

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' CONCORD ERRORS: A CASE STUDY OF
AKATSI NO. 1 JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN AKATSI IN THE VOLTA
REGION OF GHANA**



OSCARIA AMI ASRA

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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**OSCARIA AMI ASRA
(7170080025)**

**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign
Languages Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of**

**Master of Education
(Teaching English as a Second Language)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

SEPTEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, OSCARIA AMI ASRA, declare that this dissertation with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and acknowledged is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

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

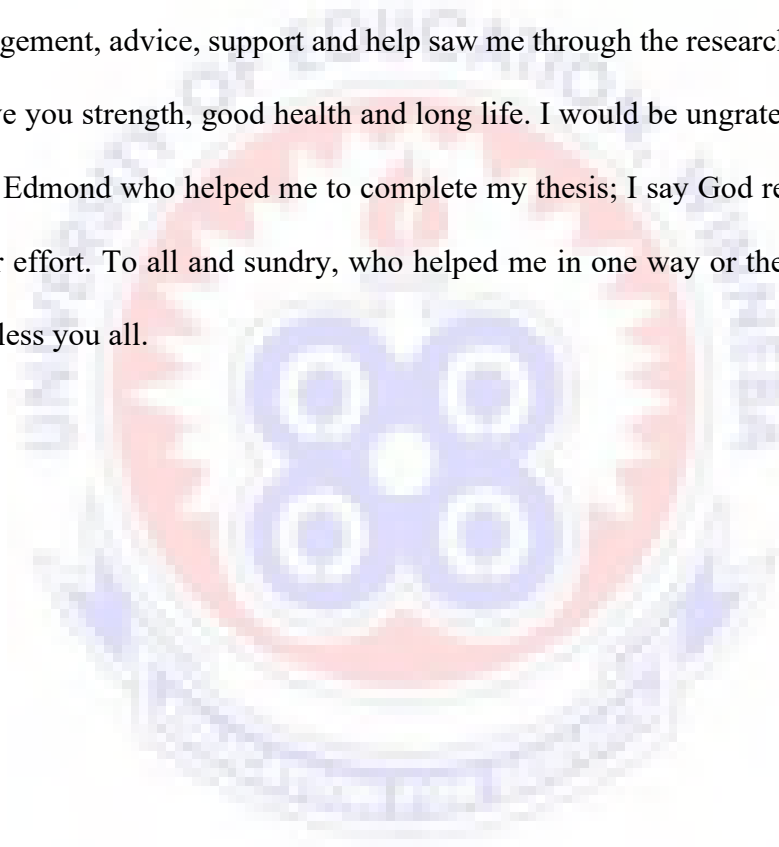
Name of supervisor DR. CHARLOTTE FOFO LOMOTEY

Signature.....

Date.....

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, my dear husband, Mr. Innocent Kwame Augustt and our lovely children, Etornam and Ewoenam.



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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the concord errors committed by students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School. Its main objective was to find the types of concord errors they commit and the possible factors that account for the errors. Data were collected from JHS 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School by way of questionnaire and in-class essays and analyzed. The findings revealed that the concord errors found in students' writing were many, including subject-verb concord errors. The findings also showed that the most challenging category of concord from the point of view of the respondents was subject-verb concord. On the causes of the errors, the study identified students' negative attitude towards the study of English Language, incomplete application of rules, as well as ignorance of rule restriction as negatively affecting their performance in English. Based on the results, it is argued that policy makers, textbook writers, teachers of English, parents, and students should be involved in shaping policy to guide the teacher in teaching effectively for optimum performance from students.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that learners make. Systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching (Corder, 1974). Error analysis received considerable attention and finally became a recognized part of applied linguistics in the 1970s. This is because the strong version of the contrastive analysis (CA) turned out not to be a productive pedagogical tool. James (2001) defines error analysis as “the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance” (p. 62).

Richards (1971) explains that the field of error analysis as “dealing with the differences between the ways people learning a language speak or write and the way adult native speakers of the language use the language” (p.1). Norrish (1983) also defines an error as a systematic deviation, when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong. The study of error permits the formulation of rules for learners’ interlingual system of acquiring a new language. Charting the learner’s language development through error analysis has psychological importance because it submits the transfer theory to critical observation. This provides data on the nature and significance of the obstacle that lies in the path towards the discovery of the rules. Concord in English Grammar means agreement between subject of a sentence and its verb or between the subject and its complement. When such agreement is not achieved, it becomes an error of concord. Quirk (2004) defines concord as a relationship between two grammatical elements such that one of them selects a singular verb while a plural subject selects a plural verb. The knowledge of the rules of concord in English grammar

is necessary for speaking and writing good English. A lucid and convincing piece of writing must be grammatical for complete acceptability.

However, it is important to mention that not much has been done to improve on how concord is taught and learnt in our schools. In this regard, mention can be made of how issues surrounding the teaching of concord continue to pose challenges to teachers and students. For example, when it comes to using the rules of concord, Long (2007) argues that for a sentence to make sense, subjects and verbs have to agree with each other. She goes on to assert that issues about subject-verb agreement are relevant basic skills which every student must strive to acquire. Concord errors can hinder effective communication and generate a feeling of disappointment in the effectiveness of our institutions. It seems, therefore, necessary to approach the teaching of English language skills by bringing out some of the concord errors produced by the students and use strategies to reduce them.

Akatsi No.1 Junior High School is located in the main Akatsi township, in the Akatsi South District of the Volta Region, where English is seldom spoken. The dominant language spoken in the community is Ewe. Most parents in the community are farmers and traders who have not received formal education. Pupils speak their local language, both in and outside the classroom and even use it to answer questions during lessons. Moreover, library facilities which could have aided pupils to read wide in order to acquire enough vocabulary for good writing, are absent in the school and in the community. Also, most pupils do not have enough time to themselves in their homes to enable them read pieces that are given them by their teachers as extra class assignment. Again, most teachers in the school lack knowledge of the English content but are supposed to teach it since they have been assigned the class, as mentioned earlier. It is in this light that the current study seeks to identify and analyse concord errors students

of Akatsi No.1 Junior High School in the Akatsi South District of the Volta Region, commit in their English Essays, for corrective measures to be applied for improvement.

1.1 Statement of the problem

It is clear that performance in the use of concord in the written essays of Junior High School students is considered to be generally poor. This can lead to poor academic achievement of students. It has been observed that most students admitted into second cycle institutions in the country are ill-prepared for their communication roles in these institutions. This is attributed partly to the inconsistency in the use of concord in English. The main purpose of teaching and learning is the provision of knowledge and skills, hence, concord should be taught effectively to students. This is important because concord gives way for constructing correct sentences; good essay writing and achieving communicative competence and performance in English language. Students' performance in the use of concord can be seen as a reflection of their performance in school. The consequence of this is clearly manifested in students' poor performance in language and communication skills in both Junior High and Senior High levels more particularly in the areas of concord. The researcher was disappointed when she found the following sentences in students' writing.

- (1) Musa you really *surprises* me
- (2) He *give* money to the children.

The researcher observed that students of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School find it difficult to use the appropriate verbs in sentences which could affect their performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E). Therefore, the situation portrays a fertile environment for an academic research such as this, hence the choice of this school for this study. The choice has also been influenced by the fact that the researcher is a teacher of English Language in the school. This study was conducted

with the hope that the findings and recommendations would provide solutions to the concord errors in Akatsi No.1 Junior high school.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to analyze concord errors forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School commit in their writings. It was undertaken to analyse and discuss the causes of the concord errors as well as the implications of the findings, and make necessary suggestions to both teachers and learners to help solve the problems identified.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the actual concord errors in the students' writings.
2. identify the various factors responsible for the concord errors the students commit.

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. what concord errors do Form 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 J.H.S. usually make in their writing?
2. What factors are responsible for the concord errors committed by the Form 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 J.H.S.?

1.5 Significance of the study

Students' writings are often littered with subject-verb agreement violations and these violations contribute to poor performance in the English language. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) final marking scheme for English Language Paper 1 allocates marks in the following aspect; Content, Organisation, Expression, Mechanical Accuracy. Students are able to score good marks for Content,

Organisation and Expression. Unfortunately, for Mechanical Accuracy which includes concord errors, observation indicates that students often perform poorly. In fact, errors in concord could be responsible for students' low performance in English language examinations. It is the hope of the researcher that if the recommendations given in this thesis are implemented, both teachers and students will overcome their concord challenges and perform better in English language examinations. Finally, the findings of the study provide language curriculum planners with enough input on how to design appropriate language programmes and resources for the basic school.

1.6 Delimitation

The study is delimited to students of Akatsi No.1 Junior High School. Only concord errors in written English essays of forms 2 and 3 students were used for this study. This is because the researcher has observed that earlier studies on concord errors have been treated broadly at national and international levels. Many grammatical categories could be identified for research but in this study only one grammatical category is being considered, that is concord.

1.7 Limitation

This study was conducted in two classes, that is Junior High forms 2 and 3 which made it difficult for the researcher because they had different English periods on the timetable. The research was limited to Akatsi No.1 Junior High School in the Akatsi South District in the Volta Region and as such, its findings cannot be generalized for all Ghanaian pupils. The written essays were conducted within the normal instructional hours so it was always difficult to get enough time since the researcher needed to go by the school's time table. Some pupils were also reluctant to submit their scripts on schedule and this somehow delayed the data collection process. Also, due to financial

and time constraints, the study could not be expanded to cover other schools in the same town.

1.8 Organization of the study

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 reviews related literature on the study. It focuses on views that are relevant to concord errors. The review included what constitutes an error, types of errors, the meaning of concord errors, types of concord errors, causes of concord errors, the strategies to overcome concord errors as well as related studies. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology adopted for the study. In this chapter, the instruments and sampling technique used for the study, as well as data analysis, were discussed. The results of the study were discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis revealed that pupils committed subject-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated noun phrases errors, pronoun-antecedent concord errors, compound pronoun, and semantic concord errors. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the study. This includes the summary of findings, the role of concord errors in the teaching and learning of English, pedagogical implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, relevant literature is reviewed on the topic under study. It presents what some authors, researchers and academic authorities have published about the problem under study. In this chapter, literature was reviewed under the following headings: the concept of errors, types of errors, differences between errors and mistakes, meaning of concord, types of concord, rules in concord, concord error types in English, strategies to overcome concord errors, causes of concord errors and related studies.

