

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**A STUDY OF THE USE OF HOMOPHONES AMONG STUDENTS OF ST.
ANTHONY OF PADUA SENIOR HIGH TECHNICAL SCHOOL, BAMBOI**

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

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education
[Teaching English as a Second Language]
in the University of Education, Winneba**

OCTOBER, 2020

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

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

Name of Supervisor: **Dr. Kwaku Ofori**

Signature

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research first to the Almighty Allah for guiding me through this work. I also dedicate the work to my family Akore Abdul-Rahaman Bakoji, Ziblim Mariama, Yussif Bintu, Biikunu, Kanyiti, Boresa, Aчитipo and Ndefuso.



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of homophones among students of St. Anthony of Padua S. H. T. S. during their attempt in writing. To realize this dream, the researcher employed three different tasks and presented to students. The tasks are dictation, fill-in-the-blank and essay task as the main data collection instruments. Interviews were also conducted with teachers of the students to get insight into how their students use homophones in their writing. Simple random sampling was used to select 200 students to participate in the study out of the total population of 393 students of forms two and three. The data was analyzed by using tables and diagrams to illustrate the percentages. Frequency tables were used to present the findings. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents acknowledge the importance of homophones in students writing. Their purpose for using homophones correctly included acquiring knowledge, learning new things, improving their vocabulary and grades, passing examination and attaining eloquence. The human resources and materials for teaching should be retooled to meet the current criteria of students' performance. The analysis also suggests that although students could produce and recognize homophones, it is not in all instances that they used them appropriately. Based on the findings, it is argued that when students are presented with the context of homophone use, errors committed in selection and production of these words may be minimized.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

Every student seeks to achieve writing good essays without errors. Improving writing involves a lot, it includes using correctly spelt words, identifying which word to use and ultimately, using clear, unambiguous expressions. Students need to know the meaning of words used. Writers normally do not find it easy to choose appropriate words because some words are pronounced similar to other words even though they may have different spellings.

Homophones by definition, are different words that are pronounced the same way. Homophones try to confuse writers, because of their nature. This is because a writer may choose one homophone when in actual fact he intends to use the other one. For example, **bark** (the sound of a dog) and **bark** (the skin of a tree). Homophones literally "Same sound") are usually defined as words that share the same pronunciation, regardless of how they are spelled. That is to say they have same pronunciation and spelling, but different meaning. Usually it is easy to differentiate between these two in writing because the writer has shown the content in use however, if the pair **loose** (free from restraint) and **lose** (lose to be in one's possession) are homophones. It may be very difficult to determine the meaning when used in writing. Example, if someone writes *I'm going to loose the seat* may present a difficulty because at first sight, the reader may think that seat had been tied somewhere and is going to untie it. But the writer may mean *I'm going to lose the seat*. Examples, A and B suggest that if homophones are not used appropriately, the intended meaning of the sentence may be left out (lost).

One of the objectives of teaching English is to ensure that, learners become competent in the distension of words in the second language. It is natural for second language learners of English to encounter difficulties in production of the exact target language vocabulary but this should not differ the learner from delving into studying the language.

George, (2008) stated that, semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. In semantic analysis, there is always an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean rather than on what an individual speaker might want them to mean on particular occasion. This technical approach is concerned with objective on general meaning and avoids trying to account for objective or local meaning that is; the technicalities involve in semantics meaning of words. Linguistic semantics deals with conventional meaning conveyed by the use of words, phrases and sentences of a language.

The researchers shed light on homophones which is a linguistic phenomenon. Writing is very essential when it comes to second language learning. Thus, errors in writing can render a student's work a failure if they are not corrected appropriately.

To this effect, Redman (2013) notes among other things that, failure to use sentence structure including the selection of appropriate words can render students writing incomprehensible. Although a considerable amount of research has been undertaken in the area of writing, there is no known study that examines the use of homophones particular among S.H.S students in Ghana. This study investigates the use of homophones in the writing of students of ST. Anthony of Padua S.H.T.S. Such a study is important because, the findings obtained suggest that not all students are able to identify, spell or use homophones appropriately in their writing. As already

indicated, the students' inability to use, identify or spell the intended homophone resulted in ambiguous sentences.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

English as a second Language taught in our various institutions is used as a strategic subject in the Schools as a medium of instruction at all levels of education in the country. English Language as a discipline in the Senior High Schools, the basic and even the tertiary levels in Ghana Education Service. Students at all levels are tested using English in all subjects except French and Ghanaian Languages. This means that, at all levels, students are expected to grasp the basic fundamentals of the English Language. However, the English chief examiner's reports between 2017 – 2019 reveals that, there has been a decline in the performance of studying the Language which has affected their academic performance in the other discipline except French and Ghanaian Language. The researcher observes that, there are huge problems faced by the S.H.S students including St. Anthony of Padua S.H.S. Tech. It is quite true that students' performance in English especially is declining. However, the report revealed by the chief examiner did not identify specific areas which students do not perform well. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence suggest that students including those in St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School, have difficulty using certain high profile items of which homophones are no exception.

The wrong use of homophones adversely affects students writing and this ultimately affects their final score and grade. This has prompted the research to investigate this area on the use of homophones among students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School. The study is qualitative in nature and employs simple analytical interpretations.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1. To identify problems students encounter in the use of homophones in writing.
2. To identify the causes and effects of the problem.
3. To discuss solutions to the problem

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the problems students of ST. Anthony of Padua S H T S face in the use of homophonous words?
2. What are the causes of the problem of misusing homophones?
3. How can the problem be solved?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The important issue of semantics is to explore how homophone is very important according to students while they study the field of semantics vocabulary. It will make students to be able to solve their problems by distinguishing the different meaning of a word, to find out solutions for these problems.

However, a study of this nature impacts positively on students, teachers and researchers. The relevance of written English language cannot be underestimated when it comes to engaging in meaningful communication.

This study is therefore significant in the sense that, it reveals how students of Senior High School use homophones in their writing. In terms of its impact on the teaching of English, the study reveals that teachers of English in Ghana may have to modify their methods and techniques of teaching for students to drive maximum benefits from the teaching and learning process. On its proper perspective, the curriculum designer's should also consider and allocate ample time in the teaching syllables for teachers to be able to handle homophones effectively for the benefits of students. School administrators should also make available some teaching and

learning materials to teachers of English so that they can use them to complement their teaching illustrations during their contact hours when handling homophones to aid students' grasp of the concept.

1.5 Limitations

The work focuses on students of ST. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School with a population of more than 350. With this kind of population, it is difficult to peruse the essays of every student identifying homophones errors they commit. As a measure, the researcher has reduced the population to a sample size of two hundred with the representations from only two streams; S.H.S 2 to S.H.S 3.

However, the researcher has chosen the school because that is where the researcher has been teaching for the past seven years. The study can however be extended to convey other Senior High Schools, the basic schools as well as other levels of education.

1.6 Delimitation

The study seeks to find out homophones errors students commit in their essays that derail their academic effort, the rate of occurrence of such errors and recommendations for improving the essays of students. The researcher has limited himself to only the use of homophones among students in writing. Other errors such as ambiguities, amalgamation of homophones in sentences. Therefore, other researchers may or can investigate other aspects that are not captured in this research in future.

1.7. Organization of Chapters

The study is organized as follows:

Chapter one (1) presents the introduction of the study, chapter (two) is a discussion of the literature review. This includes the concept of homophones, their use in writing and as a review of some related literature Chapter three (3) discusses the methodology adopted for the study.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach and used a random sampling technique in selecting the participants of the study as well as validity and reliability. Chapter four (4) focuses on the analysis and findings, the results of the study revealed that while most of the students use appropriate homophones based on context, others could not do that. The outcomes of the collected data were analyzed and interpreted according to the research questions. Chapter five (5) comprises the summary of study, recommendation and conclusion.

The summary entailed what the researcher has done throughout the work. I argue that homophones are essential in English writing because their presence in sentences aid readers to understand the writer's communicative intentions properly. The chapter concludes with implications for English classroom in Ghana and suggestions for future research.

1.8. Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter deals with the foundation upon which the study develops. It specially looks at background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitation, delimitations and ends with the organization of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses related literature as put forward by other researchers concerning the topic being discussed on different types of homophones, their influence on the writing of students (framework) errors and how they relate to the misuse of homophones in writing. The rest of the discussion focuses on homophones, major concept of homophones, their effect on writing, their use in writing, and the review of related studies to the topic.

2.1 Framework (Errors Analysis)

Whenever we write, we tend to think about all the rules that we need to apply in order to produce well-formed sentences. Unfortunately, however, unlike native speakers who have customized the rules of writing, non-native speakers, to a very large extent, sometimes find it difficult applying their rules. As a result of this non-native speakers end up committing errors in their writing. "An error refers to the use of linguistics item (grammatical item, a speech act, etc.) in a way a native speaker regards as showing faulty or incomplete knowledge of the learner" (Richards et al, 1992,p.127).s Gas and Silencer (1994) also defined errors as red flags that provide evidence of the learner's knowledge of the second language. Errors are often associated with negative words such as 'wrong, failure, mistake, misunderstanding and carelessness.

It is important to note that errors are not the same as mistakes. For example, James (1998) notes that a mistake can be self-corrected, but errors cannot because errors are systematic, that is they are likely to occur repeatedly and not be recognized

by the learner. However, a mistake may be caused by fatigue or carelessness. Different errors have been identified in the literature these are intralingual/development errors, errors attributed to the native language are referred to as interlingual errors. These occur when the learner's L1 habits (patterns, systems or rules) there are interlingua interference or prevent him/her, to some extent, from acquiring the latter's and rules of the second language. On the other hand, interlingual errors are errors that are committed due to the language being learned, independent of the native speakers. Intralingual errors reflect the learner's incompetence in understanding the rules and intricacies of the second language.

These errors may be committed by non-native speakers because of:

- a. incomplete application of rules (e.g.: *I be eating instead of I am eating*)
- b. overgeneralization (e.g. *we are come instead of we have come*).
- c. ignorance of rule restriction (e.g. *dog-dogs; sheep-sheeps*)

Apart from these sources of errors identified, Lewis (1993) observes that the linguistic sources of errors may also include:

- a. Partial mastery of linguistic structures.
- b. Interference, that is, the influence of the mother tongue.
- c. Lexical deficiency, that is, lack of vocabulary.

These three sources identified by Lewis (1993), lexical deficiency or a lack of vocabulary in the writings of students can result in the production of sentences with obscured meanings. Most, many often, when students write their lack of knowledge of the meaning difference in words leads them to select the wrong lexical items in their writings. One particular group or era of words in which students show a lack of vocabulary is homophones. Specifically, a defect in the choice of lexical items may result in the misuse of homophonic words.

Once a wrong homophone is selected the message being communicated by the writer may be misconstrued. Eventually, that student or writer may be said to have committed an error.

2.2 The concept of Homophones

David, [2008, p.40] Homophones are words that sound alike but they have different meanings and different spellings. Homophones present many problems for spellers because these words partners sound similar, even though their meanings and spellings are different. Some common homophones are listed below.

Table 2.1: The concept of homophones

Aisle, isle	Flew, flu, flue	Rain, reign, rein
Aye, eye, I	For, fore, four	Raise, rays, raze
Buy, by, bye	Gnu, knew, new	Right, rite, write
Cent, scent, sent	Heal, heel, he'll	Road, rode
Chile, chili, chilly	Main, Maine, mane	to/too/two

2.2.1 Homophone Pairs

Table 2.2: Homophone Pairs

Aid, aide	Close, clothes	Its, it's	Ring, wring
Air, heir	Coarse, course	Knead, need	Role, roll
Allowed, aloud	Colonel, karnel	Lead, led	Root, route
Assistance, assistants	Crews, creek		
Ate, eight	Crews, cruise	Loan, lone	Seam, seem
Bare, bear	Dear, deer	Made, maid	Slay, sleigh
Base, bass	Die, dye	Mail, male	Soar, sore
Be, bee	Doe, dough	Maize, maze	Sole, soul
Beach, beech	Dual, duel	Mall, maul	Some, sum

2.2.2 Types of Homophones

Table 2.3: Galbraith and Taschman (1969), Gorfein and O'Brien (1985)

This is a list of British-English homophones.

