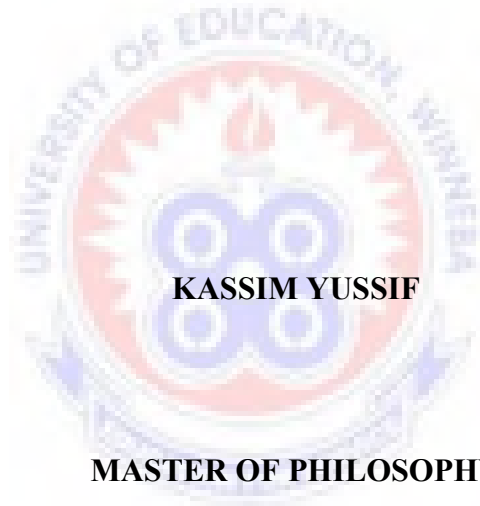


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**WRITING SKILLS OF SHS STUDENTS IN COMPOSITION WRITING
THE CASE OF YENDI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



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THE CASE OF YENDI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign
Languages, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment**

**of the requirement for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Teaching English as a second Language)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

JULY, 2020

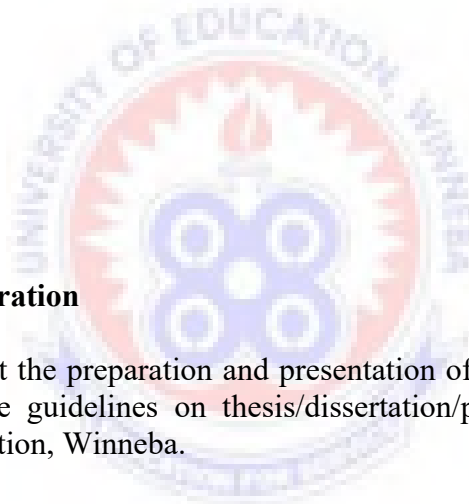
DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I **Kassim Yussif**, hereby declare that this thesis with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my 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 on thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

DR. MRS. REBECCA A. AKPANGLO-NARTEY

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this masterpiece to my parents, wives and children, and to the Baba and Gomda families, in whose prayer and upbringing I have come this far.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Allah my redeemer and helper in ages past, the sustainer of my life and provider of wisdom and strength played the central role in coming out with this thesis; He therefore deserves my exaltation and honour.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| DECLARATION | ii |
| DEDICATION | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | v |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vi |
| LIST OF TABLES | xi |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xii |
| ABSTRACT | xiii |
| CHAPTER ONE | 1 |
| 1.0. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1. Background to the Study | 1 |
| 1.2. Statement of the Problem | 2 |
| 1.3. The Purpose of the Study | 4 |
| 1.4 Objectives of the Study | 4 |
| 1.5 Research Questions | 4 |
| 1.6 Significance of the Study | 5 |
| 1.7 Limitations of the Study | 5 |
| 1.8 Delimitation of the Study | 6 |
| 1.9 Organization of the Study | 6 |
| CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE | 8 |
| 2.0 Introduction | 8 |
| 2.1 Kinds of poor writings exhibited by SHS Students' in Composition Writing | 8 |
| 2.1.1 Spelling errors | 9 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.1.2 Punctuation errors | 11 |
| 2.1.3 Grammatical errors | 16 |
| 2.2 Factors Responsible for Poor Writing Skills | 18 |
| 2.2.1 Interference of the mother tongue | 19 |
| 2.2.2 Language loyalty | 20 |
| 2.2.3 Perception blind spot | 20 |
| 2.2.4 Inadequate qualified English teachers. | 21 |
| 2.2.5 Inadequate infrastructure and TLMs | 22 |
| 2.2.7 Negative attitudes of teachers and learners | 23 |
| 2.3 Suggestions to Improve SHS Students' Composition Skills | 24 |
| 2.3.1 Provision of qualified English teachers | 24 |
| 2.3.2 Adequate provision and use of TLMs | 24 |
| 2.3.3 Effective use of motivation. | 25 |
| 2.3.4 Developing positive attitudes | 25 |
| 2.4 Pedagogical Relevance of the Suggestions. | 26 |
| 2.5 The Importance of Writing Skills | 29 |
| 2.6 Theoretical Framework | 33 |
| 2.6.1 Background to the Concept of Error Analysis | 33 |
| 2.6.2 Tenets of Error Analysis | 35 |
| 2.7 Distinction between Error and Mistake | 35 |
| 2.8 Justifying the Framework | 36 |
| 2.9 Related Studies | 36 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 40 |
| 3.0 Introduction | 40 |
| 3.1 Research Approach | 40 |
| 3.2 Research Design | 41 |
| 3.3 Population | 41 |
| 3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques | 42 |
| 3.6 Sample Size | 43 |
| 3.7 Research Site | 44 |
| 3.8 Data Collection Instruments | 45 |
| 3.8.1 Documents | 45 |
| 3.8.2 Administration of questionnaires | 46 |
| 3.9 Data Collection Protocol and Ethical Issues | 48 |
| 3.10 Data Analysis | 49 |
| CHAPTER FOUR : RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS | 50 |
| 4.0 Introduction | 50 |
| 4.1.1 Concord errors | 51 |
| 4.1.1.2 Use of non-count nouns as count nouns | 51 |
| 4.1.1.3 Reduplication for emphasis | 52 |
| 4.1.1.4 Tautological expressions | 52 |
| 4.1.1.5 Misuse of tenses | 53 |
| 4.1.2 Punctuation errors | 54 |
| 4.1.2.1 Wrong use of end punctuation marks | 54 |
| 4.1.2.2 Capitalization errors | 55 |
| 4.1.2.2.1 Wrong capitalization | 55 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 4.1.2.2.2 Omission of capital letters in sentences | 56 |
| 4.1.2.3 Conclusion | 57 |
| 4.1.3 Spelling errors | 57 |
| 4.1.3.1 Conclusion | 58 |
| 4.1.4. Other errors | 59 |
| 4.1.4.1 Article errors | 59 |
| 4.1.4.2 Wrong use of articles | 59 |
| 4.1.4.3 Omission of articles | 60 |
| 4.1.4.2 Prepositional errors | 60 |
| 4.1.4.2.1 Wrong use of prepositions | 60 |
| CHAPTER FIVE : SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND | |
| CONCLUSION | |
| 5.0 Introduction | 88 |
| 5.1 Summary of findings | 88 |
| 5.1.1 Concord errors | 88 |
| 5.1.2 Punctuation errors | 88 |
| 5.1.3 Spelling errors | 89 |
| 5.1.4 Students and teachers' views on the writing deficiencies of SHS students | 89 |
| 5.2 Factors Causing Poor Writing Skills | 90 |
| 5.2.1 Interference of the mother tongue | 90 |
| 5.2.2 Negative influence of technology | 90 |
| 5.2.3 Negative attitudes of students and teachers | 91 |
| 5.2.4 Inadequate qualified English teachers | 91 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.2.5 Inadequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs | 92 |
| 5.3 Perceptions of students and teachers on the factors causing poor writing skills | 92 |
| 5.3.1 Reasons given by teachers to justify the factors causing writing deficiencies | 93 |
| 5.3.2 Attitudes of students and teachers towards poor writing skills | 93 |
| 5.4 Suggestions to Improve Students Writing Skills | 93 |
| 5.4.1 Suggestions of students and teachers to improve students' writing skills | 94 |
| 5.4.2 Recommendations given by students and teachers on error correction | 94 |
| 5.4.3 Students and teachers justifying the solutions to remedy poor writing skills | 95 |
| 5.5 Conclusion | 95 |
| 5.6 Pedagogical Implications of the Findings | 97 |
| 5.7 Recommendations | 97 |
| 5.8 Suggestions for further studies | 98 |
| REFERENCES | 100 |
| APPENDIX A: Questionnaires for students | 110 |
| APPENDIX B: Questionnaires For teachers | 113 |
| APPENDIX C : Samples of spelling errors found in students' essays | 117 |
| APPENDIX D : Sample written scripts of final year students of yendi senior high school | 120 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|--|-------------|
| 3.6.1: Sample size for the study | 43 |
| 4.1.5.1: Students' views on writing challenges | 62 |
| 4.1.5.2: Teachers' views on writing challenges | 64 |
| 2.1: Students' perceptions on factors poor writings | 67 |
| 4.2.2: Teachers' perceptions on factors causing poor writings | 69 |
| 4.2.3: Teachers justifying the factors causing poor writing skills | 71 |
| 4.2.4: Attitudes of students towards poor writing skills | 73 |
| 4.4.5: Attitudes of teachers towards poor writing skills | 74 |
| 4.3.1: Suggestions of students to improve writing skills | 76 |
| 4.3.2: Suggestions of teachers to improve writing skills | 78 |
| 4.3.3: Students' expectations on how to treat their errors | 80 |
| 4.4.4 Teachers' expectations on how to treat errors | 82 |
| 4.3.5 Students justifying solutions to improve writing skills | 85 |
| 4.3.6 Teachers justifying the solutions to improve writing skills | 87 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|--|------|
| 1: Students' views on poor composition writing | 63 |
| 2: Teachers' views on poor composition writing | 65 |
| 3: Students' perceptions on factors causing poor writings | 68 |
| 4: Teachers' perceptions on factors causing poor writings | 69 |
| 5: Teachers justifying factors causing poor writing skills | 72 |
| 7: Attitudes of teachers towards poor writing skills | 74 |
| 8: Students' suggestions to improve their writing skills | 76 |
| 9: Suggestions of teachers to improve writing skills | 78 |
| 10: Students' expectations on how to treat errors | 80 |
| 11: Teachers' expectations on how to treat errors | 81 |
| 12: Students' justifying the solutions to improve writing skills | 83 |
| 13: Teachers justifying the solutions to improve writing skills | 85 |

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with an aim to investigate problems in Yendi Senior High School learners' writings and factors that hinder their writing skills. It also aimed at obtaining suggestions on how to improve the SHS learners' writing skills. For this purpose, a pre survey and questionnaires were administered to English language teachers and sampled final year students in the School. Writing samples were also collected from 84 SHS English learners to identify the major problems in their writings. The errors derived from students' essays were analyzed using a combination of content analysis and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the major problems in SHS learners' language writings are insufficient linguistic proficiency (including command over grammar, syntax and vocabulary), writing anxiety, poor writing habit, lack of ideas, reliance on L1 and weak structure organization. These challenges are influenced by various factors including untrained teachers, ineffective teaching methods and examination system, lack of reading and writing practice, large classrooms, low motivation and lack of infrastructure and TLMs. Remedial measures such as increased reading, conscious and incidental vocabulary teaching, writing practice, employing trained teachers and reforms in the examination system, and writing competitions are recommended for an improved performance of writing by the students.



CHAPTER ONE

1.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem and purpose of the study. It also unfolds the objectives, research questions and significance of the study. Delimitation of the study and limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter.

1.1. Background to the Study

Language is an essential instrument without which, we cannot convey our thoughts expressible to others, nor can we engage in the activities that commonly take place in the society we build around ourselves (Dipietro, 1994). Greater portion of English language evaluation seeks to measure the four (4) core language skills ranging from listening, speaking, reading, to writing proficiencies. However, many parents including some educationists in Ghana pay much attention to reading at the expense of writing.

As a result of poor composition writing skills, students have performed rather poorly during examinations over the years. A recent chief examiner's report on WASSCE results for instance reveals that, over the years, there has been consistent flop in students' composition writing, and this affected them in all the other subjects (WAEC GH, 2006). The revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (2016) rather posits that teaching at the senior high schools is affected by low proficiency in English which acts as the medium of instruction. If students exhibit low writing proficiency, it can go a long way to affect their entire performance in the final examinations.

Firstly, the writing aspect is the highest of all the language skills in Bloom's Taxonomy. Thus, one's excellent writing is worth to earn him respect in the society. Poor writing on the contrary will be difficult to comprehend and creates bad

impression of the fellow. It is true that most renowned literature authors have emerged from the grounds of their creative writing efficacies, thus, their foregrounding style stems from their rich writing acumen. However, others have been dumped and silenced because of their poor writing works.

Writing is a significant skill in language. Its significance increases when it comes to writing in English language which is extensively used for global mediation of knowledge. Hyland (2003) affirms that performance in language development is subject to improvement in writing skills. A text of an effective ESL writer must be cohesive, logical, clearly structured, interesting, and properly organized with a wide range of vocabulary and mastery of conventions in mechanics.

However, writing is often considered merely a part of teaching and learning grammar and syntax which resultantly underscores the nature and importance of writing, and this affects its growth. Hence the development of this skill draws considerable attention for its learning and teaching from the very early phase of language education. Nunam (1989) argues that writing is an extremely difficult cognitive activity which requires the learner to have control over various factors. These factors vary from academic background and personal interest of the writer (SHS students) to various psychological, linguistic and cognitive phenomena (Dar & Khan, 2015).

In spite of all the overwhelming merits that parents, educational policy makers and learners gain in English language via writing potency, there is still a significant percentage of falling standards of English language in the various Senior High Schools due to poor writing skills.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

English is the medium of instruction from Basic (4) to infinity in Ghana, and it is taught at the Kindergarten to Basic (3) as a subject. It is a government policy that

English be used as language of interaction. Despite this policy, students at the secondary school levels exhibit gross incompetence in writing when they are expected to use the English language fluently to improve their performance. Hyland (2003) indicates that the writing skills of students are alarmingly weak and substandard. These may be attributed to incompetence in syntax, coherence, idea expression, content selection, topic sentence, rhetorical conventions, mechanics and organization, lack of vocabulary or inappropriate use of vocabulary among others. As captured in the Education and Training Policy (2015), learners who complete primary schools are expected to cope with the English language as a medium of instruction throughout the secondary school level. But we often see the opposite of this in reality. This leaves an impression that they are handicapped in using the language; in speaking and writing. Malekela (2003) explains that if learners are handicapped in the written aspect of the language, classroom interaction will be impossible. It could be inferred that students who are deficient in writing may not function effectively, not only in English but in all their academic endeavors. This is because the students' performance in the written aspect of the English language influences their overall performance in final examination. Researches that have been done on the problems of writing have concentrated on how students' academic performances have been affected by their poor writing skill. Other researchers have tried to find solutions to the problem of poor writing among the students. The present study needs to find out why the problems still persist after all possible interventions have been done.

Yendi Senior High School where students persistently write poorly, have not been included in any such studies to investigate poor writing abilities of students. This current research set out to find out why there are persistent poor writing abilities

among the SHS three (3) students in particular. This will enable the researcher to trace the sources of those errors in order to suggest pedagogical measures in that regard.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is not just to add to the already existing corpus of research work in the field of poor writing skills but to trace the root causes of those poor writings and offer suggestions which will eventually improve the standards of English Language in the Senior High Schools. This study is meant to inform students, teachers, and all stakeholders of education in Ghana the actual writing deficiencies of our students in the SHS level.

The researcher is convinced that if all these players in education are made aware of the enormity of the challenge, appropriate measures will be put in place to reverse the trend and eventually the standard will improve (Agor, 2003).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The long-term objective of this study is to investigate the poor writing skills of Senior High School students. However, the specific objectives are:

- i. To identify the kinds of poor writings of SHS students in composition writing.
- ii. To examine the factors which hinder the SHS students' writing skills.
- iii. To suggest solutions on how to improve the SHS students' writing skills.

1.5 Research Questions

The study employs the following research questions to carry out the investigation:

- i. What are the kinds of poor writings of SHS students in composition writing?
- ii. What are the factors responsible for students' poor writing?
- iii. How can the SHS students' composition writing skills be improved?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Since the study aims at diagnosing students' weaknesses in composition writing, the essence of the study lies on the fact that findings of this study will enable the SHS three (3) students to realize their writing deficiencies in order to improve upon their writing skills. In fact, good writing skill is very remarkable for progression of every student in the academic realms. It is justified by Mahaboob (2016) that writing is a very significant skill in language production. Its significance increases when it comes to writing in English language which is extensively used for global mediation of knowledge.

Teachers and other educational stakeholders will acquire best English teaching pedagogies and practices suitable for their lesson's delivery and assessment.

Finally, the study will remind educational policy makers about modern theories, principles and approaches to writing, that need reinforcement so that they can integrate it comprehensively into the curriculum of the Senior High Schools. Adhering to the recommendations of this study, will make parents excited to see their wards excelling in writing creatively using English language. Hyland (2003) believes that performance in language development is subject to improvement in writing skills.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

In the course of the study, the researcher encountered a few challenges in the light of finance, time, and students' unwilling nature to respond to some questions posed by the researcher and absenteeism on the part of the students.

Financially, the researcher faced a lot of fiscal problems as he engaged in travelling frequently to distant places to source information for the study. Thus, high cost of transportation.

Another constrain faced by the researcher was the limited time allotted for the completion of the research. The researcher had to work under the dictate of time which might have hindered the validity of the study.

Also, the target people and the students did not provide the researcher with ample information for the study due to their belief system.

Finally, the study was qualitative in nature, therefore, it relied on respondents' perceptions and views, and the quality of data depended on them.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study examines the poor writing skills of students in Yendi Senior High School and not the entire schools in the Municipality. It is further restricted to errors in essay writing of English despite the fact that students replicate similar challenges in all other subjects.

The study focuses on the types of errors in writing composition in particular, but not other aspects of English language skills like, listening, speaking, and reading, although, all the aspects can be evaluated in the written product.

This study examines the poor writing skills of students and it is confined to SHS three students in the school only. The research could have been carried out in any part of Ghana, because the problem is a national affair. Thus, the overall perspectives of writing errors of SHS students in English language will be explored. Yet the scope of my study is delimited to only the form three students of Yendi Senior High School. Hence the findings cannot be over generalized.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study comprises five chapters. Chapter one introduces the thesis as thoroughly discussed already.

Chapter two consists of the review of related literature and the type of frame work adopted by the researcher. In this chapter, issues relating to the topic and the research objectives as discussed in different researches are reviewed.

The third chapter deals with the methodology which explains how the study was conducted. Here, there is a thorough discussion of the methods used in data collection. These include administration of reconnaissance survey, questionnaires, documents and observation. It reflects areas like research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, as well as data analysis.

The fourth chapter looks at the results that will be obtained from the analysis of data. The results are based on the following areas; inadequate infrastructure, lack of instructional media such as libraries and language laboratories, lack of innovation and motivation on the part of teachers on one hand, and poor attitude of students on the other hand, and a host of others. The chapter also provides suggestions to improve upon the main factors responsible for poor writing skills of SHS students. The final chapter, five, gives a summary of the results. It discusses the students' poor writing skills, its factors, and pedagogical implications of those challenges. This chapter ends with suggestions and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the opinions made by earlier researchers on the topic under study. The relevant related literature for review includes; writing challenges of the SHS students, the factors responsible for those poor writings and the solutions. The section finally looks at the type of frame work adopted by the researcher in carrying out his findings and the relevance of writing skills.

2.1 Kinds of poor writings exhibited by SHS Students' in Composition

Writing

In the first place, writing can be defined as a cognitive process that tests memory, thinking ability, and verbal command to successfully express the ideas; because proficient composition of a text indicates successful learning of a second language (Geiser, 2002). According to Widdowson (2001), writing is the use of visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language. That means, writing in one sense is the production of sentences of usage.

Muller (2000) opined that even though the writing production is an expression of one's individuality and personality, it is important to remember that writing is also a social endeavour; a way of communicating with people. For that matter, learning how to write has gained considerable importance for the last two decades because of two factors, its use as a tool for effective communication of ideas and the extensive research work carried out in this area to examine various issues faced by L2 writers (Dar & Khan, 2015).

According to Dulay and Burt (1978), "errors are the flawed side of learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some

selected norm of mature performance”. In my context, “poor writing” is used synonymously to writing errors, which can be defined as the “deficiency in writing composition”, that characterizes students of Yendi Senior High School.

The major writing challenges experienced by Yendi Senior High School students to be reviewed include spelling errors, punctuation errors and Concord errors. Other insignificant errors are also to be examined.

2.1.1 Spelling errors

In recent years, the standard of English has been criticized as being low (WAEC GH, 2001-2010). The Chief Examiner’s Report on the 2001 - 2010 Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E.) singled out poor spelling as a major cause of the poor performance by candidates during examination.