2.1 The concept of errors

Errors are those parts of utterances or writings that deviate from some selected norms of mature language performance. Errors can be described as the deviation from the norms or rules of a language. Brown (1994) defines linguistic errors as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner. For Burt et al (1982), errors are the flawed side of a learner's speech or writing. Errors are studied in order to identify the learning process and the strategies employed in learning another language (Lungu, 2003). Corder (1975) identifies what he calls "covertly idiosyncratic" and "overtly idiosyncratic" errors. The former refers to flaws in utterances that are grammatical but do not clearly convey the speaker's intended meaning. Overtly idiosyncratic errors on the other hand, occur in sentences that appear to be ill-formed but whose meaning is transparent to the listeners. Corder's provision of these broad error categories was preceded by that of Burt and Kiparsky (1972). They classified errors in terms of whether they were *global* or *local*. Global errors can be considered synonymous with what Corder refers to as covertly

idiosyncratic errors while local errors, on the other hand, are synonymous with overtly idiosyncratic ones.

As revealed by Maicusi and Maicusi (2000), in the language learning process, errors have always been regarded negatively, and must be avoided. As a result, they contend that teachers tend to show a suppressive attitude to their students. On one hand, errors are considered as a failure of teaching process and on the other hand, they are seen as a natural result that can hardly be avoided, so we should deal with and learn from them. Therefore, errors can be a very helpful means in learning a second language as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 61), explain that learners' errors are significant in three ways. (1) They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered; (2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and (3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

2.2 Errors and mistakes

According to Brown (2000), a *mistake* refers to a performance error in that it is the learner's failure to correctly utilize a known system, while an *error* is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner. Corder (1967 cited in Karra, 2006) refers to mistakes as unsystematic errors and errors as systematic ones. Unsystematic errors occur in one's native language and are not significant to the process of language learning. Systematic ones, on the other hand, occur when learning a second language. So, it can be explained that errors are a systematic deviation from the norms. An error cannot be self-corrected but a mistake can be corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker/writer. Another way of identifying the differences between an error and a mistake is by looking

at the frequency of a deviation. The identification of an error by observing, analyzing, and classifying to reveal what actually is operating within the learner's writing leads to error analysis.

A learner's errors are a reflection of a lack of understanding of the underlying competence in the language that is being learnt (Mezrag, 2013). Likewise, Ellis (1997) explains that errors reflect the gaps in the learner's knowledge. That is, an error is produced due to the fact that the learner cannot identify what is correct and incorrect. In contrast, a mistake reflects a learner's inefficient performance. This occurs because the learner is not able to correctly perform what one already knows. Jie (2008) also mentions that a mistake occurs as a result of processing an undesirable habit rather than a lack of competence while an error is the breaches of rules of code. On the part of Jie (2008), an error happens from lack of requisite knowledge of a language learner. As such, one makes such errors in one's writing because one does not know the grammatical properties in the new language. The rules of first language L1 knowledge are then employed in second language L2 writing. From the explanations, it is obvious that learners commit errors in their second language L2 speaking and writing because they do not know the syntactic as well as the lexical structures of the second language whereas a mistake is in relation to the learners' low competence in using a second language. The distinction is very necessary in this research because the researcher has to give a verge of what becomes an error and what a mistake should be.

2.3 Types of errors

Analysis was carried out on the errors found in second language learners' writings and categorized into various types. An error may vary in magnitude; it can include a phoneme, a morpheme, a word, a sentence or even a paragraph. Due to this, errors can be viewed as being global or local as advocated by Brown (2000). For Brown,

global errors hinder communication and they affect the structure of the entire sentence, such as missing essential parts of the sentence, subject or verb. They prevent the sentence from being comprehended. On the other hand, local errors do not necessarily prevent the message from being understood because there is usually a minor violation of one segment of a sentence that allows the hearer to guess the intended meaning. Dulay et al (1982) propose four types of errors to explain how sentences deviate from the correct forms because the learners change the surface structure. These categories are discussed as follows:

2.3.1 Omission errors

Omission occurs when certain items that must appear in a sentence are absent. This emerges in the early stages of second language acquisition. Example:

- a. *He eat akple* instead of *He eats akple*.
- b. *She is beautiful girl* instead of *She is a beautiful girl*.
- c. *My father name* instead of *My father's name*.

In the sentences, some items which are required were omitted. Verbs were inflected with an 's' when the third person singular pronoun like she, he and it, were used but this was omitted in the first sentence. Again in English, countable nouns especially singular forms must always have articles. This was not done in the second and third sentences.

2.3.2 Misformation errors

This error occurs when wrong forms of certain morphemes or structures are used. Unlike omission errors where an item is exempted, in this case the learner supplies an item though it does not conform to the accepted norms. There are three sub-types of these errors. They are:

2.3.2.1 Regularization

In this error regular markers are used in place of irregular ones. Example (1) *Singed* instead of *Sang*. (2) *Growed* instead of *Grew*. (3) *Mens* instead of *Men*. In the sentences, irregular markers of past tense verbs as in sentences (1) and (2) as well as irregular nouns as in sentences (3) were used for regular ones.

2.3.2.2 Archi-forms

Here, the learner selects a marker of one member of a class to represent another in the class. For example, in the use of demonstrative adjectives *this*, *that*, *these* and *those*, the following are what the learner may produce (1) *This fruits are mine* instead of *These fruits are mine*. (2) *That boys ate the food* instead of *That boy ate the food*. (3) *Those table are taken* instead of *Those tables are taken*. Here, *this* and *that* should be followed by singular forms while *these* and *those* should be followed by the plurals as in the sentences. This happened because the forms were wrongly used.

2.3.2.3 Alternating forms

This is indicated when learners develop more vocabulary and grammar, the use of archi-forms often develops into free alternation of various members of the class with each other. (1) For example, *You have come here yesterday* instead of *You came here yesterday*. (2) *They should have went there* instead of *They should have gone there*.

2.3.3 Misordering errors

It emerges by the incorrect placement of certain morphemes. Example: (1) *He canes all the time his learners* instead of *He canes his learners all the time*. (2) *You are washing?* instead of *Are you washing?*

2.3.4 Addition errors

This is committed when there is an unwanted item in a sentence. Linguistically, this unwanted item should not appear in a well-formed utterance. It results from the overuse of certain grammatical rules of the target language. Example, *He must to go* instead of *He must go*. Haryono (2011) categorizes addition errors into three types as follows:

2.3.4.1 Double marking

This describes the failure to delete certain items which are not required in a linguistic construction. Example, (1) *She didn't brushed her teeth* instead of *She didn't brush her teeth*. (2) *I wanted to swept the room* instead of *I wanted to sweep the room*. Two items instead of one are marked in the above sentences for the same feature.

2.3.4.2 Simple addition

This refers to the addition of an element to the correct utterance. Example, (1) *I am is a boy* instead of *I am a boy*. (2) *He can to cook the meal* instead of *He can cook the meal*. In addition, James (1998), suggests a category which is:

2.3.4.3 Blends

This is indicated when two or more morphemes that have the same functions appear in a sentence. Example, (1) *The only one thing I know* instead of *The only thing I know*. (2) *Both of the two girls* instead of *Both girls*.

2.3.5 Summary

For Brown (2000), global errors hinder communication and affect the structure of the entire sentence, such as missing essential part of the sentence, subject or verb. Due to this, errors can be viewed as being global or local, as advocated by Brown. On

the other hand, local errors do not necessarily prevent the message from being understood because there is usually a minor violation of one segment of a sentence that allows the hearer to guess the intended meaning. Dulay et al (1982) propose four types of errors to explain how sentences deviate from the correct forms because the learners change the surface structure. Errors found in second language learners' writing are analyzed and categorized into various types such as omission errors, misformation errors, addition errors and misordering errors.

2.4 Meaning of concord

Concord is defined by Allerton (1979) as “a kind of harmony between elements in questions whenever context-sensitivity requires that a particular sub-class or syntactic feature should be chosen by reference to another sub-class or syntactic feature elsewhere” (p. 149). The sub-classification generally involves what is normally called a grammatical category like number, case, gender, voice, or aspect. For example, a singular subject will take a singular verb. Thus, for Allerton, the focus is number, case, gender, voice or aspect. Robins (2009), in a similar vein, sees concord as “the requirement that the forms of two or more words of specific word classes which stand in specific syntactic relationship with each other” (p. 235). They can also be characterized by the same paradigmatically marked category (or categories). The current study does not agree with Allerton's focus of concord because person, pronoun and tense are among the focus of concord in English. Similarly, Ogbazi (2002) states that notional concord is the agreement between words in gender, number, case and person. The following examples illustrate the definition:

The woman found her items

Gender
13

The man found his items

The book is small

Number

The books are small

She is beautiful

Person

They are beautiful

This study accepts the notion of Ogbazi (2002) that concord is agreement between words in gender, number, person, voice, and case. Pierson (2005) also defines concord as an agreement that exists between the verb and subject in person (1st, 2nd, 3rd) and number (singular and plural). Pierson's definition is similar to that of Quirk and Greenbaum (2002), who define concord as agreement in relationship between two grammatical units. Thus, concord in broad term is the agreement between the subjects and the verbs as well as other elements of the clause structure.

