or it will take place in the future”.

Examples:

Present: She goes to school every morning.

Past: She went to school in the morning.

Future: She will go to school tomorrow.

From the above source, it is evident that in dealing with tense, there is really something that happens to verbs in one way or the other in order to indicate whether the action or state has taken place, is taking place now.

Chirakezim (2015, p. 22) defines tense as “a change to a verb to indicate time”. She further indicated that the English Language has two situations in which the base form of a verb is changed to indicate time. This implies English has only two tenses: present and past”.

Examples:

Base Form: I talk to the students.

Present: She talks to the students.

Past: Atia talked to the students.

Base form: I want food.

Present: She wants food.

Past: She wanted food.

From the above definition and examples, it is confirmed that the verb actually undergoes some changes at each state to mark the main tenses: Present and past.

“Tense commonly refers to the time of the situation which relates to the time of the utterance or at the moment of speaking” (Komala, 2014, p. 24).

Examples:

Ama the musician sings beautifully.

Ama the musician sang beautifully.

Ama the musician will sing beautifully.

Thus, the above sentences differ because each happened at a different time and so it is the time that determines the tense to use and once the events occur at different times it is obvious that the tense cannot be the same.

2.2.4.1 Types of Tense in English Language

In effective communication whether written or oral, tense plays an integral part because there cannot be a sentence without a tense. Unfortunately students make a lot of errors in the use of tenses leading to poor communication (Sukasame, Kantho & Narrot, 2013). They classified tenses as follows:

2.2.4.2. The present tense

This is when the base or infinitive form of the verb is used to describe things that are;

- Currently happening
- Habitual or always the case.
- Future situations or events

Examples:

I love Christmas carols.

The children eat rice.

She works in the hotel.

It rains everyday.

I will cook yam in the evening.



2.2.4.3 The past tense

This is used to talk about situations which happened in the past or before the present time. Thus, it indicates an event which happened once and is completed.

- Something that lasted for a longer time but is now finished.
- An event that happened repeatedly or regularly but is now over.

Examples:

- He wrote a letter yesterday.
- The beautiful old woman told us a story

- She called me three times today.

They also indicated that all others that are not part of these main ones are aspects of tense but not tenses of their own and added that saying something that is yet to happen uses present tense with the auxiliaries “*shall/will*”. Thus, it is not a tense of its own.

Examples:

We shall finish our work before time.

I will go home early today.

The match will start at exactly 3:00pm.

Kwasi (2018) in his research work also categorized tenses into present and past only and added that learners need to be aware that there are several forms of the two tenses identified. The verbs in these tenses can change, add suffixes, or maintain their form to indicate the particular tense in use.

Examples;

Present

Past

Go

went

Burn

burned

Hurt

hurt

From the above examples the writer has shown that some verbs really take different words completely as the past form (go /went), others take suffixes (burn /burned) and some maintain their form whether present or past (hurt /hurt).

Wiredu (1999) classified tenses into the following:

2.2.4.4 The simple present form

This uses the base/infinitive form to express events that;

- occur always
- are general facts
- give instructions/command
- describe feelings/emotions.

Examples:

He goes to school every morning.

Kwame eats rice everyday.

I am a Christian.

I come from Navrongo.

Come here,

Get out of the room.

The girl is sick.



2.2.4.5 The simple past form

This is used to express an action which is completed in some time before present.

It uses the simple past form of the base verb only. It is used to express;

- affirmation
- frequency
- definite point in time
- indefinite point in time
- Interrogation/negation.

Examples:

We went home yesterday

I often ate T.Z. in the morning

We ate rice this morning.

Our forefathers hunted for food long ago

Did you go home?

He didn't work in the hotel

2.2.4.6 .The present perfect form

This tense is used to indicate that past actions were repeated but not permanent part of one's life style or an action in the past extended to present time.

Examples

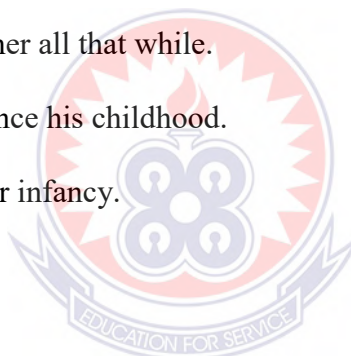
I have given birth to three children so far.

We have got a good mother all that while.

He has played football since his childhood.

I have liked him since our infancy.

It has been here for days.



2.2.4.6 The past perfect form

This tense is used to express actions/events that took place in the past finished before something happened too.

Examples:

I have had three children before I attained age forty.

The child had broken the glass when the mother entered the room.

2.2.4.7 The Progressive form

This refers to the tense which has the lexical verbs in the participle form. It indicates an action started in the past and is still ongoing or it started in the past and lasted for some time before another event also happened.

Examples

He is reading an English book

They are singing Christmas carols

What are you doing over there?

I was reading when he came in.

It started raining as soon as I came out of the room

He was singing whilst I was dancing

2.3 Related Studies

According to Asigbe (2013) tense usage in students' works (undergraduate projects) has been inappropriate. He emphasized on the appropriate usage of tense and aspect in students' communications to be able to convey the message effectively.

From the above researcher, though he dealt on undergraduate students' projects, once university students make tense errors, it is obvious that secondary school and technical institute students do same and even more errors may occur at that level, hence it is very necessary to research into tense errors in students writings.

The usage of appropriate tense enables us understand the correspondence between the forms of the verb and our concept of time. Thus, the basic forms of tense and how students are able to use them can bring about good communication (Quick & Greenbaum, 2000).

Their view is that students should be able to form the appropriate tenses in relation to the time of the event whether present or past which will enable the speaker or writer communicate effectively. This means that it is prudent to assist the learner who has difficulties in the use of tenses so as to enable him or her do effective communication

and so a research into tense errors is a step in the right direction since it will help address the learner's difficulties.

Chirakezim (2015) states that students cannot use tense and aspect effectively in their communication. As such, they do not like answering questions or speaking in class because they lack proficiency in English grammar.

Much as she states that, she limited her research to the students' use of perfect tense and once the other tenses are as equally important as the perfect tense, it is necessary for the students to get all right to enable them communicate appropriately whether in speaking or writing.

There are many errors that students make in learning English tenses but once errors are unavoidable, it is sometimes considered natural for the students as human beings (Komala, 2014).

In relation to the above statement, though we cannot avoid errors completely, we must try as much as possible to reduce the rate of occurrence of errors in students' communication. Thus, there is the need to research into tense errors to help students communicate more effectively.

Zumakpeh (2018) states in her research work that students make a lot of errors in their use of simple present tense during their essay writing. This, she stated that most students are not able to make the subjects and verbs agree when it comes to the third persons whether singular or plural. They use the third person single marker '-s' as if it is a plural marker instead.

Examples:

They *goes to the class every morning.

She *eat rice everyday.

It *do not like children.

From the above, it is very clear that the students have a serious problem in the use of simple present tense and it is obvious that once they have issues with this particular tense, it will affect the other forms as well and so we should not limit the research to only simple present tense.

Plotnik (2003) discusses the effects of wrong use of tense in the writings of students. He stated that the use of tense establishes the mood for the conversation. Past tense is traditionally the story-tellers medium in which events have taken place and people have acted out their destinies. Present tense, on the other hand, promotes a feeling of immediacy and the potential for change or flexibility.

From Plotnik's point of view, students generally have difficulties in expressing ideas in the past or present tenses. This therefore affects their ability to narrate events whether in the traditional style or otherwise and once there are errors, they affect effective conversation as the message will not be understood well. This confirms that tenses play very important part in communication and so it is necessary for students to be assisted to overcome their difficulties.

Every communication involves rational aspects and the desire to express oneself politely and effectively. This often manifests itself in the use of tense forms that are part of the knowledge of correct grammatical construction. The ability of the individual to use wide range of tense correctly creates a relationship between the speaker, the event and the listener that can involve or detach the participants from the event and each other. Students understanding and the appropriate use of the tense

have the potential to increasing significantly effective communication verbally and in written form (McCarthy & Carter, 2002).

The above confirms that, really students have difficulties in the use of tense and that destructs their communication in whatever form it may take whether oral or written. It sought to indicate that when students are able to use their tenses appropriately it enhances their effectiveness in communication thus making them better communicators.

Huddleston (1984) states that the past tense inflection indicates that the time the event took place is past in relations to another time usually, before the time the sentence is said or written, whereas, the time of the present tense will be now or sometime to come. When these tenses are not properly used, they can impair communication and understanding as well as have the potential to affect the mood or impression of the speaker and listener.

That means, the errors students make in the use of tense in their writings are not easy because wrong uses of tense can change the meaning of the message as well as the mood of the listener (reader).

Jackson (1990) states that language users need to construct message with a variety of functions in a variety of styles because for communication to be successful, messages must be structured according to the conventions of the language being used. The proper teaching of tense is the way to expose the students to the conventions of the English language.

This attests to the fact that when wrong forms of the verbs are used to describe any idea, the meaning could be changed. That is why it is very necessary we research into

the issue of tense errors in order to come out with better ways of helping the students to overcome their challenges by making their intended message to the listener or readers clear for better actions.

The misuse of subject-verb agreement reflects very unfavorably on both native and non-native speakers of English Language and how they understand what they are expected to do. He states further that, vocabulary of all kinds are important in communication because they are the ingredients of every language which English language is no exception.

From the above, once students have inadequate vocabulary, it goes without saying that, they equally do not know most of the verbs in their various forms. As such, they can easily use one form for the other due to the lack of that appropriate vocabulary

Norrish (1987) states that learning a language whether mother tongue or second language, is a matter of habit formation. That means, when one tries to learn something new, the old habits will interfere and cause the learner to commit errors.

In this case, it is quite clear that students cannot avoid errors in learning and using English Language as a second language. That notwithstanding, there is nothing that cannot be changed with much efforts and constant practice. That means, though students are bound to make errors in learning a second language and for that matter English Language, efforts must be made to bring such errors to the barest minimum.

According to Garrido and Rosado (2012) error analysis focuses on the errors learners make and is based on the comparison of learners' utterances or sentences in the target language and a native speaker's utterance or sentence. Although error analysis has some drawbacks, it can help us to see how a learner's production deviates from the

target language forms and also gives information about the difficulties students face when learning a second or foreign language. With this information, instructors can plan the teaching and learning process to help students become successful in the task of learning a second or foreign language.