1. accessory, accessory	1. dew, due	1. leach, leech	1. rouse, rows
2. ad, add	2. die, dye	2. lead, led	2. rung, wrung
3. ail, ale	3. discreet, discrete	3. leak, leek	3. rye, wry
4. air, heir	4. doe, doh, dough	4. lean, lien	4. saver, savour
5. aisle, I'll, isle	5. done, dun	5. lessen, lesson	5. spade, spayed
6. all, awl	6. douse, dowse	6. levee, levy	6. sale, sail
7. allowed, aloud	7. draft, draught	7. liar, lyre	7. sane, seine
8. alms, arms	8. dual, duel	8. licence, license	8. satire, satyr
9. altar, alter	9. earn, urn	9. lick, liquor	9. sauce, source
10. arc, ark	10. eery, eyrie	10. lie, lye	10. saw, soar, sore
11. aren't, aunt	11. ewe, yew, you	11. lieu, loo	11. scene, seen
12. ate, eight	12. faint, feint	12. links, lynx	12. scull, skull
13. auger, augur	13. fah, far	13. lo, low	13. sea, see
14. auk, orc	14. fair, fare	14. load, lode	14. seam, seem
15. aural, oral	15. farther, father	15. loan, lone	15. sear, seer, sere
16. away, aweigh	16. fate, fête	16. locks, lox	16. seas, sees, seize
17. awe, oar, or, ore	17. faun, fawn	17. loop, loupe	17. sew, so, sow
18. axel, axle	18. fay, fey	18. loot, lute	18. shake, sheikh
19. aye, eye, I	19. faze, phase	19. made, maid	19. shear, sheer
20. bail, bale	20. feat, feet	20. mail, male	20. shoe, shoo
21. bait, bate	21. ferrule, ferule	21. main, mane	21. sic, sick
22. baize, bays	22. few, phew	22. maize, maze	22. side, sighed
23. bald, bawled	23. fie, phi	23. mall, maul	23. sign, sine
24. ball, bawl	24. file, phial	24. manna, manner	24. sink, synch
25. band, banned	25. find, fined	25. mantel, mantle	25. slay, sleigh
26. bard, barred	26. fir, fur	26. mare, mayor	26. sloe, slow
		27. mark, marque	

27. bare, bear	27. fizz, phiz	28. marshal, martial	27. sole, soul
28. bark, barque	28. flair, flare	29. marten, martin	28. some, sum
29. baron, barren	29. flaw, floor	30. mask, masque	29. son, sun
30. base, bass	30. flea, flee	31. maw, more	30. sort, sought
31. bay, bey	31. flex, flecks	32. me, mi	31. spa, spar
32. bazaar, bizarre	32. flew, flu, flue	33. mean, mien	32. staid, stayed
33. be, bee	33. floe, flow	34. meat, meet, mete	33. stair, stare
34. beach, beech	34. flour, flower	35. medal, meddle	34. stake, steak
35. bean, been	35. foaled, fold	36. metal, mettle	35. stalk, stork
36. beat, beet	36. for, fore, four	37. meter, metre	36. stationary, stationery
37. beau, bow	37. foreword, forward	38. might, mite	37. steal, steel
38. beer, bier	38. fort, fought	39. miner, minor, mynah	38. stile, style
39. bel, bell, belle	39. forth, fourth	40. mind, mined	39. storey, story
40. berry, bury 41. berth, birth	40. foul, fowl	41. missed, mist	40. straight, strait
42. bight, bite, byte 43. billed, build	41. franc, frank	42. moat, mote	41. sweet, suite
44. bitten, bittern	42. freeze, frieze	43. mode, mowed	42. swat, swot
45. blew, blue	43. friar, fryer	44. moor, more	43. tacks, tax
46. bloc, block	44. furs, furze	45. moose, mousse	44. tale, tail
47. boar, bore	45. gait, gate	46. morning,	45. talk, torque
	46. galipot, gallipot		46. tare, tear
	47. gallop, galop		47. taught, taut, tort
	48. gamble, gambol		

48. board, bored	49. gays, gaze	Mourning	48. te, tea, tee
49. boarder, border	50. genes, jeans	47. muscle, mussel	49. team, teem
50. bold, bowled	51. gild, guild	48. naval, navel	50. tear, tier
51. boos, booze	52. gilt, guilt	49. nay, neigh	51. teas, tease
52. born, borne	53. giro, gyro	50. nigh, nye	52. terce, terse
53. bough, bow	54. gnaw, nor	51. none, nun	53. tern, turn
54. boy, buoy	55. gneiss, nice	52. od, odd	54. there, their, they're
55. brae, bray	56. gorilla, guerilla	53. ode, owed	55. threw, through
56. braid, brayed	57. grate, great	54. oh, owe	56. throes, throws
57. braise, brays, braze	58. greave, grieve	55. one, won	57. throne, thrown
58. brake, break	59. greys, graze	56. packed, pact	58. thyme, time
59. bread, bred	60. grisly, grizzly	57. packs, pax	59. tic, tick
60. brews, bruise	61. groan, grown	58. pail, pale	60. tide, tied
61. bridal, bridle	62. guessed, guest	59. pain, pane	61. tire, tyre
62. broach, brooch	63. hail, hale	60. pair, pare, pear	62. to, too, two
63. bur, burr	64. hair, hare	61. palate, palette, pallet	63. toad, toed, towed
64. but, butt	65. hall, haul	62. pascal, paschal	64. told, tolled
65. buy, by, bye	66. hangar, hanger	63. paten, patten, pattern	65. tole, toll
66. buyer, byre	67. hart, heart	64. pause, paws, pores, pours	66. ton, tun
67. calendar, calender	68. haw, hoar, whore	65. pawn, porn	67. tor, tore
68. call, caul	69. hay, hey	66. pea, pee	68. tough, tuff
69. canvas, canvass	70. heal, heel, he'll	67. peace, piece	69. troop, troupe
70. cast, caste	71. hear, here	68. peak, peek, peke, pique	70. tuba, tuber
71. caster, castor	72. heard, herd	69. peal, peel	71. vain, vane, vein
72. caught, court	73. he'd, heed	70. pearl, purl	72. vale, veil
73. caw, core, corps	74. heroin, heroine	71. pedal, peddle	73. vial, vile
74. cede, seed	75. hew, hue	72. peer, pier	74. wail, wale, whale
75. ceiling, sealing	76. hi, high		
76. cell, sell	77. higher, hire		

77. censer, censor, sensor	78. him, hymn	73. pi, pie	75. wain, wane
78. cent, scent, sent	79. ho, hoe	74. pica, pika	76. waist, waste
79. cereal, serial	80. hoard, horde	75. place, plaice	77. wait, weight
80. cheap, cheep	81. hoarse, horse	76. plain, plane	78. waive, wave
81. check, cheque	82. holey, holy, wholly	77. pleas, please	79. wall, waul
82. choir, quire	83. hour, our	78. plum, plumb	80. war, wore
83. chord, cord	84. idle, idol	79. pole, poll	81. ware, wear, where
84. cite, sight, site	85. in, inn	80. poof, pouffe	82. warn, worn
85. clack, claque	86. indict, indite	81. practice, practise	83. wart, wort
86. clew, clue	87. it's, its	82. praise, prays, preys	84. watt, what
87. climb, clime	88. jewel, joule	83. principal, principle	85. wax, whacks
88. close, cloze	89. key, quay	84. profit, prophet	86. way, weigh, whey
89. coal, kohl	90. knave, nave	85. quarts, quartz	87. we, wee, whee
90. coarse, course	91. knead, need	86. quean, queen	88. weak, week
91. coign, coin	92. knew, new	87. rain, reign, rein	89. we'd, weed
92. colonel, kernel	93. knight, night	88. raise, rays, raze	90. weal, we'll, wheel
93. complacent, complaisant	94. knit, nit		91. wean, ween
94. complement, compliment	95. knob, nob		92. weather, whether
	96. knock,nock		93. weaver, weever
	97. knot, not		94. weir, we're
	98. know, no		95. were, whirr
			96. wet, whet

2.2.3 English Homophones

English (especially British English) is not spelt phonetically. Two words can share none, any or all of Spelling, Pronunciation and Meaning. All languages have synonyms (words with unrelated spelling and pronunciation but the same meaning) and words with multiple meanings. However, English has an exceptional disparity between spelling and pronunciation.

Find some examples in the table below.

Table 2.4: Exceptional disparity between spelling and pronunciation.

Spelling	Pronunciation	Meaning	Classification	Example
Same	Different	Different	Homonym	Refuse
Different	Same	Different	Homophone	See below
Same	Same	Different	Multiple meanings	Trap
Different	Different	Same	Synonym	Rare uncommon
Same	Different	Same	Alternative pronunciation	Schedule British American pronunciation
Different	Same	Same	Alternative	Jail goal

Yule (2006) defines a homophone as a word which is pronounced the same as another word but differs in spelling or meaning or origin. It can also be defined as letters or words that are pronounced the same as another letter or group of letters. Some examples of homophones with their meanings are illustrated as follows:

Sea vs. see

- ❖ sea a large body of salty water
- ❖ see to perceive or detect with eyes, or as if by sight.

Weather vs. whether

- ❖ Weather the short term state of the atmosphere at a specific time and place, cloud, humidity, wind etc.
- ❖ Whether which of two or introducing a direct interrogative question.

Bass vrs base

- ❖ bass a voice or an instrument, low in pitch or frequency.
- ❖ base foundation, something from which other things extend.

here vrs hear

- ❖ here this place or location
- ❖ hear to perceive sound through the ear.

cord vrs chord

- ❖ cord a long, thin, flexible length of twisted yarns (strands) of fibre.
- ❖ chord the string of a musical instrument

I vrs eye

- ❖ I first person singular pronoun
- ❖ eye the visual sense

Fair vrs fare

- ❖ fair beautiful, or of a pleasure appearance, with a pure and fresh quality
- ❖ fare money paid for a transport ticket

beech vrs beach

- ❖ beech the wood of a beech tree
- ❖ beach the shore of a body of water, especially when Sandy

booze vrs boos

- ❖ booze any alcoholic beverage
- ❖ boos a stall for an animal

braid vrs brayer

- ❖ braid to were together, to arrange in braids
- ❖ brayed to crush or pound

bough vrs bow

- ❖ bough a firm branch of a tree
- ❖ bow a stringed instrument

desert vrs dessert

- ❖ desert that which is deserved or merited
- ❖ dessert a sweet confection served as the last course of a meal

idle vrs idol

- ❖ idle not turned to appropriate use
- ❖ idol a graven image or representation of anything that is revered, or believed to have spiritual powers.

knew vrs new

- ❖ knew a simple past of know
- ❖ new recently made or created

Knot vrs not

- ❖ knot a looping of a piece of string or of any other long
- ❖ not negates the meaning of the modified verb

right vrs rite

- ❖ right straight not bent
- ❖ rite a religious custom

rain vrs reign

- ❖ rain condensed water falling from a cloud
- ❖ reign the exercise of sovereign power
- ❖ witch a man/woman who practice witchcraft
- ❖ which what, of those mentioned or implied.

Ripple (2009) is also of the opinion that homophones are words that sound the same yet are spelled differently, and have distinct meanings. She further explains that many commonly misspelled words are actually the result of words chosen incorrectly from homophones pairs and trios. An example is two and too which are often misused, and their use often distorts meaning in sentences.

In addition, Donovan (2015) argues that homophones are those annoying words that sound exactly alike but have different meanings and are often spelled differently. In her opinion, homophones give English teachers nightmares and cause headache for students. Her claims therefore suggest that, homophones do not only pose problems to students but teachers as well.

For instance, she notes that homophones **no** and **know**, **wear** and **where** are homophones as has already been said because they have the same pronunciation. It is not always that the words are spelt differently but sometimes are spelt the same way in addition to being pronounced the same way. Example of such words are (1) **match** and (2) **match**. In (1) **Match** is used to light fire and (2) is a game.

Usually, one might not pay attention to homophones while speaking because when we speak we do not spell our words. However, students may end up making a mistake when two homophones are interchanged. To confirm this statement, Makos (2014) notes that when it comes to writing, you may end up making some funny mistakes if you mix up or interchange words. It is important to note that homophones are highly significant in writing and students' essays are not an exception.

In view of this, Sam (2008) opines that it is very important to use homophones and 'near-homophones' with maximum care as any misuse of such expressions could impede the meaning of the entire sentence. When this happens in English examination scripts, it might cause the candidate to perform below average marks or fail outright.

It is for this reason that students need to use homophones correctly so that expressions in their essays will be meaningful. Apart from using them in writing, homophones are employed in poetry to communicate rhythmic effects. In this sense,

the writer uses them to create a multiplicity of meaning in text. Research suggests that learning to differentiate pairs of homophones can be potentially frustrating because even professional writers may struggle to memorize the different spellings of homophonic words. In light of this argument, Donovan (2015) suggests that although people may struggle with homophones, constant practice will help them to overcome this difficulty. These are different types of homophones identified in the literature.

These are as follows:

- Some homophones are similar in spelling, but different in meanings. They are called homographs. For instance, **hail** vrs **hail**. The first one means ice storm and the second means something that occurs in large numbers (e.g. a hail of bullets).
- Some of them have the same pronunciation but different meaning and these are called homonyms. For instance, **cite**, **sight** and **site**.
- The homophones that have different spellings but these are pronounced in the same way are called heterotrophs. For instance, **write** vrs **right**.
- The homophones that have multiple words or phrases, have similar sounds, are called oronyms. For instance, "**ice cream**" vrs "**I scream**".
- Pseudo-homophones are homophones that are phonetically identical, but one of the words may be unreal for example **groan/grone**.

These different types of homophones show the distinctions learner's or students are supposed to learn in order to communicate the exact meaning they would want to convey. In this instance, a writer who does not take these differences into consideration when writing may either convey the wrong message or write grammatically ill-formed sentences.

2.3 Homophone Effects

Gorfein, Vivian and Leddo (1982) argue that the basic impact of using homophones is to make the lexical decision task more difficult, which will then increase their chances of interacting with the orthography, phonology and semantics. For instance, in **maid** and **made** the pronunciation is the same. However, the meanings of the two words are different.

As such, an understanding of their meanings will satiate the multiple semantic representations that they carry. In effect, homophones effect the way people process words and the result that they create a competition for place among the units within the sentence.

This also means that it may be difficult for a learner or student to understand the exact meaning of a homophone unless the context is given. Students are therefore expected to choose the right homophones from context and once this is done, it will be easy for them to know the spelling of such words. This will also help them to use them appropriately in their writings.

The spelling of a word in an alphabetic writing system reflects the word's phonological form. When trying to spell an unfamiliar word, therefore people can often construct a plausible spelling based on the phonemes that the word contains. Much of the relatively small body of research that has been done on spelling has focused on how people construct from phonological forms.

For example, researchers (e.g Barry & Seymour, 1988; Treiman, Kessler & Bick, 2002) have examined the factors that influence the selection of words when people have chosen between two homophones.