Other issues need to be considered, for example, pronoun-antecedent; distance; notional and proximity and others. Within noun phrases, it is only the demonstrative pronouns which agree with the noun they modify e.g. *this car* vs. *that car*. "These cars vs. those cars" Within sentences, the verb should be in agreement with the subject:

1. She eats vs. I / you / we / they eat
2. She has eaten vs. I/you/we/they have eaten
3. She is eating vs. /you/we/they are eating
4. She/I was eating vs. you/we/they were eating
5. He /I/ you /we /they cried

In (1) and (2), the person and number concord operate in the following manner; if the subject is third person singular (he, she, it, noun as head), the verb is third person singular. On the other hand, if the subject is not third person singular, the verb is in the unmarked form. In (3) and (4), both of which contain the verb "to be" (here it is

employed as an auxiliary verb). Concord operates differently, in (3), there is ‘third person singular’ concord, but also, ‘first person singular’ and ‘third person singular’ are identified under subject-verb concord. With the simple past tense of the verb (e.g. cried, broke), there is no subject-verb concord. The sentences show that there is concord between subject and verb. A grammar of concord should not only state agreement between words in a sentence but should also state which word governs the other or others. Verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections are the elements that may make up a sentence. These elements must agree on their combinations to form acceptable sentences. Also, concord only emphasizes the agreement between the subject and the verb in each sentence. The rule is that the verbs used in each sentence are always consistent with the number of people and the person. This phenomenon is called subject-verb agreement. The verb is considered the heart of the sentence

2.4.1 Types of concord

There are four different types of concord: grammatical, notional, concord of proximity and distance concord.

2.4.1.1 Grammatical concord

This refers to subject-verb concord. In subject-verb concord, the subject governs the choice of the verb in the present tense. Concord in number between subject and verb (in the present tense) seems to be the most crucial concord in English. This may be the reason why some grammarians pay more attention to it than the other types of concord. Long (2007), has argued that “for a sentence to make sense, subjects and verbs have to agree with each other...” (p.606). She went on to assert that issues about subject-verb agreement are relevant basic skills which every student must strive to acquire. Subject-

verb concord is a feature usually restricted to the present tense of the verb, except for the verb 'to be' which has distinct forms for number and person for both present and past tense forms.

2.4.1.1.1 Subject-verb concord by number

The rule for number concord is that a singular subject requires a singular verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb. To apply this rule, three things are crucial:

- (a) the subject governs the verb form and is distracted by other structures which may stand close to the verb;
- (b) one should be able to determine the subject of the sentence;
- (c) one should know the correct singular and plural forms of the verb.

2.4.1.1.2 Noun subject-verb concord

One should be able to identify the correct noun that stands as the subject of the sentence as seen below: One of the eggs is missing.

Pron subj.sg v.sg

2.4.1.1.3 Compound subject-verb concord

A compound subject is made up of two or more nouns and the subject can either be singular or plural. One should be able to identify the correct number of the compound subject to agree with the verb as given in the example below: Bread and

Butter is what he wants.

Subj.sg v.sg

2.4.1.1.4 Pronoun subject-verb concord

Pronouns can be either singular or plural and when used as subjects of sentences they must agree with the verbs as exemplified:

Every one of the men likes eating fish.

Pron subj. sg v. sg

2.4.1.1.5 Subject-verb concord by person

The person of the subject, noun or pronoun has little effect on the forms of the verb. Only the verb “to be” has several forms which changes in accordance with the first, second and third persons of the pronoun: “I am”, “You are”, “She is”, “I was”, “You were”. Oruma (1989) gives the following examples to show concord of person with the verb “to be”. I am the child’s father.

2.4.1.2 Notional concord

Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) believe that “notional concord is agreement of verb with its subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that idea” (p. 176). This means that notional concord refers to the agreement between subject and verb not based on number and person, but on the speaker’s perception. Therefore, the speaker chooses a singular or plural verb based on his or her own idea about number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker of the idea. Group or collective nouns such as team, crowd, audience, family, police, committee, army, government, congregation and others fall into this category. According to Quirk and Greenbaum, collective nouns notionally are plural but grammatically singular. Although singular and plural verbs are more or less interchangeable in these contexts, the choice is based on whether the group is being considered as a single undivided body or as a collection of individuals. It depends on the context in which the collective nouns are used in a sentence. That will determine whether to use a singular or plural.

The agreement of verbs with their subjects and pronouns with their antecedent nouns on the basis of meaning rather than grammatical form describes notional concord. It means notional concord depends on the speaker’s idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker. Notional concord is focusing on the whole

entity (Crystal, 2004). According to Sekyi-Baidoo (2002), notional concord can be described as the agreement between the verb and the subject according to the perception (that is the idea of numbers) rather than the actual display or presence of a grammatical feature for the idea. Parrot and Martin (2000) also note that plural nouns lacking the inflection (-s) such as a collective noun are considered singular when they refer to a group. In this case, the noun takes a singular verb. If the words *public* and *committee* are subjects in sentences, they may refer to groups and will therefore be treated as singular. This means the group is considered as a single undivided body. When this is the case, then the noun takes a singular verb. An example is 'Our staff is the best'.

2.4.1.2.1 Notional concord (collective noun concord)

A collective noun is a noun which stands for many units that constitute that single word. For example,

1. *Audience* means people who watch programme.
2. *Congregation* means worshipers.
3. *Clergy* means religion officers.
4. *Club* means association of members.

So, whenever you use a collective noun, the verb that follows must be a plural verb. For example, 'club'.

Club is a collective noun for members, so, one can also say, members of this association.

1. Our club *meet* (not meets) ones in a week.

But in some situations, singular verb goes with a collective noun.

Here is the principle:

If the collective noun performs an **action**, a plural verb follows, but if **not**, a singular

Verb: For example, *Our club is* celebrating its twentieth anniversary today.

In the statement, you can see that,

Our club performs no action, hence, we use a singular verb.

But in *Our club are* (not is) going on a vacation tomorrow.

You can see that the second sentence is different from the first one. Here, club is performing an action; going. As such, we would use a plural verb (are) in compliance with the rule. In another sentence.

The *audience are* (**not** is) partial in their judgement of the winner, the answer is *are* because the collective noun (audience) perform an action; judgement.

2.4.1.2.2 Notional agreement with certain plural nouns and collective nouns

Formally, plural nouns such as news, means, and politics have long taken singular verbs; so, when a plural noun is considered a single entity, it takes a singular verb. For example; The *United States* is sending its ambassador. When a singular noun is used as a collective noun and takes a plural verb or a plural pronoun, we also have notional agreement.

1. The committee are meeting on Tuesday.
2. The group wants to publicize their views.

Indefinite pronouns are heavily influenced by notional agreement and tend to take singular verbs but plural pronouns: ‘*everyone is* required to show *their* identification’ (Merriam-Webster, 1998).

2.4.1.2.3 Notional agreement with ‘fact’ expressions

Behind the plural expression appears to lie a singular concept which explains the selection of the -s form of the verb. Reference is made to a fact of circumstance, and the meaning of the plural subject expression can therefore be captured by the

paraphrase. Plural ‘fact’ expressions are particularly common in sentences where the predicator is realized by *mean* (or related verbs like *entail*, *imply*, *involve*), but we find it in sentences with other verbs as well (Bache, 2000). For example,

1. High production **costs** prevent reasonable consumer prices.

2.4.1.2.4 Notional agreement with ‘plus’

When mathematical equations are pronounced as English sentences, the verb is usually in the singular:

1. Two plus two is (or equals) four.

By the same token, subjects containing two noun phrases joined by *plus* are usually construed as singular:

1. The construction slowdown plus the bad weather has made for a weak market.

This observation has led some to argue that in these sentences, *plus* functions as a preposition meaning ‘in addition to.’ ... It makes more sense to view *plus* in these uses as a conjunction that joins two subjects into a single entity requiring a single verb by notional agreement (Houghton, 1996).

2.4.1.2.5 Notional agreement with phrases such as ‘one in six’ and ‘one in 10’

Phrases of this sort should be treated as plural. Grammatically, we are talking not about the noun ‘one’ but the noun phrase ‘one in six,’ signifying a group of people. Logically, the phrase represents a proportion—just like ‘17%’ or ‘one-sixth,’ both of which take plural verbs. ‘Two out of every seven’ and ‘three out of 10’ take plurals too, functioning identically (Marsh & Hodson, 2010).

2.4.1.3 Proximity concord

According to Sidney (1990), proximity concord “denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase” (p. 215). Yankson (1994) also defines proximity concord as “the

verb agreeing with the noun immediately preceding it in a sentence” (p. 4). According to Wiredu (2005), proximity concord refers to the agreement between the verb and its subject based not on *notion* but on the fact that there is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. Concord of proximity does not however, agree with the real object in the closest noun and the numeral of that specific noun. For instance, four singular nouns by (either or, neither nor, not but, and, or) take a singular verb and if the subjects are plural, then the verb must be plural.

Proximity concord does not, however, agree with the real subject in the sentence or the clause. It agrees with the closest noun and the numerous of that specific noun (Crystal, 2004). For instance, a teacher who lives in an urban area is likely to use informal language. Additionally, the principle of proximity denotes agreement of verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it sometimes in preference to agreement with the head word. For example,

1. One of the boys come here every day

Here ‘boy’ is taken as the subject of the sentence according to the principle of proximity because it immediately precedes the verb. Therefore, in proximity concord, clauses as subjects are usually treated as singular: To err is human; that you don’t agree upsets me. With long noun phrases, the head word is relevant for number concord, as in *One of your friends is here*, not, *one of your friends are here*, and *He is one of those people who always interfere*, not, *He is one of those people who always interferes*, but in the heat of writing, the concord in such constructions is often overlooked. In such cases, proximity concord can also operate in awkward constructions like *neither my sister nor I am going*. It also occurs in the traditional use of a singular verb after more than one, where both grammar and meaning require a plural verb: *More than one person has remarked on this*.

2.4.1.2 Summary

There are different types of concord such as grammatical concord comprising of subject-verb concord. This is a feature usually restricted to the present tense of the verb, except for the verb 'to be' which has distinct forms for number and person for both present and past tense forms. In subject-verb concord, the subject governs the choice of the verb in the present tense. Notional concord can be described as the agreement between the verb and the subject according to the perception (that is the idea of numbers) rather than the actual display or presence of a grammatical feature for the idea. Another type of error is proximity concord. According to Sidney (1990), proximity concord "denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase" (p. 215). Additionally, the principle of proximity denotes agreement of verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it sometimes in preference to agreement with the head word

2.5 Common errors in concord

Errors in subject-verb agreement are mostly committed by learners of English as a second language. In addition to most learners having problems in writing grammatically correct subject-verb agreement, Dakuuro (2015) believes that proximity concord, notional concord, subject - verb within tense and plural inflection concord errors are the common concord errors. Also, Obi (2007) states that grammatical concord, proximity concord and pronoun concord are the common concord errors learners are likely to make. Similarly, Mireku-Gyimah (2014) analysed errors caused by final year students of a public University in Ghana and found that students committed errors such as subject-verb agreement errors, plural inflection errors and proximity concord errors. Liu (2005) also found that Chinese learners of English

committed errors in subject-verb agreement, plural inflections and distance concord. He attributed such errors to the differences that exist between English and the Chinese language.