The above means that much as we see errors in language learning to be a negative or bad thing because it deviates from the native speaker's forms or production, it is important that errors are identified and analyzed to enable the language teacher to come up with the appropriate teaching and learning strategies to help the learner overcome most of the errors if not all.

People make errors in their writings sometimes because they never learned some particular grammar rules. Others also make errors because they are trying to express such complicated ideas. So it becomes tough to express those ideas clearly and some make errors because they get a little bit careless. In most cases students are found with those sloppy types which are quite easy to deal with a bit of effort (Bonn, 2013).

The writer makes it certain that errors will always be committed by students in the use of tenses because sometimes some of them have no idea at all about the correct form or they want to express themselves in more advanced language which they end up with errors rather than good communication. Others also commit errors because they do not pay attention to what they are writing or are not careful in the process of writing. Due to all these issues students commit some of the tense errors in their writings.

Inconsistent verb tense (that refers to arbitrary shifts between past and present tenses) can be confusing and particularly irritating to readers and they can end up with the

conclusion that the writer has failed to communicate well for the reader to understand when it does happen. It could also be concluded that the writer did not proof read the write up. Thus, unless there is a shift in the time frame the verbs must be maintained in the same tense (Inurl-Ryte, 2020).

In the above submission, it is indicated that students commit errors in the use of tenses resulting from inconsistent use of tenses. This means that in a sentence where there are two verbs, they must be in the same tense. Thus, present or past tense but not present and past tenses.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

In summary, the chapter has looked at the concept of error analysis, categories of errors (interlingual and intralingual errors), as well as procedure for error analysis and significance of error analysis to the study.

Also discussed in the chapter include: tense which included; types of tense with the major two thus present and past tenses been elaborated on.

The chapter has thus far illustrated how best tense errors can be handled based on their sources or causes, the importance of those errors to students, teachers and researchers to enable students communicate effectively with minimal errors in the use of tenses

The literature studied so far also guides the researcher as to the details of the English Language tenses and the errors that students have been committing so as to form basis in data presentation and analysis. Finally, relevant related studies to the topic have been reviewed as well which forms part of this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the types of research procedures and methods used in the study under the following sub-headings; research design, study population, sample and sampling techniques and research site. The rest are, the sources of data, data collection protocol, data collection strategies and data processing and analysis and conclusion.

3.1 Research Design

Creswell (2014) states that research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research.

Research designs are strategies of inquiry that are employed in any research work to enable the researcher get the information needed for his or study. This means that the researcher must have specific ways of collecting data for the purpose of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) see a research design as a plan and structure of investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. It therefore affords the researcher the opportunity to have a specific way of collecting data for the study.

Research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to enable him/her come out with the best results for the study (Bhat, 2020).

The research design is a suitable fact finding plan for collecting descriptive data and portrays the strategic sequence of activities lined up for the collection, organization

and analysis of data in order to prove with empirical evidence to support or refute an assertion and to answer research questions to realize the objectives of a study (Twumasi, 2001).

From the above sources the researcher adopted the case study research design where students and English Language teachers of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute were the focus. These participants were made to answer questionnaire and documentation of students' exercises and test as well as researcher's observations formed the research instruments.

3.1.1 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research method is a technique used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. It is varying by using both semi-structured and unstructured techniques such as; group discussions, individual interviews and participation, questionnaire, observations and so on. The sample size is typically small and respondents are selected to fulfill a given quota (DeFranzo, 2011).

Dornyei (2007) says that a qualitative research is a technique that uses a wide range of data that is in the form of text or words and its analysis are done using words but not purely figures as in the case of quantitative research. It is flexible and opens way to new details or openings that may emerge during the process of investigation. It further uses small sample size of participants and results realized are generalized to other schools outside the study population and they are also interpretative.

Qualitative research refers to the type of research which involves the use a number of approaches such as narrative research, grounded theory, ethnographies, and case study in its data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014).

From the above explanations the researcher deemed it appropriate in using the qualitative research approach which enabled her administered questionnaire to teachers and students observed students behavior as well as documented performance of students 'exercises and test for further information on the research. It also enabled the researcher have personal interactions with the participants and to analyze the data collected using qualitative method that is non-statistical. The method also allowed the results to be generalized to the rest of the study population not limiting it to the sampled population only.

3.2 Population

Saratakos (2005) says that a study population is the set of all objectives that have some common set of predetermined characteristics with respect to some research problems.

Therefore, the population for this research is limited to the students and teachers of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute in the Kasena-Nankana Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

The school has a total population of six hundred and sixty seven (667) students. From the total, two hundred and sixty two (262) were females and four hundred and five (405) were males representing 39% and 61% respectively.

The teacher population was sixty five (65) sixteen (16) females and fifty (50) males that is 23% and 77% respectively. The target population which refers to only first year students in the school was two hundred and sixty seven (267). In percentages it represented 40% of the student population and the English Language teachers in particular.

The sampled population was fifty (50) students and all the six (6) English Language teachers. Thus, the sampled population had thirty two (32) males and eighteen (18) females on the part of the students with five male and one female teachers participating in the study.

It meant that the researcher used fifty students and six teachers for the study. In percentages 19% and 9% respectively of the target population were part of the study.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

Sampling is a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of a population to make statistical inferences from them and estimate characteristics of the whole population (Dornyei, 2007).

Creswell (2005) argues that selecting a large number of participants for qualitative research in particular will result in superficial perspectives. That is to say the researcher's ability to carry out the data collection properly cannot be guaranteed as he or she stands the chance of committing a lot of mistakes in the process. Thus, the researcher used the following sampling techniques for the study.

3.3.1 Simple random sampling

Creswell (2005) states that simple random sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure where the individuals who are part of the target population has equal chances of been part of the study.

The researcher used the simple random sampling technique in which case each individual is usually chosen entirely by chance and each member of the population has equal chances or probability of being chosen. Before the selection took place the researcher explained to all the first year students in the school how it will be done and

argued all to feel free whether selected or not. Thus, all the first year students were given folded papers with YES or NO written on each to pick just one. Those who picked YES were fifty (50) in number constituting the respondents for the research.

3.3.2 Purposive (selective) sampling

This type of sampling technique relies on the judgment of the researcher in choosing who to be asked to participate in the study. This is to suit the needs of the researcher by using individuals with some specific qualities. As such all the six English Language teachers of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute formed the participants here (Dorneyi, 2007).

In short, the above sampling techniques were used to ensure fairness and also to enable the researcher have time to be able to carry out the research work involving all the respondents. The total sampled size was fifty five (55) participants which consisted of thirty seven (37) males and nineteen (19) females for the research.

3.4 Research Site

The school under study thus, St. Bernadette's Technical Institution is located in the Kasena-Nankana Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It is both day and boarding with mixed school. It is also the only pure Technical Institution in the Municipality though there are five other Senior High/Technical Schools in the area.

The programmers for academic studies in the school are eight in number, They are:, Business Accounting Studies, Secretarial and Management Studies, Hospitality and Catering Management, Fashion Designing Technology, Welding and Fabrication Technology, Wood Construction Technology, Building Construction Technology and Electrical Engineering Technology.

Each study programme has only one class of students for every year group and so the research was conducted with sampled size. That means that not all the students were used as participants but respondents were chosen from all the classes using the simple random sampling technique as explained above. So the results or findings from the research will be generalized to cover the entire target population as they are all first year students and share similar characteristics in most cases.. This was then implied that what student say “A” does or goes through in terms of learning tenses others will definitely have either the same or similar cases. That was why the entire first year students were not made participants in the research work.

Students from all walks of life attend the school with some from different regions such as Northern and Upper West. The school is among the inclusive schools where the vulnerable are admitted and given special attention as they require. Due to inadequate infrastructure at the permanent site, it uses an annex site that is at a different location but not too far just that there is a main road dividing them. It is one of the mission schools that the Catholic Church has established. The major Ghanaian language of the area is Kasem with Nankani and Buili also spoken around its environs.

3.5 Sources of Data

Sugiyono (2009) identifies two main sources of data which are the primary data which refers to the direct data source of the study that the researcher collects herself or himself and the secondary source where the researcher makes use of other researchers' works that relevant to the study.

The sources of data for this research included both primary and secondary information. The primary source is the data elicited from both teachers and students

who were respondents in the research whilst the secondary source covers the works of other researchers who have studied the same or similar topics earlier and their works are used as credible sources of data.

3.6 Data Collection Protocol

The researcher first met and had a discussion with the Principal of the Institute on the need to research into students' use of tenses. The purpose as well as the objectives of the study were presented to him to enable him have an insight into the study. The researcher then wrote officially for permission from the Principal of the Institute to carry out the research in the school and the approval was granted.

The researcher also met with the Head of Department and all the other English language teachers and briefed them on her mission to research into the uses of tenses by the first year students. They were assured that all information provided by them would be confidential. Their support and cooperation was solicited for a successful research work.

Finally, the first year students were met too and explanation on the need to study the topic was made known to them. The sampling technique to be used in choosing participants was equally explained to the entire first year students and they were admonished not to harbor any ill-fillings when one is chosen or not chosen as the technique chosen was meant to come out with the best results for the study. The researcher again promised to ensure that all the information they were going to provide would be confidentially kept. The students were urged to give up their best when they happen to be part of the study. After the above contacts were made, the researcher started work in October, 2019.

3.7 Data Collection Strategies

Qualitative data deals with descriptions and meaning rather than numbers. It can occur in a variety of forms such as documentations, reports from places, observations questionnaire and so on (Kusi, 2012).

Good teaching outcomes depend largely on the method or methods used by the teacher in the lesson delivery besides his or her knowledge in the subject area. Thus, the ability of the teacher to combine methods in teaching yields better results (Chirakezim, 2015).

In view of these, the researcher used different instruments for the collection of data for the research. The most convenient methods for the sake of the respondents were used for the study.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

Instruments are systematically designed or prepared forms of documents through the compilation of questions to enable the researcher collect data whether by means of writing or oral from respondents for the purpose of a study (Parahoo, 1997). With this in mind the researcher used questionnaire, documentation and observation as the instruments in this study.

3.8.1 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions or other types of prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Creswell, 2005). The questionnaire is a systematically prepared document deliberately designed through the compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents for the purpose of collecting information (Seidu, 2006).