An instance is the word **bat** which may refer to a flying mammal or a stick that is used to hit a ball in tennis or badminton. In both cases, the spellings are the same and as a result, may present a difficult choice for the student. On the other hand, the pair **site** and **cite** represent homophones with different spellings and belongs to different grammatical classes.

In both **bat**, **site/cite**, the context, if given, will help the student or the writer to pick the appropriate word.

2.4 Use of Homophones in Students' Writing

Sam (2008) claims that in an attempt to introduce new ideas, students are likely to confuse homophones and may use a wrong member of the pair or trio. When this happens the meaning and purpose of the text may be distorted. In the case of students, this affords examiners the chance to penalize them. He further notes that this situation is not considered a mere misspelling of word but it is simply a malapropism, that is, the wrong use of one word instead of another word because they sound similar to each other.

This, therefore is crucial for students to take homophones seriously in order not to incur the wrath of examiners. This fact is supported by Grygel (1991) who admonishes that writers must know which spelling is correct for their intended meaning and that if there are any words which they do not understand, they should look them up in the dictionary.

2.5 Related Studies to the topic

Jeremy M. Pacht (University of Massachusetts, 2003) discusses the processing of homophonic homographs during reading. The primary dependent variable considered was fixation time on target homographs. Both the characteristic of

the homograph (whether there are two equally likely meanings or one dominant meaning) and the characteristics of the preceding context (whether it is neutral or contains disambiguating information) were varied.

When the preceding context was neutral, readers fixated longer on balanced homographs (homographs having two equally likely meanings) than on control words matched on frequency and length, but did not look any longer at biased homographs, homographs having a highly dominant meaning) than matched control words. However, when the preceding context disambiguated toward the subordinate meaning, readers fixated longer on a biased homographs than a matched control word (the subordinate bias effect).

Ahmed (2004) conducted an error analysis of Sudanese level hundred University students English language learning the study aims to knowing the actual errors that the level hundred University students commit in learning English language.

The study came out to the fact that English language affects students learning a foreign language and confirmed that mastery of a language depends on mastery of its sound features structure. Gorfein (2008) and Kristin M. Weingartner Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York Associative norms for homographs have been widely used in the study of language processing.

A number of sets of these are available, providing the investigator with the opportunity to compare materials collected over a span of years and a range of locations. Words that are homophonic but not homographic have been used to address a variety of questions in memory as well as in language processing. However, a paucity of normative data is available for these materials, especially with respect to responses to the spoken form of the homophone.

A data for a sample of 207 homophones across four different tasks, both visual and auditory, and examines how well the present measures correlate with each other and with those of other investigators. The finding that these measures can account for a considerable proportion of the variance in the lexical decision and naming data from the English Lexicon Project provides an additional demonstration of their utility.

Method: Participants. A total of 240 students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the University of Texas, Arlington, participated as partial fulfillment of a course requirement.

All were selected to meet a stringent criterion that the native English speakers—they had to indicate on a questionnaire that English was spoken at home at least 95% of the time during their preschool years. The materials were 207 homophone sets selected from a variety of sources. Of these sets, 81 had appeared in both the Galbraith and Taschman (1969) and the Gorfein and O'Brien (1985) norms.

The other 126 were selected on the basis of appearing in one or more studies in the homophone literature. Several of the sets contained more than two alternative spellings. The homophones were separated into two lists in order to obtain the number of observations necessary to complete the design. Data collection for the second list occurred approximately one year following data collection for the first. For each list, the homophones were randomly ordered and assigned a number.

Both the number and the corresponding word were read aloud in a male voice at a rate of one number–word pair every 7 sec. These readings were tape-recorded for use during norm collection. Three separate answer sheets were created: A, Cued Meaning B, and uncued. For both of the cued answer sheets, the cue appeared in

parentheses following the number corresponding to the appropriate number–word pair from the tape recording.

For example, if [sʌn] was spoken following the number “three” on the tape recording, then father was printed following the number 3 on the Cued Meaning A answer sheet, and tan was printed following that number on the Cued Meaning B answer sheet.

For both cued answer sheets, the cue was followed by a blank line on which participants were asked to print a response. For homophones that had more than two spellings, the aural form was included in both lists in order to evaluate the effects of a cue on third and fourth meanings: pair (pear, pare), you (ewe, yew), vain (vein, vane), sight (cite, site), and air (heir, ere, err).

For example, for List 1, a cue related to air appeared on one answer sheet, and a cue related to heir appeared on the other; for List 2, a cue related to ere appeared on one answer sheet, and a cue related to err appeared on the other.

The uncued answer sheet contained only numbers (corresponding to the number–word pairs from the tape recording) followed by a blank line. Procedure: The participants were tested in groups ranging in size from 10 to 23. Within each group, the three different answer sheets were randomly assigned to participants, with the restriction that no answer sheet was used for the N11 time until all had been used N times.

Forty participants served in each condition (Cued Meaning A, Cued Meaning B, and uncued) for each of the two homophone lists. All participants were informed that they were part of a norming study and that they would hear words that had more than one spelling.

We chose to state the nature of the materials to avoid having different participants “catch on” at different points in the experiment. Specific instructions for the experiment appeared on the cover page of each answer sheet.

Participants in the uncued task were instructed to listen to the spoken words and write the first spelling of the word that came to mind. These individuals received the uncued answer sheet, which contained each number followed by a blank line for the answer. Participants in the cued task were instructed to write.

Homographs, Palmer (1984, P. 101), Allan (1986,P.151) Gramley and Pätzold (1991,P.13) Richards and Schmidt(2002,P.241) believe that homographs are words that are written in the same way but are pronounced differently and have different meanings.

Examples of homographs are **lead** (metal) and **lead** / (guide). Sometimes, the term ‘homograph’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘homonym’ as indicated by Richards and Schmidt (2002, P.241). However, homographs and homophones are considered part of homonymy.

Another definition is that homography is a term used in semantic analysis to indicate lexemes that are written alike but may or may not be pronounced similarly and have different meanings (Pyles 1971:4 and Wikipedia 2010: 2). Lyons (1982:71) and Crystal (2003:220) illustrate that homographs are words that share the same spelling but differ in meaning.

For instance, wind (blowing) and wind (verb- a clock). This definition ignores the element of pronunciation. Thus, problems of ambiguity may occur between homographs and polysemes. In writing, homography is defined as one kind of writing

system or spelling in which there is one-to-one correspondence between graphic signs and speech sounds.

Examples of such homographic systems are the phonetic transcription, or the alphabets of some languages that have a phonetic alphabet. As such, the opposite to the term 'homography' is 'heterography'. The spelling system of languages like English or French are examples of heterographic writing systems Hartmann and Stork, (1976, P.105) and Crystal,(2003, P.220).

Presently, there is no known study on the use of homophones among students in Ghana. However, results of studies from other countries suggest the homophones can either be facilitative or inhibitive. One of such studies is Rabadi (2015). In the course of my study, I realized that students' background[tribe]/[L1], teacher-student ratio, teacher's competent level or mastering the content and usage of the English Language are some of the factors affecting students in their attempt to use homophones in their writing in St. Anthony Of Padua S.H.T.S. Other factors come from the environment they find themselves. Example; Business, local mining [Galamsey], charcoal burning, fisherfolk [fishing on the Black volta] all contribute to students weakness in the use of homophones in my school and hence the study. In this study, the researcher sought to determine whether German students have difficulty choosing the correct homophones to complete the meaning of sentences. To achieve this objective, the researcher administered a homophone recognition test on 38 German undergraduates.

In the recognition test, a sentence was constructed for each of 20 selected homophones so that the participants may choose one appropriate homophone and use it to complete the sentence presented to them to fit correctly with its meaning. In the

production test, the students were made to write a meaningful homophone for each of the 20 words presented to them in the recognition test. The results revealed that the identification of homophones can serve as a source of difficulty for the students tested.

Specifically, not all of them were able to choose appropriate homophones in completing the sentence, neither were all of them able to write the words when they were asked to. From the findings, Rabadi concluded that two negative effects arise. First, the inability of the students to either write or select the appropriate homophones indicates that they encounter difficulties in English language proficiency that is needed for academic work and communication. Second, be added that the other negative effect of their inability is that the students will be confronted with inconveniences with reading comprehension.

In another instance, White, Abrams and Zoller (2012) investigated the production and perception of homophones in English. They asked 48 participants to either write sentences or detect errors in sentences containing dominant homophones (like **beat**) or substitute homophones like **beet**).

For every homophone tested, a prime that shared orthography (e.g. neat) with a contextually inappropriate homophone (e.g. beat) or by an unrelated control word (e.g. Fun) was added to the word. The study revealed that older adults made more errors than young adults in the production of dominant homophones, but fewer errors in the production of subordinate homophones. On the other hand, older adults were found to consistently make fewer errors than young adults in the detection of homophone errors. From the results, the authors concluded that aging uniquely

dissociates perception and production, and that older adults have a cognitive advantage in detecting homophones.

Another study that investigated the use of homophones is Khalil (2012). His aim was to investigate the recognition and production of homophones by 50 students in a college of education in Iraq. To achieve his aims, he conducted two tests: One, a recognition test that comprised 10 pairs of sentences containing homophones for the students to choose the appropriate homophone from using the correct spelling. Two, a production test containing 15 pairs of homophones was presented to the students from which to select the homophones with the correct spellings. The result of the study indicated that the students performed better in the recognition test (75%) than in the production test (25%).

Finally, a study on the production of English homophones was conducted by Sarina (1997). He set out to determine the ability of students to produce and use homophones in essays. He presented 80 Malay students with nine topics to choose from to write essays about 350 words in total. From the analysis, he found that students' lexical errors made up 36.3% of the total errors. It was also found that the incorrect selections that students made contributed to distortions in the contextual meaning of the sentences generated. Sarina further observed that the students' incorrect selection of words was due to inadequate exposure and some inherent difficulties in the learning of English. He thus concluded that it is important to expose students to their target language because it is only through such frequent exposures that they can understand the use of lexical items such as homophones and apply them appropriately in their writing. In all the studies reviewed, the results reflect common errors that students commit either in the production or recognition of homophones. One important finding is that in all cases, some of the participants were able to

appropriately select and use homophones, while others could not select as expected. The fact that there are recognition and production tests conducted in these studies shows that, there is a possibility of a similar outcome between what was found and the present study may be similar to the ones discussed.

2.6 Conclusion

It is clear that homophones are very vital in the writing of essays in other languages and English as well. It can also be argued that the recognition of the distinction between pair of homophones is a problem and students are expected to learn or study them in order to minimize, if not stop at all, the errors that are committed in their use. It is also clear that homophones are very significant as far as writing is concerned. This chapter discussed; the introduction, framework [Errors], the major concept of homophones, homophones effects, use of homophones in students' writing, related studies to the topic and conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the procedure adopted for the study is discussed. This includes the description of participants, collection of data and analysis of data that formed the basis for the study on the use of homophones by students. The study is descriptive in nature and the analysis employs mainly qualitative measures.

3.1 Research Approach

The research approach is a plan and a procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is therefore based on the nature of the research problem being addressed. It is the overall decision that involves a particular topic (Creswell, 2014). In selecting a suitable approach to apply to in research, there are some criteria to be taken into consideration. For example, the nature of the research problem, the purpose of the project, availability of resources, time and financial background as well as the sensitivity of the issue at hand, the discipline of the study, the researcher's skills, personal interests, and experiences (Grover, 2015).

In order to study the use of homophones among students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School – Bamboi the current study adopted a style of which findings are gathered in a written format as opposed to numerical for the research. Mixed-methods research is used to refer to a research study that integrates one or more qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and analysis (Borkon, 2000; Creswell, 2003).

Regarding the current study, the mixed methods are useful in terms of triangulation where more than one research method are used as well as complementary where the weakness of one research method is complemented by the strength of another (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Moreover using more than one method can reduce some of the biases that might occur when only one method is used. Consequently, the findings would be more representative of the participants' views.

In particular, the current study followed the sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, 2013) in which the quantitative phase is represented in the students' questionnaire whereas the structured interview of both students and teachers constitutes the qualitative phase. The questionnaire was administered first, followed by the structured interviews with the participants as well as a test. The researcher selected two hundred (200) students and nineteen teachers (19) teachers for the study. This number represents 85% of the total enrolment of second and third year students in the school.

3.2 Research Design

Akhtar (2016) considers a research design as the structure of research that holds all of the elements in a research project together and that it is the plan of the proposed research work. Jackson (2008) also views research design as a framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various research components in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently handled. It provides insights about how to conduct research in a particular methodology. Examples of research designs captured in a handout of university of California library (2016) include (1) action research design, (2) case study design, (3) casual design, (4) cohort design, (5) cross-sectional design, (6) longitudinal design,

(7) descriptive design, (8) experimental design, (9) exploratory design, (10) historical design, (11) observational design and (12) meta-analysis design.

The researcher adopted a qualitative research design using the descriptive approach to understand and describe a study of the use of homophones among students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School in Bamboi, located in the Savannah Region of Ghana, Bole district to be presides. Jackson (2008) indicates that qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings, and the data are typically analyzed without the use of statistics. Qualitative research always takes place in the field or wherever the participants normally conduct their activities. A qualitative research design, is concerned with establishing answers to the whys and hows of the phenomenon in question (unlike quantitative). It is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied. Dornye (2011), also states that it works with a wide range of data including recorded interviews, various types of texts such as field notes, journal and diary entries, and documents and usually takes place in the natural setting, without any attempts to manipulate the situation under study. The essence of this design as posited by Tharernou (2009) feels that it provides detail, process, richness and sensitivity to the context and appropriate if the aim is to understand meaning and build a theoretical explanation from participants understanding.