2.5.1 Subject-verb concord errors

According to Kirkpatrick, (2007) a verb-must “agree” with the subject in number. For example;

1. The crowd were shouting
2. I met one of my lecturer
3. Each of the students, present were given a prize
4. Our lecturer together with some students receives the trophy.
5. Few of the books given to us were on home economics.

In sentence (1), the students fail to realize that ‘crowd’, the subject of the sentence, is a collective noun. A collective noun in the words of Littel (1992) is a singular noun that refers to a group of people or things. For this reason, the singular verb ‘was’ will agree with the singular subject ‘crowd’. The correct sentence should therefore read: The crowd was shouting. The error in (2) shows that the focus of the students was on the word ‘one’, which is a singular word. However, it should be noted that ‘one of’ entails a reference to two or more friends. The correct sentence, therefore, will be: I met one of my lecturers. In (3), the word, ‘each’, an indefinite article, is a singular form used to indicate an individual reference. Since the subject of the sentence is ‘each’, a singular verb is expected to complement it. The correct sentence should now be: Each of the students, present was given a prize.

The error in sentence (4) is an indication that the students are ignorant. Because it is believed that words and expressions such as with, together with, or as well as, are prepositions and a phrase beginning with these prepositions does not, as a rule, affect

the number of the subject. For this reason, they do not form compound subjects. The expression ‘together with’ in sentence (4) does not mean the same as ‘and’ in the sentence: Our lecturer and some students receive the trophy.

The correct sentence will now be: Our lecturer, together with some students, receives the trophy.

Few, the subject of sentence (5), is a plural indefinite pronoun, since the subject is plural in form, a plural verb is expected to complement the plural subject. The correct sentence (5) will now be: Few of the books given to us were on Home Economics. All the corrected forms of the sampled sentences are as follows:

1. The crowd / was shouting.
2. I / met / one of my lecturers.
3. Each of the students present / was given / a prize.
4. Our lecturer, together with some students / receives / the trophy.
5. Few of the books given to us / were / on Home Economics.

2.5.2 Tense concord errors

According to Richards (1992) tense refers to ‘the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or state it describes’. For the purpose of this study, all tense errors will be grouped together. Examples of common errors made by students are:

- i. He **is studying** his books every day.
- ii. They **goes** to school.

Other types of concord errors are those of notional concord errors, proximity concord errors and distance concord errors.

2.5.3 Concord with auxiliary verbs (have/has) within tense

Most concord errors result from the misappropriation of the common verbs ‘have’, ‘do’, and ‘be’. The students need to be reminded that the verb ‘have’ appears as ‘has’ if the subject is a singular noun or if the subject is a third person singular. If the subject is a plural noun or the pronoun I, you, the verb “have” is used (Uchegbu-Ekwueme & Okongor, 2015). Additionally, most students and speakers of English as a second language cannot use the verbs ‘has’ and ‘have’ properly. They forget that the verb ‘has’ is a singular verb which can occur only with the third person singular pronouns; he/she/it, and any noun that they represent. Therefore, any noun or group of nouns which can represent these pronouns must go with a singular verb to agree. And the verb ‘have’ occurs with I, you, we, and any noun or group of nouns that these pronouns represent. Quagie (2010) states that the verb “has” can be used as a possessive verb for third person singular nouns and pronouns, while the verb “have” can be used as a possessive verb for first person singular and plural (I, we) second person (you) and third person plural (they).

2.5.4 Concord with relative pronouns/adverbials

Quagie (2010) explains that relative pronouns such as who, which, that, whoever, whatever, whichever, and relative adverbials where, when, and why always pose some challenges to pupils. Indeed, many speakers of English as a second language (ESL) find it difficult to identify which verb to use after a relative pronoun/adverbial in a sentence. The clue is that whenever the antecedent of a relative/adverbial is singular, a singular verb should be selected or used and when it is preceded by a plural antecedent, then a plural verb must be used.

2.5.5 Concord within tense

Another problem area for speakers of English as a second language, according to Kirkpatrick (2007), is confusion in the use of present and past tense and aspects of the present and past tense in both written and spoken communication. She noted that it is common to read or hear expressions as; *I have spoken to him yesterday*. Instead of *I spoke to him yesterday*. The problem of such speakers, according to her, is that they tend to forget the fact that expressions of time adverbials such as yesterday, last week, last year, and three days ago, are past and gone, so they should use the simple past tense form of the verb (s) involved in the conversation.

2.5.6 Plural inflection concord errors

The plural inflection is another source of grammatical error. Usually, error occurs with words that contain the /-s/ sound at the end of the words, though the word is singular noun. Pupils make mistakes and the /-s/ ending of those nouns such as economics, measles, politics, and athletics. For the plural inflection and accordingly assign them plural verbs. The students commit errors like *politics have made people corrupt* instead of using 'has'.

2.5.7 Omission of the inflection

Sometimes learners of English language omit the /-s/ sound of verbs. This could be as a result of the fact that all grammatical persons, except the third person singular (he/she) and the personal pronoun (it), do not take a /-s/ ending. Hourani (2009) states that Arabic learners of English language have problems with the use of the (-s) inflections. The situation is similar in Ghana, specifically Akatsi in the Volta Region.

2.5.8 Summary

Errors in subject-verb agreement are mostly committed by learners of English as a second language. Dakuuro (2015) believes that proximity concord, notional

concord, subject - verb within tense and plural inflection concord errors are the common concord errors. Similarly, Mireku-Gyimah (2014) analyzed errors caused by final year students of a public University in Ghana and found that students committed errors such as subject-verb agreement errors, plural inflection errors and proximity concord errors. Liu (2005) also found that Chinese learners of English committed errors in subject-verb agreement, plural inflections and distance concord. Also, Obi (2007) states that grammatical concord, proximity concord and pronoun concord are the common concord errors learners are likely to make. In this part of the study, several concord errors such as subject-verb concord error, tense concord errors, concord with auxiliary verbs (have/has) within tense, concord with relative pronouns/adverbials, concord within tense, plural inflection concord errors and omission of the inflection were discussed with examples.

2.6 Causes of concord errors

According to Bamgbose (1976), irregular patterns of the English language is one of the major causes of concord errors among learners of English. Olukpe (1981) is also of the view that concord incongruity is the most common grammatical error that mars one's effort in writing effectively. He stresses that mistakes in agreement are caused by inconsistency in the use of subject and verb of a sentence, pronoun and its antecedent shifts from one tense to the other, shifts from active to passive voice. The following are the causes of concord errors:

2.6.1 Transfer

Transfer is the effect of one language on the learning of another. Positive transfer occurs when both the native language and English have the same form or linguistic feature. It makes learning easier and does not result in errors. Languages may share aspects of grammar such as some patterns of word order and the use of adverbs

and these may allow for positive transfer. Negative transfer or “*interference*” is the use of a native language pattern or rule that leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language. Littlewood (1984) also posits that in transfer, the learner uses his previous mother-tongue experience as a means of organizing the second language data. In agreement with the previous argument, Ellis (1994) believes that transfer takes place whenever habits of the native language differ from those of the target language. This error mostly happens in the beginning stages of learning other languages (Mbau & Muhsin, 2014). The huge difference between the students’ native language and the target language in language aspects like morphology, syntax and semantics, makes the target language, English in particular, difficult to learn.

For example:

1. *She has eaten all of my money.*
2. *She has spent all of my money.*
3. *She does not have ears.*
4. *She does not listen.*

2.6.2 Overuse

Overuse happens when learners become over-dependent on certain grammatically correct forms and use them in preference to other forms that might be known and available. For example, the learner may become dependent on a phrase such as “*last time*” to refer to past events and use it when other ways of referring to the past time could have been used. For example:

- i. *I was with him last of last week.*

Ellis (1994) believes that other forms of intralingual processes could also result in overuse, like when learners overgeneralize the regular past tense inflection even to irregular verbs in L2 English. For example:

- i. *It costed us a fortune.*
- ii. *It cost us a fortune.*

Ellis (1994) further states that overuse could often be due to the avoidance or underproduction of some difficult structure. For example:

- i. *I am asking for a stapler*, when the correct version would have been:
- ii. *May I use your stapler?*

2.6.3 Underuse

Sometimes learners may underuse a form they have studied and practiced many times by resorting to some other sentence construction formation. For example the learner may avoid using some constructions with “*if*”-“*For*” example:

- i. *If I had known I would have told her about it*, and instead use:
- ii. *I didn't know so I didn't tell her*, because it appears to them as more direct and easy to understand.

2.6.4 Fossilization

Sometimes a learner's grammatical development appears to have stopped at a certain level and recurring errors of both grammar and pronunciation have become permanent features of a learner's speech. This is referred to as fossilization. It consists of the persistence of errors in a learner's speech despite progress in other areas of language development. Littlewood (1984) stresses that fossilization is most likely to occur when a learner realizes (subconsciously) that the error does not hinder him in satisfying his communicative needs (at the functional or social level). This is what Gass and Schacter (1989) refer to as a stage short of success as it is the stage when development ceases and even serious conscious efforts to change are often fruitless, and even if there might be some brief changes, those would just not take the learner anywhere as the learners always backslides to the stable state. Spada and Lightbrown

(1993) add that this lack of change happens even after extended exposure to or instruction in the target language.