In order to actually come out with valid findings, the questionnaire was in two types: Teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire. See samples in appendix "A" and "B"

3.8.2 Teachers' questionnaire

This was meant for all the six English Language teachers to respond in relation to the study. It had parts "A" and "B" where they were to provide their personal information for part "A" and methods and strategies of teaching for the improvement of students use of tenses in part "B"

The questionnaire was printed and given to the six English Language teachers of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute in January, 2020 to respond to at their own convenience but the researcher pleaded with them not to keep them more than a month for the fear of losing the scripts. This the teachers did very well by answering them in time for the researcher.

3.8.3 The students' questionnaire

Also had parts "A" and "B". The part "A" talked about their personal information too whilst part "B" centered on the types of tense errors students make in their writings, causes of tense errors in their writings and suggested activities and methods of teaching to enable students use tenses appropriately in their writings.

On the part of the administration of the students' questionnaire, 24th January, 2020 was fixed for all the fifty (50) respondents and they all converged in one classroom in St. Bernadette's Technical Institute after closing from normal classes. The researcher had explained to them the purpose of the meeting. Then the researcher distributed the printed questionnaire to all of them. They were guided to fill the part "A" without

writing their names on the questionnaire. Then the researcher took them through the part "B" reading the items one after the other and explaining them to the respondents to enable them tick what was applicable or appropriate to them in each case. This was done successfully on the scheduled date.

3.8.4 Observation

Kusi (2012) also explains observation as an instrument that gives researchers the opportunity to interact with participants in their natural settings, see things for themselves and determine the data to collect on them.

Observation was one of the research instruments used by the researcher to gather data on the study. In order to get good results this was started in October, 2019 till February, 2020 because the researcher could not have observed a student for just a week and be able to draw conclude on that person.

So the researcher observed the behavior of students and teachers in the classroom whenever they were asked to perform certain activities during lessons delivery as well as their oral conversations inside and outside the classroom since they usually translate what they say verbally into writing. Teachers' attitudes towards students in the classrooms as well as their methods of teaching tenses were not left out .It thus, came out very clearly that it was not an issue of writing that they could not do but that they had problems in the use of tenses and majority of the students avoided the use of English Language especially whenever they were outside the classroom. It also revealed that many of the teachers teach traditional grammar which did not involve the students much.

3.8.5 Class Exercises and Test

Class exercises and test which forms part of documentation which provides official information or evidence to an issue was also used as one of the instruments for data collection during the research (Dornyei, 2007).

In this case the written works (class exercises and test) of students were also used as a source of information to confirm that students really commit tense errors in their writings. With this, during the research, the researcher gave out class exercises and class test to the respondents on tenses and their performances in those works confirmed the types of errors the students commit in the use of tenses in their writings. This was done with all the respondents again called together one day after normal classes and the exercises and test which were already printed were distributed to them and they answered them. From their works, one could easily found out that there were inappropriate use of the suffixes “-ed” or “-d” markers as past or perfective forms for all verbs as well as the “-s” as a plural marker but not third person singular marker. This method was also used because it enabled the researcher compiled data from the respondents in a short time once there was no further works to be done on what was collected by way of transcription since the exercises and test were designed purposely to authenticate the errors for the study. See appendix “C”, “D” and “E” for samples of questions for exercises one and two and class test respectively.

3.8.4 Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis involves working on the description and interpretation of the data collected to uncover the patterns and trends in it. This is also a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the responses from the respondents (Creswell, 2005).

The research questionnaire was collected from both teachers and students after they had answered them. The answers were then categorized based on the types of tense errors they commit, the causes of the errors, and the activities to help students overcome tense errors for the students' questionnaire. On the part of the teachers' questionnaire, it was analyzed based on the types of teaching methods and approaches to use and their individual ways of helping the students to overcome tense errors in their writings. For easy analysis and presentation the sorting and categorization were all done by the researcher, the analysis and discussions of the findings were done using tables and bar graphs which summarized everything one after the other. The findings on documentation were presented in table and graph with a discussion of the interpretation. The findings from observation were presented in the form of discussion only.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology of the study. It explained the research design which centered on the qualitative research approach, the study population, sample and sampling techniques such as simple random sampling and the purposive sampling. Others were the research site, sources of data, data collection protocol, data collection strategies like the questionnaire, observation and documentation (class exercises and test) and finally data processing and analysis. All these were used with the intention of obtaining credible data to enable the researcher better explain the phenomenon and help the students overcome tense errors in their writings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the findings and analysis of the data collected for the research work. The presentations are based on the responses from the questionnaire that students and teachers of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute answered, documentation of students class exercises and test and the observations made by the researcher during the study.

It analyses the types of tense errors students make, the causes of the errors and the activities that could help students overcome these errors in their writings. Thus, the researcher will present the findings in tables and bar graphs using frequency and simple percentages and then discussions will follow thereafter. The various data would be analyzed in the order in which the research questions were presented as they are aimed at answering these questions below:

1. What types of tense errors do students make in their writings?
2. Why do students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute make tense errors in their writings?
3. What activities could be used to help students overcome tense errors in their writings?

Based on the research question 1, responses from students 'questionnaire on the types of tense errors students make in their exercises and test would be presented first. Then responses on the causes of tense errors would follow .Then, responses from students and teachers on the activities to help students overcome tense errors and finally, researcher's observation would end it up with the conclusion of the chapter.

4.1 Students' Responses to Questionnaire

The responses of students to the questionnaire that was administered to them revealed the following information in table 4.1.1 below on their ages and gender.

Table 4.1.1: Age and Gender distribution of student participants

Age	16 years		17 years		18 years	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number(frequency)	7	3	8	6	17	9

From the responses of the participants presented in table 4.1.1 above, their personal data indicated that all of them aged within sixteen (16) to eighteen (18) years. The results showed that ten respondents were sixteen years old, fourteen of them attained age seventeen and twenty six participants were eighteen years old. Out of the fifty respondents, eighteen of them were females and the remaining thirty two were males. Thus, in percentages these were 36% and 64% respectively.

Table 4.1.2: below again depicts the number of participants from each class which formed part of the students' personal data.

Table 4.1.2: Number of Participants from the Various Classes

Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fashion Designing Technology	10	20%
Catering & Hospitality Management	8	16%
Electrical Engineering Technology	10	20%
Building Construction Technology	7	14%
Wood Construction Technology	5	10%
Welding and Fabrication Technology	5	10%
Secretariat and Management Studies	2	4%
Business Accounting Studies	3	6%

Their responses again indicated that each of the eight classes had at least two students participating in the study. The numbers were as follows; Fashion class ten, Catering class eight, Wood class five, Electricals class ten, Welding class five, Building and Construction class seven, Secretariat class two and Accounting class three respondents.

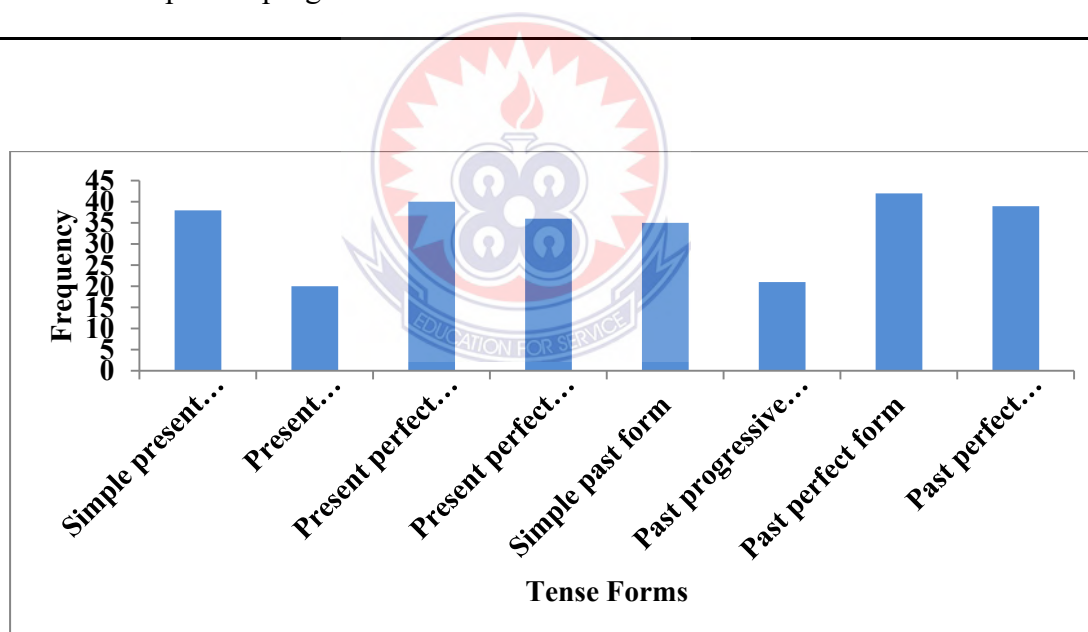
As indicated in table 4.1.2 above their responses again revealed that all the classes had students participating in the study, this implied that respondents could really have similar characteristics in most cases because there were at least two respondents from each class and so all were involved by way of representation. In this case all the students saw it as a fair treatment as all classes were participating. That is to say that, they all formed part of the study and took it seriously as adolescent group who share a lot in most of their behaviors and character? It was also very possible for these respondents to have similar challenges when it comes to the use of tenses in their writings because they virtually do everything together as students of the same school and form and so could influence one another in many ways whether good or bad. Therefore, when the results from these are generalized to cover those who could not be part of the study, it would go a long way to help all of them to improve their performance in the use of tenses in their writings.

4.1.3 Types of Tense Errors Students Make

On the types of tense errors students make in their writings, table 4.1.3 below shows the responses of students as an attempt to answer research question one (1).

Table 4.1.3: Types of Tense Errors Students Make

S/N	Tense form	No. of students that commit error(frequency)	Percentage(%)
1.	Simple present form	38	76%
2.	Present progressive form	20	40%
3.	Present perfect form	40	80%
4.	Present perfect progressive form	36	72%
5.	Simple past form	35	70%
6.	Past progressive form	21	42%
7.	Past perfect form	42	84%
8.	Past perfect progressive form	39	78%

**Figure 4.1.3: Types of Tense Errors Students Make**

From Table 4.1.3 above, 38 students representing 76% of the total respondents indicated that they commit errors when using the simple present form in their writings. Their exercises and test also proved it in table 4.2 below that students made a lot of errors in the use of simple present forms because the suffix “-s” is used as a

plural marker. When the researcher casually asked some of them how they usually write this form through their interactions, most of them said they could not use the third person singular maker “-s” appropriately. It was mostly been used as a plural maker. Thus, they inflected the verbs to be like plural nouns in the sentences. The researcher’s observations during the time of answering the questionnaire also confirmed what they said about the use of the suffix “-s” as a plural marker in most cases. These therefore revealed their inability to use the simple present form appropriately.