On the basis of these expositions, the researcher deems it as an appropriate research design for the research topic under study.

The case study approach as explained by Creswell (1998) is an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. The qualitative case study is

therefore an intensive, holistic analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Jackson (2008) considers a case study as one of the oldest research methods that takes an in-depth study of one or more individuals in the hope of revealing things that are true of all of us. For example, Freud's theory of personality development was based on a small number of case studies. Piaget, whose research was used as an example of observational methods, began studying cognitive development by completing case studies on his own three children.

A research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Owu Ewie (2012) also observes that a research design provides the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research question(s) stated. The design for the present study describes the procedure employed in carrying out the research and the conditions under which the data was obtained. As the main purpose of this research is to investigate into the use of homophones in students' writing, this part discusses the plan and set-up of the work. It also discusses the techniques of data collection that were used. Research designs provide the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research questions stated. The study adopted a qualitative survey method. According to De Vaus (2001, p.16), a research design is the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of a study coherently and logically, thereby ensuring you will effectively address the research problem. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.

In a similar view, Frankfort and Nachmais (1992, p.19), also defined research design as the stages involved in a research process: measurement, generalizations, and analysis of data as the key component in research design. In my opinion, research design could be seen as the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research

problems to the pertinent and achievable empirical research. In other words, the research design articulates what data is required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyze data, and how all these are going to answer the research question.

The researcher then follows up with these results with an in-depth qualitative study to select participants to better explain why such results occurred for better understanding.

According to (Morgan, 1998), the explanatory research design promotes the understanding of a researcher on certain subjects. Again, explanatory mixed-method design makes room for the flexibility of sources. Secondary sources such as published literature or data are commonly used in the explanatory type of research. Finally, the descriptive research can be very useful in promoting subsequent research approaches.

A greater understanding of the subject allows the researcher to draft subsequent research questions that can greatly increase the usefulness of a study's conclusion. The researcher through a simple random strategy selected 200 students and 19 teachers for the study. Qualitative approach is used to explore the reasons why students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School face challenges in homophones writing.

The researcher through in-depth and detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information in the form of texts to explore strategies that can be adopted to improve upon performance in homophones writing among students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School, Bamboi Savannah Region. The use of multiple sources of information results in triangulation which contributes to the validity of the researcher's investigation.

Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln, (1994), provides a deeper analysis and allows for a richer and an in-depth understanding of how people make meaning of their situation or interpret phenomena. Bailey et al (1999) state that since validity is an essential element, the research should attempt to accurately represent findings. To this end, different data sources were employed to investigate the use of homophones in students' writings and thus the necessity to expand the data scope to the greater proportion of the population of the school.

3.3 Data Sources

All research studies involve data collection (Gay 1992) and are designed to either test hypotheses or answer research questions. This study aims at answering research questions with data from the basic source, thus, students and teachers' direct responses concerning the use of homophones in students' writings. Data was collected from the various English tasks given to students of the school involved in this present research. Written work was chosen because they are considered to be the outcome of planned language production.

3.4 Research site and students

The research site refers to the place where the data are collected. St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School is found in Bamboi in the Bole District within the Savanna Region. Senior High Schools in Ghana are categorized based on availability of academic facilities of the school and their geographical location. The school falls under the Category 'C'; a second class prestigious school in the region. It is located in a rural area, well-endowed in terms of academic infrastructure and other facilities. It is properly structured administratively and has more well-trained qualified teachers for all the courses the school runs. The school is always over-subscribed by applicants, meaning that the school's management are expected to

admits students with excellent and very good grade of Basic Education Certificate Examination, and are expected to go further to perform well in their final year.

The performance of the students in English language is far from being impressive for several reasons. Firstly, the school is closely located in a community that makes disciplining students very difficult. Members of the community have been opposed to building of fence wall around the school. Secondly they provide information for recalcitrant students to evade discipline and also dodge class attendance. It makes keeping discipline daunting and near impossible. The selected students were drawn across the two streams in the school. The selection was done for comparative purposes from SHTS 2 to SHTS 3. The first-year students were recently admitted and had not completed a full semester and the second-year students had a complete academic year cycle. The final years were also selected to find out if they could be improvement in performance. So identifying errors would assist the teacher to conduct remedial exercises for them to improve students' performances. The students, at this level, have been introduced to the study of English as a subject from their Primary four, a core subject at Junior High School level which signifies that they have studied English for at least eight years.

3.5 Population

A population is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common and of interest to the researcher (Best and Kahn, 2006). It also refers to the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which he or she would like the results of the study to be generalizable (Gay, 1987). The accessible population included teachers and students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School. The total population of the school is 393. The researcher selected the students from SHTS 2 and 3 because the first-year students have just reported. A good sample determines

the generalizability of results and represents the population of the study. The classes are 5 in number and the elective subjects studied in the school are Home Economics, Fashion & Design Technology, Hospitality and Catering, Business Accounting and General Arts.

St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School was chosen because that is where the researcher teaches and identified the problem in the course of marking students' scripts. Each student being in SHTS has studied English from the basic level to this present level. Most of the students in the school come from less endowed schools and for that matter face a lot of challenges when it comes to writing. Students' use of homophones in their writing depicts their knowledge or lack of it in the use of the language.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A small population in a study tends to magnify the effects of individual variability, thus presenting a possible distortion, (Selinger and Shohamy, 1989). Since the researcher wanted to have adequate knowledge of the ways in which students recognize homophones, a greater number of the school's population was used for the present study to determine exactly how this is done in their writings. A sample in this study is a smaller group of participants drawn from an accessible population of students of St Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School. Therefore, Omair (2014) opines that it is important to select a representative sample in research in order to be able to generalize the results to the target population. The sample should be of the required sample size and must be selected using an appropriate probability sampling technique. Important factors to consider for estimating the sample size include the size of the study population, confidence level, and expected proportion of the outcome variables. The results of a poorly selected sample that is different from

the target population cannot be applied to the general population. A smaller than required sample size may not have the appropriate power to identify significant differences or associations that may be present in the target population.

The researcher employed purposive sampling technique to determine the population of the study. According to Freedman et al. (2007), in this method, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling technique, sample members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject. The sample members who were selected had special relationship with the phenomenon under investigation. In this case they are comprised of students of senior high school; SHS 2 to SHS 3 who share similar academic prospects and challenges. The streams for the study comprised 2 classes; each stream made up five classes and each of the 5 classes had an average roll of not less than sixty students.

For fair distribution of the subjects of the study, a minimum of one hundred (200) subjects were selected from each of the streams in the school. Finally, a total of two hundred (200) students were randomly selected and used for the investigation. Different essay questions were provided for them; especially the final year students when the researcher had to rely on the mock examination scripts for analysis. The second year students chose questions from two different questions. Cohen et al (2000), states that sample size is also determined to some extent by the style of the research. For example, a survey style usually requires a large sample, particularly if inferential statistics are to be calculated. In a qualitative style of research it is more likely that the sample size will be small. Sample size might also be constrained by cost; in terms of time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources.

The sample size of the research comprised 200 students. This is made up of 100 students from form 2 of which 60 are girls and 40 are boys and 100 students from form 3 which comprises 45 girls and 55 boys. The students were drawn from form 2 C and D and from 3 A, B and D. It is said that the size of the population depends on factors such as the research design, topic and the type of data (Selinger & Shohamy, 1989). The size of the present study demands the use of a fairly large number of samples to represent students' writings. The total number of students as well as their programs respectively is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Summary of Students and their programs

Program	Male	Female	Total
Home Economies	15	35	50
Fashion & Design Tech	10	40	50
Hospitality & Catering	35	10	45
General Arts	10	45	55
Total	70	130	200

3.7 Instruments for Data collection

Selinger & Shohamy (1989) assert that the use of variety of methods to collect data helps to give the research findings validity through triangulation, the sourcing of the Pattern or behavior through different sources. Based on this, the following instruments were used textual, [fill-in-the-blank task, essay task] and interview. These four tasks were used in order to obtain varying responses or answers from the data of both students and teachers.

3.7.1 Test

Test is a standard set of questions that requires the completion of a cognitive task (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). This cognitive task can focus on the subject achievement, ability, interests, attitudes, values or skills. This test can ensure that an individual knows his or her ability to learn or choose to do. A test measures the individual's current performance. The test was self-developed. The instrument was used to ensure that students could easily produce pairs of homophones, use them correctly in sentences and use them appropriately in their writings. Also, interviews on homophones based on the research work was employed.

3.7.2 Dictation Task

Dictations usually are words or sentences that a teacher mentions or reads out to test student's ability to hear and write correctly. The task under discussion comprises 5 pairs of homophones and was administered to Form 2C, D, Form 3A, B and D students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High School. The students were expected to spell the appropriate homophones after they have been fully explained in a particular context by the researcher. The population size for this test was two hundred (200) that is, all the students. The list of words for this task is presented in Appendix A.

3.7.3 Fill-In-The-Blank Task

The fill-in-the-blank task is in a form of a short comprehension passage. This was in a written form which basically tested students on using the appropriate homophones according to words in the context in which it has been used. The task under discussion comprised 5 target words. The task was given to form two and three including all the participants of the school under research. The passage and words for the fill in the blank task are in Appendix B.

3.7.4 Essay Task

An essay is a written composition of moderate length exploring a particular subject or issue. An essay task was conducted in all the classes chosen for the research in order to ascertain the extent to which homophones affect students' essays/writings. As it has been stated already, the classes in the school for this particular research are 5 and a variety of essay topics were given to them. The essay topics for the essay writing task are as follows.

1. *My school*
2. *.Myself*
3. *Letter of Permission*
4. *Describe How Your Favorite Food Is Prepared*
5. *My Family*
6. *Write a Letter to Your Friend Telling him/her About Your Recent Visit to the Mole National Park*
7. *Write a story which begins 'had I known',*
8. *My First Day at School*
9. *Describe what you do during one of your Home Economics Practical*
10. *Write a story that ends with the expression 'it was the happiest day in my life'.*

The documents containing the topics containing the essay are presented in Appendix C.

3.7.5 Interview

An interview is a conversation between two or more people where questions are asked from the interviewer to elicit facts or statements from the interviewee. The researcher used interview because it establishes good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee since it is conversational in nature and when this happens, the interviewee feels very free to answer every question given by the interviewer. The researcher used semi-structured questions and made it as flexible as possible to meet the needs of the study. In all, 19 teachers were interviewed. This was to know their views on homophones and how homophones affect their students' writings. The interview questions are presented in appendix D. The number of teachers is presented in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2. A Summary of Teachers interview results

Subjects	Male	Female	Total
English Language	2	1	3
Home Economics	2	2	4
Social Studies	4		4
Government	3		3
Geography	3		3
Total	16	3	19

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis in research is defined as the phase of the study that includes, classifying, coding and tabulation information to perform an analysis according to the research design appropriate for the data. The analysis follows the collection of information and proceeds to interpretation or application. It is therefore the process of evaluating data using analytical reasoning to examine each component of the data

provided. The form of analysis is just one of the many steps that must be completed when conducting a research. Data obtained from the tasks discussed above were gathered and analyzed to form the findings and conclusions. Methods used in analyzing this data depend on the type of study conducted. The dictation task, fill-in-the-blank task items and essays were also interpreted in all the scripts marked and all homophones were identified. In the dictation task, the spelling of homophones as either right or wrong depending on which word pronounced are graded. The same procedure was repeated in the fill-in-the-blank task. In the essays, all instances of homophones used were circled, all the ones that were used appropriately were counted and all the ones that were used inappropriately were also counted. The responses from the interview were grouped under them to reflect what teachers actually said about their students' use of homophones. Simple statistical analysis (percentages) was used to show the number of students who used or did not use homophones in their writings and the number of homophones used.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

Jackson (2009) makes it clear that in conducting research with human participants, the researcher is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the participants. Thus, the researcher is responsible for protecting the participants from harm that participants are likely to suffer. Special considerations arise in research studies that use children as participants. Informed consent must be obtained from the parents or legal guardians for all persons under the age of 18. However, with children who are old enough to understand language, the researcher should also try to inform them of the nature of the study, explain what they will be asked to do during the study, and tell them that they do not have to participate and can request to end their participation at any time. The question remains, however, whether children really

understand this information and whether they would feel comfortable exercising these rights. Thus, when doing research with children, the researcher must be especially careful to use good judgment when deciding whether to continue collecting data from an individual or whether to use a particular child in the research project.

As part of ethics of research, the researcher had initial discussions with the head of the school and submitted a written permission to the management to notify him of the research and the streams and expected number of participants. The researcher assured management of conducting it following the ethical guidelines of research. This, I believe, ensured some level of co-operation of the people involved with the researcher from start to the end of the data collection period. The head of languages department in addition to other members of the department was also notified about the work. The researcher briefed them on objective of the research and its consequential benefits to the department and the students. The sampled students for the study were also briefed on the objectives and how they stand to benefit from it. The issue of the confidentiality was also stressed to assuage their fears and apprehensions. The students fully co-operated. Before conducting the test, the researcher designed a test sheet on which the subjects would indicate class, hometown and tribe. Conspicuously, name of subject was left out for purposes of confidentiality; the researcher used code numbers for the individual participants.

3.10 Validity

According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2001), validity is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring (Uys & Basson, 1991). Validity is an important key to

effective research. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. Validity is thus a requirement for quantitative and qualitative as well as naturalistic research. Validity can further be grouped as external and internal validity. Cohen et.al (2000), further elaborates that in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher.