In Owusu (2005) analysis of the Chief Examiner of WAEC’s report, concerning the Junior High School Certificate Examination between 1993 and 2003, he highlighted spelling errors as a major problem in written grammar of students. He opined that students’ inability to spell words correctly lead to the deduction of marks resulting in poor performance. These reports buttress the previous reports that highlighted spelling errors as being common in written grammar of students.

The Chief Examiner’s Report on the 2008 Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E.) described the level of spelling during B.E.C.E. English papers as “terrible”. For this reason, the report suggested that English Language teachers in basic schools should intensify “the good old practice of spelling drills” in all schools and encourage dictation of single words and short passages during language lessons. These he emphasized “will improve spelling” of students (WAEC GH, 2008).

It is against this backdrop that the present study sought to analyze spelling errors in written essays of Yendi Senior High School students as a case study.

Graham et al (1997) postulate that poor spelling is linked to overall essay quality, which determines performance. The performance of students in composition writing has been falling and this attracted the attention of English language researchers, educational policy makers, the conscious masses as well as the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) (Daily Graphic, 17th April, 2000 at WAEC's 6th Annual Endowment Fund Lecture, Accra 12th March, 2001 by Prof. Florence Abena Dolphyne p. 8). Due to the status of English language in the educational system in Ghana, failure in the subject at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E.) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), serves as an automatic hindrance to the next level of education. Revelations from the reports of WAEC Chief Examiners from previous years to recent time on B.E.C.E. revealed several errors contributing to the poor performance of students in English. Prominent among them was spelling errors.

It is imperative to investigate spelling errors made by SHS students (in Yendi Senior High school) for the first time to unearth the causes and prescribe solutions to them. It is therefore my view that even though a lot of researchers have worked on grammatical errors in the written essays of students whether specifically or generally, a few of them such as Geber (1984) and Twum (2011) who studied spelling errors in the written grammar of Junior High School students, Kirkpatrick (2009) who worked on spelling errors of American slang words, Kyte (1958) who explored common spelling errors made by intermediate students, etc., have delved into spelling errors and that most researchers focus on other types of errors. For this reason, the present

study in an attempt to fill the gap in the literature, explores spelling errors evident in written essays of students in Yendi SHS in particular.

2.1.2 Punctuation errors

In regard to the effect of using good punctuation or bad ones, there are some studies that show the importance of this issue. For example, Meyer (1985) found that educators see punctuation accuracy as the difference between “good” writing and, “bad” writing. He added that writing in an easy to read style, requires students to use various punctuation marks correctly to help the reader construct the intended meaning of each sentence appropriately and meaningfully. Rumki (2005) stated that wrong punctuation can interrupt the flow of ideas and change meaning, but properly used punctuation not only helps readers understand your meaning but also makes them engrossed in one's writing. Additionally, Robinson (2002) stated that good punctuation makes a lot for clean thought. A mania for punctuation is also an occupational hazard for almost any teacher; he added that the rules are important. But by themselves they are insufficient. Unless one has an emotional investment, rules are too easily forgotten. What learners and teachers must instill is an attitude toward punctuation, a set of feelings about both the process in general and the individual marks of punctuation. That set of feelings might be called a philosophy of punctuation. To him, punctuation is informed by two ideals: clarity and simplicity. Punctuation has the primary responsibility of contributing to the plainness of one's meaning. It has the secondary responsibility of being as invisible as possible, of not calling attention to it.

As for the level of seriousness as pointed out by other researchers, some researchers have found out that misuse of commas in different respects is the most serious and common errors. For example, Alley (1987) stated that a comma splice is a comma that

joins two independent clauses. One should replace comma splices with either periods or semicolons. What is more, he said, is that the possessive singular of nouns by adding apostrophe 's', no matter what the final letter is, could be considered as one of the major punctuation errors. Alley added the idea that the space devoted to each punctuation mark reflects the degree of difficulty that most people have with it. These conclusions are in harmony with Russell (1984). For example, apostrophes and bracketing commas receive a great deal of discussion, while question marks are dealt with much more briefly, since hardly anybody finds them difficult. In this context, Menand (2004) added that nonrestrictive clauses must be preceded by a comma. If not, they become like a wild ride downhill and the comma is deployed as the mood strikes.

Al-Mutib (1989) states that the use of punctuation marks and the semicolon in particular, to connect two related clauses, is very rare. However, the comma was inappropriately used to link two clauses where the result is often a run-on sentence. Some punctuation marks prompt the reader to give a word or sentence more than the usual emphasis. For example, a command with a period does not evoke the same emphatic response as the same command with an exclamation mark. A dash or colon has more emphatic force than a comma. For example: The employees were surprised by the decision, which was not to change company policy. The employees were surprised by the decision—no change in company policy. The employees were surprised by the decision: no change in company policy (Al-Mutib,1989). In the Palestinian context and in this regard, Khalil (2015) mention that the most common frequent errors made by Palestinian EFL students in their writing are commas and periods. The most common errors are categorized into comma splice and superfluous

commas. Superfluous comma errors refer to over punctuating sentences by inserting commas in the wrong place.

The present researcher supports Gaines (2002) mainly in the part through which he showed that the most common errors the learners of English make could be arranged to frequency of error according to the following order; wrong use of commas to replace the semi-colon or vice versa. Commas are probably the most frequently used punctuation marks, and comma errors come up frequently in student writing. The most common mistake that students make when using commas is thinking that a comma goes wherever one hears a pause in a sentence. That's not true at all, and this assumption is likely to lead to comma errors. Conjunctive adverbs (like "however," "therefore," "moreover") or transitional phrases (like "in fact", "in addition") must be used with a semicolon when they connect two independent clauses (Gaines, 2002).

According to Wilde (1992), readers have trouble understanding written English because of the lack of commas; they have to go back and re-read a certain section of written work to get the full gist of it. If punctuation is required to parse a text (Bernard,1995) and if punctuation is generally misused.

For the level of seriousness as pointed out by other researchers, some researchers have found out that the misuse of italics and quotations is in different respects the most serious and common error. For example, Robinson (2002) wanted to mention two other practices that are out of hand: the use of italics for emphasis and of quotation marks for distancing. These are serious errors because of the intellectual tone they set. Italics rarely fail to insult the reader's intelligence. More often than not they tell learners to emphasize a word or phrase that they would emphasize automatically in any natural reading of the sentence. Quotation marks create the spurious impression of an aristocracy of sensibility.

In regard to capitalization, Sofer and Raimes (2002) emphasized the fact that lack of capitalization in the Arabic alphabet could be the basic reasons behind the Arab learners' misuse of the English capital letter. Pausing is another problematic area where learners fail to achieve correctly. For example, Daniel (2004) showed that pausing is different from one punctuation mark to another which affects the meaning and changing it.

Teaching strategies and remedies when dealing with teaching and learning the punctuation system, have had a lot of research attention. For example, Moy (1996) conceded that punctuation is not as uniform and prescriptive as it was assumed, and that teaching this sub-skill can fall into a mechanical, monotonous abyss. The study employs teachers to encourage their students to explore a diversity of written and entertainment media. Doing that, according to the study, makes students to learn to discover and appreciate permissible variations and violations of punctuation. Teachers should therefore employ that approach instead of encapsulating students with boring rules. Various novel and thought-provoking assignments can be introduced thus allowing the learner to interact with authentic English, such as collecting data samples from magazines, listening to the news to compare reported and direct speech, and administering a punctuation "test" to peers and other teachers. The benefits of this discovery approach to teaching punctuation will increase students' motivation, arouse and sustain their interest, and foster independence which are all significant pedagogical considerations in language learning.

Mayo et al (2000) described a new Intelligent Tutoring System (ITS) that teaches the mechanical rules of English capitalization and punctuation. Students must interactively capitalize and punctuate short pieces of unpunctuated, lower case text (the completion exercise). The system represents the domain as a set of constraints.

The I T S was evaluated during several sessions in a classroom of 10-11year old school children. The results showed that the children effectively mastered the 25 rules represented in the system.

Adding to the role of teaching and punctuation errors, Angellilo (2002) stated that teachers often lament that many children do not remember to put in the punctuation when they write. Perhaps teachers need to change the way they teach punctuation by leaning toward inquiry and conveying meaning. For example, they might show children how punctuation works, rather than giving them punctuation rules. They might teach children to value punctuation marks as much as letters and words for conveying meaning. Allen (2002) emphasized the role of step by step procedure via describing the basics of constructing statements and how they are best expressed using the basic elements of punctuation- from the comma to the full stop. The 'so' teacher of English in regard to punctuation marks should select the best materials that can teach learners punctuation system in an interesting way and in this respect, Vallentin (2004) said that one of the best-selling books in Britain at the moment was one on 'correct' English punctuation called *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynn Truss. He believes, however, that many punctuation marks are becoming obsolete. For example, he very rarely sees colons or semi-colons used any more-which seems similar to the findings of the present study and he can't help but think that Truss's book is just another ultimately futile attempt to stop language doing exactly what it wants to do. Lukman (2006) added that clarifying writing by using punctuation in an efficient manner could be possible but not through rules and grammar lessons which bore the readers. Instead, they sought to inform by showing examples of successful use by well-known authors. Gaines (1992) showed that the sentence is a standard textual unit in natural language processing applications. In many languages the

punctuation mark that indicates the end-of- sentence boundary is ambiguous; consequently, educators and teachers should do their best to make them clear so as to remove such ambiguity mainly between question mark and an exclamation mark.

We use punctuations in writing because we lack phonetic and visual means of indicating how the flow of sound is to be parsed. Consequently, good punctuation enables sophisticated processing; while bad punctuation causes a lot of trouble and the reader is left scrabbling for sense.

2.1.3 Grammatical errors

Several studies have been carried out to identify the taxonomy of errors in written English produced by speakers of other languages. Ceylon (1972) conducted a survey of students' errors in English. The findings revealed that the errors made by students are mainly on articles, prepositions, possessive forms and word order. They suggested that those new categories showed that students' errors have been shifted from those in twenty years ago. Therefore, they suggested that those new error taxonomies should be taken into consideration by the textbook writer for Ceylonese.

Wyatte (1973) studied the errors made by the prospective participants of the East African Certificate Examination. He identified fourteen categories of errors. The findings of his study showed that the major areas of errors were spelling (18.4%), sentence structure (16.6%), verb groups (15.2%) and noun groups (16.2%), punctuation (7.8%), whereas the other nine categories were less than five percent each. Those were: Pronouns (1.6), adjectives (2.4), prepositions (4.1), intensifiers (0.6%), confusion and misuse of idioms (4.7%), contraction, abbreviation and informalities (2.6%), repetition (3.7%), clumsy or meaningless expression (2.4%) and carelessness (3.6%).

The same research was conducted by Thom (1986) to identify the taxonomy of errors produced by Vietnamese students and English teachers in Vietnam. He classified the errors into ten categories. In comparison, the major categories of errors produced by students and teachers were: Spelling (15.38: 11.42), lexical (23.84: 34.23), verbal (18.46: 11.42), prepositional (15.38: 11.42), article (13.84: 8.57), punctuation (5.38: 8.57) and morphological (4.61: 11.42). Meanwhile, both students and teachers produced fewer errors on three other categories namely concord (1.53: 0), word order (0.76:0) and discourse (0.76: 0).

The more recent studies on error analysis still emphasize the taxonomy of the errors, the cause of errors and their implication on language teaching. In Secondary School context, there have been two studies on error analysis on students' essay writing in Malaysian secondary school, and one in Jordanian context. Maros (2007) found that the three most common errors produced by Jordanian students were the use of articles, subject-verb agreement, and copula verb 'be'. Darus et al (2009) studied the errors in the written English essays made by secondary school students in Malaysia. The findings of their study revealed there were fifteen categories of errors made by students, and the most common errors were singular or plural forms, tense, word choice, preposition, subject and verb agreement, and word order.

Zawahreh (2012) studied errors made by ten graders in writing English essays and found that the most prominent errors were subject-verb agreement, insertion of preposition, verb omission, tense, and word choice.

At the University context, error analysis has been conducted in Nepal, Jordan, and Iran. Giri (2010) found that bachelor level students of English in Nepal produced all sort of grammatical errors in the use of the English language, and the seven most committed errors were on conditional, mood, verb forms, tense, main verb, subject-

verb agreement, question formation. In Jordan, Abushihab (2011) studied grammatical errors produced by university students enrolled in paragraph writing class. They found that the most problematic areas for students were preposition, morphological errors, articles, verbs, passivation, and tense. Whiles Abbasi (2011) studying students' error in Iranian university tried to reclassify errors into lexico-semantic and syntactico-morphological errors. In lexico-semantics categories, they found that the student produced false cognates (82%) and Cross association (18%). In syntactico-morphological categories, the seven most occurrence errors were word order, tense, there-existential, passivation, word form, preposition, and question formation.

Summarily, the studies above show that the sources of errors are predictable but their frequencies cannot be predicted. Palmer's (1980) idea that the frequency of errors in terms of percentage it represents of all mistakes is relevant in the analysis of errors on written production of a language is still widely accepted.

2.2 Factors Responsible for Poor Writing Skills

Writing is the most challenging area in learning second language. It is based on appropriate and strategic use of language with accuracy and communicative potential (Dar & Khan 2015). Senior High School student writers face various writing problems at different stages of their learning. Generally, these problems can be classified into linguistic, psychological, cognitive and pedagogical categories (Haider, 2012). For instance, the students struggle with the structural components of English; because an inappropriate structure complicates the content and comprehension of the text, which a reader deciphers through involvement of a mental process (Quintero, 2008).

Similarly, an incoherent text fails to communicate ideas, which causes lack of confidence in learners even if they have mastered the syntactic, lexical and grammatical command over text composition (Rico, 2014). Students' lack of confidence is also caused by a teaching strategy which does not conform to students' learning styles and cultural backgrounds (Ahmed et al, 2013).

It is argued that poor writing skills originate from two factors: the teacher and the learner. Teachers lack appropriate pedagogic approach to teach writing, including providing prompt and effective feedback to students, and most crucially, teachers' lack of ability to motivate students. On the other hand, students face numerous challenges: effects of L1 transfer, lack of reading, motivation, and practice. In Yendi SHS, student writers encounter series of psychological, cognitive, social and linguistic problems while converting ideas into text.

However, other studies have categorized these factors into some broad domains, for example, teacher' incompetence (Harmer, 2008), and methodological inappropriacy (Ahmed et al, 2013). The study aims at bringing the latent linguistic, social, psychological and cognitive factors into light for further enquiry and suitable solution.

2.2.1 Interference of the mother tongue

Firstly, most SHS students have been bedeviled with the dominant use of the mother tongue (L1) at the peril of English. Usman (2012) is of the view that students are engulfed by complex linguistic situation that compels them to use their indigenous language when they are expected to master and gain command of the English Language. Danial et al (1980) clearly stated;

Writing requires the writer to call upon memory and put facts, organize thought and finally put them in to a logical sequence, bringing to bear on the

task all available sequence, all available knowledge of words, sentence structure, grammar, and form in order to communicate effectively.

Fema (2003) adds that, the major cause of errors in English used by students can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue with the English language. Usually, students tend to use the native language in almost all their interactions while the English is only used within the four walls of the classroom and ends there. This culture among the various Senior High Schools students can contribute greatly to their deficiency in composing.

2.2.2 Language loyalty

Language loyalty as captured by Ellis (1985) refers to the situation where the L2 learner remains so loyal to his L1 that; he is irresistibly tempted to transfer elements of his L1 (for example, a syntactic structure) into the target language. Secondly, if a Ghanaian learner of English says 'I'm coming instead of just a moment' or 'see my face tomorrow instead of expect me tomorrow'. The error analyst will describe the source of the error as language loyalty.

2.2.3 Perception blind spot

According to Ellis (1985), the L2 learner of English may not be able to auditorily perceive particular English sounds even though he may hear them. This situation is called perception blind spot. For example, when a Ghanaian says /nɔ:f/ for /nɔ:θ/, /sa:f/ for /sa:θ/ and /ba:f/ for /ba:θ/. Critics of error analysis would relate such error to perception blind spot. However, the reality is that the Ghanaian learner is unable to produce the voiceless dental fricative sound /θ/ and rather replaces it with the voiceless labio-dental fricative sound /f/. This is because the former /θ/ does not exist in the phonological category of his L1. That is why he replaces it with the latter /f/ which is the closest alternative from his L1.

2.2.4 Inadequate qualified English teachers.

One important cause of errors in students' essays that cannot be omitted is of course the caliber of teachers employed to handle English language at the SHS level. Ferris (1985) suggested that English teachers should relentlessly control what students write by scribbling relevant words to fill appropriate spaces given them during composition writing process.

Adedokun (2011) opines that poorly trained English and untrained teachers were employed to teach and prepare students for the school certificate examination in English language. This unfortunate situation manifested in the performance of the SHS students' written scripts. That is why Lado (1957) says that, the teacher who has made a comparison of the L2 with the L1 will know better what the real problems are and provide methods for teaching them.

Ahmed (2013) testifies that students' lack of confidence is also caused by a teaching strategy which does not conform to students' learning styles and cultural background. It is rather argued that poor writing skills originate from two factors; the teacher and the learner. Teachers lack appropriate pedagogic approach to teach writing, including providing prompt and effective feedback to the students, and crucially, teachers' lack of ability to motivate students. On the contrary, students face numerous challenges; effects of L1 transfer lack of reading, motivation, and practice.

Finally, numerous factors that affect students' writing skills have also been identified in literature. These are associated with the motivation of learners who are generally unclear about the purpose and significance of the text in the L2 learning. Similarly, social media, inconsistent feedback from teachers to learners, learners' lack of analytical and evaluative approach, large and unmanageable class sizes also

negatively impact the structural and communicative accuracy of the students' text (Pineteh, 2013).

Empirical studies revealed that the L1 plays a major role in L2 writing. For instance, Kubota, (1998) has found in a study among Japanese ESL students that the L2 used similar patterns from L1 in their essay writings. He found that L2 writers transfer organization and rhetorical patterns from their L1. They also used the L1 knowledge to access appropriate word order and compared cross-linguistic equivalents (Cummings, 1990).

2.2.5 Inadequate infrastructure and TLMs

Inadequate infrastructure and instructional materials are among the factors causing students' writing deficiency. Sa' ad (2007) posits that teaching and learning takes place effectively when classes are moderate. Roger (1981) asserts that instructional materials and facilities are important part of the process of learning as they provide practice and feedback in the learning task. This situation goes to confirm the acculturation model which says that the rate at which a person acquires second language (L2) is determined by the degree to which he or she acculturates to the target language culture (Schuman, 1978). In this regard, if the conditions necessary for good writing are not encouraging it would tend to impede learners writing progress.

2.2.6 Negative influence of computer or technology

In recent times, the use of computer or technology has become part of pedagogy. This has made teaching and learning easier and quite interesting. In many situations, the use of technology has replaced the arduous task of the teacher carrying bulky teaching and learning materials to class every day. However, the use of the computer or technology has adversely affected second language acquisition. The "computer language" has affected many second language learners especially in the area of

written communication. For example, a mobile phone advertisement culled from the Daily Guide newspaper of Thursday, April, 2011:10 reads; “One 4 all offers a more convenient and flexible way to top up your mobile credit on your network”. When students read this type of information which is in the print media, they tend to copy because they see it as a correct form. Source: <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>

2.2.7 Negative attitudes of teachers and learners

Finally, one remarkable factor responsible for deficiency of SHS students in essay writing is the attitude of teachers toward innovation and motivation on one hand, as well as the negative attitude of students toward learning of English language on the other hand. That is why Abdullahi (2003) stressed on the fact that, teachers mostly prefer to use traditional ways of teaching which they have been familiar with or as they were taught which do not necessarily aid proper learning. Ya’ u and Sa’ad (2007) have both agreed that “successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right teaching method.

In conclusion, interference of the mother tongue, negative influence of technology, lack of motivation and innovation, insufficient time for teaching writing, lack of instructional aides, overcrowded classrooms, traditional pedagogy and students’ weak academic backgrounds have been reported to be some of the factors affecting students’ ability to compose (Butt & Rasul, 2012). Also, outdated textbooks that neither promote the importance of writing skills nor give any opportunities too, consequently fail to invoke an audience (Haider, 2012). The worst case lies in the body of research critiques implicating teachers who instead of promoting creative skills urge students for rote learning and exam-oriented language production (Rahman, 2002).