Also, 20 respondents representing 40% made errors when using the present progressive form in their writings. This was the aspect of the tenses that most of the respondents seem to be doing well in its usage. Even though there were still some who said they could not use it appropriately because they did not remove some letters that were supposed to be removed and so could not answer the questions as expected, they did better in this area. This again confirmed that students make errors when it comes to the use of tenses in their writings.

The present perfect form recorded 40 respondents representing 80% of the total number that indicated they usually commit errors in its usage. This was the second area that recorded high figure as an indication that they have difficulties in its usage. Here, most of them told the researcher openly that they have always had difficulties in the use of the appropriate perfectives of the irregular verbs. They inflected most of the verbs with the “-ed” or “-d” suffixes which should not be applied to all verbs from the researcher’s observations. With this, the students made many errors in the use of this particular form.

Also, 36 respondents representing 72% said that they usually commit errors in using the present perfect progressive form. This was revealed through their responses to the questionnaire and their exercises and test. The simple present forms of the verbs were used in this area instead of the present progressive form of the verbs. In short, their responses in this area confirmed that they really make a lot of errors in its usage.

Furthermore, the simple past form was one of the areas that was also looked into. From this, 35 respondents which represented 70% said they have difficulties using this form. In this area their exercises and test proved that they have always added “-ed” or “-d” to all verbs in order to form this particular aspect of tense and this was confirmed through the observations of the researcher too. On the whole, their responses indicated that participants make error in its usage which means it forms part of the types of errors they commit.

In addition to the above, 21 respondents representing 42% indicated they often make errors in the use of past progressive form of the verbs. This was very similar to their response for the present progressive form. It was the second type that recorded less number of participants who have difficulties in its usage. That means, the respondents are doing well in this area when it comes to them using verbs in this form in writing. Here many of them said adding “ing” to every verb is not difficult as compare to the other forms.

More so, 42 respondents representing 82% of them said they often commit errors when using past perfect form of the verbs. In fact it was the area that recorded the highest number of participants that confirmed they really have difficulties in its usage. This high figure alarmed the researcher so she contacted most of the participants and they confirmed that it has been a problem area to them because sometimes they

change the past auxiliary to present or use the simple past form of the lexical verb instead of the perfective form . Observations made by the researcher on the writings of students in other aspects confirmed their saying as true. Thus; it indicated that respondents have serious challenges in using the past perfect form.

Lastly, the past perfect progressive form was the next. It recorded 39 respondents which represented 78% of them who said they commit errors in the use of this form. In this case it was just similar to the past perfect form where many of them usually change the past auxiliary to the present form and instead of the lexical verb taking the progressive form they use the simple past form. .In short their responses confirmed they commit a lot of errors too in its usage.

4.1.4 Class Exercises and Test

The use of class exercises and test was employed to authenticate the types of tense errors students make in their writings. Table 4.1.4 below gives a summary of the findings from this instrument. *See appendix “F” for samples of answered class exercises and test.*

Table 4.1.4: Results from Class Exercises and Teston Types of Tense Errors

Students Make		
Tense form	Number of errors(frequency)	Percentage (%)
Simple present	40	80%
Present progressive	7	14%
Present perfect	39	78%
Present perfect progressive	37	74%
Simple past	37	74%
Past progressive	7	14%
Past perfect	39	78%
Past perfect progressive	37	74%

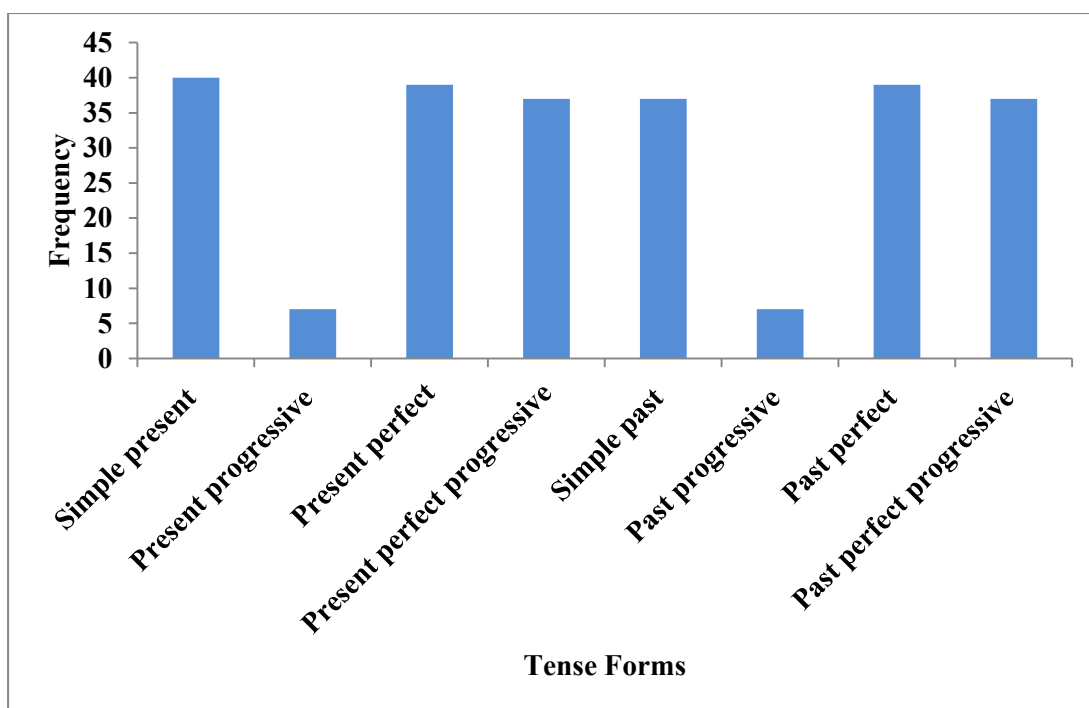


Figure 4.1.4: Results from Class Exercises and Test on Types of tense Errors

Students Make in their writings

Results from students' exercises and test as presented in table 4.1.4 above indicated that 80% of the respondents really commit errors in the use of the simple present form. That is to say, they were unable to differentiate between the plural marker and the third person singular marker '-s'. So they used the suffix '-s' mostly as a plural marker. This reflected so clearly in the exercises and test conducted for them.

Again, the use of the suffixes '-ed' or '-d' as the past tense markers for all verbs whether regular or irregular was a common error most students' constituting 74% committed in the exercises and test given to them. That means they students do not know that those markers are meant for regular verbs only but apply the rule to all verbs leading to their errors. This has confirmed that learners of a second language may not acquire the rules of the target language adequately and begin to apply them. When this happens, it leads to intralingual errors (James, 1988).

Furthermore, 39 respondents which represent 78% of the students made errors with the use of the perfectives from their exercises and test. This implies that, majority of the respondents could not use the perfect forms of the verbs appropriately whether it is in the present or past form. They used verbs in their simple present or past forms in most cases meanwhile the irregular verbs cannot use their simple past even if the regular could go that way. The present perfect form should use the participle form of the lexical verb with the auxiliary “*have or has*” while the past perfect form should use the past form “*had*” with the participle form of the lexical verb (Wiredu, 1999).

Then also, the perfect progressive forms equally recorded poor performance just as the above ones. 37 respondents representing 74% of them made errors in the use of these. They mostly write the verbs in their simple present forms in this area whereas they should be using the “*have or has*” with the participle form “*been*” and then the progressive form of the main verb to form the present perfect progressives while the past form takes “*had*” with the participle “*been*” and the progressive form of the lexical verb (Wiredu, 1999). This also confirmed that the students have difficulties in the use of tenses based on their performance in the class exercises and test conducted during the study.

Finally, the only area respondents did quite well was the progressive forms for both the present and past. Here, 43 respondents representing 86% of them were able to use them appropriately. That means only 7 respondents representing 24% were not able to use this form appropriately. From the researcher’s interactions with the respondents, most of them said that form is easy to write because it does not have singular and plural or regular and irregular verbs issues. “One needs to only add the suffix “*ing*” to the verb or take off a letter before adding that suffix”.

That notwithstanding, their responses indicated generally that they have difficulties in the use of tenses in writing through the exercises and test given to them during the study.

4.2 Responses from students ‘questionnaire on the causes of tense errors in the writings of students.

The data shown in table 4.2 below indicates the causes of tense errors in the writings of students. This part of the questionnaire aims at answering research question two (2) which says; “why do students of St. Bernadette’s Technical Institute make tense errors in their writings?”.

Table 4.2: The Causes of Tense Errors Students Make

S/N	Cause of Error	No. of students it affects (frequency)	Percentage (%)
1.	Transfer of mother tongue rules to English Language	40	80%
2.	Over-generalization of English Language rules	36	72%
3.	Wrong application of English Language rules	36	72%
4.	Ignorance of rule restrictions	41	82%
5.	Literal translation of mother tongue structures to English Language	31	62%