Cohen et al (2000) explain that internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data. This concerns accuracy of the research. The findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched. External validity on the other hand refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations. Burns and Grove (1999) describe external validity as the extent to which the results can be generalized beyond the sample used in the study. This usually depends on the degree to which the sample represents the population.

3.11 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency or accuracy with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure (Polit& Hungler, 1997,). If a study and its results are reliable, it means that the same results would be obtained if the study were to be replicated by other researchers using the same method. It refers to the degree of consistency or accuracy with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure (Polit&Hungler, 1997). Joppe (2001) indicates that if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the instrument is considered to be reliable. It is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is

concerned with precision and accuracy (Cohen et al 2000). In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the researcher employed the services of a seasoned examiner of English language to bring to bear the needed assistance. The researcher marked scripts; identified errors contained in every script and forwarded them to the examiner to vet and further provide some insights.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the procedure adopted for the study. It highlighted the sources of data, the subject and sample size, the instruments for the data collection, the technique used in analyzing and interpreting the data, Ethical Consideration, validity, reliability in order to better explain the phenomena.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the data analysis in the form of tables to carry out the whole percentages and total explanations according to respondents. The results showed that students' use of homophones in their writings, and this is an indication that they have a fair knowledge of what these words are. Although this knowledge exists, it was also clear that it was not always that they chose those that were appropriate in their sentences. The discussion is divided into four parts: The first section presents analysis of the dictation task. In this particular task some students were able to spell the words based on its description, some others were not able to write them. It was also revealed that there were some errors in selecting the particular type of homophonic words due to either the orthography or the grammatical class of the words. The second section presents a discussion of the fill-in-the-blank task. In this task also, some students were able to choose appropriate words based on their contexts. Others, still, were found not to select homophones to complete sentences to communicate their intended meanings. As with the dictation task, there were errors in the selection of the homophones because of either their orthography or the grammatical class they belong to. The third section presents a discussion of the results obtained in the essay writing task. In this particular task, students chose their own homophonic words; they were not presented to them as in the dictation and fill-in-the-blank tasks. The results showed that all students used homophones. In fact, 50 out of the 200 utilized them in writings. Apart from this, not all those who used them did so appropriately. For instance, while some used them to reflect the intended meanings of the sentences, others used them inappropriately. Their selection of particular

homophones also indicated that students had difficulty choosing the appropriate words because of their orthography or grammatical class. The chapter finally ends with a discussion of the responses obtained from the interviews with teachers of the students investigated. It is worthy to note that the teachers indicated that their students always showed errors in the use of homophones, whether in English language, Social Studies, Home Economics or Government.

4.1 The Dictation Task

Corresponds to research question one; What are the problems students of St. Anthony of Padua S.H.T.S face in the use of homophonous words?

All the 200 students took part in the dictation task. Table 4.4 presents a summary of the findings of the dictation task. Table 4.4 shows scores in the dictation task given to students. The table below illustrates 5 items in the dictation. These were homophones that students were asked to write based on an explanation or a description of the contexts.

Table 4.1. Summary of results obtained from the dictation task. Table; 7

Number of Students	Score	Percentage (%)
10	5	100
60	4	80
55	3	60
50	2	40
25	1	20

The results from the dictation are grouped according to numbers of students, marks obtained and the percentages of the marks obtained. The information on table 4.1 is illustrated in figure 4.4. below.

Table 4.1 shows that 10 students were able to write correctly the homophones that were dictated to them, and this represents a total of 6% of the entire students' population. Also, a total of 60 students were also able to write 4 out of the 5 words dictated to them correctly representing 28%. 55 students representing 27% were able to write 3 out of the 5 dictated words correctly, 50 students were able to write 2 out of the 5 homophones dictated to them correctly representing 23% of the entire student's population. Finally, 25 students out of the entire population of 200 students which represents 16% were able to write 1 out of the 5 dictated words correctly.

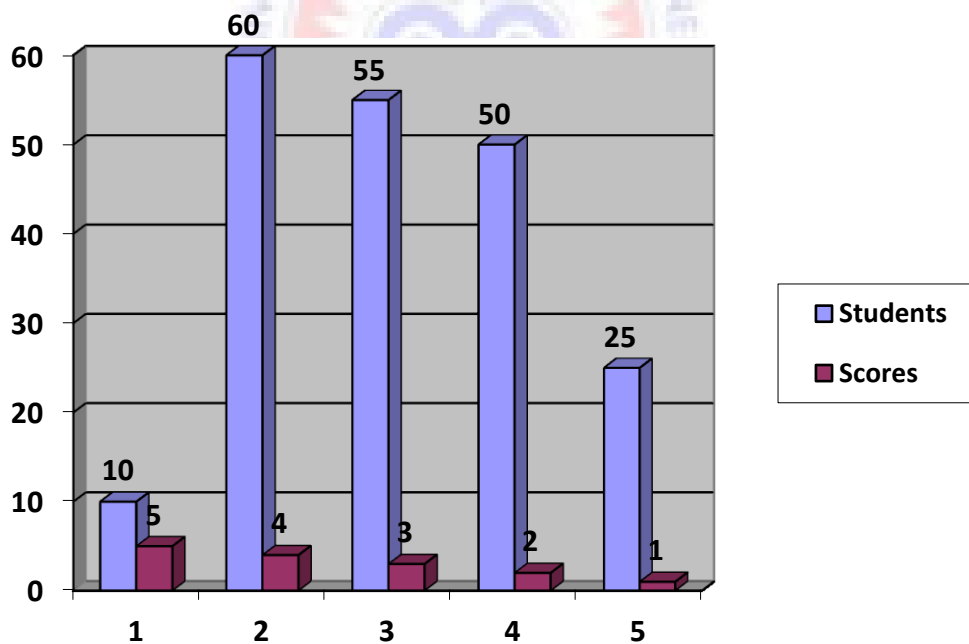


Figure 4.1: A chart of students and scores obtained in dictation task.

The number from the table 4.4 shows that some students could relate the words to their context. For instance, in the word *sea*, a description was given as the collection of water where fishermen usually fish. The rationale for this description

was to avoid confusion with *see* which shares the same pronunciation as *sea*. In total 150 students representing 61% got more than 60% of the words correctly written, while 39% got less than 40% of the words correctly written. From these I argue that majority of the students could correctly identify the homophones presented to them. For those who had errors in writing the correct homophonic words, the errors arose out of two main sources; orthography and word class. For example, the analysis revealed that in many situations, homophones that have the same spelling but distinct in one letter proved difficult for the students to write. A classic case is in the pair *week* and *weak*, a close look at these two words indicate that the only difference between them is found in the middle of the word thus *a* and *e* and this brings about the distinctions. Because they sound the same, they prove more confusing to the students and as a result most students interchange them. So, where they were asked to write *weak*, these students wrote *week*. With regard to the word class, homophones from different grammatical classes appeared more confusing and difficult to understand. The current study findings also concur with that of Khalil, that through “Assessing EFL learners Ability in Recognition and production of Homophones. In this research he emphasized assessment of students use of homophones through recognition and this can be achieved by “Dictation and fill-in-blank-space. Mako (2014) her study in London also mentioned the current finding strategies to support students in order to come over their weakness in the use of homophones both in orthography and speaking. Donovan (2015) also mentioned in his study that “Homophones: Wreaking havoc on writers and editors everywhere.

This shows that, the findings of my study would help students in my school and any other school in Ghana to overcome this phenomenon.

Other teachers also indicated that another group of homophonic words that appeared complex are those that come from different grammatical classes. In contrast, those that belong to the same grammatical class were found to be simple for the students.

This means that, the possibility of misinterpretation of the used homophones by students may be more extensive in the use of those that belonged to different grammatical class than those that belong to the same class. It is therefore clear that, students and for that matter writers need to understand the use of homophones before selecting and using them in their writing. The understanding also includes knowing the correct spelling, knowing the correct grammatical class and their meaning. In effect, the correct use of homophonic words especially in writing shows the students ability to express themselves effectively. An ability to distinguish the semantic elements of homophonic words also reflects the student's mental ability towards complicated words and the use of these pairs of words in contextually suitable sentences. In summary, it is asserted that the role of homophones in writing, whether in students writing or writing in general cannot be overemphasized, therefore when students have sufficient knowledge of the meaning and functions of homophones as well as the ability to use them appropriately, they will gain mastery of the English language.

4.2 Fill-In-The-Blank Task

The fill-in-the-blank task item is in a form of a comprehension passage task. This was in a written form which basically tested students on using the appropriate homophones according to the context in which they have been used. The test items consisted of 5 target words. Table 4.5 represents a summary of results obtained in the fill-in-the-blank task students scored out of 5 items, grouped according to correctness.

Table 4.2. Summary of results obtained from the fill-in-the-blank task

Number of Students	Marks Scored	Percentage (%)
35	5	100
20	4	80
40	3	60
65	2	40
40	1	20

The table shows that 35 students representing 16% identified all five homophones correctly, 20 students representing 18% identified 3 out of the five homophones correctly, 40 students representing 19% identified 3 out of five homophones correctly, 65 students representing 27% identified 2 out of homophones correctly. Finally, 40 students representing 20% identified 1 out of the five homophones correctly, the figures in table 4.5 are represented in figure 4.5.

The identification of homophones in this particular task is similar to the spelling of homophones in the dictation task. This is because students relied mostly on the context. As a result, the word surrounding the identification of the homophones helped the students to better identify the most appropriate word in filling in the blank. This may explain why the 53% were able to identify more homophones. In spite of this, it is also noteworthy to indicate that as much as 47 % of the entire student's population was not able to recognize and choose something of the homophones as must be expected. In this sense, the ability of the students to recognize the correct homophones and used them appropriately in sentences resulted in errors. The analysis suggests that the errors that students committed in the selection can be traced to orthography and word class. For those who had errors in filling in the blank with

correct homophonic words, the errors arose out of two main sources; similar to what was found in the dictation task, these are orthography and word class. Similar to the dictation task, students had difficulty in selecting homophones from pairs that have the same letters but only one different letter, for example as in *see* and *sea*.

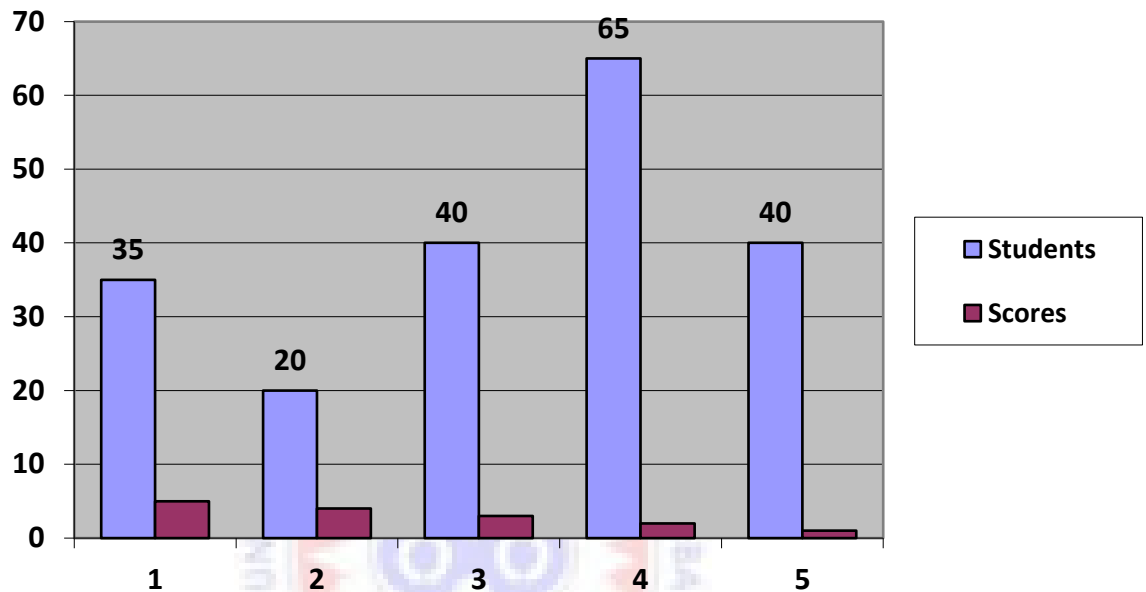


Figure 4.2. A chart of students and scores obtained in the fill-in-the-blank task

It was observed that the spelling created confusion because they sound same such that they have to misapply or misuse them in the proper context. Concerning word class, students had difficulty selecting homophones from different grammatical classes. For example, in the case of check/cheque (verb/noun) these words proved to be complex for the students. Consequently, their misused had a negative effect in the comprehension of sentences. Ultimately, this misuse resulted in misinterpretation.

4.3 Essays

What are the causes of the problem of misusing homophones?

In the essays, students used a total of 37 homophones out of the total 200; the 37 represents the actual homophones, and not the number of times they were used. A summary of their usage is presented in table 4.6.

Table 4.3. Summary of results obtained from the essay task.

Use	Number of Students	Number of Homophones	Percentage (%)
Appropriate use	114	13	35
inappropriate use	86	24	65
Total	200	37	100

Table 4.3 shows that 114 students representing 57% used a total of 13 different homophonic words and this also represents a total of 35% used homophones appropriately. On the other hand, 86 students representing 43% of the total population used 21 different homophonic words inappropriately and this represents 65% of the total number of homophones used in the writings. The marks obtained in table 4.6 are represented in figure 4.6.