Brown (1994) indicates that this could be a problem even with those who have otherwise learned the language quite well. For example, here are some examples of fossilized errors in an adult fluent speaker of English who uses English regularly and effectively, though often with a high frequency of what we might regard as basic grammatical and other errors. For example:

- i. *I doesn't understand what she wanted.*
- ii. *He never ask me for help.*
- iii. *She say she meeting me after work.*

Fossilized errors such as those above tend not to affect comprehension although they might be stigmatized due to the fact that they often reflect errors that are typical of very basic-level learners (such as omission of 3rd person -s). It is therefore essential to discuss the global research findings on concord/subject verb agreement Error Analysis EA which will shed light on the complexity of the subject.

2.6.5 Overgeneralization

It covers the instances where the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structure of the target language. Nordquist (2010) defines overgeneralization as the application of a grammatical rule in the case where it does not apply. Nordquist (2010) further explains that it is part of the language-learning process in which children extend regular grammatical patterns to irregular words. Two examples of overgeneralization are:

- a) When a learner adds a plural marker –s or –es on a noun which has a different plural formation as in:
 - i. *Tooth – toothes/ tooths*

- ii. *Tooth – teeth*
- iii. *Equipment – equipments*
- iv. *Equipment – equipment*

b) When a learner gives the past tense form of an irregular verb by adding –ed as in:

- i. *Teach – teached*
- ii. *Teach – taught*
- iii. *Buy – buyed*
- iv. *Buy – bought*

2.6.6 Ignorance of rule restrictions

It is a type of generalization or transfer which occurs as a result of failure to observe the restrictions or existing structures. It involves making use of rules that the learners acquired before in new contexts where they do not apply. For example, learners misuse prepositions when they encounter these prepositions with each type of verb because of their wrong analogy to use the same prepositions with similar verbs as in:

- i. *We discussed about it.*
- ii. *We talked about it.*
- iii. *He makes him to do it*
- iv. *He told him to do it.*

2.6.7 Incomplete application of rules

This arises when the participants fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences. It involves learners failing to learn more complex types of structures since they think they can succeed effectively

2.7 Strategies to overcome concord errors

Obi (2007) believes that exposing learners to English language materials can help learners to overcome their difficulties when it comes to the use of concord. She

further stated that constant practice will help learners of English as a second language to overcome their concord difficulties. Also, according to Nndwamato (2017), when learners are exposed to English language learning material, it will help them to overcome spellings and concord difficulties. He believes that reading is the key to helping learners become effective in the language. Ningsih (2014) stated that concord errors among learners are largely due to inter-lingual and intra-lingual interference. He stated such measures as knowledge of grammar rules, continuous writing, reading a lot and positive feedback from teachers can be adopted to help learners of English to overcome their errors.

2.7.1 Knowledge of rules of concord

It is very essential to understand the grammar of a language and it is said that vocabulary is the flesh of the language and grammar is the skeleton. According to Qashao (2006), most learners of English view the study of grammar as boring and with frequent outcries about the difficulty of the structures of grammar. He believes that learners must learn the grammar of every language so as to avoid problems in writing and speaking. Therefore, the researcher maintains that concord rules should be properly taught in order to help learners correct their grammatical errors when writing or speaking.

2.7.2 Reading a lot

Learners of English Language should read a lot in order to increase their knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures and be informed, and to have knowledge of the world as well. Shoebottom (2016) argues that reading helps learners to improve their vocabulary; sentence formation and grammar. If they read a lot, they will come across how the three types of concords are being used in sentences. Teachers

should encourage learners to read more books especially story books and develop the habit of reading extensively.

2.7.3 Roleplay and drama

Students should be encouraged to be part of drama clubs formed by teachers. They should be encouraged to carry out activities like; role plays, poetry recitals, debates and so on. This would help them learn when to use singular and or plural verbs.

2.7.4 Role of the teacher

Teachers should lay more emphasis on the subject verb agreement or concord when teaching the topic. According to Bakuuro (2015), the most confusing rules about concord are those on subject-verb. So, the topic should be taught more frequently in class to help students get used to the rules.

2.7.5 Summary

It has become clear from studies that have been reviewed that, for learners to be able to overcome concord errors, they must be exposed to English learning materials; they must practice constantly and must read a lot as proposed by Obi (2007). Ningsih (2014) also stated that such measures as knowledge of grammar rules, continuous writing, reading a lot and positive feedback from teachers can be adopted to help learners of English to overcome their errors.

2.8 Related studies

Various researchers such as Yankson (1994), Agor (2003) Akrong, (2008), Arthur (2009), Annor (2011) have studied errors of students. For example, Yankson (1994) conducted a study aimed at increasing an awareness of the enormity of concord problems and helping both students and teachers to overcome these problems. The study was based on concord errors made by first year undergraduates of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Cape Coast in Ghana. Yankson is of the view that

concord rule deviances reflect badly on the speaker's personality. His study provides the needed scientific empirical data that are reliable to help English language teachers at all levels in West Africa who seem to be operating in the dark, over the years. It is the strong conviction of the researcher that conscious efforts should be made to teach students the components of a noun phrase and other words that can function as the subject of a sentence. If enough time is spent on teaching the components of a noun phrase such as the *headword* and *modifiers*, students would be aware of the headword which will assist them in determining the appropriate corresponding verb.

Furthermore, Akrong (2008) in his study entitled *Correcting Students' Concord Errors* is more concerned about new strategies of teaching that have to be adopted to enhance the performance of students in Senior High Schools. He also recommended that pronouns should be taught better and properly in Ghanaian schools so that students can identify their subject and object forms and can relate the subject forms to the appropriate verbs. Arthur (2009) looks at teaching concord at Junior High Schools. She looks at the various methods teachers of English use to teach subject-verb agreement in the Junior High School. She found out that most of the teachers use the right methodologies; however, these teachers need to employ more techniques at the various stages of their lesson presentations for pupils to get better understanding of the topic. According to her, most pupils have difficulties in applying the rules of concord in their compositions, but then when it comes to objectives tests, they are able to select the correct form of the verb to match the correct subject. She asserted that: As far as the requirements of the English syllabus are concerned, pupils at the basic levels clearly understand the three subject-verb rules required of them (Arthur 2009). She recommends that the Basic Education English Language syllabus should include more of the rules of concord.

In her study, Annor (2011) found that J.H.S. pupils have more problems relating subject-verb, especially proximity concord, and pronoun-antecedent concord. She adds that teachers find it difficult explaining the rules of these categories of concord for their pupils to understand. She explains that most teachers may not be quite familiar with the explanations behind the application of particular concord rules though they may be proficient in their use of these rules. Annor (2011) infers as reported in the literature that the inability of some teachers to adduce correct reasons for their answers may also be an indication of the carry-over effect of the not too encouraging performance in English concord among some teacher-trainees. Annor (2011) suggested among other things that teachers should be given periodic training on English language, especially in terms of concord so that they can understand and appreciate the intricacies of this aspect of English grammar while improving their proficiency as well.

Regarding the attitude of students towards the teaching of grammar and learning of the English language, Asinyor (2012) observes that students' writing mechanisms are below standard because students do not usually study English, since they think English is automatically acquired but not learned. He proposed that students should be encouraged and made aware that English language is the vehicle to the prospects of the opportunities offered in their elective courses to them. It could thus be observed that almost all of them concentrated their work on the high levels of education without considering the basic schools which is the bedrock of learning concord. The researcher realizing this, thought it wise to undertake her research at the Basic school level to analyze students' concord errors.

2.8.9 Conclusion

It has been observed that the problem of wrong usage of concord amongst students is a pervasive one right from the Basic school level to the University as was

identified in the various studies reviewed. It is therefore not too surprising that this problem was rife among the Forms 2 and Form 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 J.H.S. as well. This chapter discussed the concept of errors, types of errors, differences between errors and mistakes, meaning of concord, types of concord, rules in concord, concord error types in English, causes of concord errors, strategies to overcome concord errors and related studies.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Gathering of information is an important feature of any research work which can be used to solve a stated problem. To be able to achieve this, systematic method, procedures and instruments of collecting data need to be used. In view of this the chapter outlines the methodology that was employed in conducting the whole study. Specific areas discussed are as followings: Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure, Data Source, Data Collection, Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis.

3.1 Research design

According to Burns and Grove (2003), research design is a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Kothari (2008) also believes that research design is a plan, a roadmap and blueprint of investigation conceived in order to obtain answers to research. Owu-Ewie (2012) observes that a research design is the procedures a researcher employs to achieve accurate and valid answers that answer a research question. All the above authors believe that, research design is to show the procedures the researcher employs in conducting a research and the condition in which the research data is obtained. Thus, research design is a model or action plan upon which the entire study is built. It shows the way in which a study is conducted and it provides the roadmap of the study in terms of the sample, data collection, instruments and analysis procedure. The overall purpose of this study was to analyse student's concord errors in English Language and it is limited to Forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School.

3.2 Population

According to Blanche (1999), population is a group of individuals or people with the same characteristics and in whom the researcher is interested. This is the entire set of objects or people which is the focus of the research and about which the research wants to determine some characteristics (Bless et al, 2006). Babbie (2008) maintains that a population for a study is that group about whom we want to draw conclusions. For this study the target population used was Forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School in the Akatsi South District of the Volta Region. The researcher noticed that the use of concord in the English Language had been poor, and therefore affected their performances in the Basic Education Certificate Examination BECE for the first year she was posted there as a teacher. She observed that students of the school find it difficult to use the appropriate verbs in sentences. Therefore, the situation portrays a fertile environment for an academic research of this magnitude, hence the choice of this school for this study. The choice has also been influenced by the fact that the researcher is a teacher of English Language in the School.

3.3 Sample and sampling procedure

According to Asamoah (2004), sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group, from which they were selected. Sample frame is all members of the population from which a sample is drawn for research study. Saunders (2007, p. 15) indicated that the size of the sample and the way it is selected definitely has implications for the confidence level in the data analysed and also an extent to which generalization can be made. The study involved Akatsi No.1 Junior High Forms 2 and 3 Students. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two English teachers out of four English teachers

on the staff and 82 students out of a total population of 110 students, comprising of 52 boys and 58 girls.