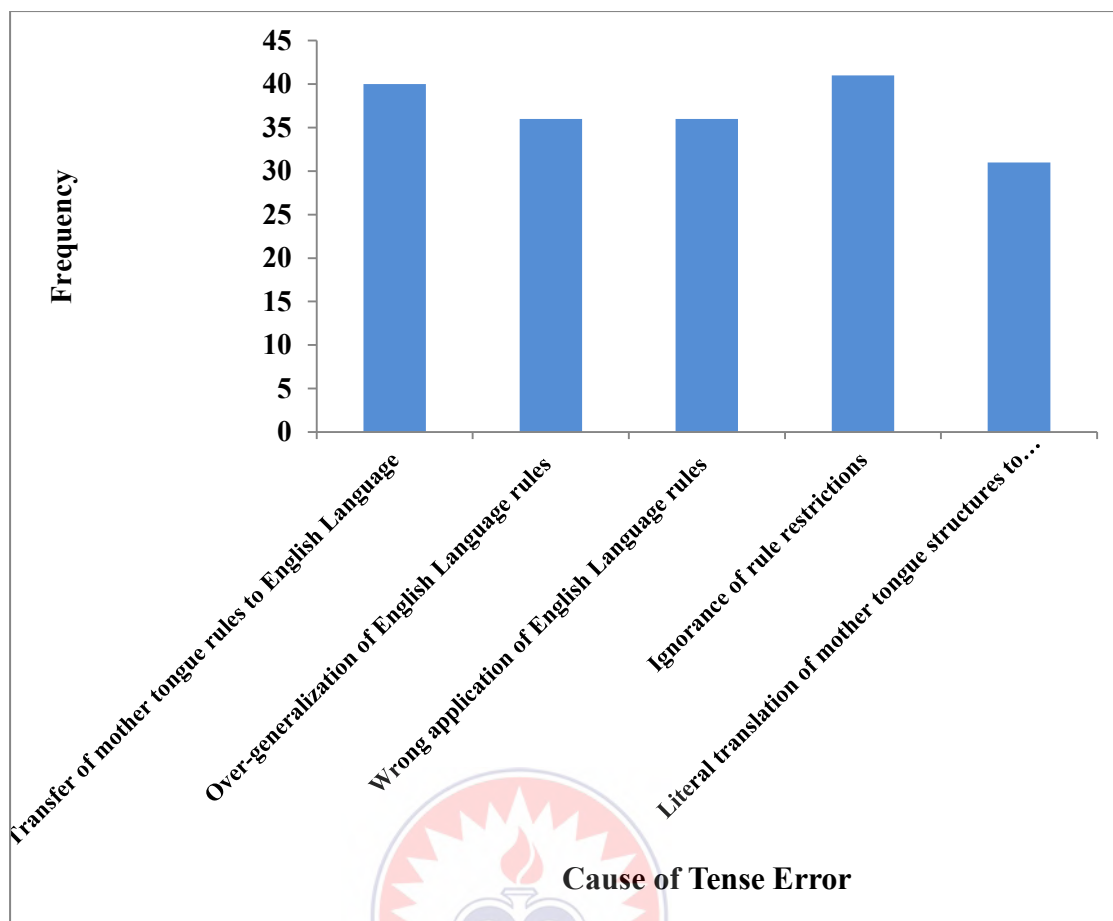


Figure 4.2. The Causes of Tense Errors Students Make

From Table 4.2 above which presents the responses of participants on the causes of the errors students make in the use of tenses; 40 respondents representing 80% of the students were of the view that transfer of mother tongue rules to English Language was the second major cause of the errors they make in the use of tenses. This the researcher has observed in their writings whereby they use the pronoun “you” to begin every question such as; *you will go?*. As well as placing adjective after noun such as; *the shirt red is on the door.* This means that these students had acquired the mother tongue structures earlier or they mostly use the mother tongue in their conversations. As such, they have been able to master the rules of the mother tongue which easily interfere in their use of the English Language. This is as a result of negative transfer (Norrish, 1987).

Also, 36 respondents representing 72% of them agreed that over-generalization of English Language rules was the third leading cause of tense errors in the writings of students. This can be related to their use of “-ed” or “-d” as past tense markers for all verbs as well as the use of the suffix “-s” as a plural marker for all nouns irrespective of the type but could not use that same suffix for the third person singular present verbs. This therefore means that the students have over generalized the rules or just jumble them in the process of using because of carelessness. As such it causes them to commit errors when using tenses (Lim, 1990).

Again, 36 respondents representing 72% of the students said wrong application of English Language rules is yet another cause of their errors in tenses. In this situation English Language is full of rules governing its usage just as any other language does and when the students are not able to acquire these rules well, they try to use them the way they know or think and not how they should be which results in making of errors. Their responses from the documentation confirmed that they used the suffixes “ed” or “d” as past tense marker for all verbs. These errors have sources from the target language as the learners use what they have acquired in that same language but just that the application is wrong (James, 1998).

Ignorance of rule restrictions was rated the leading cause of the errors students make in the use of tenses from their responses. It recorded 41 respondents representing 82%. This can be confirmed from the documentation data above that the students have not acquired much knowledge on when, where and how certain rules in the language should be applied especially in their use of tenses. In this case the use of auxiliaries and main verbs together in sentences poses a serious challenge to the students. Hence

their poor performance in the present perfect and past perfect forms as indicated in Table 4.2 above.

Finally, 31 respondents which represent 62% of them said literal translation of mother tongue structures to English Language is the last cause of their errors in tenses. That is to say that yes it affects them but not as much as the others though the percentage is also bad. The learners of English as a second language have a distance between the learners and the language because the learners are not within the natural environment of the target language. This makes the learners always rely on their mother tongue for terms they find difficult getting or using in it (James, 1998).

In summary, the responses of the participants, documentation records as well as the observations of the researcher revealed that mother tongue interference, wrong application of English Language rules, overgeneralization English Language rules and literal translation of structures from mother tongue to English form the causes of tense errors in the writings of students.

4.3.1 Responses From Students' Questionnaire on Activities That Could be Used to Help Students Overcome Tense Errors.

The next research question to be answered in this study is; what activities could be used to help students overcome tense errors in their writings? In line with this table 4.3.1 presents a summary of the findings.

Table4.3.1 The Activities That could be used to Help Students Overcome Tense Errors

S/N	Activity	No. of students it helps (frequency)	Percentage (%)
1.	Giving more time for students to practice during lessons	37	74%
2.	Using deductive approach of teaching tenses by teachers	43	86%
3.	Using student- centered approach of teaching and learning.	39	78%
4.	Using variety of teaching methods by teachers.	41	82%
5.	Apply tense usage to all aspects of English language.	40	80%

From table 4.3.1 above, 37 respondents which represents 74% of them agreed that giving more time for students to practice during lessons will help them overcome tense errors in their writings. This means that teachers need to change from their old ways of teaching where no activities or very few were usually done by themselves with the students been observers. Let the students get the idea first and give them the chance to apply what they have learnt orally first before writing later .In this case the teacher will then guide them in their practice. Here, the researcher's observations revealed that teachers write a lot of notes on the board for students to copy and then they only explain to them in most aspects especially on tenses. As a result of this, students are usually seen very dull and non-participating in the lessons because the only activity for them is to write notes or exercises.

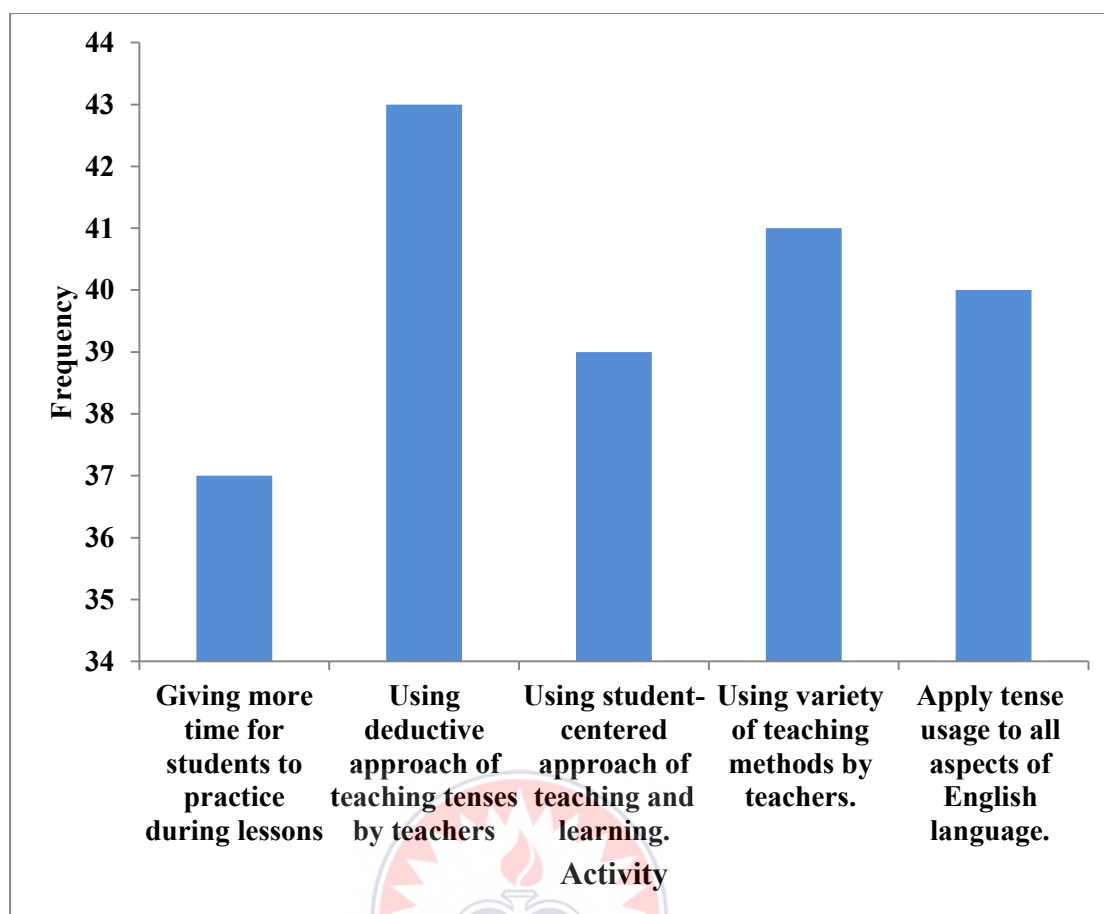


Figure 4.3.1: The Activities which could be used to Help Students Overcome Tense Errors

Also, 43 respondents representing 86% were of the view that using deductive approach of teaching tenses is a good approach that could help them overcome tense errors. This means that teachers should move gradually away from the traditional grammar and teach functional grammar. In other words, the teacher should take students through a number of activities and examples in the teaching of tenses so that the students can discover certain rules and some meaning for themselves. Where this is not done but definitions are given straight away, it leads to wrong applications and some rule restrictions are overlooked by the learners. On this the questionnaire for teachers revealed that some teachers introduce tenses with the definition first and go on to tell the learners the types.

Again, 39 students representing 78% of the respondents said that using student-centered approach of teaching and learning could help them overcome tense errors in their writings. This also emphasizes the fact that students want to be part of the learning process. Thus, they should be active participants but not passive ones. It again goes back to the teachers to plan their lessons in such a way that the learners will be fully involved in them so that they could acquire more knowledge in the use of tenses to avoid errors. The observations made by the researcher revealed that English Language teachers mostly give every bit of information about tenses to the students because they perceive it to be quite technical and students do not know tenses so they cannot be involved much in the lessons. They have however, neglected the fact that once the learners are not involved in the process of learning to derive the ideas by themselves they easily forget what they have been told and so make errors again and again.