Some of the homophones that were used appropriately are found in the following,

4.3.1 Homophones Used Appropriately in Students Writing.

1. I am very happy to **hear** from you.
2. We always **meet** on Wednesday.
3. May his gentle **soul** rest in peace.

4. I am the last **son** of my parents.

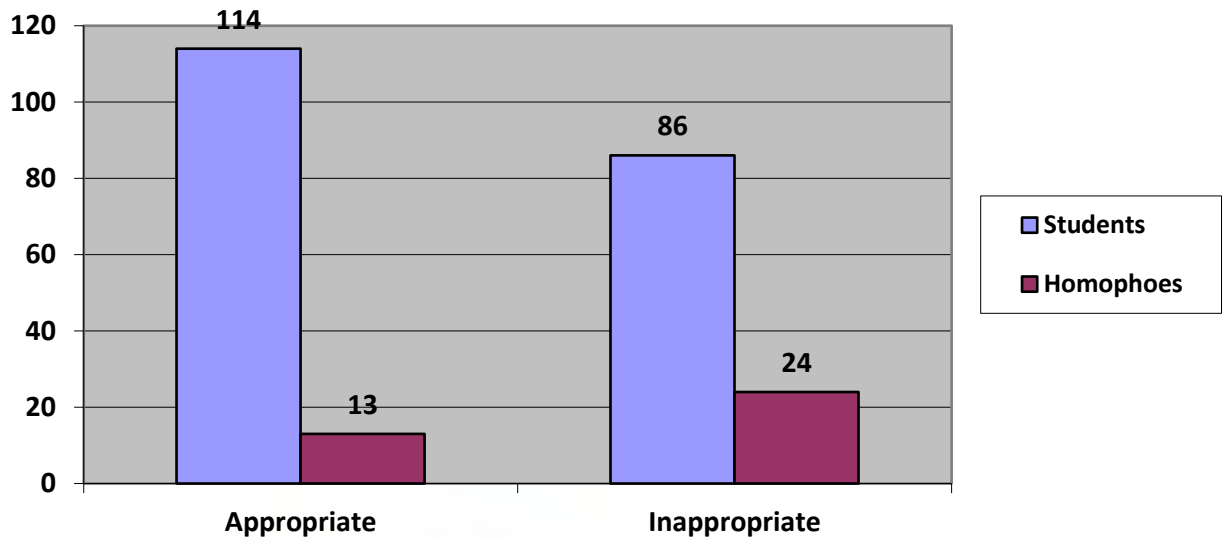


Figure 4.3: A chart of students and scores obtained in the essay task

Sentences (1-4) are clear cases of where the students used the homophones **soul**, **peace**, **son**, **meet**, and **hear** appropriately in sentences. In these particular examples, the sentences are clear and the meanings are not obscured. This is an indication that when writers use homophonic words correctly in their writings, they are able to express themselves effectively and in addition to this, they are able to show the distinction between the meanings of two words that are homophonic even though they sound the same. The result of the finding is also in line with what other researchers had done on the use of homophones among students. Rabadi (2015) found out in his study that writing essays in any form develops the students' correct usage of which homophone to be used in a particular concept.

Finally, writers show their mastery of the English language in their writings through appropriate usage of homophonic words. This eventually enables them to communicate their intended meanings to their readers. Although more students (57%) used some homophones appropriately, table 3 also shows that there were more

homophones (65%) that were used inappropriately in the essays. This number accounts for almost double the number of homophones that were used appropriately. It is evident from the table that there is a huge difference between the correct usage and incorrect usage of homophones in the writings of students. Examples of homophones that were used inappropriately are found in the following sentences

5. The syllabus designers do not focus on homophones such as **to**, **too** and **two**.

Table 4.4: Table; 10 Attention of syllabus designers.

Degree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Frequency	4	5	1			10
Percentage	40%	50%	10%			

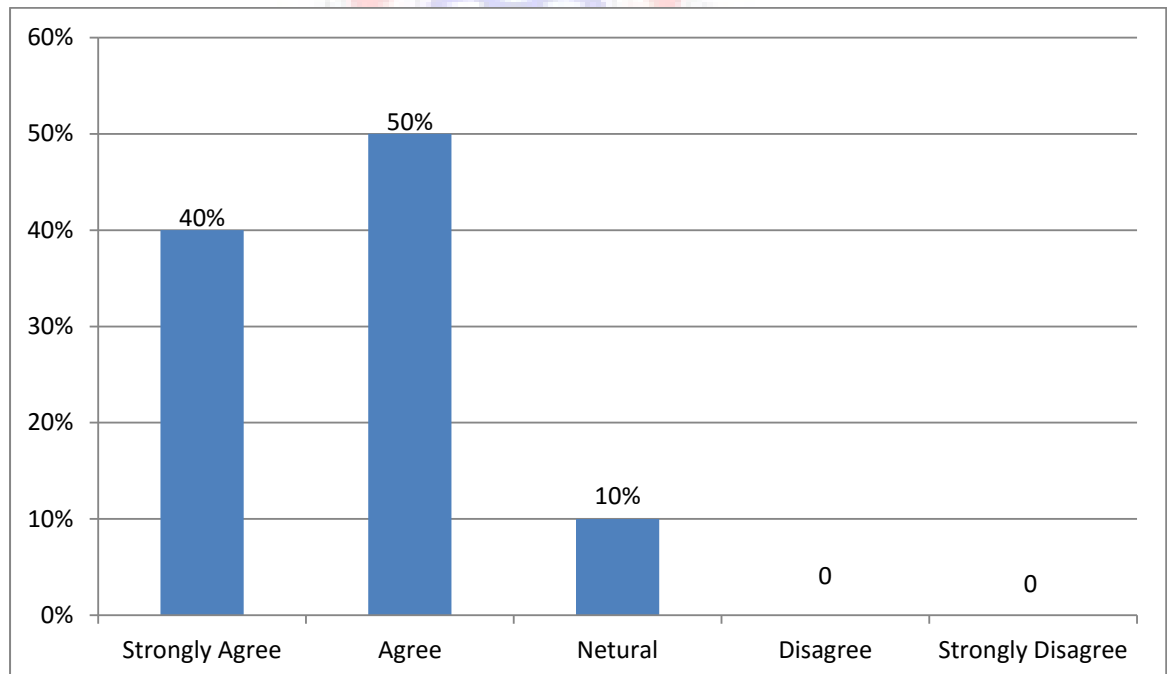


Figure 4.4: Attention of syllabus designers.

The data in table and figure (4.4) show that the majority 90% of the respondents agreed with **(The syllabus designers do not focus on homophones such as to, too and two).**

6. Teaching of homophones is not sufficiently covered by the teacher of English due to limited time of a lecture

Table 4.5 Table, 11 Limited time on school time tables.

Degree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequently	1	7	0		20	10
Percentage	10%	70%	-	20%	-	

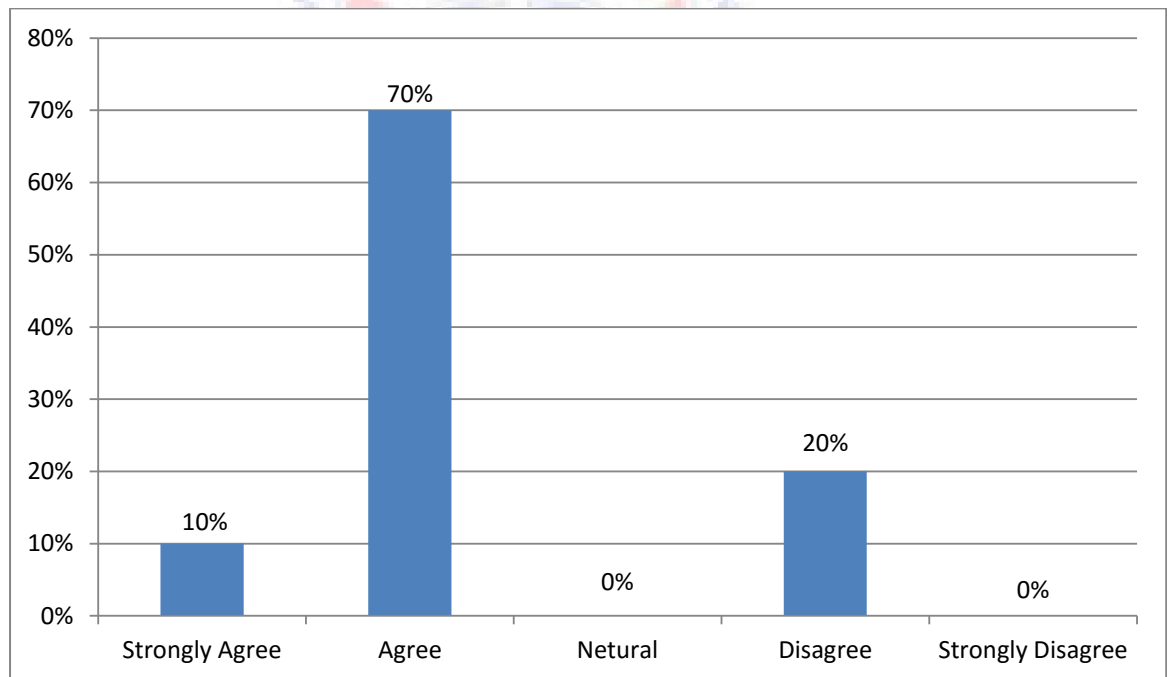


Figure 4.5: Limited time for teaching homophones.

The data in table and figure (4.5) show that the majority 80% of the respondents agreed with **(Teaching of homophones is not sufficiently covered by the teacher of English due to limited time).**

7. Students are not taught to distinguish between different types of homophones e.g **(for, four and fore)**

Table 4.6: Table; 12 Different types of homophones.

Degree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	2	4	1	3	0	10
Percentage	20%	40%	10%	30%	-	

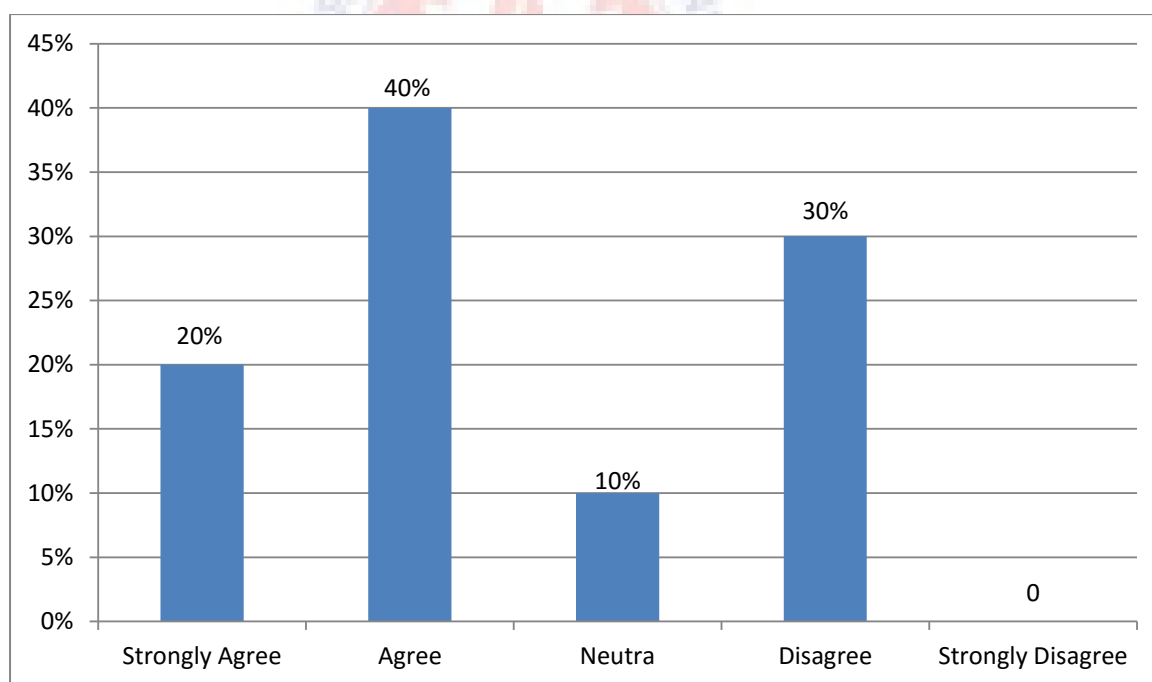


Figure 4.6: Types of homophones

The data in table and figure (4.6) show that more than half 60% of the respondents agreed with **(Students are not taught to distinguish between different types of homophones e.g (for. four and fore).**

8. Teachers of English language do not use multimedia in teaching homophones.

Table 4.7: Multimedia perception.