2.3 Suggestions to Improve SHS Students' Composition Skills

Literature provides so many suggestions on how to improve students' writing potency. Some of the solutions include employing qualified English teachers, adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs, motivation and developing positive attitudes for essay writing.

2.3.1 Provision of qualified English teachers

The ideal English teacher should be seen as a figure and worthy of emulation but not just a mere teacher in the subject. Literature reveals that, it is the teacher who sets the tone for learning activities (Allen and Vallette, 1997 cited by Quist, 2000). Since to teach is to communicate, English teachers must have maximum communicative competence to enhance effective teaching of the subject. Besides, a teacher must be knowledgeable in the language itself so that she or he can make informed decision regarding what should be done or not to be done. Researches demonstrate clearly that among the factors that lead to students' poor writing skills are qualities of teachers (Mosha, 2014).

2.3.2 Adequate provision and use of TLMs

Teachers must constantly use adequate and relevant Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs). Nyamubi (2003) says: teaching and learning materials supply concrete basis for conceptual thinking. If the teacher designs better, clear and concrete teaching materials, his teaching and the acquisition of learners becomes easier. Therefore, teachers should do well to use learning materials appropriately in their lesson delivery especially in English composition writing. This can be achieved by using word cards, manikins, substitution tables, and all sort of language games etcetera in English lesson delivery. If the above is closely adhered to, students will exhibit high proficiency in writing essays which will help improve the standards so desired.

2.3.3 Effective use of motivation.

Another important way of curbing writing errors in students' essays is the effective use of motivation. Teachers should pay more attention to writing in particular since evaluation is normally done in the written form during examinations. Petty (2004) argues, if students are not motivated to learn, their learning efficiency will be slow such that they may learn virtually nothing and if you know how to motivate students, you can highly increase their learning proficiency. Thus, if students are motivated extrinsically through praises, awards in the form of books and other prizes for excellent written output at the end of each exams conducted by the teacher or the school, the students' morale would be boosted as they would wish to learn more and get more. Through these kind gestures, an impetus is provided to the students which compels them to take learning as a challenge, and this adversely would lead to excellent writing output.

2.3.4 Developing positive attitudes

Udumah (1998) adds that teachers should devise ways through which they can help the students improve their learning; speech and listening skills. He categorically stated that: firstly, students should be thought correct pronunciation in English language in order to minimize the effect that the first language has on the second one, secondly, that instructional materials and facilities like language laboratories should be constantly provided to aid in proper and effective teaching and learning of English language.

Darko (2009) examining the impact of the Process Approach to the teaching and writing of composition in SHS bitterly laments that in spite of the crucial nature of writing, most students have difficulty in writing because they seem to believe that it is a difficult process. He holds the view that the process approach to writing should be

experimented on pilot basis as the starting point in the writing programme in some SHS.

In sum, teachers and educational stake holders must provide an atmosphere suitable for learning English language by considering individual differences and developmental levels of students among others suggested above. This would help reduce students' writing challenges in English language if not completely eradicating it.

2.4 Pedagogical Relevance of the Suggestions.

Proper execution of the suggestions above will benefit students in many ways.

In the first place, adhering to the solutions will enable students participate actively in classrooms during lesson delivery. The teaching and learning process involves two active participants usually, the teacher and the learner, and that, the task does not fall entirely on the teacher but on other avenues as well. The students must also assume more responsibility in the learning process (Quist, 2000). Students' ability in writing can be improved by fostering their interest, developing motivation and zeal for writing through technology (Graham & Perin, 2007). Also, some meta-cognitive, cognitive and socio- affective strategies could also be used for enabling the students to know and practically exercise the writing process (O' Malley, 1990).

Furthermore, teachers can adapt modern pedagogic approaches and can mutually design such task that could motivate and encourage students by giving them liberty of choosing topics of their interest. For instance, Vuzo (2010) reported that, it is through interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and the content of the target subject. On the contrary, such situation is uncommon in Yendi SHS. As quoted in Wong et al, (1994) says; “when I hear, I forget, when I see, I remember, and when I

do, I learn. Cummings noticed that, learning in which students are interactive produces far more effective participation in class. This idea concurs with Quist (2000) which reads; the successful teaching and quality of students' learning is closely related to the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Only professionally trained teachers would be able to execute these pedagogical skills. Hence the employment of professionally trained and committed teachers at the SHS levels would help improved upon students' writing proficiency in English language.

Also, adequate use of relevant teaching and learning materials are very essential to the process of lesson delivery in English language as it enables learners to learn for pleasure. Learning becomes more pleasant to the students because they offer a reality of experience which stimulates self-activity and imagination on the part of learners and thus, makes the class lovely because students are busy in several creative activities which arouse their interest in the subject.

Nyamubi (2003) claims that instructional materials help supply concrete basis for conceptual thinking and hence reduce meaningless word responses from students. Kapoli (2001) also asserts that authentic materials enable the students to explore the language used in day- to- day life which appeals to their needs and interest. It reports in UNESCO (2000) that the provision of teaching and learning materials especially text and other literature books is an effective way of improving students' results, in my case, writing output. Thus, to improve upon the essay writing skills of Yendi Senior High School students, there must be the need for provision and effective use of relevant teaching and learning materials.

Furthermore, activating learners' positive attitudes toward writing and English language in general, is another beneficial suggestion proposed. The ideal teacher

serves as a figure and role model and as such, must have positive attitude towards innovation and must help students to develop those positive attitudes towards creativity in the learning process. Brown (2000) asserts that attitudes refer to the sets of beliefs that the learner holds towards members of the target group and towards his own culture. Language attitude is an important concept because it plays a key role in language learning. In addition, research conducted by Gardner (2006) about attitude and motivation share correlation with linguistic performance of learners emphasizing the role of attitudes and motivation as determinant factors in second language learning.

This confirms Gardner (2006) report that students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels. In essence, students who are motivated have reasons or motives for engaging in relevant activities. Motivation serves as internal catalyst that arouses and sustains students' interest and keeps them engaged in exhibiting certain incredibility's. For instance, the mere use of well done, excellent and keep it up can elevate a student to an unimaginable height in English composition writing.

He reiterates that motivation is the primary determination of L2 proficiency. Motivation is simply what encourages someone or stimulates somebody to start learning a language. It is the need or desire that the learner feels in embarking on SLA/SLL. It is the psychological quality that leads people to achieve goals. In short, the higher the level of motivation is the higher and the faster the proficiency and the vice versa.

To sum it all, with guidance and structural approach in learning to write well, students can overcome their fears and weaknesses. Coupled with substantial practice and constructive feedback, such students can become confident and accomplished writers

and therefore scoring well in composition writing will not just be confined to the talented few.

2.5 The Importance of Writing Skills

Writing is an outlet for emotions and thoughts, and despite the fact that writing skills come late on the ladder of acquisition, they still form an important component of second or foreign language learning (Fageeh, 2011). It is a complex process which involves different factors, and is an essential and necessary skill for ESL or EFL students (Hashemi & Amerian, 2011). Engle (1970) is of the view that through writing, students can see themselves as sincere, sensible, sensitive, thoughtful beings, capable of penetrating creative self-expression. It is imperative that gifted writers learn and master writing skills such as grammar, spelling and vocabulary, and punctuation as the written word carries a certain amount of prestige when compared with the spoken word (Schnur & Marmour, 2009).

Yet, a majority of the student dislikes writing (Cimcoz, 1999) although there is a considerable concern that the majority of adolescents do not develop the competence in writing they need to be successful in school, the workplace, or their personal lives (Graham & Perin, 2007). In fact, Jahin (2012) stressed that a consensus seems to prevail among language instructors that students view writing not only as a particularly challenging discipline but as the singly most difficult aspect of English language acquisition although Liao and Wong et al (2010) are of the view that a high command of English writing ability and skills is critical to advance college performance and academic success. However, despite the importance of writing, too many youngsters do not learn to write well enough to meet the demands of school or the workplace (Liao & Wong et al, 2010). The idea that writing is a complex skill and

already having writing anxiety may not help learners including the gifted ones to master the aforementioned skill.

Learners can benefit from writing as it can enhance students' vocabulary, spelling and grammar (El-Koumy, 2004) and is considered a literacy skill which is active and productive. Competent writers would be able to take into consideration the variety of vocabulary, the correct spelling as well as the precise grammar required to convey their ideas in written form. As opposed to the transience of spoken language, writing has a lasting, permanent quality about it whereby it is less redundant, more planned, meaning and shades of meaning are conveyed by carefully chosen and placed words (Ferris, 2002). According to Vijaya (2010), written word is permanent and allows the reader some time to analyze and assess unlike spoken words whereby once recorded have short lives and mistakes made while speaking is more readily overlooked and forgotten. Additionally, grammar skills are enhanced as ESL writers make decisions about the form in which to present ideas (Hughey et al, 1983 cited in Siti Hamin Stapa 1994). They must apply their knowledge of sentence patterns, frequently visualized as isolated rules, to shape their ideas into acceptable and effective sentences. They actively use knowledge of coordinating and subordinating structures, for example, to emphasize or deemphasize ideas (Siti Hamin Stapa, 1994). As such, learning to write well indirectly involves improving vocabulary, spelling and grammar besides having a longer lasting effect that the words were meant to convey.

Another byproduct of writing is as a vehicle through which students can readily express their critical thinking (Dixon et al, 2005) since it enables enhancement of students' thinking skills (El-Koumy, 2004) due to a strong relationship between thinking and writing (Alhaisoni, 2012) which makes it an invaluable part of any language course (Nik et al, 2010).

Fahsl and McAndrews (2012) promotes dialogue journal writing with the teacher that enables students to think through critical and important issues with the help of a valued other. Analogous to the act of 'iron is sharpening iron', this process will help enhance students' critical thinking skills. Fahsl & McAndrews (2012) concurred that the connection between writing and thinking is natural. Writing not only accomplishes the simple recording of ideas but also helps kids create new ideas. At one level, it is widely accepted that good writing and careful thinking go hand in hand (Applebee, 1984), whereby the ability to master writing skill is inclusive of the ability to generate ideas.

Fahsl and McAndrews (2012) acquiesced that writing is a powerful tool for thinking and learning. As children write, they shape their thinking and personalize their learning. According to Siti Hamin Stapa and Hameed (2012), generating ideas, which falls in the realm of the prewriting stage is a big hurdle for many L2 writers and this stage invokes complex cognitive skills. Zamel (1998) as cited in Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012) further explains that writing has the ability to enhance learning in a particular discipline because it helps students to acquire content knowledge and in the course of analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and making inferences, students are actually developing their cognitive skills. Hence, the ability to generate ideas for writing can be a clear indicator of a learner's level of cognitive skill.

Furthermore, writing is a means to communicate with others that transcends time and space and which involves a writer who produces a text for someone, including the self, and under certain circumstances (Valencia, 2007). Not only that, it enables communication with a large number of people all over the world (El-Koumy, 2004) and with others removed in both distance and time besides promoting a sense of heritage and purpose among larger groups of people (Graham & Perin, 2007). In view

of that, learners who failed to master writing skills may feel left out of a certain loop as they could be unable to put their ideas and thoughts in written form. Inept writers can also be at a loss as they are unable to reach out to people and may have to resort to other ways of communication, for instance, face to face communication. Moreover, lack of competency in writing also limits the effectiveness of communication in the workplace and hurts productivity and employee relations. Hence, it is clear that penmanship and the ability to express ideas accurately, succinctly, and correctly are especially important (Bailey, 1984).

Writing is a demanding activity especially for learners of a second or foreign language and yet it is a skill that they have to master in order for learners to do well in content courses especially at the tertiary level of education (Daud et al, 2005) or success in higher education (Atkinson, 2011) and are often needed for formal and informal testing besides providing students with physical evidence of their achievement (El-Koumy, 2004). This has direct consequence to the learners' employability as their formal and informal testing result on their writing skills or lack of it would be considered as a reflection of their actual competence. The role of writing skills can never be questioned because in the world of work, competency in writing is required to prepare memorandums, job applications, proposals, brief presentation, summaries, letters, resumes and direction or instruction to others (Bailey, 1984) as writing is considered a fundamental aspect of literacy (Valencia, 2007). Being unable to complete the aforementioned task could only result in drawbacks. Additionally, learners should also be concerned of the importance of writing skills as the physical evidence of their achievement would speak for itself even before the learners are called for a face to face interview.

As such, being competent in all the other language skills but not writing would definitely be a setback for the learners. This may even be more perturbing for the gifted learners who are seen as the “me of the society”. Therefore, focusing on the writing anxiety and performance of the gifted learners is one that is worth exploring.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study is to investigate the primary sources of English errors in the writings of Senior High School students. In view of this, the Error Analysis (EA) theory of second language acquisition (SLA) would be the most recommended and suitable theoretical framework that would guide this study. Error Analysis is an approach to the study of language teaching. It involves the method of collecting, identifying, classifying and explaining second language learners’ errors in order to discover any inherent peculiarities operating within the language learners (Inter-Language) so that the language learner could be sufficiently or adequately helped to overcome those errors (Corder, 1967, Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972). EA holds the view that errors are natural phenomena or outcomes of SLA and therefore, students need to be made aware of them else they cannot learn them (Agor, 2003).

2.6.1 Background to the Concept of Error Analysis

Ellis (1985) reckons that the post-second world war period through the 1960s witnessed a strong assumption by linguists that most of the difficulties that L2 learners encounter were imposed by his/her first language. Therefore, a procedure called Contrastive Analysis (CA) was developed in order to identify areas of difficulties. This was based on the assumption or belief that it was possible to predict what problems the learner of a particular L2 would face by establishing the linguistic differences between the learner’s L1 and the L2. For example, it was assumed that where there were differences between the L1 and the L2, the learner’s L1 knowledge

would interfere with the L2 and where the L1 and L2 were similar; L1 would actively aid L2 learning (Ellis, 1985). As a solution to the problem, contrastive analysts such as Brooks (1960) and Lado (1964) opined that classroom teachers should focus their teaching on the areas of difficulty created by negative transfer by adopting vigorous practice in order to overcome the challenges. According to Lado (1957) cited in Ellis (1985 p.23) “the teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them” (Ellis1985: 6). Contrastive Analysis (CA) hypothesis has strong and weak forms. The weak form claims that some but not all the L2 errors are the result of interference. The strong form, however, says that all L2 errors can be predicted by identifying the differences between L2 and L1. In support of the strong form, Leech (1968) cited in Ellis (1985:23) laments that, “the prime cause or even the sole cause of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner’s native language”. Researchers such as Dulay and Burt (1978) also raised serious doubt about negative transfer as a major factor in SLA because according to them many grammatical errors could not be traced to L1 influence. Their findings paved the way for the emergence of Error Analysis (EA). In the 1970s, a methodology for investigating the learner’s language surfaced. This method known as Error Analysis was seen as the appropriate starting point for the study of the learner’s language and second language acquisition. Ellis (1985) is of the view that Error Analysis consisted of “common” errors and their linguistic classifications. Therefore, the goal of (EA) is pedagogic and researchers began to show interest in the learner’s errors. It was also around this time that structures of child language production began to be described and analyzed as grammatical systems in their own right rather than in terms of how they are “deficient” in comparison to adult norms. Pit Corder, an ardent

proponent of (EA) through a series of articles, for example (Corder, 1967, 1971, 1974) contributed greatly in the field of Error Analysis (EA) by giving it direction (Ellis, 1985).

2.6.2 Tenets of Error Analysis

In 1974, Corder came up with the procedure for Error Analysis (EA) and also suggested the following stages in (EA) research. They are: identification, description, explanation and evaluation stages. In the collection of errors, samples of the learner's language are selected. Some studies use samples collected from few learners over a period of weeks, months or years in order to determine the patterns of change in the occurrence of errors. Secondly, the errors are identified.

Corder (1967) is of the view that there should be a distinction between systematic errors and haphazard mistakes. The third step in EA is the description of the errors. For the purpose of analysis, errors are classified by their grammatical behaviour, whether an error is phonological, morphological or systematic. The next stage is the explanation of the errors. An attempt is made to understand why an error is made. Is the error inter-lingual (between languages) as a result of negative transfer or interference from L1 and most importantly if the error is intra-lingual (within a language) that is factors not caused by cross – linguistic influence? The final step is that errors are evaluated. That is, what effect has the error on whoever is being addressed? In other words, how serious is the error? Does it affect intelligibility or social acceptability? It must be stated that error evaluation is necessary only if the purpose of EA is for pedagogy (Agor, 2003).

2.7 Distinction between Error and Mistake

According to Corder (1967), an “error” is a noticeable deviation from the rules of a target system. It is a breach of the language code. It may occur as a result of lack of

knowledge or misapplication of the rules of the second language. Errors are recurrent, systematic and reveal one's level of competence in the language.

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

2.8 Justifying the Framework

It would be very interesting to note that no single theory or hypothesis is sacrosanct. In fact, all the various theories have their own strengths and weaknesses. For instance, proponents of CA assumed that learners' errors largely emanate from transfer of L1 to L2. In short, CA lends credence to the behaviorist and structuralist approach to language learning and was criticized by language theorists such as Noam Chomsky and Pit Corder. As a result, a counter theory known as Error Analysis was propounded by Stephen Pit Corder in the early 1970s to replace CA.

EA analysts proposed that it has since been found that other factors such as intra-lingual and inter-lingual ones often combine to produce error. Error analysts go beyond examining the effect of transfer errors but also those related to target language itself. Thus, all the various theories or approaches to second language learners' errors have their own strengths and weaknesses.

2.9 Related Studies

Firstly, empirical studies revealed that the L1 plays a major role in L2 writing Karim and Nasaji, (2013) cited in Kubota (1998), has found in a study among Japanese ESL students that the L2 used similar patterns from L1 in their essay writings. He found

that L2 writers transfer organization and rhetorical patterns from their L1. They also used the L1 knowledge to access appropriate word order and compared cross-linguistic equivalents (Cumming, 1990).

Secondly, another study was conducted by Yin (2001) in a study of Bahasa Melayu EFL students with low proficiency in English. It was identified that about fifty percent (50%) of the errors they committed has their source from their L1. The researchers used fifty (50) written essays and analyzed, described, and explained the cross-linguistic influence of these students. The study also determined how the native language or mother tongue influences the students' acquisition of English. Some of the errors were approximation, coined words and slang, literal translation among others.

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

Fourthly, Darko (2009) examining the impact of the process Approach to the teaching and writing of composition in SHS bitterly laments that in spite of the crucial nature of writing most students have difficulty in writing because they seem to believe that it is a difficult process. He supports his claim with the chief examiners' report (CER) on SHS English language papers from 2001 to 2006, which confirmed wrong spelling, faulty constructions, misuse of tenses and misplaced punctuations as students'

weaknesses. He holds the view that the process approach to writing should be experimented on pilot basis as the starting point in the writing programme in some SHS.

Similarly, Anyidoho (2002) also studied the writing of final year university students in the University of Ghana- Legon. According to the researcher, “in order to avoid the attendant problems of relying on the results of external examinations in evaluating the proficiency level of students in English, a long-term research project involving the collection and analysis of samples of students’ writing over a number of years was embarked upon”. The study identified faulty sentences in the students’ writing and categorized them under the following headings in descending order of prevalence: concord, word choice, omission, preposition, punctuation, and spelling errors.