Furthermore, 41 respondents representing 82% supported the idea of using variety of teaching methods by teachers is also a good activity which could help them overcome tense errors. The researcher's observations revealed that many of the teachers do not use different methods but mostly rely on the lecture method of teaching. In this case it goes without saying that students get bored with one method of teaching because teachers want to finish their lessons fast and rest. It is therefore, good that teachers should vary their methods especially in teaching tenses. Thus, demonstration method, group method, the use of drills and others should come to play when teaching tenses so as to help the learners acquire the rules well for effective communication (James, 1998).

Finally, 40 respondents which represent 80% of them said tense usage should be applied to all aspects of English language in order to help them overcome tense errors in their writings. This means that the respondents share the view that any aspect that English Language teachers are handling in classes, they should incorporate tenses into it. Observations made by the researcher also revealed that many teachers do not care to even discuss with the students the tenses employed in a comprehension passage which he or she uses in the class. In such instances the teachers can help the students talk about the tenses that are used in the comprehension passage been read or the essay that is been discussed and so on. When this happens it gives the students the opportunity to use tenses most often which leads to improvement in its use in their writings.

4.3.2 Responses from teachers' questionnaire on the appropriate teaching methods and approaches

James (1988) states that the role of the teacher is very crucial in language teaching and learning. He or she can make and unmake the learners what they should be. In other words how and what the teacher teaches can greatly influence the learners' ability to make errors or not to make errors in tense usage. This he terms "teacher-talk induces errors" Due to this, the researcher deemed it appropriate to get the teachers views on the activities to help the learners overcome tense errors in their writings.

The responses of English Language teachers on the appropriate teaching methods and approaches are presented in table 4.3.2 below to authenticate the responses from students' questionnaire to answer research question three (3).

Table 4.3.2 Age, gender and qualification distribution of teacher respondents

Age	38years	39years	40years	41years	44years	46years
Frequency	1	1	1	1	1	1
Gender	Male		Female			
Frequency	5		1			
Qualification	Trained English Teacher(first degree)		Untrained English Teacher(first degree)		Trained Ghanaian Language Teacher.(first degree)	
Frequency	00		01		05	

From table 4.3.2 above the teachers' responses to their personal data indicated that their ages ranged from thirty eight to forty six years. Out of the six English Language teachers, only one was a female. There were five trained teachers who studied Ghanaian Language and one untrained teacher who studied English Language. All of them were holders of first degree. From their personal data in the table above it was quite clear that these teachers have the requisite qualification and at least good basic knowledge in the field of language teaching and learning. In this sense, though the competence level of the teachers cannot be overlooked, that is quite minimal to have caused the students to commit such errors when using tenses.

Table 4.3.3 Responses of English Language teachers on the appropriate teaching methods/approaches for tenses.

S/N	Method/approach/strategy	No. of teachers in support of it (frequency)	Percentage (%)
1.	Teaching of tenses is relevant in all aspects of English Language.	6	100%
2.	Using student – centered approach is good in teaching tenses.	5	83%
3.	Giving students more time to practice during lessons	6	100%
4.	Using variety of teaching methods in lessons delivery	6	100%
5.	Using deductive approach in teaching tenses.	4	67%
6.	Improving in the knowledge and methods of teaching English language by teachers	5	83%

As presented in Table 4.3.3 above, all the 6 respondents representing 100% of them supported the view that teaching of tenses is relevant in all aspects of English Language. This means that they are in favor of tenses being incorporated into the other aspects of the language. The researcher during her observations realized that tenses have not always been talked about in the other aspects even when there was the need to do so. That observation prompted the researcher to add it to the activities for teachers.

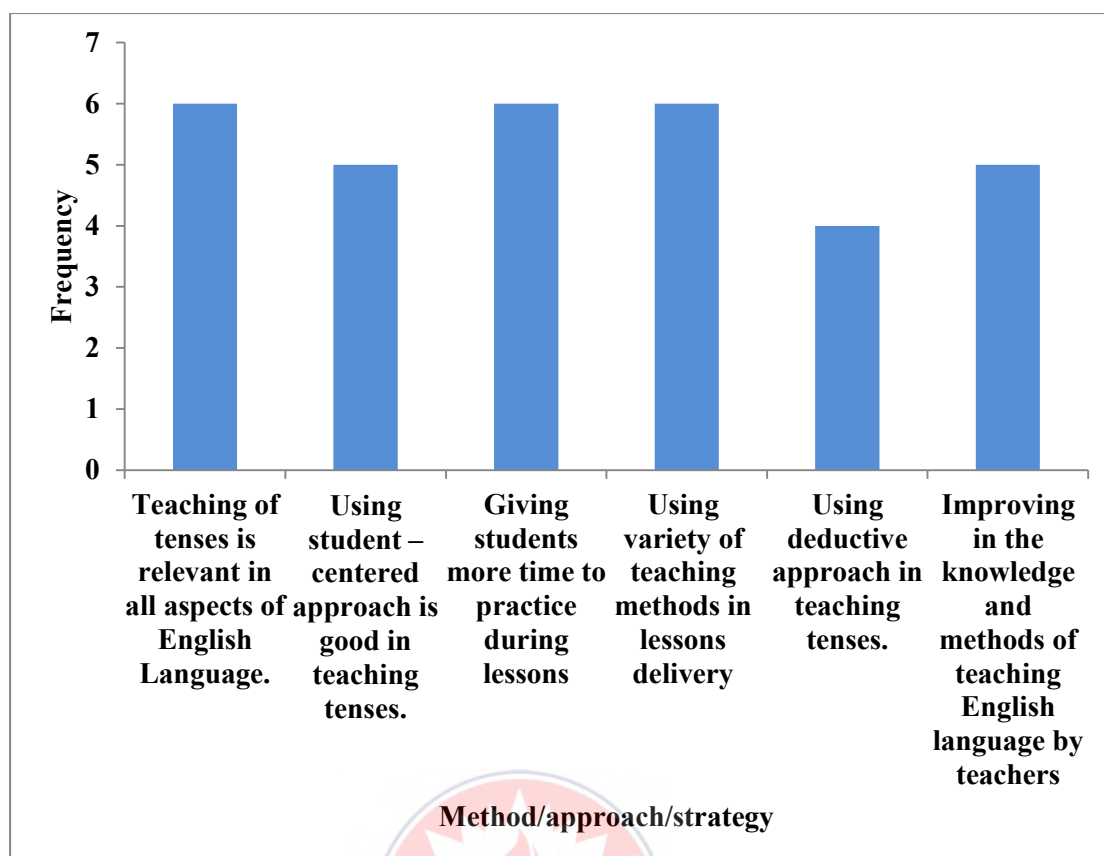


Figure 4.3.3 Responses of English Language teachers on the appropriate teaching methods and approaches for tenses.

Again, 5 out of the 6 English Language teachers representing 83% said more time should be given to students to practice during lessons. Observations of the researcher also revealed that many of the teachers usually want to finish their lessons fast and go and rest so, they prefer the lecture method to any other which helps them give out quick and everything ends there. That is why it is said that teachers should play just guided and supervision roles after taking the learners through some activities with examples while the learners are allowed to also interact with the language on their own. This will make the learners active instead of passive participants (James, 1998).

From the table also, all the six participants again said that variety of teaching methods should be used in lessons delivery to help students overcome tense errors in their

writings. It is obvious that these teachers were not using variety of methods and approaches as the researcher observed them during the study but for the fact that they are genuine and honest; the idea was endorsed by them. Thus, when teaching methods and approaches are varied, they attract the attention of the learners rather than when a particular method has been used always. In this sense, once the students are interested in the lesson their chances of participating and performing well increase.

Furthermore, 4 respondents representing 67% of them agreed that deductive approach be used in teaching tenses to help students overcome their errors. This is an approach that many teachers do not like to use because it takes a lot of time and energy. The researcher interacted with some of them and also observed that teachers really do not have patience for the learners. So all they want is to be quick to say or give what they have just as one of them said in the responses that he or she introduces tenses with the definition first. Though this was the activity that recorded the least respondents who supported its usage, it is a good approach to help students when teaching tenses. When learners are able to form their own rules governing the use of tenses it will reduce their rate of committing errors in them (Norrish, 1987).

Finally, 5 respondents which represented 83% of the teachers said that improving in the knowledge and methods of teaching English Language by teachers could help reduce tense errors in students' writings. From their personal information it was clear that they have all taught for some years yet none of them is pursuing any course anywhere at the moment. The researcher also observed that none of them has immediate plans towards further studies. As a result, the researcher engaged all of them in a casual discussion and that was where they all agreed that new things keep

coming with technology and there is really the need for teachers to always research for these innovations and also develop themselves professionally (Quizalize, 2018).

Besides the above teaching methods and approaches that teachers were to tick the appropriate ones to them, in the following questions below they were expected to write briefly on them.

7. How do you introduce tenses to your students?

Quizalize (2018) states that being an effective teacher is a challenge because every learner is unique, however by a combination of teaching strategies you can address students varying learning issues and make the classroom a dynamic and motivational environment for students.

On the above question, four teachers responded that they always tell their students to form sentences that talk about different times that actions or activities occurred or that they should talk about things that happened in the past and those that happen regularly. One teacher said he would first define tenses and make the students understand that actions can take place in the past, present or future. The last teacher said he always review the relevant previous knowledge of the students and links that to the topic.

From the responses of the teachers, those who asked the students to form their own sentences have used good introduction as well as the last teacher who reviews the previous knowledge of the students and links up to the topic. However, the teacher who starts with the definition of tense has not used an appropriate introduction to the topic. That teacher uses the traditional grammar method where grammar has always been a written language and a product whereas functional grammar method sees

grammar as a process which involves the structure of the language .Therefore, teachers need to use strategies that will involve learners in analyzing the language so that they could use it interactively (Halliday, 1994).

8. What do you do with your students when they commit tense errors?

The knowledge of grammar is very important in enabling one to express what someone intends to say or interpret correctly. So a learner who knows grammar is one who has mastered and can apply the rules of the language appropriately to express himself or herself in what would be considered acceptable language forms (Penny, 1998).