Degree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	3	7				10
Percentage	30%	70%				

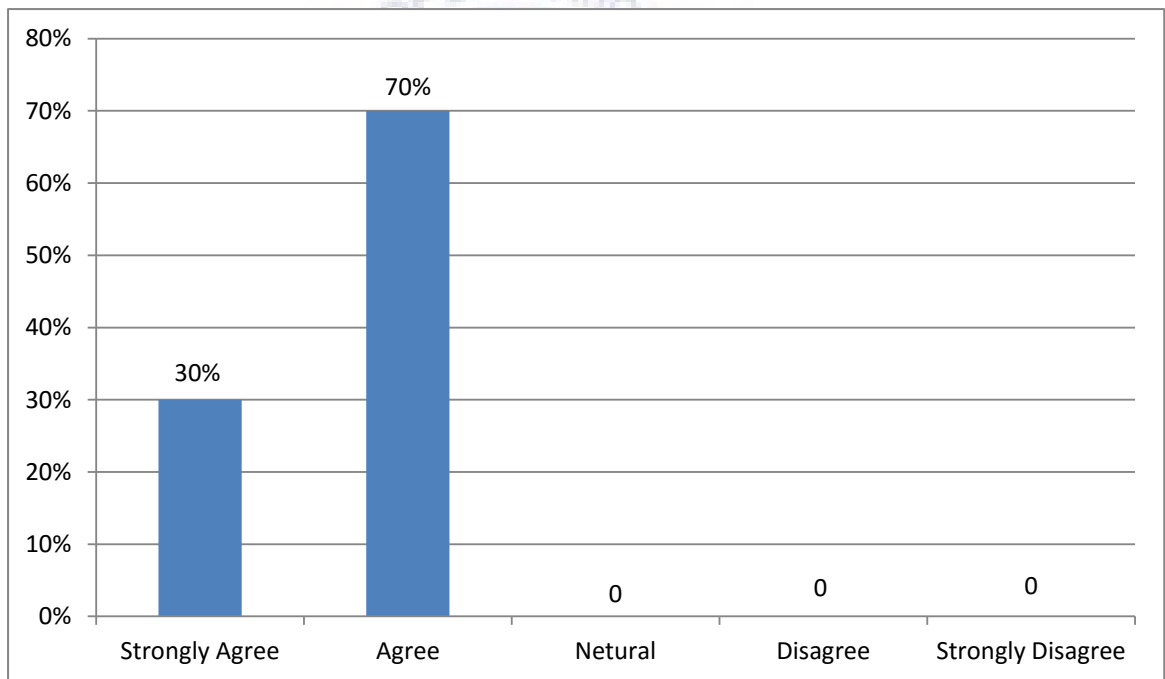


Figure 4.7: Multimedia perception in a bar chart.

The data in table and figure (4.7) show that almost 100% of the respondents agreed with **(Teachers of English language do not use multimedia in teaching homophones).**

4.3.2 Homophones Used Inappropriately in Students Writings.

1. May his gentle **sole** rest in piece
2. I am the last **sun** of my parents
3. I am very sorry to **rite** you this letter
4. My **ant** is the last child of my grandparent
5. **Weather** I should attend the program or not
6. We always **meat** on Wednesday
7. My father bought me a **knew** car on my birthday
8. I use **flour** to manufacture sweet scented perfume
9. God will **heel** you soon
10. I always **ware** white on Sundays

The homophones in example 1 to 10 are explained as follows

4.3.2.1 Sole verses soul

In example 1, the inappropriate use of the **sole** instead of **soul** may result in the distortion of fact. This is because instead of **soul**. **Sole** refers to the bottom surface of the foot or shoe whereas the intended word soul refers to the spirit or essence of a person usually thought to consist of one's thoughts and personality. When writers interchange these words the meaning of the sentences within which these words are used, the meanings are either lost or obscured because the words have different meanings. If the meanings are not used as required or expected, readers may find it difficult to process meaning and also find it difficult to understand the sentences. In an attempt to investigate the source of this problem, it was found that students' find it difficult to differentiate the morphological aspect of the two pairs. And hence, syntactically/semantically their wrong usage in their orthographies.

4.3.2.2 Sun verses Son

The word **sun** as used in the sentence instead of **son** also makes the sentence different from what the writer intended to put across since the **sun** talks about the solar system and **son** is a male child. The writer was talking about the fact that he is the last male child of his parents. The word **sun** as used in the sentence gives a totally different meaning from what the writer wanted to say. Syntactically, the sentence is said to be correct since the word **sun** is also a noun and can fit in the sentence even if that was not the intended meaning. Semantically, the sentence is also seen to be correct since the writer could mean being the last star of the parents. Due to these different meanings, it will be very difficult for the reader to understand what the writer intended to convey.

4.3.2.3 Rite verses Write

Rite is a religious custom and **write** is to form letters, words or symbols on a surface in order to communicate or to show in written form. The use of the word 'rite' instead of 'write' does not make the sentence meaningful since a writer cannot 'rite' a letter to someone. It is also used inappropriately in terms of syntax since **rite** is a noun and could not replace a verb in that context. These different meanings with these 2 words confuse the reader since the actual meaning the writer wanted to communicate is lost.

4.3.2.4 Ant verses Aunt

Ant is an insect and **aunt** on the other hand is a sister of one's father, both words are nouns but the use of **ant** in place of **aunt** makes the writer belong to the family of insects which changes the intended meaning since the writer was not referring to **ant**. The two words **ant** and **aunt** belong to the same word class so

grammatically, the sentence is correct but the reader reading this will not get the intended meaning the writer wanted to make known to the reader.

4.3.2.5 Weather verses whether

The fifth example, **weather** and **whether** are pairs of homophones that writers use interchangeably but are different in meaning. Whereas **weather** is the short of the atmosphere at a specific time and place, including the temperature, wind, precipitation, cloud cover, etc., **whether** is a pronoun which means among a group/list of things or a conjunction used to introduce a direct or indirect interrogative question, the student in his attempt to write the second word **whether** wrote **weather** and as a result made it very confusing to the reader.

4.3.2.6 Meat and meet

Meat is the flesh of an animal used as food and **meet** is a gathering of people. The sentence 'we always **meat** on Wednesday' means they had or ate **meat** on Wednesday and this is not what the writer intended to convey and as such changed the original meaning of the sentence making the sentence incorrect.

4.3.2.7 New verses Knew

In this example, **knew** has been changed with **new** by the writer. **New** means recently made or created or current as opposed to former and **knew** is a simple past tense of know. The sentence 'my father bought me a **knew** car' says something different to the reader who is confused about what the writer intended to write.

4.3.2.8 Flour verses Flower

Flour is a powder obtained by grinding or milling cereal grains, especially wheat and used to bake bread, and **flower** on the other hand is a colorful, conspicuous structure associated with angiosperms. The sentence 'I use **flour** to manufacture sweet

scented perfume' is not wrong grammatically because both homophones belong to the same word class but in meaning, this is not what the writer intended to write but inappropriately used **flour** instead of **flower** and this has sent a wrong message to the reader.

4.3.2.9 Heel verses Heal

Heel is the rear part of the foot, where it joins the leg and **heal** on the other hand is defined as to hide, conceal or to revive or cure. These two words 'heel' and 'heal' are pronounced the same but are different when it comes to meaning. **Heel** and **heal** belong to different word classes that is **heel** is a noun whereas **heal** instead of **heal** does not only make the sentence grammatically incorrect but this example also makes it difficult for the reader to understand the writer's message.

4.3.2.10 Wear verses Ware

Finally, the pair **wear** and **ware** have been used in the essay of the writer. These words are from different word classes thus verb and noun. **Wear** is to defend, guard or display in one's aspect or appearance and **ware** is also explained as a metal goods that are made /designed for a particular use, the state and of being aware or a style or genre of artifact. This sentence actually conveys something different to the reader, who may not know the intended meaning of the writer and thereby it brings about confusion on the part of the reader.

In the students' essays, it is realized that some of the students used homophones of the word. For instance, with the pair **sun** and **son**, although these pairs of homophone sound the same, they have distinct meaning and so **sun** has been used instead of **son** because the spelling are so close, which are the letters 'u' and 'o' as the only difference and this makes student interchange the two. Others also used pairs of homophones

that belong to the same grammatical word class and due to this a student who used **flour** in place of **flower** for instance might think since the sentence is grammatically correct the sentence is correct. There is a result in confusion especially when their error is pointed out to them. These errors mostly rendered their sentences meaningless. Another group of students also interchanged different grammatical word classes in their essays, an example is the pair **heel** and **heal** when instead of a student writing **heal** which belongs to the verb word class, the student interchanges it with **heel** which also belongs to the noun word class. This makes students writing ungrammatical and meaningless as well.

4.4 Interview

Corresponds to research question three; How can the problem be solved?

The number of teachers who were interviewed were 19. These include all teachers and teachers of other subjects which are; Social Studies, Integrated Science, Government, Home Economics, Business Accounting, Hospitality and Catering Management, Fashion and Design Technology. From the responses, 15 teachers representing 78% indicated that they normally see homophones in their students' writing. The four teachers representing 22% responded that they have never come across any homophone because they teach topics such as local dish, stitching and as a result, their main focus is always on the technical aspect of the subject and not the language their students use. As regards those who find homophones in their students' writing, all the teachers indicated that it is not always that their students used homophones appropriately. They confirmed that, sometimes they used them appropriately, sometimes they do not. They further observed that they have found some consistent errors in the use of homophones by the students. They enumerated that they are of the view that their students' errors can be traced to either the

orthography or the homophonic pair of their grammatical classes. For instance, an English teacher remarked:

*"These students sometimes interchange the word because they think they are the same. If you take a pair like **beech** and **beach** they have the same spelling except that the third letter **e** and **a** respectively are different. Most often students tend to use beech for beach and vice versa. When you read through their scripts you realize that these are very common"*.

Another teacher (this teacher teaches social studies) commented that:

*"It is interesting how students use homophones in their writing. My brother, our students use these words without even thinking whether they are the same words or belong to the same classes, to them once the word sound the same they use them. I was marking scripts one day and I came across **allowed**. In fact, the student used it in a sentence like; the boy screamed. I was allowed. It is true that one may know what this boy is talking about, you also realized that he has used the wrong word that is, instead of **a-l-o-u-d** **aloud**. **Aloud** is an adverb and **allowed** is a verb, how can you interchange them? My brother you will then see clearly that he is not taking the grammatical classes of two words into consideration.*

The comments from the two teachers (and the others who made similar comments) confirm the findings in the dictation task, the fill-in-the-blank and in the essays task. This is an indication that, the errors that students commit in their choice of homophones occur as a result of confusion in the spelling and in the word classes of the word. Unfortunately, these choices lead to wrong sentences, wrong meanings and misinterpretation.

4.5 Conclusion

To crown it all, the three tasks, that is, dictation task, fill-in-the-blank task and the essay task used in this study showed that students' use of homophonic words varied. As in the case of dictation and essays writing task, students produced

homophones. The only difference however is that the homophones produced in the dictation task were done by following the teacher's explanation while those produced in the essays were solely by the students themselves. In the fill-in-the-blank task students are to recognize and select homophones that are there rather than producing them. The analysis suggests that students were able to produce more homophones in the dictation and also recognize more homophones in the fill-in-the-blank task as against their ability to produce same in the essay writing (35%). It is interesting to note that in both dictation and the fill-in-the-blank task students were given the context of the words, that is, the teacher explained the meaning of the words. On the other hand, nobody explained the context of the words students produce in their essays. This may explain why they produced less (35%) than they did in both the dictation and the fill-in-the-blank task. This indicates that context is very important in the use of homophones and when students get an explanation of the context of the homophones, they are likely to perform better in the production and the recognition.

The results obtained in this study are similar to what Rabadi (2015) found with German students. After a recognition text and a production test, Rabadi found that participants performed better in the recognition test (72.5%) than in the production test (36.8%). Although Rabadi's study comes from a different context that is 'Germany', it serves as an important blueprint in that it involves both a recognition test and a production test. Another study that is similar to the results of this study is Khalil (2012). He presented college students with 10 pairs of homophones for a recognition test and 15 pairs for a production test. From the analysis he found that students performed better in the recognition test (75%) than in the production test (25%). It follows therefore that there is a possibility for students to recognize homophones better than to produce them. As already indicated, an explanation of the

use of particular homophonic words may go a long way to facilitate students' recognition and production of such a word.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study analyzed and interpreted in the previous chapter. Implications of the findings of this present study are also given and discussed after which suggestions for future research are given.. The main aim of the study is to investigate the use of homophones in students writing. In 393 students and 200 were sampled and they all participated fully including 19 teachers. A dictation task, fill-in-the blank task and essays task were presented to students for data collection.

5.1 Summary, of findings

Question (1):

What are the problems students of St. Anthony of Padua S.H.T.S face in the use of homophonous word?

Five (5) homophones were tested through dictation and analyzed. The result was encouraging because 63% were able to spell more than 61% of the dictated words correctly and 50% were also able to write less than 48% of the dictated words correctly. Five fill-in-the- blank test were also administered to students, the rationale for this task was to determine the selection of homophones correctly. For instance, the context and co-text of the homophones helped the students to better identify the most appropriate word in filling in the blank. It can therefore be argued that more students 65% were able to identify more than 70% of the most appropriate homophones because of the context and the co-text of the homophones and then 49% were also able to identify less than 37% correctly. In the final task, that is, the essay writing

task, students wrote essays on different essay topics. The results show that almost half of the students (57%) of those who used homophones in their writings selected them appropriately and a total of 86 students which represent 43% of the total population of 200 also used homophones inappropriately in their writings. The results obtained in 3 tasks are an indication that, students were not ignorant of homophones to fit context. The data showed that there were varying scores or results in the entire task administered. Some of the students had problems in distinguishing between the appropriate homophones came as a result of error they committed. These errors can be traced to two main factors; the orthography and the grammatical classes the words belong to. In effect where the words have the same spellings but only different letters, students become confused and interchange them. Concerning the grammatical classes, it means that the possibility of misinterpretation in the use of homophones by students may be more extensive in the use of those that belong to different grammatical class than those that belong to the same class. I categorically state that there are errors in the use of homophones because students at the senior high level in Ghana are not introduced to homophones as a topic in the teaching of the grammar of English.