What was unique about this study was that the investigation went beyond identification and classification of students’ errors. After some time, the students were given the opportunity to correct their own deviant sentences when the scripts were later returned to them. The reason for asking the students to correct their own deviant sentences according to the researcher was based on the distinction that has been made between “error” and “mistake”. The study assumed that if the deviant forms that emerged in the students’ writings were mistakes, they would be able to rectify them when they were given the opportunity to review them. Conversely, if the errors were the result of the students’ incompetence in English, they would go unnoticed. This study in some way answers the pertinent question, what constitutes a “mistake” and an “error”

Additionally, a local study which is very crucial to this work is the study by Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2011) on L1 interference with L2 writing of Akan speakers in three selected JHS. Data was gathered by documents (students written essays). The

researchers used Content Analysis (CA) approach to analyze ninety (90) written essays of the students to obtain sample writing errors in these essays with respect to L1 interference. The study found that transliteration, omissions, wrong word use, L1 induced spelling errors and wrong pronoun use were the most frequently committed L1 interference errors in the writings of Akan speakers learning English in the JHS. Finally, Safo-Edu (2009), in his book titled “Your English is you” examines the error pattern of students in their essays. The purpose of his study is to draw attention to certain wrong grammatical errors and expressions which feature prominently in the speech and written works of many students and public speakers. He exclaims:

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

In conclusion, the revelations of the various studies have confirmed that indeed the standard of English composition writing of Senior High Students has fallen considerably and therefore proper investigation and recommendations need to be given, so that, eventually standards will improve once more, hence the current study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter unfolds the overall research approach, Design, methods and procedures that were followed to obtain data for analysis. It also dealt with the population, sample and sampling techniques, as well as data collection instruments. Additionally, it displayed the manner in which the information derived had been presented. The method through which the data had been analyzed was also mentioned in the chapter. This study was conducted based on the research questions.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Patton (1990) wrote that a qualitative research “is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and interactions there” (Merriam, 2002 p.5 cited in Patton, 1985). According to Patton, a qualitative research makes meaning out of situation and not necessarily attempting to foretell what might happen in the future, and to understand the nature of the issue. According to Cobb and Hagemaster (1997), a qualitative research by definition should portray eight (8) distinct features. These are that: attention is focused on social context of meaningful events; a serious effort is made to understand the social world from the stand point of participants in it, the inductive approach is mainly used, data collection techniques largely include interviewing, participants’ observation, examination of personal documents and other printed materials, procedures and tools for data gathering are continually revised in the field situation, the concern is primarily with discovery and description although verification is also possible, hypotheses are usually developed during the research rather than apriori and analysis is presented for the most part in narrative rather than

numerical form (Yemeh, 2004 cited in Cobb & Hagemaster, 1997). Since this work centers on identifying, classifying, describing, analyzing and evaluating the writing errors of SHS students in composition, the researcher had been motivated to use the qualitative approach although the work did not involve any hypothesis formulations.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed case study as its research design. This is because a case study provides an in-depth description of what the situation had been on the issue under discussion in this case, the grammar errors in SHS students' written scripts. Merriam (2002) indicated that for a research to qualify as a case study, "one particular programme (a bounded system) selected because it was typical, unique, experimental, or highly successful among others, would be the unit of analysis". Owu-Owie (2011) consented the idea as an in-depth analysis of event, settings, programmes or groups, or one or more individuals which was limited to time and activity. Yin (1994) said that a case study research method was "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence is used" (Soy, 1997 p. 1 cited in Yin, 1994 p.23). In my context, the study sought to inquire into the errors of students in essay writing so as to understand what the issues were among teachers, SHS students and educational stake holders in Yendi Senior High School.

3.3 Population

Seaberg (1998) in De Vos et al (2005) defined population as the total set from which the individual units of study are chosen. The population of this study is nine hundred and fifty (950) in which eight hundred and twenty (820) were students in the form three (3) where seven hundred and eighty-six (786) of these were registered to partake

in the WASSCE examination for this year (2020). The total number of female students was three hundred and eighty-one (381), whereas the population for the male students was four hundred and thirty-nine (439). One hundred and thirty (130) of the participants were professional teachers and non-professional teachers in the school. Out of the teacher population, only sixteen (16) of them were English teachers in the school.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Eighty-four (84) students and sixteen (16) teachers of English language were sampled out for this study using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques respectively.

Wretman (1992) wrote that non-probability sampling technique meant a situation where some units of the target population might not even have a chance at all of being in the sample. This sampling technique was adopted for the study. The researcher applied the stratified random sampling technique by putting the students in to two distinct groups that are mutually exclusive according to gender (masculine group and feminine group), the results of which was used for the the analysis.

The researcher wrote “Yes” and “No’ in pieces of papers and folded each of the papers for the students to pick in turns. This was done for all the students and those who chose the option (Yes) represented the required participants for the study. The importance of this technique was that it enabled the researcher to pick the participants that were relevant to the study. Indeed, this sampling method provided an avenue the researcher to examine students’ exercises and to look out for those who committed errors and collect data from them for his analysis. It also enabled the researcher to arrive at an unbiased representation of the participants. Thus, to ensure gender

sensitivity the students were divided into female and male before each student was given the chance to pick the pieces of papers.

Merriam cited in Patton (1990) argue that it was necessary to select information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. The researcher for this work relied on the purposive sampling method to collect data from teachers for analysis. That is, both professionally trained English teachers and the non-professionally trained ones were selected in the sense that: they teach English language as a subject, they believed to have been familiar with students' knowledge of English grammar and composition writing, they were part of the actors involved in the subject of grammar error corrections and they have at least five years working experience in teaching English language.

Procedurally, the data collected came from examination of students' exercises, the teaching syllabus for the English language and the English language text books. Additional data was also collected from sampled form three (3) students and their English language teachers via written responses. Moreover, the form three (3) students were used because they were far advanced in the teaching and learning of the composition aspect of the English language than those in form two (2) and form one (1). Equally, they were those students who were being prepared to write the next WASSCE exams in English language using the SHS English syllabus, because they would graduate and proceed to the tertiary levels of education.

3.6 Sample Size

According to Gay (1987), the minimum number of respondents needed for a study to be adequate is dependent on the type of research. The position was that "for a descriptive research, a sample of Ten percent (10%) of the population is considered

minimum” (Gay, 1987 p.14). In this regard, the sample size for my study was made up of eighty-four (84) students representing eleven percent (11%) of the accessible population of the form three students (820). All the sixteen English teachers were also chosen which represented Twelve percent (12%) of the accessible population of all the teachers in the School (130). The criterion used was that those teachers were the only English teachers handling the form three (3) students. Thus, the English teachers were all accessible. Therefore, the teachers selected for the study were those relevant to the purpose of the study regarding the form. This is summarized in table two (2) below;

Table 3.6.1: Sample size

| CLASS | FEMALE | MALE | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| SHS THREE (3) | 42 | 42 | 84 |
| ENGLISH TEACHERS | 4 | 12 | 16 |
| TOTAL | 46 | 54 | 100 |

3.7 Research Site

The site selected for the study was Yendi Senior High School (YESS) which is the premier SHS in the Yendi municipality of the Northern Region in Ghana. The school is situated in the heart of Yendi Township along the principal street of the Yendi-Zabzugu road just behind the Jubilee Park (Independence ceremonial ground). Even though the school was a public one, yet it had no strict requirement for admission (it considers all kinds of English language grades for admission). Lack of infrastructure, inadequate human resources, and inadequate flow of funds are some of the challenges facing the school. Additionally, the school engaged the services of unemployed

university and Technical University graduates as part-time English teachers. The dominant languages spoken in the school (Among students and teachers) were the English language and Dagbani respectively, but nobody had ever thought of conducting a research on students' writing deficiencies in the school for reasons yet to be discovered. In effect, this situation posed a great deal of concern to the researcher which compelled him to conduct an investigation of this kind in the school in order to ascertain whether the context of learning affects students' knowledge of the English language. The school was very convenient and satisfactory for me in terms of proximity, resources and personal security.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher examined students' class exercises, official documents and questionnaires to answer the research questions. The researcher finally engaged in a class room observation to practically understand the realities that go on between teachers and students during composition writing lessons. Merriam (2002) indicated that researchers were encouraged to use more than one method of data collection because the use of multiple methods enhanced the validity of the findings.

3.8.1 Documents

First of all, the researcher collected students' exercise books including those on pieces of papers on all aspects of the English language. Refer to appendix D for sample exercises from students. He examined exercises of each student covering the use of English language in responding to questions on the following aspects of the English language; reading comprehension, summary questions, composition writing, and English grammar. The researcher identified and assembled the writing errors in the exercises during the examination. The errors were then, classified, described and explained using linguistic principles in the theory of error analysis. In order for me to

authenticate my impression on some of the errors identified, the participants involved were called to answer few questions in written form. The questions bothered on whether the elements identified were really errors. The inspection of the exercises also covered how the errors in learner's written works were corrected by the teachers as well as observation of the students' attitudes toward the exercises. This made it possible for non-manipulation of the elements examined and to avoid confusion.

Additionally, the researcher also looked at the teaching syllabus for the SHS English language and the text book. With these at hand, he then looked at the topics, the content, the objectives, the activities involved in the teaching and learning of English language. Again, the researcher looked at areas where learners were evaluated on which include a) knowledge and understanding, and b) application of knowledge. The study finally covered suggestions on listening, speaking, reading and writing which the syllabus and the textbooks prescribed to the teachers and the students to use during teaching and learning of composition writing in English language.

3.8.2 Administration of questionnaires

To arrive at the questionnaires, the researcher first of all carried out a reconnaissance survey to scout out all available inputs and responses about the topic of concern from students, teachers and the Head of Languages Department in the school. The outcome of this was then used to prepare the questionnaire. Evidence is reflected in the appendix's column as A and B.

Slightly different structured questionnaires were prepared for student respondents and teacher respondents to respond to (see appendix A & B). The researcher used the research questions to generate the questions for the questionnaire after examining the documents. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents who committed

multiple grammar errors in all their exercises examined, and their grammar errors formed part of the data gathered for analysis.

Before the administration of the questionnaires, student respondents were informed by their teachers that they would respond to some few questions from a researcher. That was done in order to make the participants to feel at ease. Indeed, the researcher personally requested the teachers to respond to the questionnaires which they did. Besides, the teachers and the students did not know anything about the questions at all until they appeared before me. In order to get the student respondents, a list of the sampled students was prepared and given to one of the teachers to get them ready for the exercise. The teacher then instructed students to appear before me in an office in pairs and in turns. The administration of the questionnaires followed these steps:

I shared a few pleasantries with the student respondents, introduced myself by mentioning my name and then asked the students to also introduce themselves. I declared my mission to the participants (see the introductory part of appendix A & B). I then gave out copies of the questionnaires to the participants. From then, I read out the first question to the student participants; and asked them to answer separately by writing; these steps were taken in order to validate the potential errors identified in the student respondents' exercises through their written responses.

The respondents then read the subsequent questions and responded to them individually. I supervised the respondents as they responded to the questionnaires. The whole exercise was as exciting as a pen-to-paper survey. The time spent in administering the questionnaires for a pair of student respondents lasted for about thirty (30) minutes. And that of the teachers was about twenty-five (25) minutes.

The merits for administering the questionnaires were that it provided an opportunity to avoid reframing the questions, and to stay focus on the questions that were being

asked. It also made it possible for students who find it difficult to speak in response to the questions to resort to writing. This provided an opportunity for students to freely express their views. It enabled me to verify many impressions on the errors identified in students' writings. It also ensured that students were not allowed to consult with one another or prevented cross-fertilization of opinions. Furthermore, the written responses had also enabled me to use few of them as data for analysis. Finally, it offered the opportunity for me to ask each participant the same questions so that the responses could be compared (Owu-Owie, 2011 p.23).

3.9 Data Collection Protocol and Ethical Issues

The study was to take place initially at the Almarktoum Senior High School of the Yendi municipality in the northern region of Ghana. But due to the performance of the awaited funeral rites of the two (2) late overlords of Dagbon, the selected school was used as military camp. As a result, all educational activities came to a halt in the school. In fact, this was the major reason for changing the initial site of the study to its present location (Yendi SHS).

A request form was sent to the headmaster who endorsed it and granted permission for the study to be carried out. This was done after a letter of introduction from the University of Education had been given to him. I followed promptly with a letter of appreciation for granting me such an honour. The documents such as students' exercises, the English syllabus and the English text book were examined first, followed by the questionnaires conducted on those students who exhibited gross incompetence in their compositions writing.

Summarily, the researcher did not face much challenge in getting the full co-operation of the staff and the students because most of the teachers had been his former teachers and the school itself was his alma-matter. Rather, it became

somewhat stressful in reading and comprehending some of the students' writings which was not a surprise. But with the help of God's intervention and the personal experiences of the researcher it was overcome.

3.10 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using Content Analysis (CA) and Thematic Analysis (TA). The analysis was made up of the responses and results from the documents. It had been said that "the use of different methods in concert compensate for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits" (Shenton, 2004 cited in Guba, n.d; Brewa & Hunter, n.d). The analysis followed a pattern of the data in response to the research objectives. The analysis was done in the form of description, comparison, and relational. Divergent views were used to challenge generalizations made earlier on by some scholars. Returns were made to the substantive theoretical and methodological literature for analysis. Finally, the data derived were used for creation and displays. Bazeley (2009) said "The researcher moves away from describing to explaining through a ladder of abstraction" (Bazely, 2009 p.12). Microsoft excel was used to design the tables and the charts and SPSS was the statistical package employed for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The data collected for the study was analyzed in this chapter. After the collection of sample errors, the researcher classified them for easy analysis. This includes recording the pattern of the errors, finding their percentages and mean of responses, possible causes and solutions of poor writing. The discussion in this Chapter was guided by the research questions and the objectives set for the study. The Error Analysis theory of second language learning was mainly used in carrying out the analysis. This theory has been thoroughly discussed under the caption theoretical framework in chapter two (2). The researcher requested for sample essay scripts of eighty-four (84) students including take home exercises and end of term examination papers. The researcher carried out a pre-survey which was used to prepare questionnaires for students and English language teachers in Yendi Senior High School. The researcher also embarked on a classroom observation where he had the opportunity to observe how some of the teachers taught composition writing and how students also responded towards essay writing during interactions. In this chapter we have also presented the results of the analyzed data and the statistical package employed is SPSS. Hence, the results would be discussed vis-a-vis the stated objectives.

4.1 Kinds of poor writings exhibited by students

After assessing the marked essay scripts of students, the researcher identified the systematic and recurrent errors and put them into three main themes. Theme one dealt with grammar or concord errors, theme two discussed punctuation errors and theme three examined spelling errors. There was also the last category of errors captioned as

other errors. For the work to be easily understandable, the researcher focused on phrases and sentences containing grammar errors, spelling errors, punctuation errors and other errors like, prepositional errors, wrong uses of tenses and article errors. Below is the detailed classification of the errors identified and analyzed in the documents gathered from students.

4.1.1 Concord errors

Concord errors were largely committed by students in Yendi Senior High School. Some of these were realized in the form of subject verb agreement, wrong uses of non-count nouns, reduplications for emphasis, tautological expressions and misuse of tenses. Each of these are discussed below with examples:

*My friend have come. (has)

*Sportsmen lives healthy lives. (live)

*Habib love Sharifa. (loves)

*This issue lead to conflict. (leads)

*It make no sense to me. (makes)

The researcher observed that majority of the students exhibited these kinds of errors in their texts because they lack knowledge of the principles governing grammar. Thus, some of the students could not effectively use the principle of grammatical concord which states that a singular subject should agree with a singular verb and the vice versa.

4.1.1.2 Use of non-count nouns as count nouns

Another set of grammar errors that were found in students' written essays was on the use of non-count nouns. Most of the students used non-count nouns as count nouns which may be attributable to overgeneralization of the rules of grammar. Samples of these errors collected are exemplified below:

- *The informations reaching us are unbelievable. (information)
- *She has misplaced the equipments. (equipment)
- *They demolish so many furnitures during entertainment. (furniture)
- *Nobody should touch the luggages in the car. (luggage)

4.1.1.3 Reduplication for emphasis

Some of the final year students of Yendi SHS showed grammatical errors resulting from reduplication. The researcher observed that these errors were meant for emphasis as it happens in Dagbani where a particular lexical item is repeated to show emphasis. The source of these kinds of errors could be traced to the interference of the mother tongue with the second language. Examples of these errors are:

- *Let's eat the food quick quick.
- *Go and buy the water fast fast.
- *We all got up fine fine.
- *He donated the money double double.
- *Close the door sharp sharp!

4.1.1.4 Tautological expressions

Undue repetitions of similar words and phrases which meant the same idea or thing was largely committed by the students in their written works. Some examples of tautologies found are as follows:

- * The time allowed for the paper is not **adequate enough**.
- *That shirt is **red in colour**.
- *The dignitaries had all **returned back** to their various destinations.
- *I strongly rise to **oppose against** the motion.
- *They did the work **without no** complaints.

4.1.1.5 Misuse of tenses

The word tense is an old English word derived from Latin “tempus” which means time. It is used to describe the time of occurrence of an action or event in a sentence. It can also be explained as the location of events with time. English language has three main ways of expressing time using verbs. These are the present tense, the past tense and the futures tense. However, there is a very huge controversy around the use of future tense by morphologists. But the researcher’s concern is that there is a way of expressing actions in the future time and hence the future tense. Mastery of which is a hall mark of complete literacy and lack of knowledge of which lives a negative impression on the fellow. Despite all the importance, some majority of final year SHS students still face challenges in using tenses especially with regular verbs which adversely leads to poor writing in composition. Some examples of tenses errors in students’ documents include the following:

- * They have **begin** rehearsals already. (begun)
- * I **gived** the book to him. (gave)
- * Dad **do** the work alone. (does)
- *They **tached** us some patriotic songs. (Taught)
- * She has **win** the competition. (won)

4.1.2 Conclusion

It is obvious that the work has delved greatly into the grammar errors committed by the final year students of Yendi SHS. As a result, the researcher introduced the section by explaining what grammar errors are and then classified the errors according to their causes as reflected in the students’ texts by throwing light on grammar errors caused by subject verb concord, wrong use of count nouns, reduplications for

emphasis, tautological expressions and misuse of tenses respectively with ample examples.

4.1.2 Punctuation errors

Punctuation marks to the readers are like the torch for a person walking in darkness. As indicated by Robert (2006) punctuation marks cut the flow of words into meaningful groups and prevent confusion. We use punctuation when writing because we lack phonetic and visual means of indicating how the flow of sound is to be parsed. Consequently, good punctuation enables sophisticated processing; while bad punctuation causes a lot of trouble and the reader is left scrabbling for sense. Of all the importance of punctuations many students still exhibit poor punctuation skills which lead to their writing inabilities.

The most commonly committed punctuation errors found in the documents of students were omission and misplacement of end punctuation marks such as the full stop (.), the question mark (?) and the exclamative mark (!). Others include wrong use of comma, apostrophe and semi-colon and capitalization errors. All these are exemplified below:

4.1.2.1 Wrong use of end punctuation marks

According to Robinson (2002) good punctuation makes a lot for clean thought. Yet there is still the dominance of wrong punctuations in the texts of many students. Angellilo (2002) stated that teachers often lament that many children do not remember to put in the punctuation when they write. The extract below is a typical example of omission and wrong uses of end punctuation marks.

* I purchased the car because of it's brand. (its)

*The student's were singing. (students)

* How are you, Kofi (?)

*They have'nt dressed at all. (haven't)

*The books belong to her (.)

This finding concurred with Rumki (2005) who stated that wrong punctuation can interrupt the flow of ideas and change meaning, but properly used punctuation not only helps readers understand your meaning but also makes them engrossed in one's writing. Khalil (2015) also mentioned that the most common punctuation errors made by Palestinian EFL students in their writing are commas and periods. The most common errors are categorized into comma splice and superfluous commas. Superfluous comma errors refer to over punctuating sentences by inserting commas in the wrong place.

4.1.2.2 Capitalization errors

Students most often defy the capitalization principle which states that all proper nouns should begin with capital letters irrespective of where they are found in a sentence. Additionally, all words beginning a sentence must also begin with capital letters. These errors manifested in students' written essays in the form of wrong capitalization and omission of capital letters. The omissions were largely realized in students' sentence constructions. Below are few examples with the wrong word underlined.

4.1.2.2.1 Wrong capitalization

Majority of the students in Yendi SHS demonstrated gross incompetence in their essays by capitalizing non-proper nouns which were not used at the beginning of their sentences. Some examples include:

*The Exams is very difficult.

*We saw an Elephant when we went for the excursion.

*Tohadzie was a powerful Warrior.

*My father bought a brand new CAR.

* We have gone to the Bus Station.

4.1.2.2 Omission of capital letters in sentences

The researcher also made some observation from the students through their documents and found out that many students omit capital letters in proper nouns especially when they are not beginning a sentence. The examples below represent instances where students fail to capitalize proper nouns present in their construction of sentences.

*The exams will commence on **monday**.

* He came when **i** had left the house.

* Some students prefer **english** to **maths**.

*The match will be played at the Tamale **sports stadium**.

* Ghana **broad casting** co-operation is my favourite station.