Concerning what teachers do when their learners make tense errors; two teachers said they usually tell them the mistake immediately and correct them. One says he makes them repeat what was said severally and listen to themselves. Then he would ask them whether it sounds well and conveys their message. Another also said he guides them in correcting themselves. One again said he tells them the appropriate form and makes them repeat after him. The last teacher said he does not tell them the error but only says the appropriate form after the inappropriate form. See appendix “F” for samples of answered questionnaire.

The above responses from the teachers indicate that some teachers are not treating learners well when they make tense errors. Apart from the one who said he does not tell the student the error but only says the appropriate form after the learner, the rest of the responses are not learner friendly. The teachers end up widening the affective filter and so would discourage most learners from participating because they would not want to be corrected openly before their peers. There should be co-operative

learning where the teacher encourages learners of mixed ability to work together by promoting small group or whole class activities (Quizalize, 2018).

9. What language do you encourage students to use most often even when they are performing their own activities and why?

The researcher wanted to ascertain facts from the teachers on where they feel the English Language should be learned in order for the students to overcome tense errors. Hence the question: what language do you encourage your students to use most often even when they are performing their own activities?

On the above question, all the 6 teachers said they encourage students to use English Language most often even when performing their own activities and outside the classroom.

Their reasons for choosing English Language are that; “practice makes man perfect” and so constant use of the language will also offer them the opportunity to talk about things that have happened at different times. This will also be a source of learning to them since learning must not take place only in the classroom.

The fact that all the six teachers encourage the students to use the English Language most often in order to become perfect is a good thing. However, the teachers should be sure that the learners have been given something good to practice with otherwise, they could be practicing forms which are full of errors unknowingly. Therefore, the “teacher talks errors...” should not be part of their practice (James, 1998).

In that case, the teachers should be exemplary in the use of the language appropriately everywhere so as to encourage the learners to do same but if the

teachers go by the saying that “do what I say but not what I do” then the value would not change with their words of encouragement only.

4.3.4 Report on Researcher’s Observation

The researcher who is also an English Language teacher in St. Bernadette’s Technical Institute had the opportunity to observe the first year students of Electrical Engineering Technology, Wood Construction Technology, Welding and Fabrication Technology and Fashion Designing Technology which comprise the classes she has been teaching before and during this research period. The following were the outcomes:

First and foremost, all the students make tense errors but the interesting thing is that they become timid when they are made aware of their mistakes openly. As such, many of them device measures that would make them not to be corrected which to them means that they do not know and so they will not participate or contribute in class during lessons.

The above observation implies that it is not just corrections that they do not want but the form that is quite embarrassing and exposes the learner for everybody to know that he or she made an error is what they dislike. For example, where the teacher would tell you to repeat the error severally and finally asks you whether it conveys your message is not a correction that could help the learner. Therefore teachers should find better ways or just say the appropriate form after the students had finished with the inappropriate form.

Also, the researcher observed that students turn to concentrate on definitions of terms or topics whenever you give them that and neglect the most important aspect which is

the application part as far as grammar and for that matter tenses are concerned. It is therefore not proper to start tenses lessons with definitions aside the fact that it is too traditional a method for use today. When students are allowed to use the language themselves they feel satisfied within them. Functional grammar encourages that students should be allowed to interact with the language so as to come out with its functions but not to be restricted and given meaning to the grammar (Halliday, 1994).

Furthermore, the researcher also observed that the students were more comfortable working with their colleagues and also being involved in the activities in the classroom. This is to say that the students participated actively in lessons that they were involved in the activities especially when they were put into groups. However, teachers who did not supervise these sessions well turned the classroom into a playground where there was no control over anything again and so there was no learning of a particular thing for that period.

Finally, it was observed by the researcher that some teachers of English Language really lack the requisite skills or techniques, even though they have the basic knowledge in the subject area. This means that teaching is a form of art that one needs both knowledge and techniques to be able to make teaching and learning effective in the classroom. In effect inappropriate teaching methods and approaches such as introducing lessons with definitions of the topic first, writing notes on the board before teaching the topic, correcting students openly and instantly and so on lead to ineffective teaching and learning which also contribute to the errors students make in the use of tenses in their writings.

4.4 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has looked at the research findings and interpretations of the data collected from students and English Language Teachers of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute. It analyzed data from students' questionnaire, students' class exercises and test (documentation), teachers' questionnaire, and researcher's observations. The analysis centered on the types of tense errors, causes of the errors as well as the activities to help students overcome the errors. It also looked at the observations made by the researcher on students' attitudes during and outside English Language lessons as well as teachers' methods and approaches of teaching tenses.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the study which looks at highlights of major findings to draw conclusions and to make suggestions for further research in future as well as general conclusion to mark the end of the study. The summary would dwell on the types of tense errors students make in their writings, the causes of these errors, and the activities that teachers could take students through to help them overcome tense errors in their writings. It also discusses the pedagogical implications of the findings for teachers and other stakeholders in Education. The chapter ends with recommendations, suggestions for future research and conclusion.

5.1 Summary of Findings/Results

This study dealt with tense errors in the writings of students of St. Bernadette's Technical Institute –Navrongo in the Kasena-Nankana Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It became necessary for the researcher to go into the study because the students of the above mentioned school make tense errors in their writings and to a large extent no research has been conducted in the this area in the school to ascertain the types of errors they make, the causes and possibly how to help these students overcome the errors.

The main objectives of the research were to unearth the types of tense errors students often commit, the causes of these errors and how to help them minimise or overcome these errors in their writings. The data was collected from students' written exercises

and test, answered questionnaire from students and English Language teachers of the school and researcher's observations.

The data presented and analysed revealed a lot of findings about the students' performance in the use of tenses in their writings as well as the methods and approaches used in teaching tenses by the teachers.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) opine that there are only two types of tenses. They summarise and group them into present tense and the past tense. The findings indicated that most of the errors often committed by students were in the simple present, the simple past, and the perfective forms.

From the findings, over 70% of the students commit errors in the use of the simple present and its perfectives. Here, the students could neither use the third person singular present suffix "-s" appropriately nor the perfective forms appropriately. Their answered questionnaire and exercises and test revealed that they used the suffixes "-s", as a plural marker in most cases but could not use it to indicate tense and number, then the "-ed" or "-d" as present perfect forms for all verbs. Thus, it was only the progressive forms that recorded about 40% of the respondents committing errors.

It was also revealed through the exercises and test conducted during the study that the simple past and its perfectives had between 70% and 80% of the respondents committing errors in them but its progressive form also recorded 42% of the respondents committing errors there. Again, respondents used the suffixes "-ed" or "-d" for all verbs as the past or participle forms for all verbs. Due to that they form inappropriate past and past participle forms of verbs in the use of these.

On the causes of the tense errors in the writings of students, it came out from the analysis of their answered questionnaire and researcher's observations that, transfer of mother tongue rules to English Language topped as the major cause. In this case they produced structures that did not follow the English Language patterns in their writings. Students who are learning English as a second language usually think in their mother tongue and translate that into English and so it is a major cause (Erdogan, 2005).

Also, over-generalization of English language rules was the next cause of their errors from their responses on the questionnaire. Here, the issue is that students do not have adequate knowledge on the two types of tenses. Thus, the present and past tenses so they jumble them up in the process of writing. Their interest is to say or write something but whether it follows the pattern and conveys the right meaning or not does not matter much to them (Kwasi, 2018).

Wrong application of English Language rules was identified as the third cause of errors in their writings through their answered questionnaire. This mostly results from inadequate knowledge of the rules or forms of the target language which leads to those errors known as intralingual errors. These types of errors are usually produced not only by second language learners but also children who are learning English as their first language (James, 1998).

Again, ignorance of rule restrictions was yet another cause identified in the findings. This seeks to explain the situation whereby the students do not know that certain rules such as the past or participle form suffixes “-ed” or “-d” could not be applied to all verbs but to regular ones only. Due to that any verb whether regular or irregular is

given that suffix thus, making some of the words formed inappropriate in the language.

Finally, literal translation of mother tongue structures to English language was the least even though it recorded over 60% of the respondents from the answered questionnaire. This comes about because the learners have no contact with the cultural, linguistic, and social or the economic aspects of the target language. As such, they are not familiar with most of the things in the target language and so cannot use them or find the equivalence of certain items or features in the target language, so they resort to the use of their mother tongue features resulting in the literal translation (James, 1998).

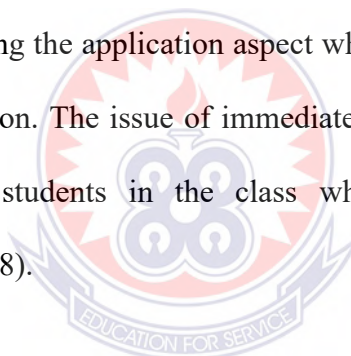
On the activities which should be used to help students overcome tense errors, the findings from the answered questionnaire were that, teachers should use the deductive and student centred approaches in teaching and learning so as to motivate learners to participate well in the lessons and be able to use the language interactively for effective communication but not to only give meaning to it as is the case now (Halliday, 1994).

Again it was also revealed through the researcher's observations that giving more time to students to practice both orally and in writing during lessons would help the learners overcome tense errors in their writings. Here it is believed that constant practice is what is lacking in tense lessons and so when the opportunity is given to learners to practice they can improve.

The researcher's observations and the answered questionnaire also revealed that the use of variety of teaching methods and, application of tense usage in all aspects of the

language are good approaches that could help learners overcome the errors in tenses. This seeks to imply that the students do not have the feel of different teaching methods and tenses are not talked about or given any attention in the other aspects of the language lessons. Thus, when teachers incorporate tenses into other lessons it would help improve upon the students' knowledge in it.

On the part of the teachers, it was revealed through the researcher's observations that most of them teach tenses in the traditional way that is by giving meanings or definitions based on the semantics of the language and corrected students immediately the commit errors in the use of tenses which were not appropriate approaches in the teaching of tenses. This is because when students are giving definitions they turn to concentrate on that leaving the application aspect where they should use the language on their own for perfection. The issue of immediate correction of tense error widens the affective filter of students in the class which leads to low interest and participation. (James, 1998).



5.2 Pedagogical Implications

Under this part of the study the researcher would attempt to bring out what should be done by all the concerned stakeholders, which include; policymakers, curriculum designers, textbooks writers and teachers to help the students overcome tense errors in their writings and to be able to use English Language with competence.