5.2 The Role of Homophones

In the previous section, I have been able to provide answers to the first research question:

The discussion has revealed that, while some of the students utilized homophones appropriately, others did not. The discussion has shown that homophones can create confusion in English comprehension and use. This is also evident from the interview conducted with teachers of the students. For instance, the teacher's interview commented that they had realized that students keep on committing the same errors and the majority of the sources of errors are many and one

of such error is homophonic. It is interesting to know that, some of the teachers also remarked that, in pairs of homophones where the writings are quite distinct, students had less problems recognizing and using them correctly in sentences, however, in homophonic pair where there is only one letter in the word which is different, students seemed more confused, thus students were found not to be able to demonstrate a positive link in language processing and comprehension of these homophones.

In many situations, the students misused the homophones pairs in the second instance even though they are in their proper context. Other teachers also indicated that, another group of homophonic words that appeared complex are those that come from different grammatical classes. In contrast, those that belong to the same grammatical class were found to be simple for the students. This means that, the possibility of misinterpretation of the use homophones by students may be more extensive in the use of those that belonged to different grammatical class than those that belong to the same class.

It is therefore clear that, students and for that matter writers need to understand the use of homophones before selecting and using them in their writing. The understanding also includes knowing the correct spelling, knowing the correct grammatical class and knowing their meaning. In effect the correct use of homophonic words especially in writing shows the student's ability to express themselves effectively. An ability to distinguish the semantic elements of homophonic words also reflects the students' mental ability towards complicated words and the use of these pairs of words in contextually suitable sentences. In summary, I argue that the role of homophones in writing, whether in students writing or writing in general cannot be overemphasized, therefore when students have sufficient knowledge of the meaning and functions of homophones as well as the ability to use them

appropriately, they will gain mastery of the English Language. This reflects what McKay (1987) observes in the introduction of her work that “it is not enough that our students know how to correctly make simple statements (form). They need to be aware that there are other ways of saying the same things (meaning)”.

5.3 Implications for Teaching

Having investigated the use of homophones in students writing, it is also important to suggest some implications that these results may have on English Language teaching in Ghana. The pedagogical implications are of significance to policy makers, syllabus designers, textbook writers and teachers of English. These implications are to help reduce if not completely do away with the inappropriate use of homophones in students writing. The attention of readers should be drawn to the fact that a cursory look at the SHS English syllabus does not have any sections that guide teachers on the teaching of homophones as part of the semantics in the English teaching, as a result of these pairs of words are not taught. The findings for this study show that the use of appropriate homophones is a major problem area for SHS students. It is therefore suggested that in designing or reviewing subsequent English syllabus for SHS, there is the need for curriculum developers to include homophones so that teachers will teach their students to understand and use them appropriately.

In addition to the above, it is also important to note that textbook writers have a role to play when as far as what students study is concerned. It is thus suggested that once the curriculum is modified, writers need to include homophones as part of the English books they write to enable the students learn and understand and use them effectively. Furthermore, a modification of the curriculum and an inclusion of homophones in the textbooks will not yield desired results if teachers do not teach the topic in their English lessons. Teachers therefore need to effectively teach homophones so that it

will be easier for students to use them as desired. That is to help students to identify lexical item correctly, encourage transfer from short term to long term and encourage recording of lexical items in helpful non-linear format. It is also important to note that homophones do not occur in isolation; they occur in sentences.

In teaching homophones, the teacher should not merely point out the difference in meaning and spelling of the word but emphasize the use of the lexical item in context. This means that they cannot be taught effectively without the appropriate context. To this effect the teacher has to stress how ambiguity can lead to disruption in comprehension. Teachers therefore have the important task of sensitizing the language learner towards understanding the meaning of a lexical item in the presence of other words. By helping the students to develop this skill, language learning becomes more effectively as students are exposed to identifying constituent bits within a whole. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to use an interesting approach to excite the teaching of that topic. The topic should also be given ample attention and expanded on all its spheres rather than just relying only on definitions and examples. This way, students will find their form and functions easier to understand. Again, teachers of English at the various S.H.S should conduct research on different topics in the English Language among their students from time to time to find out their difficulties in order to organize remedial teaching geared towards finding solutions to the difficulties and weaknesses they may identify. Some of the teachers enumerated that they are of the view that their students' errors can be traced to either the orthography of the homophonic pair or their grammatical classes. For instance, a teacher of English I interviewed remarked:

“These students sometimes interchange the word because they think they are the same. If you take a pair like beech and beach they have the same spelling except

that the third letters e and a respectively are different. Most often students tend to use beech for beach and vice versa". When you read through their scripts you realize that these are very common "It is interesting how students use homophones in their writing. My brother, our students use these words without even thinking whether they are the same words or belong to the same classes, to them once the words sound the same they misuse them. In marking a script one day I came across dye. In fact the student used it in a sentence like the boy dye can be inter changed. It is true that one may know what this boy is talking about but you also realized that he has used the wrong word that is, instead of d-i-e die. Die is a verb and dye is a noun, how can you interchange them? My brother you will then see clearly that he is not taking the grammatical classes of the two words into consideration".

One of the ways of minimizing errors in the use of homophones among students is for teachers to modify their teaching methods. This way they may need to move away from traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach so as to benefit the students. The teacher should try to stimulate and sustain interest in the English language. Cross word puzzle, board games and quizzes can be mentally challenging instead of the teacher drilling grammatically and lexically correct structures or setting exercises that need minimal thinking because students learn effectively in language-rich classroom and with language-rich materials. Finally, teachers of English must be well-trained and re-trained to equip them with the requisite skills about the changes and innovations in all aspects of the subject and the approaches to teaching. The training may include in-service training in the form of seminars and workshops to improve their knowledge and performance in the teaching of English.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

It is important to note that, this study focused on only one school, hence, there are still areas in the English language that merits the studies. Researchers can expand

the number of students as well as the number of schools investigating how other students use homophones. Apart from expanding the number of students and schools, there is also the possibility of examining the phonetics and phonology of homophones. These areas include the duration of homophones and its effect and their meaning. In this sense, the study by Elston-Guttler and Friederici can serve as a model. Beyond these linguistics variables, there can be the use of a study that focuses on variations in homophones. The students who participated in the study comprised technical, Hospitality and Catering Design and Home Economics, General Arts. There were no tests of variations conducted on their use of homophonic words. Therefore, it is also important to conduct a study that examines the differences in the use of homophones according to program, for instance, between Home Economics and Fashion and Design Technology, General Arts and Business or even between year groups. Apart from looking at programs and year groups, a variation study on homophones may also involve gender. In this sense, researchers may choose to focus on the differences in use between males and females. It may also be possible we further research into tribes (local dialect). Finally, the results of the present may stimulate other researchers to do extensive academic research work on the effect of English homophones on the language of other users and learners of the language. These groups may include students in tertiary institutions, upper primary and students at the junior high school.

- Investigations of homophones and homographs in students' performance.
- Investigating difficulties of teaching semantics particularly homophones and homographs English.
- Assessing the use of homophones in spoken text.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the method of data collection and analysis has served as a valuable procedure in investigating homophone use among students of St. Anthony of Padua Senior High Technical School. Through this analysis, I have been able to demonstrate that it is important for students to be taught the form and functions of homophonic words, for it is only when they understand these words that they are able to use them appropriately. Teachers of English should also employ methodologies that would help students to grasp the concept of homophones.



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APPENDIX A

DICTATION TASK

- Question (1): Corresponds to research question one: To what extent are 2nd and 3rd year students of St. Anthony of Padua S. H. T. able to use homophones in writing correctly.

Spell the following words as I explain them.

1. Weather as in the short state of the atmosphere at a specific time and place.
2. Sea as in a large body of salty water. Or a large water body that shares boundaries between Ghana and other countries.
3. Cheque as in a draft directing a bank to pay money to a named person or entity. Or it is used to withdraw money from a bank.
4. Made as in a simple past tense and past participle of make.
5. Seam as in a folded back and stitched piece of fabric.
6. Dear as in an affection or human relation.
7. Deer as in the name of animal.
8. Die as in the end of ones' life on earth.
9. Soul as in the spirit of creatures.

APPENDIX B

Read the following and choose from the pairs of homophones provided, to fill-in-the-blank to make the passage understandable.

- Question (2): Corresponds to research question two: What are the reactions behind the problems of misusing homophones?

Dramandu came home late and on her arrival, she was and fell vigorously on her leg. Two days later, she said to her Uncle with the intention to visit her sick Aunty on her hospital bed in Bole. The Aunty rushed from her bed when she heard the voice of her younger sister say sister Dramandu is she grabbed her daughter and said, 'I feel to see you my daughter'. She then sat on the chair under the neem-tree behind the house with her daughter and convinced her to stay for a jiffy. Dramandu agreed but had a text message on her phone prompting her to attend an interview and an aptitude test in a private Hospital she had written an application to in Tamale. She left three hours later since she has only a To prepare for the exams, Dramandusaid to her aunty and left Bole for Tamale.

1. A. Week B. Weak
2. A. Right B. Write
3. A. Buy-Buy B. Bye-Bye
4. A. Hear B. Here
5. A. Great B. Grate

APPENDIX C

ESSAY TOPICS

Write an essay on any of the following topics.

My school, Myself

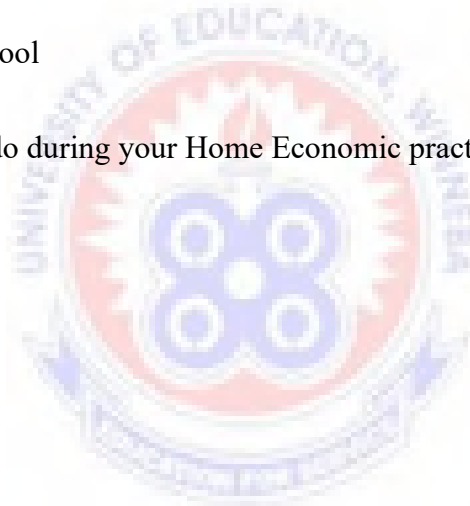
Describe How Your Favorite Food is Prepared

Write a Letter to your Friend in Another School Telling him/her About Your Recent Visit to the Mole Park

Write a story which ends 'Had I Known'

My First Day at School

Describe what you do during your Home Economic practical's.



APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Question (3): Corresponds to research question three: To what extent are 2nd and 3rd year students able to find remedies to the problem?

1. Do you come across homophones in students' writing during your marking?
2. Do your students use homophones inappropriately in their writing?
3. If yes, how do you help your students overcome the problem of inappropriate use of homophones in their writing?
4. What suggestion (s) and recommendation would you give to the above mentioned problem?



Sulemana Koomson Form 2e

Distillation

1. 1. Dear ~~...~~
2. 2. Check ~~...~~
3. 3. Find ~~...~~
4. 4. Write ~~...~~
5. 5. Sign ~~...~~



Glebe Zidima

Form 3B

1. ~~Grate~~ ^{Discussion}
2. ~~Write~~ Write
3. Here
4. ~~Check~~
5. ~~Week~~



Bunella Fadia

Form 3C

Modulation

1. Here ✓
2. Great ✓
3. Good ✓
4. Write ✓
5. Check ✓

$$\frac{24}{5}$$

Dramani Hawo

Form 3A

Dictation

- i. Write ✓
- ii. Hear ✓
- iii. Watch ✓
- iv. Answer ✓
- v. Soul ✓



Jan 24

Mohammed Bakari

Fill in the blank.

1. Neck ✓
2. White ✓
3. Waist ✓
4. Great ✓
5. Eye - (eye eye) ✓
6. Hair ✓

5/6

Discontinuous Christopher

Fill in the blank

(1) Week ~~is~~

(2) Right ✓

(3) Near ~~is~~

(4) Buy-buy ~~is~~

(5) Great ✓

(6) Rise ~~is~~

2 1/2

DEBY MOSES

FORM 3A

MYSELF

Deby Moses is my name. I am 20 years of age. I was born in Ghana. I am a tall boy. I am a Ghanaian.

My parents have 4 children and I am the fourth (son) and I am the only boy. My father is called Mr. Deby George and my mother is Henry Gammie. My father is a business person and my mother is a mid-wife in the village I live with them.

My hobbies are playing 'basket', high-jump, long-jump and playing football. I also like reading story books. My food I like is manioc and white rice. I also like to listen to rock music and watching selected Nigerian movies. I also travel to various places.

Also, the name of my school is St. Anthony's Boys S.H.T. I am sociable when I go out but sometimes do not principle with facts. I have some friends who come from outside Ghana.

In short, I would like to be a teacher of English because I like teachers in that department since I started schooling. I would love to achieve this aim.

✓
 Eng. - 4
 C - 4
 M.A. - 2
 F.A. - 3

15/20

Thomas Akpan

Form 3/4

My School

The name of my school is St. Anthony's Senior High Technical School. It is located in the newly created economic region in Bahr District, Bamboi to be precise.

My school has five (5) courses namely: Home Economics, Business Accounting, Hospitality and Catering Management, Fashion and Design, Technology and General Art. I am in form three (3), General Art (A). My school is located at the eastern part of Bamboi community (physically the Bampem - Dekator Road).

The school has beautiful and nice classrooms, a Home Economics practical block, ICT laboratory which helps to make learning easy and interesting.

Also my school has a girl dormitory, boys dormitory and masters quarters for masters to be present in the school always as observed on an on the has about 20 teaching staff and 10 non-teaching staff in the school.

Mr. John Kwagiti is the name of my Senior Housemaster and madam Denista is my house mistress. Who has just passed on. Oh! madam may your sole rest in peace.

My school has a very big bus lesson start at 7:00am and we close at 4:30pm.

I love my school for two purpose, just what?

discipline and academy excellence

$$\begin{array}{r} 12 \\ \hline 2-6 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 0.9 - 3 \\ 2.4 - 4 \\ 1.8 - 2 \\ 4.8 - 3 \\ \hline 12 \end{array}$$