With the above revelation, the present researcher agreed with Sofer and Raimes (2002) on the fact that lack of capitalization in the Arabic alphabet could be the basic reasons behind the Arab learners' misuse of the English capital letter.

The study also concurred with Thom (1985) cited in Hamza (2012) who identified the taxonomy of errors produced by Vietnamese students and English teachers in Vietnam. He classified the errors into ten categories. In comparison, the major categories of errors produced by students and teachers were: Spelling, lexical, verbal, prepositional, article, punctuation and morphological errors. Meanwhile, both students and teachers produced fewer errors on three other categories namely concord, word order and discourse. For the sake of clarity and work organization, the researcher arranged this section in regard to the other researchers' works regarding where researchers meet and where they differ.

4.1.2.3 Conclusion

This part of the study begins by introducing punctuation errors and their kinds that abound in students' written extracts. The punctuation errors were classified under the following subheadings: wrong use or omission of end punctuation marks (the full stop, question mark and exclamatory mark), wrong capitalizations and omission of capital letters with some examples each of the subheadings given.

4.1.3 Spelling errors

The English language yields a vast number of words borrowed from other languages. The reason lies in its variety in spelling. Thus, words that often sound alike are not always spelled alike. Also, the English language is known for its inconsistency and as a result, both native and second language users make mistakes in spelling most English words. Students generally exhibit spelling errors in their essays and that has been proved in this study. In all the sample essays, it was identified that spelling errors ranked for the highest error representation.

Table 4.1.3 below presents the spelling errors that were frequently committed by students in their essays. See appendix C for the detailed classifications and examples of the sample spelling errors identified in students' documents.

Table 4.1.3 Spelling errors

| Incorrect | Correct | Incorrect | Correct |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Be4 | Before | Boyz | Boys |
| Allways | Always | rice | Rights |
| 6ter | Sister | Saunz | Sounds |
| Becourse | Because | Dat | That |
| Gr8tful | Grateful | 2day | Today |
| 8teen | Eighteen | Dis | This |
| Ten | Turn | There4 | Therefore |
| Run | Ran | Store | Stall |
| Check | Church | Runabout | round about |
| Norf | North | Beer | Bear |

4.1.3.1 Conclusion

Evidently, a brief description of spelling errors has been discussed in this section with samples extracted from the essay scripts of students. These errors are classified according to their hypothetical causes including those arising from double consonants, inconsistency in orthography as against phonology, carelessness and finally those emanating from wrong amalgamation of words. Some examples are shown in appendix C.

This finding established a concordant relationship with the study carried out by Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2011) on L1 interference with L2 writing of Akan speakers in three selected JHS, as I observed that students avoided the use of English to the level that it was boldly written at the entrance of each class that “speak English; vernacular is prohibited”. But this study discovered other sources including that of intra-lingual and inter-lingual errors.

4.1.4. Other errors

There was some other category of errors identified but those were not as significant as those mentioned already. That is why they have been classified as other errors. They however, collectively form quite a significant group. These errors are article errors and capitalization errors. They are carefully discussed below:

4.1.4.1 Article errors

Articles belong to the minor word class or part of speech in English language. Articles are classified into types, namely, the definite article “the” and the indefinite article “a” or “an”. Functionally, articles precede noun phrases as determiners in English language. However, the phonemic environment and the semantic nature of the noun phrase also determine the kind of article that should precede it. In the essays written by the students, a number of errors involving wrong use and omission of articles were identified. The wrong uses are shown in italics and underlined while the acceptable forms are put in brackets. Some examples are summarized below:

4.1.4.2 Wrong use of articles

The researcher in the process of examining students’ written scripts observed that majority of the students could not use the definite and indefinite articles correctly. Some examples in evidence include the following:

- * Let’s give peace the chance. (a)
- *My father requested for a water. (some)
- * I was warned for a very last time. (the)
- * Rafiq got missing a very first day of his arrival. (the)
- *I received an information from him. (a piece of)

4.1.4.3 Omission of articles

Quite a number of errors concerning article omissions was discovered in students' written exercises and affected the entire essays composed by them. However, this type of errors was not as serious as wrong use of articles. Few of them are exemplified below with their correct forms shown in brackets.

- *We are going to ...house. (the)
- * ... man killed ...woman and run away. (A, a)
- * Each of you should come with ... broom. (a)
- * The rest of ... robbers were killed. (the)
- *The anniversary event happened on ...3rd of May, 2020. (the)
- *The driver was sleeping in ...car when ...accident occurred. (the, the)

4.1.4.2 Prepositional errors

A preposition is a part of speech which shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to other words within the same sentence. Pronouns enable a speaker to show a clear relationship between separate entities. These relationships include location, direction, cause or possession. In other words, a preposition is a word that relates the noun or pronoun following it to another word in a sentence. Among the common errors identified were prepositions that indicate time and place. Most of the preposition errors that were identified in students include wrong selection and careless use of prepositions. The examples identified are listed below with their correct forms in brackets.

4.1.4.2.1 Wrong use of prepositions

The researcher also found out from the documents of students that most of the students chose wrong prepositions. The types of prepositional errors manifested by student in their written extracts are as follows:

- *The boy died in a tender age. (at)
- *We visited the Gbewaa palace at the first time. (for)
- *The armed robber was thrown into death. (to)
- *Throughout last night the light went of. (off)
- *Andre Ayew is the like on his father. (of)

4.1.4.2.2 Redundant prepositions

It was observed that some of the student participants used prepositions needlessly and this made them score low marks in their compositions. Some of these preposition extracts include:

- *We met to the president.
- *Two days ahead up of vacation.
- *Yendi SHS lacks of many facilities.
- *I saw him on my way to home.
- *The class comprises of male and female students.

4.1.5 Students and teachers views on poor writing

After a careful examination of students' written essay scripts, a set of questionnaires were administered to 84 students and 16 teacher participants of Yendi Senior High School to confirm the most challenging issues regarding the poor writing skills shown by students in order to scout out the factors causing the poor writings and recommend appropriate solutions to remedy those challenges. Out of the 84 participants, only 50 answered questionnaires were retrieved from the students. This was because many of the participants had gone home following Government's order for closure of all schools due to Covid-19. The researcher working under limited time had no alternative than to rely on the available data for his analysis. Below is the qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires.

Table 4.1.5.1: Students' views on kinds of poor writings

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid wrong expression | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 32.0 |
| concord errors | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 54.0 |
| wrong use of punctuations | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 66.0 |
| wrong paragraphing | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 74.0 |
| spelling mistakes | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The table above unfolds the results of the major writing challenges often faced by student respondents. The highest recorded frequency was 16 responses representing 32% manifested wrong expression and this obtained the mean score of 0.32. The next most frequent error discovered was spelling mistakes with 13 responses representing 26% of the total number of responses with 0.26 mean values, followed by concord errors which recorded 22% of the total number of student respondents which had 0.22 mean scores. The lowest frequency value was 4 representing 8% of the total respondents and 0.08 mean values. Other errors which recorded include punctuation errors and wrong paragraphing. This goes to affirm our presupposed objective that concord errors, spelling mistakes, wrong expressions, punctuation errors and wrong paragraphing are the most frequent errors found in students' essays.

The finding above is in tendon with Thom (1985) who identified the taxonomy of errors produced by Vietnamese students and English teachers in Vietnam. He classified the errors into ten categories. In comparison, the major categories of errors produced by students and teachers were: Spelling, lexical, verbal, prepositional, article, punctuation and morphological. Meanwhile, both students and teachers

produced fewer errors on three other categories namely concord, word order and discourse.

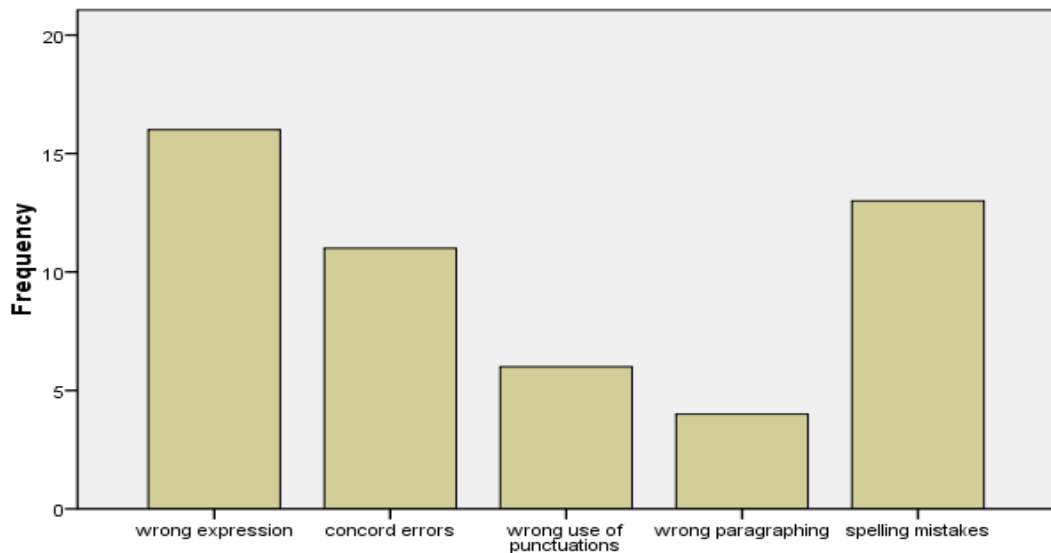


Figure 1: Students' views on kinds of poor writings

It was discovered from the bar chart above that wrong expression recorded the highest frequency with a mean of 0.32 while wrong paragraphing recorded the lowest frequency with 16% and 0.16 mean of the total number of responses. Concord errors and spelling mistakes followed as second and third highly recorded figures with a mean of 0.22 and 0.26 respectively. The implication is that students commit more spelling, concord and expression errors than punctuation and paragraph errors in Yendi SHS.

Table 4.1.5.2: Teachers' views on kinds of poor writings

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| Valid concord errors | 10 | 62.5 | 62.5 | 62.5 | 0.625 |
| wrong spelling | 2 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 75.0 | 0.125 |
| wrong expressions | 2 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 87.5 | 0.125 |
| problems in using irregular verbs | 1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 93.8 | 0.062 |
| use of pronouns as verbs | 1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 100.0 | 0.062 |
| Total | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

This is the tabular display of the results on the various views of teachers about the kinds of poor writings that students encounter most in composition writing. It was found that concord or grammar errors which had 10 responses representing 62.5% recorded the highest frequency and mean value of 0.625. 2 respondents each representing 12.5% with a mean of 0.125 responses each was recorded for both spelling errors and wrong expressions. Equally insignificant response of 1 represent 6.2% constituting 0.062 responses each was recorded for misuse of irregular verbs and the use of pronouns as verbs. This finding had established a positive relationship with our presupposed objective that concord errors, wrong spelling and wrong expressions were the major kinds of writing deficiencies experienced by students.

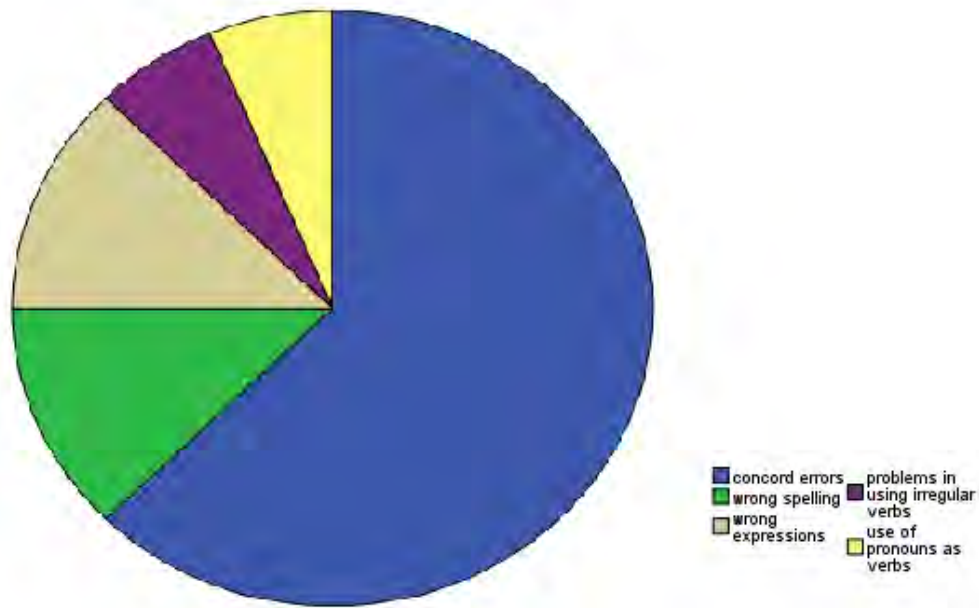


Figure 2: Teachers' views on kinds of poor writings

The pie chart above presents the results on the major writing challenges of students and teacher respondents. It was revealed that an overwhelming number of respondents representing blue in the chart recorded the highest frequency and this marked concord errors. The second highest frequency values recorded were those responses in favour of wrong expressions and wrong spellings which marked the green and brown respectively. The lowest frequencies recorded were problems in using irregular verbs and use of pronouns as nouns marking the yellow and pink portions respectively.

This study is in tandem with Edu-Buando (1997), who provided a preliminary report on the study of error patterns in the written essays of Senior High School students in the Central Region of Ghana. The rationale behind the study was to identify the most frequent recurring errors and possible causes. The researcher grouped the identified systematic and recurrent errors into categories of spelling, concord, punctuation and other errors. The study went further to examine the effects of gender, length of stay in school and the type of school on the general level of proficiency in English of SHS

students. According to Edu-Buando, the purpose of her study was to draw the attention of English teachers, policy makers of education, and even students to the problem of poor standards and to recommend appropriate ways of attending to the problem. It also affirmed the chief examiner's report (CER) on SHS English language papers from 2001 to 2006, which captured wrong spellings, faulty constructions, misuse of tenses, and misplaced punctuations as students' weaknesses.

4.1.6 Conclusion

The two tables above present the views shared by both students and teachers on the writing challenges experienced by students. It was discovered that grammar errors recorded the highest mean of 0.42 responses from student respondents and 0.625 from teacher respondents. The lowest recorded means went in favour of wrong use of irregular verbs and pronouns with the mean of 0.062 each of the teacher respondents and that of the student respondents was wrong choice of vocabulary with the mean value of 0.02 responses. Other errors discovered were wrong spelling, wrong expressions and wrong sentence constructions. The implication is that grammar error is the most frequently committed error among SHS students in Yendi Senior High School.

This finding has established a concordant relationship with studies conducted by other researchers. For instance, Maros et al (2007) found that the three most common errors produced by Jordanian students were the use of articles, subject-verb agreement, and copula 'Be'. Darus et al (2009) studied the errors in the written English essays made by secondary school students in Malaysia. The findings of their study revealed there were fifteen categories of errors made by students, and the most common errors were singular/plural forms, tense, word choice, preposition, subject and verb agreement, and word order. Zawahreh (2012) studied errors made by ten graders in writing

English essays and they found out that the most prominent errors were subject-verb agreement, insertion of preposition, verb omission, tense, and word choice.

4.2 The Factors Hindering the SHS Students' Writing Skills

This section deals with the factors hindering the SHS students' writing skills in three themes. Theme one is concerned with the factors responsible for those poor writings. Theme two presents the justification for the factors enumerated as causing poor writing skills and finally, theme three which discusses the attitudes of students towards the current method of error correction.

Table 4.2.1: Students' perception on factors causing poor writings

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|-------|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|------|
| Valid | poor writing habit | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 0.32 |
| | heavy reliance on exam malpractices | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 44.0 | 0.12 |
| | inadequate qualified English teachers | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 68.0 | 0.24 |
| | student indiscipline | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 82.0 | 0.14 |
| | large class sizes | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 94.0 | 0.12 |
| | inadequate infrastructure and TLMs | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 | 0.06 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

The table above presents the results of the possible factors responsible for the poor writing skills of the student respondents. It was unearthed that poor writing habit rating 16 responses and representing 32% of the entire students with a mean of 0.32 was ranked the highest followed by inadequate qualified English language teachers which recorded 12 responses with 24% and 0.24 mean score. A total number of 3

respondents representing 6% out of the 50 respondents chose inadequate infrastructure and this recorded the lowest percentage and mean of responses. The rest of the responses recorded were heavy reliance on exam malpractices, student indiscipline, and large class sizes.

This result established a positive correlation with our objective on the assumption that the major factors responsible for causing writing deficiency were clearly poor writing habit on the part of students and inadequate qualified English teachers, student indiscipline among others.

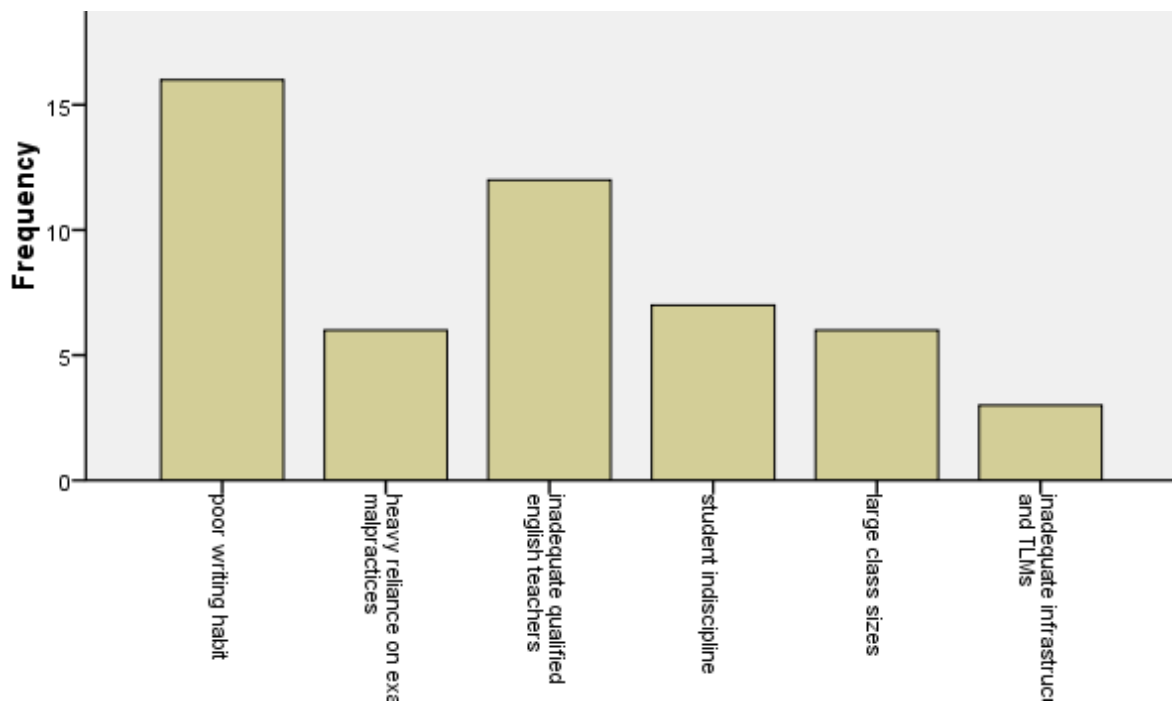


Figure 3: Students' perceptions on factors causing poor writings

This is a bar chart showing the results of the possible factors responsible for the errors committed by students. The highest frequency obtained was for poor writing habit on the part of students which recorded 16 responses and 32% with a mean of 0.32 responses followed by inadequate qualified English teachers, with the frequency and mean values 24% and 0.24 respectively. The other responses were student indiscipline, heavy reliance on exam malpractice and large class size as well as

inadequate infrastructure and TLMs which recorded the mean scores 0.14, 0.12 each and 0.06 respectively.