According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1990), “purposive sampling method is adopted when the respondents selected may either judged to have certain characteristics or more commonly those who are likely to provide the most useful information for the purpose for which the study is being done” (p. 100). The researcher chose purposive sampling technique due to the purpose of the study. The selected teachers are experienced teachers who have been teaching the subject for quite a long time and are familiar with the students’ problems as far as English language is concerned. The researcher saw the selected subjects to be the right people that could give the needed information she was looking for.

3.4 Source of data

Creswell (2013) affirms that research instruments involve data collection and are designed to answer research questions. This study made use of pupils’ written essays, forming the basic source of data to answer the research questions. Written essays were given to pupils since they are the outcome of a planned language production. The researcher informed the school authorities and the pupils about the study in order to ensure some level of co-operation throughout the study.

3.5 Instrument for data collection

A research instrument is a systematically prepared document purposely designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data (Parahoo, 1997). Parahoo argues that a research instrument is a systematically prepared form or document purposely designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data. Hence, the researcher used pupils’ written essays for the study. The main objective of this study

is to analyse pupils' writing errors, hence the use of written essays as the major instrument of the study. The pupils were given writing test in the form of an open essay question. They were given adequate guidance on how many words to write. They were then given a time limit of 40 minutes. The purpose of the essay was to identify the types of errors pupils commit and classify them accordingly. The topic that pupils were asked to write on was:

Describe a visit to a friend's hometown during a traditional festival

The researcher scored the written essays per the West African Examination Council marking scheme. The breakdown of the marks were as follows: Content (10 marks), Organization (5 marks), Expression (10 marks) and Mechanical Accuracy (5 marks).

3.6 Data analysis

The Error Analysis approach which is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the forms of language writing and speaking (Richards & Schmidt, 2002) was used to analyse errors in pupils' written essays. The written essays were collected from the 82 pupils that are the sample for the study. The following steps as outlined by Gass and Selinker (2001) were used: *Data collection, identification of errors and a statement of error frequency*. The written essays were read, marked and analysed. In line with the Taxonomy of Error Analysis designed by James (1998, p. 304), categorization and sub-categorization were used to record all the occurrence of errors which were committed by the pupils. The errors were categorized into tense, articles, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and omission of word errors.

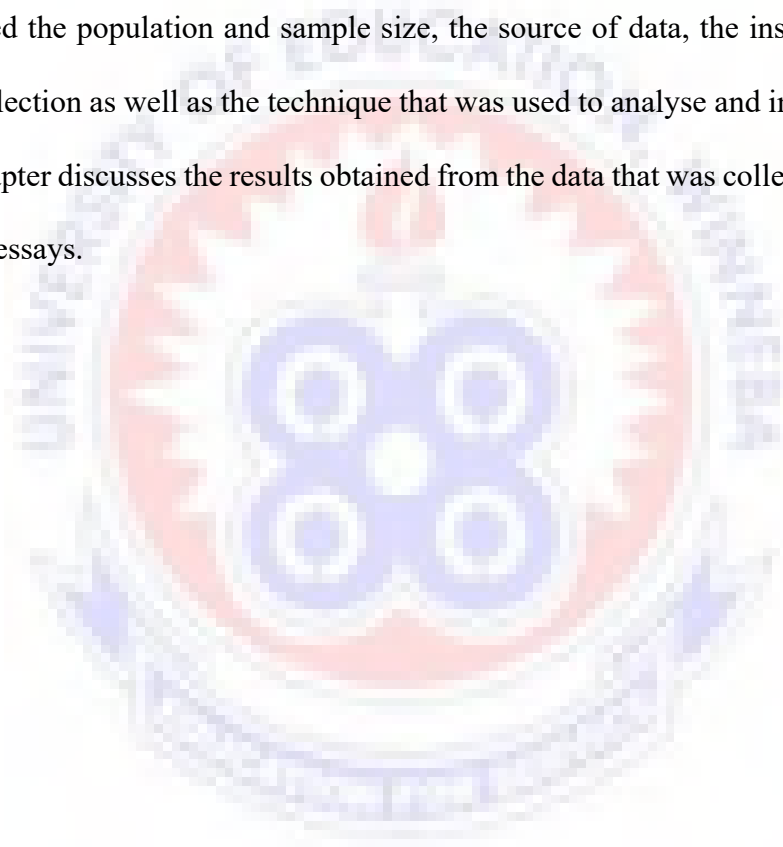
3.7 Reliability and validity

Reliability, according to Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001), is referred to as the degree of consistency with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure. On this note, the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to write on

the same essay topics within a period of two weeks. This was to ensure consistency of results. Validity, on the other hand, is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Parahoo et. al). The researcher presented the essay topics to the head teacher and other two teachers in the school to evaluate in order to ensure their content validity based on the standardized level of pupils.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the procedure that was employed for the study. It presented the population and sample size, the source of data, the instrument used for data collection as well as the technique that was used to analyse and interpret data. The next chapter discusses the results obtained from the data that was collected from pupils' written essays.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from the analysis of the collected data. The researcher analyzed the errors found in the written essays of the students. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents the analysis of the mistakes made by students in their writings. These include errors in concord types, such as subject-verb agreement, concord when prepositional phrases are interposed between subject and verb, concord with compound subject joined by 'and', concord with noun phrase errors coordinated among others. The second section presents an analysis of the findings based on the questionnaire that sought to examine the attitude and perception of students towards learning the English language. A careful study of the various errors in the students' scripts and oral communication revealed that concord errors had the highest frequency which coincidentally happened to be the main purpose of the study: to evaluate concord errors among the students of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School: A case study of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School, in the Akatsi South District in the, Volta Region, of Ghana. The specific objectives of the study are: to examine the various categories of students Concord errors, and examine the extent to which the competence of the English teacher in Concord of English affects the performance of students in the aspect and examine the impact of English teacher's competence and pedagogical skills on student's performance in English.

The researcher's intention was to discover how students commit concord errors and the sources of such errors in their writings for analysis. The question posed was '*Describe a visit to your friend's hometown during a traditional festival*'. In all, 82 scripts of the 82 participants were analyzed. Each of the scripts was critically examined to find out how they used concord, to identify the various categories of concord errors

and the sources where the student concord errors arise. On the basis of the results, it was observed that the problem of the students went beyond the problem of concord errors.

4.1 Categorization of concord errors

After analyzing the data, different types of concord errors in students' written essays were identified. They include subject-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject-verb concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors, inverted subject-verb concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, and construction with more than one concord errors. Students' responses as collated from the essays regarding the types of errors and number of errors on each type were 80 for subject-verb concord errors, 15 for determiner noun concord errors, 12 for coordinated subject verb concord errors, 17 for noun pronoun concord errors, 10 for Inverted subject verb concord errors, 20 for verb-verb concord errors and 15 for Construction with more than one concord errors.

4.1.1 Subject-verb concord errors

Subject-verb concord errors recorded a greater frequency, indicating the students' inability to get the right verb to match the subject so as to make the sentence grammatically correct. This was clear in the students' scripts, particularly in singular subjects with their singular verbs in the present tense. Subject-verb concord errors gathered in the data are discussed below:

4.1.1.1 Singular subject with plural verbs

It was revealed from the scripts that getting a singular verb to match with a corresponding singular subject was difficult for them. Students used plural verbs to match singular subjects opposing the concord rule which states that singular subjects take singular verbs and plural subjects take plural verbs. Examples 1-4 illustrate this.

1. The secretary write a letter of appreciation to the boss.
2. My mother buy my gift for me.
3. The staff secretary read the minute.
4. The room are nice for use.

Although the subjects of the sentences are all singular, the students disregarded the concord rule and matched them with plural verbs. Following the subject-verb concord rule, all the singular subjects should be matched with their corresponding verbs in the singular form. This may be due to teachers' way of teaching concord. Most teachers emphasize the use of the third person inflection –s- after pronouns (he, she, it) than their corresponding nouns. Because this appears to be fossilized in the brains of the students, when the subject of a verb is singular, it confuses students as to which verb to consider. Consequently, teachers need to vary their emphasis when teaching subject-verb concord. Also, students need to pay more attention and also put in more effort towards understanding the subject-verb rules in order to apply them well in their sentences.

The sentence 'my mother buy my gift for me' is an example of a grammatical rule that in a structure where the same subject controls a series of verbs, all the verbs must agree with the subject. Usually, they transfer their first language L1 elements into the target language they learn, which may result in errors. This is very true because all the students of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School speak Ewe. In Ewe, verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense. Here are some examples in Ewe;

- i. Exornam da akple. (Exornam prepares akple)
- ii. Exornam kple Ewoenam da akple. (Exornam and Ewoenam prepare akple).

The verb 'da' (cook) maintains the same form in both examples above even though a singular subject, Exornam is used in the first example as against a plural subject, Exornam 'kple' (and) Ewoenam in the second example. The verb remains the same in 'Ewe' irrespective of the plurality and singularity of the subject in used. English, on the other hand, has a different grammatical rule. Students however match singular subjects with plural verbs because they often have irregular use of the third person –s. With this, students think that some verbs create a phonetic environment that makes them sound more third person friendly than others.

4.1.1.2 Plural subject with singular verb

Generally, in English language, countable nouns take an -s- to form plural and the absence of -s- renders a count noun singular. Example, book (singular), and books (plural). The direct opposite of this is to verbs. With verbs, it is the third person singular form in the present tense that takes -s-. The fact that a plural count noun usually takes an –s does not generally mean verbs should also have –s at the end to form their plurality. The grammatical rule states that the verb must agree in number with its subject. That is, the subject of a sentence and its corresponding verb must agree in number, thus, singular or plural. An agreement error occurs when a plural subject is used with a singular verb as in the following excerpts.

In the following examples, the students mismatched the subjects and their verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verb is singular. Examples are:

5. The villagers goes to the river every day to fetch water.
6. No vehicles enters the school compound after 6 p.m.
7. The teachers teaches well to prepare their students for their examinations.
8. Our players trains very hard to win all their matches at the games.