The policy makers need to always consider every level and their needs and capabilities before designing policies so that these could help bring out the best in the learners. They should as well pay visits to Educational Institutions not to offices only and monitor how the policies they have formulated are been implemented and the outcomes of those policies on the learners. When this is done from time to time and

teachers and the learners are engaged in the appraisal and evaluation of the policies, it would give them realities on the ground and so suggest the way forward for the benefit of the students.

Again, curriculum designers should look into what is been prepared for the various levels so that there is usually a systematic progression from one stage to the other. When the curriculum is designed in such a way that the learners are taken through every aspect of the language gradually and ensuring that learners are giving what they could acquire by way of learning, then the issue of teaching all the tenses and their aspects should not be done within a short period in only one class or form. In other words, tenses need adequate time for the students to practice and so they need to be taken separately at different levels so that the learners can acquire the knowledge gradually without confusing themselves.

Also, textbooks writers need to ensure that they provide appropriate materials that are needed by learners at each level in the books. This should be done taking into consideration the competency level of the learners in the language and what they need most. This means that tenses should be broken down and given ample time at every level with good reading materials for the learners to use to enhance their acquisition of the knowledge.

Finally, English Language teachers need to be proactive in the teaching of the subject especially when it comes to tenses. Teachers need to constantly search for new knowledge in the subject area and use teaching methods and approaches that are motivating enough to arouse the interest of learners. They should equally teach the learners to use the language interactively but not to give meaning to it only, encourage learners and do not ridicule them even if they make errors in its usage. Learners

should also be involved in the activities of the lessons for they are the reason for the teaching and learning in the classroom.

5.3 Recommendations

Once the knowledge of English Language tenses is very vital in all forms of communication in the language, the researcher wishes to recommend that tenses be incorporated into all the other aspects of the language by the teachers. This is not to say that teachers should be teaching only tenses in all English Language lessons but help guide students to talk about and use it appropriately where necessary.

English Language teachers should do well to always upgrade their knowledge, skill and techniques through further courses , in-service training (INSET)and research through extensive reading to ensure quality teaching and learning in the language. Here, teachers need to move along with technology and so should know that how and what was done in the classroom some years ago could be modified to suit the era in which we are now. Therefore from time to time teachers should search for better ideas from different sources by attending courses and researching into important areas of the language.

Teachers should make their lessons on tenses student-cantered so as to ensure full participation by all learners and more time be given to them to practice both orally and in writing. This is to say that learners should be given the opportunity to play with the language after the teacher has introduced the topic and given them some examples to guide them. Let the students start with oral usage and then the writing could come later.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Considering how to help the students to overcome tense errors in their writings and the limitations of this study, the researcher makes the following suggestions for future research:

- That appropriate teaching methods and approaches of teaching tenses to minimise errors in their usage by students should be studied by future researchers.
- Other research works should also be carried out on grammatical errors in the writings of students of the school.
- The other two forms left in the school should also be used for the same research topic to authenticate the findings of this study.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the objectives of the study were to find out what types of tense errors students of St, Bernadette's Technical Institute make in their writings, the causes and the activities to help them overcome these errors. The study then collected data from students and English Language teachers of the school using the qualitative approach with questionnaire, documentation and observation being the main instruments. It was revealed that students commit errors in all the tense forms most especially in the simple present and simple past with their perfectives. The causes of these errors were identified as the interlingual and intralingual factors as well as inappropriate teaching methods and approaches. The activities to help students overcome their tense errors were identified as; using variety of teaching methods and approaches and student-centeredness of teaching, giving students more time to practice tenses in class and the

use of deductive approach in teaching are recommended for use to help students overcome tense errors in their writings.

The study has also come out with recommendations for the teachers to help the students overcome tense errors in their writings. It is hoped that when the recommendations are given the needed attention, tense errors in the writings of students would become a thing of the past in the school.



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APPENDIX A

ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Part A-----Personal Data

Write or tick [√] appropriately in each case.

1. How old are you?

2. What is your gender?

(i) Male [] (ii) female []

3. Which class are you?

Part B

Tick [√] the type of tense forms you often commit errors in the usage.

1. Simple present form []

2. Present continuous form []

3. Present perfect form []

4. Present perfect continuous form []

5. Simple past form []

6. Past continuous form []

7. Past perfect form []

8. Past perfect continuous form []

Tick [√] the causes of the errors you make in the use of tenses.

1. Transfer of mother tongue rules to English Language. []

2. Over generalization of rules in the English Language. []

3. Wrong application of English Language rules. []

4. Ignorance of rule restrictions. []

5. Literal translation of mother tongue structures to English Language []

Tick [√] the activities that can help you reduce or overcome errors in the use of tenses.

1. Giving more time for practice by students in class both orally and in written form. []
2. Using deductive approach of teaching tenses by teachers. []
3. Using student-centered approach of teaching and learning. []
4. Using variety of teaching methods by teachers. []
5. Apply tense usage to all aspects of English Language. []



APPENDIX B

ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Part A-----Personal Data

Tick [√] or write appropriately in each case.

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender? Male [] Female []
3. Are you a trained teacher? Yes [] No []
4. What is your highest professional qualification?
5. What is your highest academic qualification?
6. How many years have you taught?
7. How many years have you taught in this school?
8. Which form do you teach now? Form 1 [] Form 2 [] Form 3 []
9. Are you a trained English language teacher? Yes [] No []

Part B

Tick [√] the ones that are appropriate to you in teaching tenses.

1. Teaching of tenses is relevant in all aspects of English Language []
2. Using student-centered approach is good in teaching tenses. []
3. Giving students more time to practice during lessons. []
4. Using variety of teaching methods in lessons delivery []
5. Using deductive approach in teaching tenses. []
6. Improving in the knowledge and methods of teaching in English Language. []

Write briefly on the following:

7..How do you introduce tenses to your students?-----

8.What do you do with your students when they make tense errors?-----

9.What language do you encourage students to use most often even when they are performing their own activities and why?-----



APPENDIX C

ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

CLASS EXERCISE 1

Use the appropriate present tense forms of the verbs in brackets to fill in the spaces provided in the following sentences.

1. The choristersevery Sunday .(sing)
2. The student is.....to school today.(walk)
3. I.....to work everyday.(go)
4. Theytheir uniforms on Saturdays.(wash)
5. Afia has.....the sun in the morning before everybody.(see)
6. The cats have.....better than the puppies.(eat)
7. He often.....the younger brother in support of the sister.(beat)
8. They have been.....in the city for many years now.(live)
9. Our dog only.....at night.(bark)
10. The girls arebeautiful carols.(sing)

APPENDIX D

ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

CLASS EXERCISE 2

Use the appropriate past tense forms of the verbs in brackets to fill in the spaces provided in the sentences below.

1. The childthe plate.(break)
2. Atipoka had....."yongo" beautifully yesterday.(dance)
3. Aduko was home late yesterday. (go)
4. We had.....home before closing time. (go)
5. She had been.....all her books to the friends. (give)
6. Kwame all the work alone.(do)
7. They from Accra two days ago for the holidays.(come)
8. Who had..... a lion in the forest? (see)
9. The boys had been.....actively in the sports than the girls.(participate)
10. The children.....to school in the morning.(run)

APPENDIX E

ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

CLASS TEST

Use the appropriate tense forms of the verbs in brackets to fill in the spaces provided in the following sentences.

1. The learnerswhen the English lesson begins.(know)
2. Abena.....her lunch after classes everyday.(take)
3. The tallest boy in our class has been.....the highest part of the board .(clean)
4. We havethe Examination with confidence.(write)
5. Theythe conference hall yesterday.(book)
6. Kwame was.....the teacher's table in the morning.(break)
7. She is.....the food without further delay.(eat)
8. Mary and John had.....to the Headmaster's office but did not see him.(pass)
9. The baby.....a lot in the absence of the mother. (cry)
10. Joana had been.....since morning.(sleep)

APPENDIX F

ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

CLASS TEST

Use the appropriate tense forms of the verbs in brackets to fill in the spaces provided in the following sentences.

1. The learners ... ~~knows~~ ... when the English lesson begins. (know)
2. Abena ... ~~take~~ ... her lunch after classes everyday. (take)
3. The tallest boy in our class has been ... ~~clean~~ ... the highest part of the board
(clean)
4. We have ... ~~wrote~~ ... the Examination with confidence. (write)
5. They ... ~~book~~ ... the conference hall yesterday. (book)
6. Kwame was ... ~~break~~ ... the teacher's table in the morning. (break)
7. She is ... ~~eat~~ ... the food without further delay. (eat)
8. Mary and John had ... ~~pass~~ ... to the Headmaster's office but did not see
him. (pass)
9. The baby ... ~~cry~~ ... a lot in the absence of the mother. (cry)
10. Joana had been ... ~~sleep~~ ... since morning. (sleep)

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ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

CLASS EXERCISE 1

Use the appropriate present tense forms of the verbs in brackets to fill in the spaces provided in the following sentences.

1. The choristers ~~sing~~ ✓every Sunday .(sing)
2. The student is ~~walking~~ ✓to school today.(walk)
3. I ~~goes~~ ✓to work everyday.(go)
4. They ~~washs~~ ✓their uniforms on Saturdays.(wash)
5. Afia has ~~seed~~ ✓the sun in the morning before everybody.(see)
6. The cats have ~~ate~~ ✓better than the puppies.(eat)
7. He often ~~beat~~ ✓the younger brother in support of the sister.(beat)
8. They have been ~~lived~~ ✓in the city for many years now.(live)
9. Our dog only ~~barks~~ ✓at night.(bark)
10. The girls are ~~singing~~ ✓beautiful carols.(sing)

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ST. BERNADETTE'S TECHNICAL INSTITUTE NAVRONGO

CLASS EXERCISE 2

Use the appropriate past tense forms of the verbs in brackets to fill in the spaces provided in the sentences below.

1. The child ~~break~~ ^{broke} the plate. (break)
2. Atipoka had ~~.....~~ ^{danced} "yongo" beautifully yesterday. (dance)
3. Aduko was ~~.....~~ ^{going} home late yesterday. (go)
4. We had ~~go~~ ^{gone} home before closing time. (go)
5. She had been ~~.....~~ ^{giving} all her books to the friends. (give)
6. Kwame ~~do~~ ^{done} all the work alone. (do)
7. They ~~come~~ ^{came} from Accra two days ago for the holidays. (come)
8. Who had ~~see~~ ^{saw} a lion in the forest? (see)
9. The boys had been ~~participate~~ ^{participating} actively in the sports than the girls. (participate)
10. The children ~~run~~ ^{ran} to school in the morning. (run)

H/O