Table 4.2.2 Teachers’ perceptions on factors causing poor writings

| | | | Valid | Cumulative | |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Percent | Mean |
| Valid | influence of mother tongue | 1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 0.062 |
| | lack of regular practice | 9 | 56.2 | 62.5 | 0.562 |
| | negative influence of technology | 3 | 18.8 | 81.2 | 0.188 |
| | inadequate infrastructure and TLMs | 3 | 18.8 | 100.0 | 0.188 |
| | Total | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

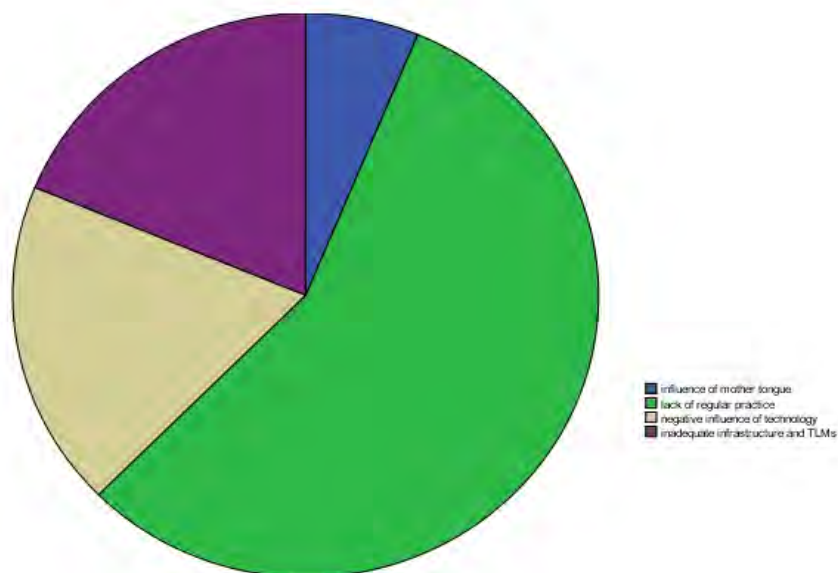


Figure 4: Teachers' perceptions on factors causing poor writing skills

Observably, the two (2) tables and diagrams above, present the views of both students and teachers on the factors responsible for the poor writing skills of Yendi SHS three

students in composition writing. It was discovered from student respondents that poor writing habit recorded the highest mean of 0.32 responses followed by inadequate qualified English teachers with the mean value of 0.12. On the part of teachers, lack of regular practice with a mean of 0.562 responses recorded the highest value while negative influence of technology and inadequate qualified English teachers equally recorded a total 0.188 mean value each. The implication of this finding concurred with our objective that the most serious factors causing poor writing skills in Yendi Senior High School range from poor writing habit, lack of regular practice, inadequate qualified English teachers to inadequate infrastructure and TLMs, large class sizes, heavy reliance on exam malpractices and the influence of the mother tongue.

Finally, the study concurred with that of Yin (1994) in a study of Bahasa Melayu EFL students with low proficiency in English. It was identified that about fifty percent (50%) of the errors they committed have their source from their L1. The researchers used fifty (50) written essays and analyzed, described, and explained the cross-linguistic influence of these students. The study also determined how the native language or mother tongue influences the students' acquisition of English.

Table 4.2.3: Teachers justifying factors causing poor writings

| | | | Valid | Cumulative | |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Percent | Percent | Mean |
| Valid students fail to organize coherent thoughts | 9 | 56.2 | 56.2 | 56.2 | 0.562 |
| students lack the principles governing grammar | 3 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 75.0 | 0.188 |
| Students exhibit poor learning habits | 4 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 100.0 | 0.25 |
| Total | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

This is table 4.2.3 presenting the results of teachers justifying the factors responsible for poor writing skills. A total of 9 respondents said that students fail to organize coherent thought which recorded the highest frequency with the mean value of 0.562 responses, followed by those who said students exhibit poor learning habit with the mean of 0.25 responses. The least mean score of 0.188 was recorded in favour of respondents saying that students lack the principles governing grammar. The underlying assumption is that majority of teachers at the SHS level attribute the falling standards of composition writing among students to lack of knowledge to organize coherent thought and poor learning habits.

However, other studies have categorized these factors into some broad domains, for example, teacher' incompetence (Haider, 2012; Mansoor, 2005; Harmer, 2008), students' lack of interest (Byrne, 1991), and methodological inappropriacy (Ahmad, et al., 2013).

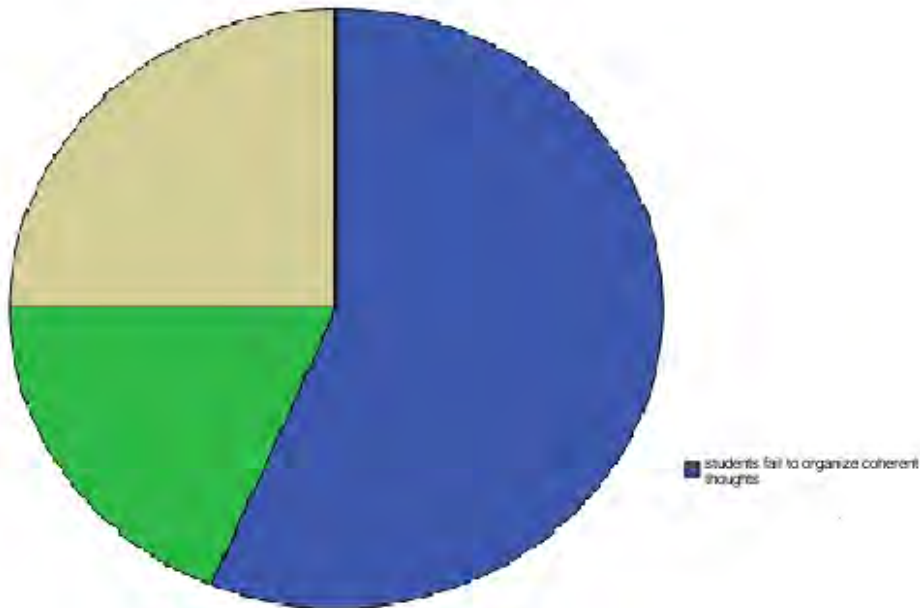


Figure 5: Teachers justifying factors causing poor writing skills

The pie chart above is a pictorial representation of the opinions made by teachers to justify the factors enumerated as being responsible for students' inability to compose well. As can be seen above, the portion coloured blue represents the highest respondents and they said that students lack the skill to organize coherent thought and this scored the mean of 0.562 responses. Followed by those who argue that students exhibit poor learning habit with the mean values of 0.25 and lastly were respondents who said that students lack the principles governing grammar which recorded the lowest mean value of 0.188.

During the researchers' class observation period he realized that most of the students were using Dagbani in class instead of English while majority of the teachers had to translate some terms into Dagbani before the students could comprehend. Other students wrote their essays with the mixture of alphabets and numerals. And these revelations confirm that influence of L1, negative influence of technology and lack of practice are the pivot of all the writing deficiencies of students in Yendi SHS.

Table 4.2.4: Attitudes of students towards poor writing skills

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|------|
| Valid Yes | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 1 |

Table 4.2.4 presents the results of whether students feel worried about their poor essay writing abilities. All the respondents replied yes after weighing the factors causing poor writing skills. This result is in connection with our proposed assumption that all the students will be ready to embrace the suggested solutions to their writing difficulties.

All the respondents representing 100% agreed that they are worried about their poor writing potency. This revealed that the students were supposedly ready for change which provides room for the fulfillment of our final objective.

Table 4.2.5 Attitudes of teachers towards poor writing skills

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|------|
| Valid Yes | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 1 |

Table 4.2.5 is a tabular presentation of the results of how often teachers feel when their students commit multiple errors. It was discovered that 16 out of 16 respondents which represent 100% and a mean score 1 of response replied ‘yes’ while no respondent was recorded for ‘no’. This establishes the fact that poor writing skills leave some negative effects on its victims.



Figure 6: Attitudes of teachers towards poor writing skills

Figure 7 presents the diagrammatic display of the results of teachers' attitudes towards victims of poor writing skills. It was discovered then that all the 16 respondents representing 100% of the total responses said 'yes' meaning they were all worried.

The revelations above concur with the assertion of Nunam (1989) who argues that writing is an extremely difficult cognitive activity which requires the learner to have control over various factors. These factors vary from academic background and personal interest of the writer (SHS students) to various psychological, linguistic and cognitive phenomenon (Haider, 2012).

4.2.6 Conclusion

The factors responsible for poor writing skills have been discussed here using observation and questionnaires. The analysis gave much attention to the perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers towards the factors causing poor writing skills. it was discovered that both respondents made mention of influence of the mother tongue, negative influence of technology, lack of constant practice, inadequate infrastructure and TLMs and inadequate qualified English teachers at the various

Senior High Schools as the major contributory factors to poor writing skills of students. The section also looked at the reasons given by both group of participants to justify their opinions on the factors outlined and their attitudes towards those factors. It was discovered that all the participants from both sides felt worried about the writing challenges faced by the students due to those factors.

4.3 Suggestions to Improve Poor Writing Skills

This final part also presents three themes in respect of the suggestions given to improve the writing abilities of the SHS students in composition writing. The first theme sought to find what can be done to remedy the poor writing skills as experienced by Yendi SHS final year students. The second theme discusses students' and teachers' suggestion on the best error correction strategies. The last theme deals with why the suggestions given by both teachers and students on errors correction should be considered.

Table 4.3.1: Students' suggestions to improve their writing skills

| | | | Valid | Cumulative | | |
|--------------|---|----------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Percent | Percent | Mean | |
| Valid | constant practice on the part of the student | 28 | 56.0 | 56.0 | 56.0 | 0.56 |
| | employing the services of highly qualified English teachers | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 76.0 | 0.2 |
| | Motivation provision of infrastructure and TLMs | 8 4 | 16.0 8.0 | 16.0 8.0 | 92.0 100.0 | 0.16 0.08 |
| Total | | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

Table 16 displays the results of the suggested solutions to remedy the poor writing skills of students in composition writing. 28 respondents representing 56% with 0.56 mean values proposed constant practice on the part of students. The next batch of responses were; employing the services of qualified English teachers which had 10 respondents representing 20% and 0.02 mean of the total number of student respondents, followed by motivation which recorded 8 respondents representing 16% with the mean values of 0.16 of the entire respondents. Four (4) respondents were those who said provision of infrastructure and TLMs which represents 8% of the total number of responses with 0.08 mean scores. These suggestions are directly proportional to our assumed objective that constant practice, employing highly qualified English teachers at the various SHS and motivation are the major strategies to improve upon the students' writing skills.

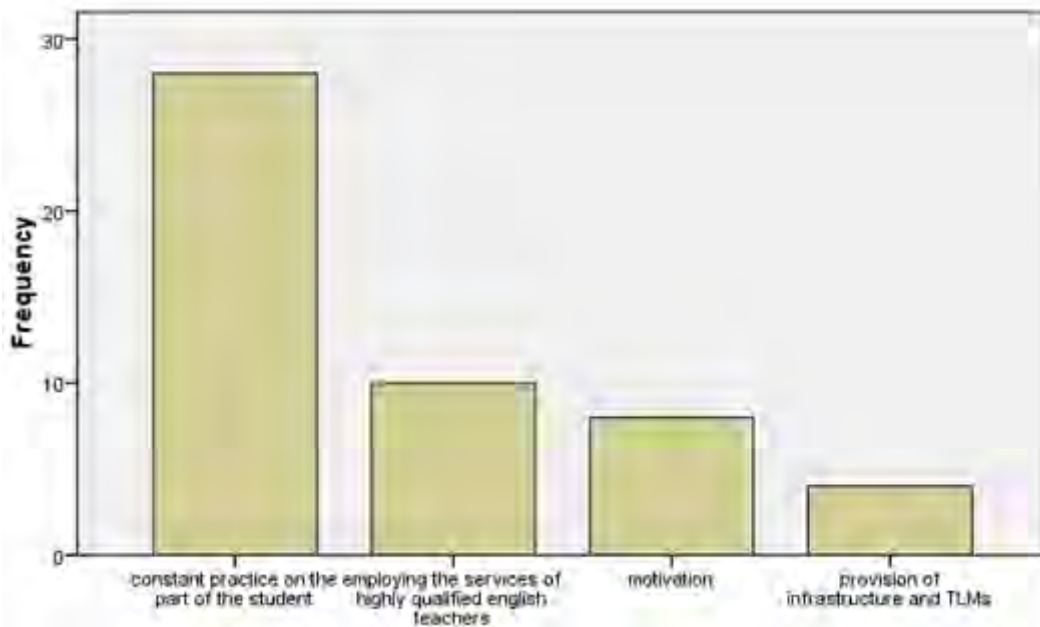


Figure 7: Students' suggestions to improve their writing skills

Figure 8 is a bar chart showing the results of the possible strategies and solutions that can help improve students writing skills. As shown above, there is a revelation that

the paramount remedy to students writing challenges is for them to develop positive attitude for writing through constant practice which recorded the highest mean value of 0.56 responses. Provision of infrastructure and TLMs had recorded the lowest frequency and mean value of 0.08 responses. Other suggestions were motivation and employing the services of highly qualified teachers which had 8 and 10 responses representing the mean values of 0.16 and 0.2 respectively.

Table 4.3.2: Suggestions of teachers to improve' writing skills

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|-------|--|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| Valid | use of modern methods like student centered | 1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 0.062 |
| | moderate class sizes | 6 | 37.5 | 37.5 | 43.8 | 0.375 |
| | Motivation | 2 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 56.2 | 0.125 |
| | consistency in educational policies | 2 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 68.8 | 0.125 |
| | adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs | 4 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 93.8 | 0.25 |
| | employing the services of qualified English teachers | 1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 100.0 | 0.062 |
| | Total | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

Table 4.3.2 is a tabular presentation of the results on the various suggestions that aimed at remediating poor writing skills. It was discovered that 6 out of the 16 teacher respondents representing 37.5% and 0.375 mean of the total responses suggested moderated class sizes, followed by 4 respondents of the 16 representing 25% with the mean score of 0.25 said adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs was the next

highest frequency. 2 respondents each representing 12.5% was recorded for both respondents whose suggestions were motivation and the need for consistency in educational policies respectively scoring the mean values of. 1 respondent each representing 6.2% with the mean values of 0.062 recorded the lowest frequencies for respondents who said employing the services of qualified English teachers and using modern methods of teaching.

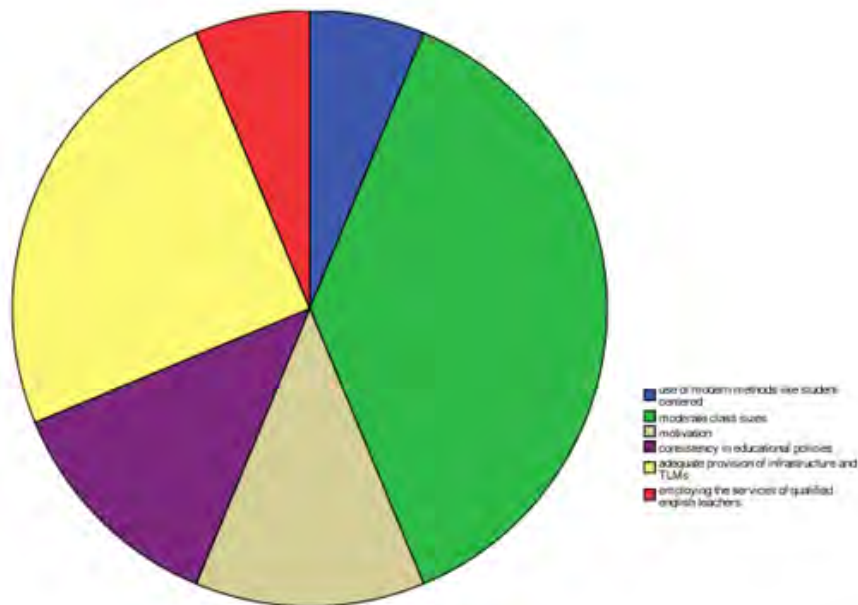


Figure 8: Suggestions of teachers to improve writing skills

Figure 9 is a diagrammatic presentation of the results on the various suggestions that aimed at remediating poor writing skills. It was discovered that 6 out of the 16 teacher respondents representing 37.5% of the total respondents suggested moderated class sizes, followed by 4 respondents of the 16 representing 25% said adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs was the next highest frequency. 2 respondents each representing 12.5% was recorded for both respondents whose suggestions were motivation and the need for consistency in educational policies respectively. 1 respondent each representing 6.2% recorded as the lowest frequencies and means of

those who chose employing the services of qualified English teachers and using modern methods of teaching.

Table 4.3.3: Students' expectations on how to treat errors

| | | Frequenc y | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|-------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Valid | to correct all the mistakes | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 0.1 |
| | to circle or underline each error | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 32.0 | 0.22 |
| | to discuss the mistakes with us | 24 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 80.0 | 0.48 |
| | to assist us to do self-corrections | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 96.0 | 0.16 |
| | to provide us with positive feedback | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 | 0.04 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

Table 4.3.3 above presents the results of students' expectations on how teachers should approach their errors when they come across them in their written scripts. Respondents who the errors should be discussed with them were 24 representing 48% with the mean of 0.48 responses. It was also discovered that 11 respondents representing 22% and a mean of 0.22 each said their errors should be circled or underlined. The least recorded frequency went in favour of respondents who said they should be given positive feedback on the errors committed and this had the mean of 0.04 responses. Other responses suggested that they should be assisted to do self-correction and teacher should do corrections for students respectively. This discovery showed that majority of the students would endorse error discussion and identification as the best method of error correction.

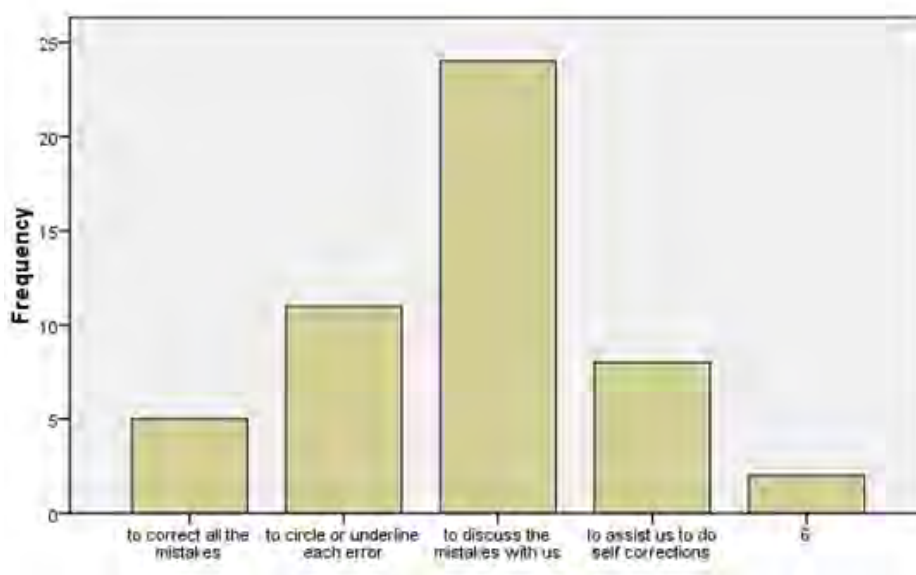


Figure 9: Students' expectations on how to treat errors

Figure 10 above provides a pictorial presentation of the results of students' recommendations on how their errors should be corrected by teachers. The highest figure represents those who said errors should be discussed with them, followed by respondents who suggested that their errors should be identified. The least recorded figure went for those in favour of positive feedback.

Table 4.3.4: Teachers' expectations on how to treat students' errors

| | Frequency | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|--|-----------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| Valid improving my methods of teaching | 3 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 0.188 |
| giving more essay assignments | 1 | 6.2 | 25.0 | 0.062 |
| discussing errors with students | 11 | 68.8 | 93.8 | 0.688 |
| giving positive feedback on students' weaknesses | 1 | 6.2 | 100.0 | 0.062 |
| Total | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

This is a tabular presentation of the results of teacher respondents about what they do to those kinds of errors when they are found in students' scripts. It was discovered that ten (10) out of the sixteen (16) respondents representing 62.5% with a mean of 0.625 said they would discuss the errors with students and this recorded the highest frequency. 3 of the 16 respondents representing 18.8% and 0.188 mean of responses said they would encourage the students to self-corrections whiles 2 of the teacher respondents representing 12.5% constituting 0.125 said they correct it for students. The remaining 1 respondent representing 6.2% said they would subtract half a mark each from affected students and this recorded the lowest frequency and mean score of 0.062.