9. Police recruits jogs every morning as part of their training schedules.

From the above examples it can be concluded that the students have mistaken the –s addition rule in count nouns to that of verbs. Haydari (2012) declares that these are errors that occur during the learning process of the second language. So, they are developmental errors. Developmental errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience. These errors can also be considered as intralingual errors because the students made faulty generalization of the rules of -s inflection of nouns. These students may be operating intuitively by thinking that the first –s of the noun attracts a second one of the verb.

4.1.1.3 Relative pronoun-subject with singular verb

In the case of the proximity law, attraction occurs when a sentence has two clauses; the main clause and the subordinate clause and the subordinate is a relative clause. A relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun, who, whom, that, which or whose. A relative pronoun can be either singular or plural. They take their number from antecedent- the word to which they refer. This means that, if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun is plural and hence takes a plural verb. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun is singular and hence takes a singular verb. There should be an agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun. The principle of ‘proximity’ also termed as ‘attraction’ denotes agreement of the verb with a closely preceding noun phrase in reference to agreement with the noun phrases that function as subject (Quirk et al, 2005). The proximity concord may be extended to mean that concord is determined by whatever immediately precedes the verb. In other words, it is the position of the subject which normally determines the concord.

Wiredu (1998, p. 13) has the same view that “proximity concord refers to the agreement between a subject and its verb based not on notion but on the fact that there

is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb”. That is, grammatical concord is established between these elements instead of the normal formal agreement with the head of the noun phrase/subject (NP/Subj). As stated above, what is important here is that there should be an agreement between the verb and the antecedent of the relative pronoun as in:

The headmistress disciplined the teachers that were late to school today.

The antecedent of ‘that’ is ‘teachers’ in the sentence. Since the noun, ‘teachers’ is plural, the pronoun ‘that’ is also plural because it (pronoun *that*) stands for or in place of the noun teachers which is plural.

In a different sentence, the antecedent of that could be a singular noun. For example,

The headmistress disciplined the teacher that was late to school today.

Since the noun, ‘teacher’ is singular, the pronoun, ‘that’ is also singular and therefore takes a singular verb. This rule was violated by the students as follows:

1. The villagers who **goes** to the river every day to fetch water are brave.
2. The vehicles which **enters** the campus after 6: pm are stopped
3. Students and teachers who **absents** themselves from school takes permission from the head.
4. Police recruits who **jogs** every morning as part of their training schedules are gone.
5. The teachers on duty that **comes** to school so early gives us numbers.

4.1.1.4 Demonstrative pronoun subject-verb agreement

Demonstrative pronouns are used to refer to locations or places of things and persons in space. They have number contrast and have two sets; **this** and **these** on one hand and **that** and **those** on the other hand. Aarts (2010) explains that these pronouns are used following reference: this and these are used to refer to entities that are proximal

(close by), whereas **that** and **those** refer to entities that are distal (far away). The pronouns **this** and **that** are singular while **these** and **those** are plural. When a demonstrative pronoun is used as the subject, it must agree in number with the verb. Unfortunately, the students did not apply the rule. They realize that the pronouns **this** and **that** are singular subjects and so should take singular verb form but their plural counterparts **these** and **those** should take their corresponding plural verb forms. A possible cause of this violation could be **fossilization**. This has become the case because this error may have become imprinted in their brains that they find it difficult to change. The sentences are grammatically acceptable if the verbs are changed to agree with their corresponding subjects as in:

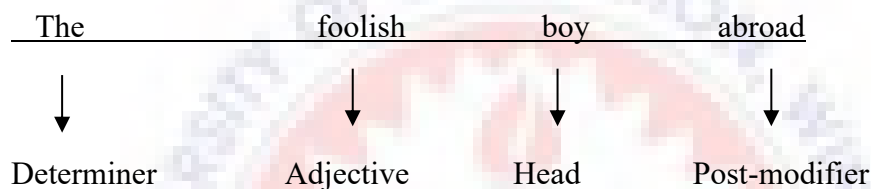
6. This **makes** the beautiful girl happy.
7. These **were** some of the books I needed for her.
8. That **was** how the teacher lamented.
9. Those **were** the students who disciplined us.
10. These **make** the beautiful girl happy.

In the examples, students could not apply the rule of the demonstrative pronouns being in agreement with the verbs that they follow. This therefore made them construct different structures. *This* and *that* are singular pronouns and so must take singular verbs. Also, *these* and *those* are plural pronouns and so must take their corresponding plural verbs to make the sentences grammatically acceptable.

4.1.1.5 Headword–verb concord errors

The inability of the students to identify the headword in a string of words within the subject zone is attributable to errors like this. The head or the headword is the most important element in a string of words. For example, a noun phrase is a string of words whose head is a noun as in **the foolish boy**. Students who properly internalized subject-

verb concord rules have no problem matching subjects such as nominal group (a noun or pronoun) or the dummy **it** with the right verbs in their speech or writing. In other words, it is easier for students to let the simple subject to agree with a verb in the present tense. However, there are instances where the subject is a complex one. A complex subject can be a noun phrase with multiple pre-modification and post-modification. Pre-modifiers precede their heads. In English grammar, a post modifier is a modifier that follows the word or phrase it limits or qualifies (Nordquist, 2019). Consider the following:



The complex subject poses problems because it makes students lose track of the headword. Memory limitation could also prevent them from employing the correct verb, to get into a relationship with the noun headword. The rule should not change whether the subject is simple or complex. Thus, if the head is singular, the verb in the present tense should also be singular. On the other hand, if the head is plural, the verb in the present tense should also be plural. Sometimes, there is an adverb between the subject and the verb. This does not change the number, person or gender of the subject. So, if the subject is singular the verb must also be singular and if the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural. The following are examples produced by the students:

1. Some of my friends **does** not want to identify themselves with the poor people.
2. The school **have** kind teachers.
3. Therefore, he **were** not happy.
4. Almost all of my school friends **does** not like him.
5. And there we **goes**

In example 1 the headword is my friends and it is plural. This headword is followed by a pre-modifier some of. The pre-modifier that comes between the subject and the verb may be the case of confusion in determining the appropriate verb. It is important for students to note that the verb agrees with its subject but not a word in the phrase or a clause. They should learn to cross out the interrupting group of words in their brains because these serve as modifiers of the subject and do not add to the number. Since the headword, *my friends* is plural, the verb must also be plural. Table 4.1.1 presents the summary of subject-verb concord errors.

Table 4.1.1. Subject-verb concord errors

Concord error	Frequency	Percentage
singular subject with plural verb errors	19	25%
head word verb concord errors	18	23.6%
plural subject with singular verb errors demonstrative pronoun (subject)	17	21%
verb concord errors	14	16.4%
relative pronoun (subject) with singular verbs errors	12	14%
Total	80	100%

Table 4.1.1 illustrates the different concord errors committed in subject-verb agreement by students in this study. The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified indicated that getting a verb to agree with its subject is difficult for the students, particularly singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense. The information in Table 4.1.1 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.1.

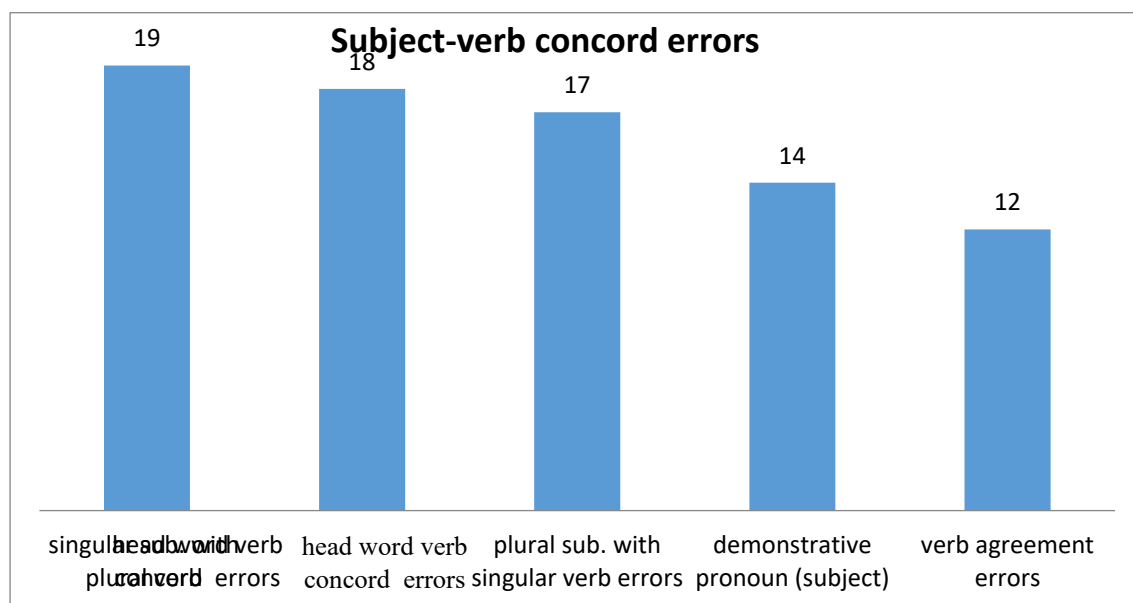


Figure 4.1.1. Subject-verb concord errors

The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified showed that getting a verb to agree with its subject is a big problem from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense. With the plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences under singular subjects with plural verbs are singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In a related study, Wu and Garza (2014) investigated types and attributes of English writing errors in the EFL context. The findings of the study revealed that subject-verb concord errors were the most frequent errors that occurred in almost all the students' scripts. They indicated that these participants did not start learning English until 3rd grade; so, their literacy skills in the first language affected their learning of English. In the present research, Forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No.1 Junior High School seem to have the same problem with the students in that study because Forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No.1

Junior High School did not get the opportunity to study English at the early stages of their schooling, hence their problems in matching verbs with the right subjects.