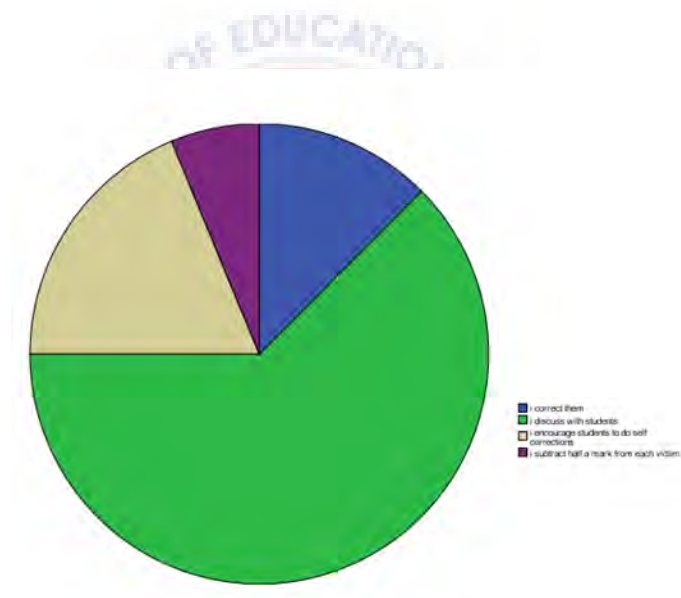


Figure 10: Teachers' expectations on how to treat errors

The pie chart above shows the pictorial representation of the results of what teachers do whenever they encounter errors in students' written essays. A greater portion marked green represented respondents who said they would discuss the errors with the students and this recorded the highest frequency, followed by the brown portion which represents respondents who encouraged respondents to do self-correction. Other responses include those who correct the errors for students as marked by the blue colour.

In sum, these tables and figures present the results of the various suggestions given by students and teachers to improve the students' writing skills. It was discovered on the part of student respondents that 24 out of the 50 respondents which represents 48% said that their errors should be discussed with them and this recorded the highest mean value of 0.48. Whiles 2 out of the total respondents representing 4% and 0.04 mean responses said they should be given positive feedback on the errors committed. Other responses include assisting students do self-corrections and correcting the errors for students which recorded the mean values of 0.48, 0.22 and 0.1 respectively.

On the part of teacher respondents, the highest frequency was recorded in favour of discussing the errors with the students with a mean of 0.688 responses, whilst the lowest frequency with mean of 0.062 was recorded for those who said there should be positive feedback and more essay assignments should be given to the students respectively. The remaining responses went in favour of given improving methods of teaching which obtained the mean value of 1.88.

The implication of this revelation is that the immediate solutions to remedy students' writing challenges are discussing the writing errors with them, improving teaching methodology, given more essay assignments and positive feedback. That is why Brooks (1960) and Lado Lado (1957) opined that classroom teachers should focus their teaching on the areas of difficulty created by negative transfer by adopting vigorous practice in order to overcome the challenges.

This is a table showing the results of why students' suggested remedies should be considered. It was found that 14 out of 50 respondents representing 28% with the mean values of 0.24 out of the total number of respondents said in order to improve upon their writing skills. Also, 12% with the mean of 0.12 scores out of the 50

respondents which represents 24% was recorded for those who said through positive feedback they got to know their errors. Other responses include; to enable teachers give them the desired marks and to offer opportunity for self-corrections by the students which recorded 9 and 8 responses respectively scoring 0.018 and 0.16 mean values. 7 students representing 14% and 0.14 mean of responses recorded were those who believed that the suggestions will enable them change their attitudes towards composition writing.

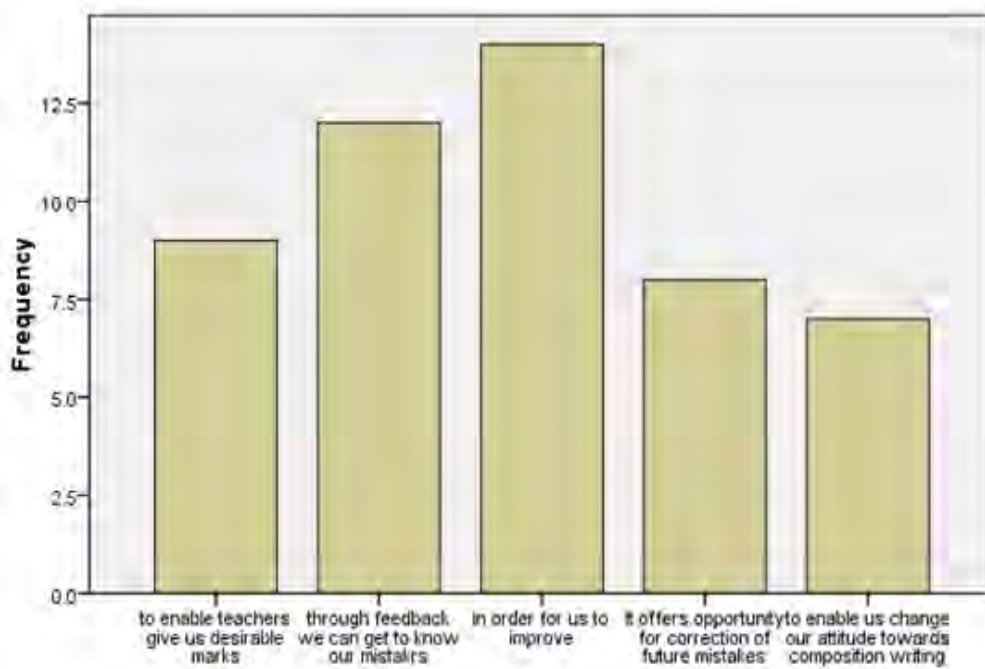


Figure 11: Students' justifying the solutions to improve writing skills

The bar chart shown above is the pictorial reflection of the reasons why students would like to improve upon their ability to compose good essays. Evidently, the highest frequency represents those whose responses were that they embraced the solutions in order for them to improve their writing efficacy and this recorded 14 responses with a mean of 0.28. The lowest frequency recorded also represent those who responded that the suggested solutions in Q11 would enable them change their attitudes towards composition writing and this constitute 0.14 mean of responses.

There were some other responses which include; providing opportunity for students to correct future mistakes, providing positive feedback makes students realize their errors and finally to enable students obtain desirable marks from their teachers recording the mean values of 0.42, 0.16 and 0.18 respectively.

Table 4.3.6: Teachers justifying the solutions to improve writing skills

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | Mean |
|--|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| Valid it will deter students from repeating similar errors | 7 | 43.8 | 43.8 | 43.8 | 0.438 |
| It will enable students improve upon their writing skills | 7 | 43.8 | 43.8 | 87.5 | 0.438 |
| it will help students to understand why they fail in essay writing | 2 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 100.0 | 0.125 |
| Total | 16 | 100.0 | 100.0 | | |

This table (32) presents the results of the reasons why students think the solutions suggested could help improve their writing skills. 9 out of the 16 respondents representing 56.2% and a mean score of 0.562 said it would let students develop positive attitudes for writing, followed by 4 out of the 16 respondents which represent 25% with a mean score of 0.25 said it would enable teachers evaluate their methods of teaching. The remaining three (3) respondents representing 18.8% was the lowest frequency and a mean of 0.188 said it would enable students to improve upon their writing skills. The implication of this result is that the SHS students are willing to change their attitudes towards composition writing.

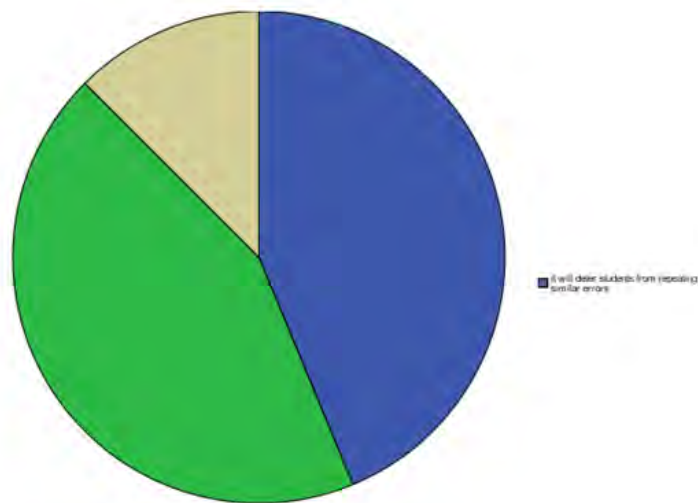


Figure 12: Teachers justifying the solutions to improve writing skills

The diagram above is a pie chart showing the results of the reasons why the suggestions advanced in Q13 could help remedy students' grammar errors. Both the green and blue portions simultaneously recorded the highest frequencies respectively representing teachers who gave the following reasons; it would enable students improve upon their writing skills and would also deter students from repeating similar errors in future. The area marked brown which represents respondents who said it would enable students understand why they fail in essay writing recorded the lowest frequency.

Summarily, the diagrams above present a detailed explanation of the various responses given by both categories of respondents regarding the solutions to improving students' writing skills. It was found that both respondents gave suggestions which affirmed our objective that regular practices, employing the services of highly qualified English teachers, motivation, moderate class sizes, adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs, adoption of modern methods and the host of others were the major strategies to remedy SHS three (3) students' poor writing skills.

The revelations above are exactly in tendon with a study done by Darko (2009) on the impact of the Process Approach to teaching of composition writing in SHS and found out that most SHS students face the writing task with difficulty. He supported his claim with the chief examiner's report on English language from 2001 to 2006 which confirmed wrong spelling, faulty constructions, misuse of tenses and misplaced punctuations as students' weaknesses. He therefore recommended that the process writing approach be piloted as the starting point of the writing programme in some SHS. Moreover, this study would recommend the adoption of writing across the curriculum since most of the respondents largely suggested constant practice as the highest frequency in the two tables. All in all, Safo-Edu (2009), in his book titled "Your English is you" examines the error pattern of students in their essays. The purpose of his study is to draw attention to certain grammatical errors and expressions which feature prominently in the speech and written works of many students and public speakers. He exclaims: In a country like Ghana where English permeates all aspects of our socio-linguistic life, the use of poor English is a serious social handicap. A single grammatical error in the speech of a public speaker, even if it is immediately corrected, leaves an indelible stigma on his or her public image.

4.3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has been dealt with in two folds. The beginning part sought to collate sample grammar, punctuation and spelling errors found in Yendi SHS students' essays. These were classified and analyzed using observation. The second part was analyzed by administering questionnaire to both participants (students and teachers). This was done in order to ascertain what the real writing challenges are and to examine the factors causing those challenges and thereafter suggest appropriate solutions to solve the writing deficiencies of the students.

In sum, the revelations of the various studies have confirmed that indeed the standard of English composition writing of Senior High Students has fallen considerably and therefore proper investigation and recommendations need to be given, so that, eventually standards will improve once more.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, pedagogical implications of the study, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary of findings

The findings of the study on Senior High School Students' poor writing skills showed that there are three (3) major kinds of writing deficiencies experienced by Yendi SHS final year students. The taxonomy of these writing challenges ranges from spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and punctuation errors. These errors were further classified according to their hypothetical causes and thoroughly discussed.

5.1.1 *Concord errors*

The researcher introduced the section by explaining what grammar errors are and then classified those errors according to their causes as reflected in the students' texts by throwing light on grammar errors caused by subject verb concord, wrong use of count nouns, reduplications for emphasis and tautological expressions respectively with ample examples. The researcher made a personal class observation and found out that of all the errors committed by students' grammar is the most frequent one and resulting from subject verb concord and misuse of tenses in particular.

5.1.2 *Punctuation errors*

Another major category of writing error found in students' documents was punctuation errors. The kinds of punctuation errors commonly committed reflected wrong use or omission of end punctuation marks such as the full stop (.) the question mark (?) and the exclamatory mark (!). Those were also classified as omission of end

punctuation marks, omission of capital letters, wrong capitalization, wrong use of apostrophe and the use of comma in place of semi-colon.

5.1.3 Spelling errors

Regarding spelling, it was discovered that the most frequently committed spelling mistakes reflected wrong amalgamation of words, use of alpha-numeric coinages, confusion of homophones and double consonantal words as well as spelling mistakes resulting from carelessness.

This study confirms a previous study conducted by Agor (2003) on the sources of errors that Senior High School Students errors in Sunyani Municipality make in writing, whose findings revealed that wrong spelling was the most frequent errors committed followed by concord problems and other three categories namely, preposition, article and wrong use of words which recorded nearly equal percentage of errors. However, the present study went ahead to look at punctuations in order to fill a vacuum created by the previous study as a contribution to knowledge.

5.1.4 Students and teachers' views on the writing deficiencies of SHS students

It was discovered from the questionnaires administered to students that grammar errors recorded the highest mean of 0.42 responses from student respondents and 0.625 from teacher respondents. The lowest recorded means went in favour of wrong use of irregular verbs and pronouns with the mean of 0.062 each of the teacher respondents and that of the student respondents was wrong choice of vocabulary with the mean value of 0.02 responses. Other errors discovered were wrong spelling, wrong expressions and wrong sentence constructions. The implication is that grammar error is the most frequently committed error among SHS students in Yendi Senior High School.

5.2 Factors Causing Poor Writing Skills

This portion of the study discusses the opinions of students and teachers towards the factors causing poor writing skills. It also presents reasons justifying these factors and lastly unearths the attitudes of students about their writing challenges in three themes.

5.2.1 Interference of the mother tongue

During the classroom observation session, the researcher observed that majority of the students were using Dagbani instead of English language in response to questions posed by the teacher. Not all, even English had to occasionally switch to the use of Dagbani to explain certain concepts for better understanding, even though, it was boldly written at the entrance of each class that “speak English; vernacular is prohibited”. When the researcher enquired about the frequent use of Dagbani a student told him that English was not their native language. Others translated some expressions in Dagbani directly into English language. Some examples are:

Go fast fast: Chami yom yom and lest eat double double: Ti dim parim parim.

This revelation confirms Owu-Ewie and Lomotey (2011) who found in a study of L1 interference errors of Akan speakers in the JHS. Usman (2012) also opines that students are engulfed by a complex linguistic situation which compels them to use their indigenous language when they are expected to master the English language.

5.2.2 Negative influence of technology

One of the new trends of error found among final year students of Yendi Senior High School was discovered to be caused by negative influence of technology and social media inconsistency. Thus, technology and social media exposure has succeeded in ruining the students’ writing ability as they wrongly apply alpha-numeric words in the formal setting which prevents them from scoring higher marks during exams. Some sample sentences found in students’ exercises include: I am very gr8tful, let us meet

to 9, 10 around and see, just a few to mention. The finding concurs with that of Agor (2003) who studied the concord errors of three Senior High School students in Sunyani municipality and found out that one of the sources of concord errors among SHS students is negative influence of technology.

5.2.3 Negative attitudes of students and teachers

One of the most serious factors which resulted in students' poor writing skills is the negative habit of students towards writing and teachers lack of skills towards innovation and motivation. It was discovered from the findings that an overwhelming majority of the final year students could not organize sentences into logical paragraphs because they face composition writing with difficulty. The students testified that they show a negative attitude for writing unlike speaking and reading. Abdullahi (2003) seconds this finding by saying that teachers prefer using traditional methods of teaching which they have been familiar with or as they were taught which do not aid proper learning. Sa'ad and Ya'u (2007) have also agreed that successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right method.

5.2.4 Inadequate qualified English teachers

An important factor that cause poor writing skills among students is inadequate qualified English teachers with pedagogical skills handling English in the various Senior High Schools. It was observed that only six of the sixteen teachers were teachers who majored in English and this does not promote effective teaching of English composition lessons. The reason is that most untrained teachers and national service personnel are given English because it is the only vacant subject on the time table. Lado (1957) concurs that a teacher who has made comparison of the L2 with

the L1 will know better what the real problems are and provide methods for teaching them.

Ahmed also adds that students' lack of confidence is caused by a teaching strategy which does not conform to students' learning styles and cultural background.

5.2.5 Inadequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs

Yendi Senior High School where the study was conducted has been known for its number one problem which is inadequate provision of infrastructure and teaching learning materials leading to large class size and its attendant problems. I observed that Yendi SHS has been suffering from lack of good roads, water, electricity, language labs, and furnished library. The existing library has been filled with outdated books, graphics and workshops that neither promote teaching and learning. Besides the researcher realized that none of the teachers used TLMs in teaching through the length of his stay in the school. Sa'ad is of the view that teaching and learning takes place effectively when classes are moderate, whereas Roger (1981) says that instructional materials and facilities are very important part of the process of learning as they provide practice and feedback in the learning task.

5.3 Perceptions of students and teachers on the factors causing poor writing skills

The study outlined some of the opinions shared by both students and teachers on the factors causing poor writing skills of SHS students. The factors were either internal or external in nature and include; interference of the mother tongue, inconsistencies in the target language, negative influence of technology, teacher incompetence, lack of motivation on the part of teachers, poor writing habit of students, inadequate infrastructure and TLMs and inconsistent government policies on education. However, other studies have categorized these factors into some broad domains, for

example, teacher' incompetence (Haider, 2012; Mansoor, 2005; Harmer, 2008), students' lack of interest (Byrne, 1991; Harmer, 2008), and methodological inappropriacy (Javed, et al., 2013).

5.3.1 Reasons given by teachers to justify the factors causing writing deficiencies

The section looked at the reasons given by teacher participants to justify their opinions on the factors outlined towards those factors. It was discovered from an overwhelming majority of teacher participants that students' failure to organize coherent thoughts, lack of knowledge of the principles governing grammar and poor learning habits of students are among the reasons justifying the factors discussed above.

5.3.2 Attitudes of students and teachers towards poor writing skills

It was discovered that all the participants from both sides felt worried about the writing challenges faced by the students due to those factors. This confirms our assumption that victims of writing inabilities have negative attitudes towards themselves any time they compose poorly and would therefore do everything possible to reverse the trend. For instance, Nunam (1989) argues that writing is an extremely difficult cognitive activity which requires the learner to have control over various factors. These factors vary from academic background and personal interest of the writer (SHS students) to various psychological, linguistic and cognitive phenomena (Dar & Khan, 2015; Haider, 2012).

5.4 Suggestions to Improve Students Writing Skills

After critically examining the factors, the study outlined a set of suggestions to solve the student's writing challenges in three themes. Theme one is concerned with the suggestions of students and teachers on the solutions to remedy the SHS students

writing challenges. Theme two discussed the expectations of both students and teachers about error correction. The last theme tried to present the reasons given by students to justify those suggestions given.

5.4.1 Suggestions of students and teachers to improve students' writing skills

The solutions include; employing the services of highly qualified English teachers at the SHS level, adequate and timely provision of infrastructure and TLMs, motivation, activating positive attitudes towards essay writing, constant practice and frequent use of English on campuses, and giving positive feedback to students on their writing errors.

The finding above is exactly in tandem with that of Darko (2009) who carried out a similar study dubbed the impact of process writing approach to teaching of composition writing in Senior High Schools. He supported his claim with the Chief Examiner's report on SHS core English papers from 2001 to 2006, which confirmed wrong spelling, faulty constructions, misuse of tenses and misplaced punctuations as students' weaknesses. He recommended that the Process Writing Approach be piloted as the starting point of the writing programme in some Senior High Schools. Additionally, this work recommends the adoption of the New Intelligent Tutoring System of punctuation Writing (NITS) and Writing across the Curriculum which would offer students the opportunity to practice writing regularly.

5.4.2 Recommendations given by students and teachers on error correction

Regarding the results of the various suggestions given by students and teachers to improve the students' writing skills, it was discovered by both respondents that errors should be discussed with the students, and that teachers should improve their methods of error correction and give positive feedback to students on the errors committed.

Other responses include assisting students do self-corrections and correcting the errors for students.

5.4.3 Students and teachers justifying the solutions to remedy poor writing skills

The diagrams and tables above present a detailed explanation of the various responses given by both categories of respondents regarding the solutions to improving students' writing skills. It was found that both respondents gave suggestions which affirmed our objective that regular practices, employing the services of highly qualified English teachers, motivation, moderate class sizes, adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs, adoption of modern methods and the host of others were the major strategies to remedy SHS three (3) students' poor writing skills.

5.5 Conclusion

The study sought to investigate the poor writing skills of Yendi Senior High School students in the final year. The target population for the study was 16 teachers and 84 students, comprising 42 male and female students respectively. The qualitative research approach was adopted to answer three (3) research questions using observation, documents, reconnaissance survey and questionnaire as research instruments to unravel the poor writing abilities of SHS students. Error Analysis theory of second language learning was the framework adopted for this study. The researcher identified the sample errors including grammatical mistakes, punctuation errors and spelling mistakes in written essay scripts of the respondents of Yendi Senior High School. The errors were later classified and described according to their hypothetical causes. For instance, grammar errors were classified into grammar errors resulting from misuse of concord, wrong choice of vocabulary, misuse of tenses, wrong use of count nouns and pronouns, prepositions among others. These were

analyzed in order to evaluate their seriousness using a combination Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis.

This study revealed that majority of the SHS three students have not yet completely mastered the fundamental principles of grammar and composition writing even when they are about to take their WASSCE exams.

The study secondly considered the major factors causing poor writing skills in Yendi Senior High School. It was revealed that the challenges that the students face in essay writing may not be peculiar to them. Both students and teacher participants concerted that these factors among others include poor writing habits, inadequate qualified English teachers, negative influence of technology, inadequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs, inconsistent government policies on education, interference of the mother tongue, lack of motivation and innovation towards composition writing, student indiscipline and heavy reliance on exam malpractices on the part of students. Hence, there is the need for improvement in the teaching of essay writing in particular, at all the levels of our education so that standards will improve once again.

The study finally considered the major suggestions given by both participants to improve the writing skills of Final Year Students of Yendi Senior High School. Top most of the suggestions were the need for students to change their writing habits and practicing regularly, motivation on the part of teachers, use of modern methods of teaching, discussion of students' writing errors with them and given the students positive feedback on their errors. The final set of suggestions were that government should: provide adequate infrastructure and TLMs such as language laboratories, good roads and portable drinking water and ICT resource centers on regular bases, employ only highly qualified and skillful English teachers at the SHS level, formulate favourable and consistent policies on education. It is when all the field players like

students, teachers and teacher unions, PTAs, NGOs and Civil bodies, and government are directly involved in decision making and policy formulations that the standards so desired would be achieved.

5.6 Pedagogical Implications of the Findings

Revelations from the study presupposed that Yendi Senior High School Students do not exhibit good writing ability which means teaching of composition writing is not properly done.

The implication of this finding is that many students in that school will not be able to function effectively in a community where writing (English language) is the only medium of communication. Perhaps, all the four fundamental skills of language are measured in the written form. Hence there is the need for Students to take composition writing as a habit to become perfect in the writing process.

5.7 Recommendations

In view of the analysis and findings from the study, the current researcher found it very important to suggest some recommendations which he thinks could be very useful in addressing the writing deficiencies of Yendi Senior High School final year students and other students facing similar ordeal elsewhere. These recommendations include:

1. The services of highly qualified trained English teachers would help improve the Senior High School students' writing skills as they are well equipped with linguistic and communicative competencies. The study therefore recommends that appropriate institutions should recruit only teachers who specialize in English to handle the subject at that level.
2. Teachers should use appropriate TLMs to project their composition lessons adequately. Students should also be motivated to change their attitudes towards

composition writing and English in general. This can be achieved when teachers adopt new writing approaches such as the Process Writing Approach and Writing across the Curriculum which will give students the opportunity to practice writing more often.

3. Students should be made to use English more often in school to avoid being negatively influenced by the mother tongue since language proficiency comes with constant practice. Hence the four (4) basic skills of language acquisition such as listening, speaking, reading and writing should be emphasized.

4. There should be adequate provision of infrastructure such as resource centers, language laboratories, and classrooms to prevent congestion. Thus, a very conducive atmosphere should be provided for teaching and learning in addition to observing strict compliance of the CONVID 19 precautionary measures by students and teachers in the various schools.

5. There is the need for students to know when to use the informal English so as to avoid being influenced by social media language such as WhatsApp and face-book chats etc.

5.8 Suggestions for further studies

Since no single study is sacrosanct, further research is required to explore the SHS learners' errors in totality especially on paragraphing errors which is not adequately dealt with in this study.

Another research needs to be conducted on the topic so that comparison could be made between the female and the male performance regarding composition writing.

Furthermore, a body of research is required to scout out the degree of writing challenges exhibited by private school students and public-school student, and that of

rural schools and urban ones in order to establish the influence of setting on the academic performance of SHS students.

Finally, this study is limited in scope because one out of the five SHS was used in the study. So, the findings could not be over-generalized. Hence another body of research needs to be done to cover the remaining schools in the Municipality.



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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR STUDENTS

Introduction

Hello, my name is Kassim Yussif and your name is-----? Please, I am here to interview you on the teaching and learning of composition writing. I wish to assure you of the confidentiality of any information you would provide. The information you are going to provide would be used for academic purposes and nothing else. Hence there are no correct or wrong responses to the interview questions.

During the interview, I would like to discuss the following topics: teaching and learning of English composition writing. Thank you.

Please, after going through your written exercises which have been marked by your teachers, you some time, find some words that have been underlined or marked as wrong with red pen. For example, I never go to school (where goes is underlined and the sentence marked as wrong).

Now answer the following questions correctly by underlining only one option from the list of alternatives below each question.

1 What signal do you receive when your essay script is full of red pen?

a. spelling mistakes b. poor writing c. grammatical errors d. wrong sentence construction e. wrong choice of vocabulary f. direct transliterations

2 Do you attribute the red inks underlined to poor writing skills? Yes or No

3 Are you aware of the errors or mistakes you make?

a. indeed b. partly aware c. totally aware d. unaware e. partly unaware f. totally unaware

4 Do you feel like avoiding them? Yes or No

ii How possible? A. by reading widely b. by asking my friend c. by constant practice
d. by consulting my teacher e. by reading over and over my write up after finishing

5 Why would you want to avoid the errors?

a. to avoid disgrace b. to score high marks c. to become perfect d. for prestige e.
for promotion

6 How do your colleague students and teachers react towards you each time you
compose poorly?

a. They mock at me b. they try to avoid me c. they encourage me to sit up d. they
correct it for me e. they look down upon me

7 What kinds of errors often lead to your deficiency in essay writing?

a. Wrong expression b. concord errors c. wrong use of punctuations d. wrong
paragraphing e. spelling mistakes

8 What do you think are responsible for those poor writings in your written essay
exercises?

a. Poor writing habit b. heavy reliance on exam malpractices c. inadequate
qualified English teachers d. student indiscipline e. large class sizes f.
inadequate infrastructure and TLMs

9 Do you worry about the poor writings exhibited in your exercises? Yes or No

ii and why? a. because it affects our scores b. because it makes me feel shameful c.
because it helps me not to repeat such mistakes d. because it helps us identify our
strengths and weaknesses e. because it helps us change our attitudes towards writing

10 Are you satisfied by the way your teacher circles the mistakes in your exercises?

a. Satisfied b. fairly satisfied c. strongly satisfied d. unsatisfied e. fairly
unsatisfied f. strongly unsatisfied

- 11 What do you think can be done to remedy the poor writings encountered in your written scripts?
- Constant practice on the part of the student
 - employing the services of highly qualified English teachers
 - motivation
 - provision of infrastructure and TLMs
 - activating positive
- 12 Why do you think your answer to question eleven (11) should be considered?
- To enable teachers give us desirable marks
 - through feedback we can get to know our mistakes
 - in order for us to improve
 - it offers an opportunity for correction of future mistakes
 - to enable us change our attitudes towards composition writing
- 13 Now, what do you expect your teachers to do if your essays are poorly written?
- To pardon us
 - to correct all the mistakes
 - to circle or underline each error
 - to discuss the mistakes with us
 - to assist us do self-corrections.
- 14 Why do you think your answer to question thirteen (13) should be considered?
- Correction can let us understand why we make such mistakes
 - It will prevent us from committing poor writings
 - It will enable us improve upon our writing potency
 - It will help us become perfect composition writer
 - It will expose our strengths and weaknesses
- 15 Now do you expect your teachers to correct the errors or mistakes in your written exercises?
- Agree
 - partly agree
 - strongly agree
 - disagree
 - partly disagree
 - strongly disagree

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

Hello, my name is Kassim Yussif and your name is called? Please, I am here to interview you on the teaching and learning of poor writing skills. However, I wish to take this opportunity to assure you of the confidentiality of the information you would provide. The information you are going to provide is only for academic purposes and nothing else. There are no correct or wrong answers to the questions.

During the interview, I would like to discuss the following topic: poor writing skills, teaching and learning of composition writing. Thank you please. Now answer the following questions correctly by underlining only one option from the list of alternatives below each question.

1 Please what kinds of errors do your students show in their essay writings? For example, Rabi together with Salam are coming. He closed the door gentle.

- a. Concord problems b. spelling mistakes c. punctuation errors d. wrong pronoun usage e. poor paragraphing

2 How did you know that the kinds you have provided in question one (1) are errors or mistakes?

- a. Because they are not acceptable b. because they deviate from the norm c. because the students commit them consciously d. because the students are unaware of those deviations

3 Why do you consider those kinds you provided in question two (2) as grammar errors?

- a. Because the subjects do not agree with the verbs b. because they defy the basic rule of grammar

4 Which kinds of errors give rise to complaints?

- a. Concord errors b. wrong spelling c. wrong expressions d. problems in using irregular verbs e. use of pronouns as verbs

5 What do you think are some of the factors causing poor writing skills among your students?

- a. Influence of the mother tongue b. lack of regular practice c. large class sizes d. negative influence of technology e. inadequate infrastructure and TLMs f. reliance on exam malpractices

6 On what basis do you say that your earlier response to question five (5) actually cause poor writing skills? b. students exhibit low vocabulary knowledge b. students fail to organize coherent thoughts c. students lack the principles governing grammar d. absenteeism e. poor learning habits

7 Which aspect of the English language mostly pose problems in students' writings?

- a. Tensing b. paragraphing c. using non-count nouns as count nouns d. spelling e. expression

8 Which students are mostly affected by the circumstances you mentioned in question seven (7)?

- a. Those at the basic level b. the SHS students c. all the levels

9 What suggestions would you apply to help remedy the students' poor writing skills?

- a. Use of modern methods like student centered b. moderate class sizes c. motivation d. consistency in educational policies e. adequate provision of infrastructure and TLMs f. employing the services of qualified English teachers

10 How effective can those suggestions mentioned in question nine (9) be?

- a. Partly effective b. very effective c. partly ineffective d. very ineffective

11 Why do you think the suggestions you have mentioned in response to question ten (10) can help improve students writing skills? a. because it will let students develop good attitudes for writing b. it will enable students write good essays c. it will enable teachers evaluate their methods of teaching

12 What do you do to those kinds of errors when you encounter them?

- a. I correct them b. I discuss with students c. I ignore them d. I encourage students to do self- corrections e. I subtract half a mark from each victim

13 What do you think must be done to the grammar errors in students' essays?

- a they must be identified b. they should be discussed with students c. they should be corrected e. they should attract some marks as penalty.

14 Why do you think your response to question thirteen (13) can assist in dealing with grammar errors in students' writings? a. it will deter students from repeating similar errors b. it enables students improve upon their writing skills c. it will help students understand why they fail in essay writing d. it will enable students obtain good scores

15 How would you encourage your students to read other extra materials? a. by giving them regular assignments b. by engaging them at the library often c. by giving them novels to read and report during vacations d. by advising them e. by giving them project works

16 How do students respond to the advice? a. positively b. negatively c. none

17 Have students been approaching you for clarification on topics you have taught them on English grammar? How often has this been? How beneficial has it been? Yes or No

ii a. very often b. not often c. not at all iii a. not beneficial b. extremely beneficial c. partly beneficial

18 What do you seek to achieve when you organize project work on English grammar for your students?

- a. Improve writing skills b. change in students' attitude c. diagnose students' weaknesses d. for regular practicing opportunity

19 How do you feel towards your students' composition deficiency when marking their scripts?

- a. Worried b. not worried c. very worried d. marking becomes frustrating

20 Do you often feel worried when your students commit multiple errors in their essays? Yes or No

And what steps do you take to reverse the situation?

- a. improving my methods of teaching b. giving more essay assignments c. discussing errors with students d. punishing students by withholding some marks e. giving positive feedback on students' weaknesses.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLES OF SPELLING ERRORS FOUND IN STUDENTS' ESSAYS

Table1 Spelling errors resulting from wrong pronunciation

| Wrong | Correct | Wrong | Correct |
|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| Dye | Die | Otter | Utter |
| Fest | First | Oltar | Altar |
| Sift | Shift | Sort | Salt |
| Nusty | Nasty | Againts | Against |
| Conderm | Condemn | Slippers | Sleepers |
| Quite | Quiet | Doo | Door |
| Pleasure | Pressure | Soyal | Soil |
| Peace | Piece | Dagomers | Dagombas |
| Allthough | Although | Her | Here |
| Axe | Ask | Two | Too |
| Primery | Primary | Dim | Deem |
| Buy | By | Were | Where |
| Mulpractice | Malpractice | Presdent | President |
| Bars | Bus | Been | bin |
| Beyong | Beyond | Relatips | Relatives |
| Fine | Find | Dirtbin | Dustbin |
| Heloo | Hello | Torch | Touch |
| Oganize | Organize | Lest | let's |
| Ladys' | Ladies | Trowing | Throwing |
| Trofy | Trophy | Kwality | Quality |

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Fowl | Foul | Story | storey (building) |
| Simester | Semester | Schoo | School |
| Lounge | Lunch | Extral | Extra |
| Physis | Physics | Dezeez | Desist |
| Cantry | Country | Querrell | Quarrel |
| Farsion | Fashion | Extral | Extra |

Source: field data

2 Spelling errors resulting from words containing double consonants

| Incorrect | Correct | Incorrect | Correct |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Pas | Pass | Reffuse | Refuse |
| Coleague | Colleague | Comand | Command |
| Hapy | Happy | Appealling | Appealing |
| Excelence | Excellence | Scater | Scatter |
| Asembly | Assembly | Aple | Apple |
| Occassion | Occasion | Butocks | Buttocks |
| Peacefull | Peaceful | Pannel | Panel |
| Robers | Robbers | Suficient | Sufficient |
| Aflict | Afflict | Attitude | Attitude |
| Puting | Putting | Accross | across |
| Quarel | Quarrel | Runer | Runner |
| Opose | Oppose | Gogles | Goggles |
| Previllage | Privilege | Compell | Compel |
| Modelling | Modeling | Helow | Hello |

| | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| Rennovate | Renovate | Starf | Staff |
| Accademic | Academic | Umbrela | Umbrella |
| Writen | Written | Socket | Soccer |
| Probblem | Problem | Reffuse | Refuse |
| Arangement | Arrangement | Comand | Command |
| Briliant | Brilliant | Appealling | Appealing |
| Sumary | Summary | Scater | Scatter |

Source: Field data

3 Spelling errors resulting from wrong amalgamation of words

| Unacceptable | Acceptable | Unacceptable | Acceptable |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Insteadof | instead of | Reliedon | relied on |
| Infact | in fact | Hi therto | Hitherto |
| Aswell | as well | To morrow | Tomorrow |
| Inbetween | in between | For ever | Forever |
| All though | Although | Wakeup | wake up |
| Where as | Whereas | In deed | Indeed |
| Aparfrom | apart from | Inlieu of | in lieu of |
| Dis ability | Disability | Un less | Unless |
| Un able | unable | Lefthand | left hand |
| In to | into | Up on | Upon |
| A lotof | a lot of | Reliedon | relied on |
| To morrow | tomorrow | Eitheror | either or |

Source: Field data

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE WRITTEN SCRIPTS OF FINAL YEAR STUDENTS OF YENDI
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Stopped us from going because the driver dashed
 some notes into his hand and we passed
 when the driver sets on and we well
 moving, a smaller small car by-passed ~~and~~
 and chased the driver for a chase and since
 we were all young youth we want to see
 the chase and the driver also increased the
 speed of the car and because the ~~other~~^{time}
 was getting closer we asked him to increase
 the gear in addition so that we will pass
 the car and also to reach to get some at
 the front since the number would be great.
 Getting closer to Bonaiye without passing
 the smaller small the driver continued with
 the same speed, and what we could see
 is that there was a ~~motor~~ motor bike taking
 the way that we are supposed and the
 driver tried to stop the car but the brake
 refused to function then, the driver grew his
 hand on the steering wheel and tried to
 control the ~~fit~~ fit to a different direction and
 the ~~motor~~ motor bike also turned to the same
 direction and the driver cursed the car because
 and ~~what~~ saw or hear or fear felt and
 a note up in a tablet near the head and saw
 a great crowd and the people in the car
 all died ~~and~~ ^{yellow} ~~of~~ the motor also died

Mark
value
of
paper
with
weight

Candidate's Number

Page

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write
in
margin

Question

Write on both sides of the paper

and other big men and women and head masters
from other schools will be present.

C=10

O=09

E=13

M=20

Finally the school is launching the
programme before the main one comes and
it will be a nice moment which I shall like
to share with you. And it will not be possible
for me please extend my greetings to your new
friends, masters and Amo your class friends
tell her I miss her and will visit her during
the vacation. I will be waiting for a reply from
you bye.

32
~~32~~
50

Write only one name
(informal letter).

Yours every
Akpan Idorinju

10/10/10

Conducting a lesson

Quarter 1

With or with skills of 4/5 subject

10/10/10

should go back home since we didn't inform our parents before the journey. If anything should happen there would be a lot of blame on us and if you look at the poster of the programme you realized that it is going to be a large number and an interesting and interesting one. ~~of course~~ we said no ~~to~~ ^{to} what he said and he left to his house.

At the station, we ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~best~~ ^{four} ~~were~~ ^{left} ~~writing~~ ^{to} ~~see~~ ^{if} ~~there~~ ^{would} ~~be~~ ^a ~~car~~ ^{from} ~~that~~ ^{would} ~~come~~ ^{from} ~~the~~ ^{Dahome} ~~to~~ ^{to} the programme. The guys at the station always hire a car when they are attending a programme. We stood there for thirty minutes and we heard a loud sound coming down to pass. We got ~~more~~ ^{closer} to the roadside to wait for our ~~car~~ ^{car} and that ~~was~~ ^{was} the Dahome people when they got closer we stepped ~~them~~ ^{them} and the car was occupied ~~inside~~ ^{inside} and ~~top~~ ^{top} of the car. The guys at the top of the car called us to climb ~~on~~ ^{on} we did and all of us got a place on ~~it~~ ^{it} of the car and ~~watch~~ ^{watch} our presents and the driver made a ~~work~~ ^{work}. When we got to the police barrier they complain on the ~~seating~~ ^{seating} arrangement but did

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both sides of
the paper

Question 21
Write on both sides of the paper

Page 17

Go on
to the
next

fans which are not in good shape should be repaired including the ceiling panels in the classrooms and sanitaries. Also the school is almost 50 and still it does not have a good and nice entrance like other schools. The school is also a big and well known in the country especially in the northern part of the country but due to it lacking an entrance most people do not see and observe it as such but there only disregard it.

Secondly, the coming of the anniversary has made the school very busy at all times and this is to just make sure it becomes a successful one of course. Due to this reason, the school is putting pressure on us to make us learn and pass well. As you know, the head master will have to deliver his speech and will have to give every information about the school to the guest present and it will be a disgrace to announce that the school has been performing bad in their final examinations. We are called elite student and we have to behave as such because the programme will take place during our celebration so there fore we have to pass and pass well to rise the name of the school since since a lot of visitors like the ministers

UoE Winneba
Candidate's
Name

Candidate's Number

Location (UoE)

Page 1

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name at
the
beginning

Write on both sides of the paper

Great Lamprey Mills

P.O. Box 12430

Accra (UoE)

15 June, 2020

Hello Kano

Hi dim it is a great pleasure to pen you this letter and hope you are faring well by the grace of Allah as I am in a good condition over here. Some are the days when we do everything together, eat, go to school, play, learn and work together. I really miss those days and the moments we spend together. The reason for writing to you this letter is to ^{tell} you about the preparation the school is making towards her forthcoming 50th Anniversary and I hope this letter reach you in a good mood.

There are a lot of activities which is to be carried on during this powerful anniversary. Most of the buildings in the school needs to be renovated due to some cracks on the walls, damages to the fans, repairing of doors and the serious ones which is the exposure of wires. Most of the buildings and the class rooms are deteriorated and there fans need to be put in to good shape to prevent accident, further damage and make them functional.