They mismatched plural verbs with singular subjects and singular verbs with plural subjects and this misinterpreted the meaning of their utterances. In the category of demonstrative pronoun, subject verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but they desecrated the rule of subject-verb agreement. *This* and *that* are one of the classes of determiners that can take both. The headword-verb concord errors are also ascribed to the inabilities of the students to identify the head-word from the string of words. The headword is the most important element of a string of words in a sentence. In the relative pronoun-subject with singular verbs, the principle of proximity (attraction) is practical when a sentence has two clauses; the main and the subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the relative clauses which must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

4.1.2 Determiner-noun concord errors

According to Downing and Locke (2006), English obliges us to make a distinction with regards to how a referent is cognitively perceived: whether as a discrete, countable entity such as stone or as an individual, non-countable 'mass' entity, such as sheep. This difference constitutes a feature which is salient in speakers' experience of 'things'. Other languages make a count-mass distinction, but we must not assume that particular items are conceptualized or lexicalized in the same way in different languages. News, for example, is a singular mass noun in English language, (the news is good) *one news, *a news, *many news are ungrammatical. Students could

not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count, and non-count nouns in sentences and that led to the students committing errors.

4.1.2.1 Count-nouns

In this type mostly, the referent can be counted, as in one cow, two cows but not *one sheep, *two sheeps. The referents of these nouns are regarded as individuated in things or in persons. The following count nouns include both regular plurals in –s or invariable or ‘zero’ plurals: 3 cyclists, 2 trouts, a dozen eggs, three new television series, 10 minutes, 6 salmon, 4 crossroads, seven and a half meters, a thousand sheep, five US aircraft, seven spacecraft. Nouns that can be quantified in units and in numbers are countable nouns; Meaning they can be counted. Examples are:

1. The hardworking teachers comes to school early.
2. The students likes the hardworking teachers.
3. Some porridges were bought for the sick man.
4. The teachers in the school doesn’t likes her.
5. But the students does likes her.

In the examples, students mismatched the verbs to their referent nouns and noun phrases. In the first example, the noun phrase ‘the hardworking teachers’ is a plural count-noun and so requires a correspondent plural verb, ‘come’ and not a singular verb, ‘comes’ as used by the students. The second sentence also needs a plural verb ‘like’ to match with the ‘plural’ subject ‘students’. In the third example also, porridge is a non-count noun and so needed a singular verb, ‘was’, to match it and not a plural verb, ‘were’, as the students used. Porridge is a non-count noun and so does not require a plural marker –s. The correct sentence should have been ‘some porridge was bought for the sick man’, and not the other way round.

4.1.2.2 Non-count nouns

The referent of this category is cognitively perceived as not countable. We don't therefore say, for example, two furniture, four luggages. Both *furniture* and *luggage*, as well as *news*, can be individuated by a preceding counter-'a piece of'. Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be quantified in units and numbers. Some errors that students committed are

1. The informations was delievered to my mother.
2. The student braced the furnitures.
3. The pastor gave us advices against insulting the gentleman.
4. The school prefect was following sheeps.
5. The childrens cooked the food for us.

Table 4.1.2 shows the summary of determiner noun concord errors.

Table 4.1.2. Determiner-noun concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage
Count-noun errors	6	40%
Non-count-noun errors	9	60%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.1.2 shows the different determiner-noun concord errors committed by students in this study and these are presented in Figure 4.1.2. The different types of determiner-noun errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns.

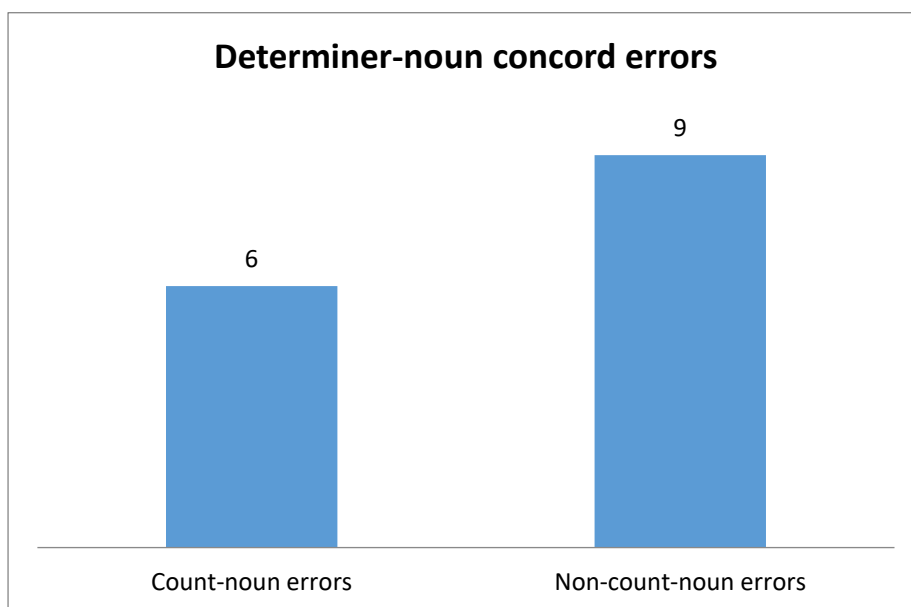


Figure 4.1.2. Determiner-noun concord errors

The different types of determiner-noun concord errors from students' scripts disclosed that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count and non-count nouns. In a related study, Quagie (2014) presents an analysis of concord errors in the examination scripts of 200 students and the major errors found included determiner noun concord errors among others. He then concluded that the most EFL students' errors were not due to insufficient command of linguistic complexity. In addition, the study reported the major causes of EFL learners' errors as overgeneralization, ignorance of rules restrictions, simplification, and incomplete application of rules of the target language.

4.1.3 Coordinated-subject concord errors

Concord with subordinated subject has been discussed by Quirk and Greenbaum (2000) as a process where equivalent units are linked by 'and', 'or', 'but'. They further explain that it may occur between different grammatical units: clauses, clause elements, words. Some of the common errors that students committed could be classified under

the following sub headings: coordinating with ‘and’, coordination with a ‘singular subject and coordination with ‘or’ and ‘nor’.

4.1.3.1 Coordinating conjunction ‘and’ concord errors

When subjects in sentences are joined by ‘and’, all the subjects collectively control the verb, so, a plural verb should be used. Here are some examples

It will be wrong to write,

Victor and Exornam enrolls on an M.Ed. programme at Winneba.

The sentence is incorrect because there are two subjects, ‘Victor and Exornam’ making it a plural subject, which according to concord rules, needs a corresponding plural verb to match with. The correct sentence should therefore be as follows:

Victor and Exornam enroll on an M.Ed programme at Winneba.

Despite the above rule, there exists an exception, which states that when you use ‘and’ to link or join two subjects and both subjects refer to the same person (i.e the person has two titles), use a singular verb and not a plural verb. Following this, it will be inappropriate to write:

The beauty queen and head of department of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School are in the room.

Here, the beauty queen and the head of department are two titles referring to the same person, making it a singular subject requiring a corresponding singular verb to make it appropriate. But if the definite article, ‘the’ is used before the second title, it means both articles refer to separate persons or things and so should be considered a plural subject.

For example,

The beauty queen and **the** head of department are in the school.

With this example, the beauty queen stands as a separate subject and the head of department also stands alone as a separate subject thereby rendering them plural

subjects, and so a plural verb should be used to match them. Examples of some faulty construction by the students are as follows;

1. My mother and the queen is supporting the poor in my hometown.
2. Tables and chairs was costly.
3. Uniform and shoes costs our head teacher.
4. The founder and leader of the church are absent from church today.
5. Teachers and students is quarreling.

It is clear from the above sentences, that students could not apply the rules of coordination with ‘and’ which simply states that ‘when a subject consists of two or more noun phrases (clauses) coordinated by ‘and’, distinction has to be made between coordination and coordinative apposition. Coordination comprises cases that correspond to fuller coordinate forms. A plural verb is used even if each conjoin is singular’. The examples cited from students’ essays could be attributed to over generalization of rules as most of the students focused on singular subjects with their corresponding verbs forgetting about the rules of coordinating conjunctions. Quirk and Greenbaum (2002), Leech and Svartvik (2002), and Yankson (1994) discuss this type of error under coordinated subject concord error.

4.1.3.2 Subordinating conjunction concord errors

This type of concord error break sentences into word clusters called dependent (subordinate) clauses. Dependent clauses cannot stand alone to make a complete meaning and so must be connected to an independent clause to make a complex sentence. Subordinating conjunctions connect the dependent clause to the independent clause. For example, in the sentence below:

The teachers were happy when the headmistress did not come to the meeting.

The sentence is in parts; the part that makes complete sense and the part that does not express complete meaning. Thus; ‘The teachers were happy’ is an independent clause because it carries a complete meaning while the second part ‘when the headmistress did not come to the meeting’ is a dependent clause because it must be connected to the independent clause to give complete meaning. When you join the subjects in a sentence with any of the subordinated conjunctions, only the subject before the subordinating conjunction controls the verb. When both a coordinating conjunction (i.e. ‘and’) and any of the subordinating conjunctions (example, ‘with’, ‘also’, ‘together with’ and so on.) appear in a sentence, whichever of them appears first, controls the verb. If ‘and’ appears first, the rule of ‘and’ applies, and that means **all** the subjects collectively control the verb. For example,

The head teacher and his assistant together with his students are serious in school.

In the sentence, both ‘and’ which is coordinating conjunction and ‘together with’ which is a subordinating conjunction, is seen in the same sentence, but then, ‘and’ is seen first, therefore all the subjects collectively should be controlled by ‘and’ and this renders the subject a plural one which requires a corresponding plural verb, ‘are’ to make it grammatically appropriate. However, if a subordinating conjunction appears first, only the subjects which is seen before the subordinator control the verb. For instance,

The head teacher with his students and assistant head is serious in school.

In this example, the subordinating conjunction *with* appears first before the singular subject *the head teacher*. Hence, as the rule of concord implies, a singular verb ‘is’ must be used and not a plural verb ‘are’. Some of the deviant constructions from students’ scripts include:

1. Headmistress with staff buy books for the brilliant student.

2. The small girl were happy when the president shook her hand.
3. The headmistress and chairperson of the food committee are here.
4. The father together with mother are gone.
5. Mr. Annan and the Science teacher is gone.

The sentences indicated clearly that they could simply not interpret the rules governing the use of subordinating conjunctions structures in sentences where the subject controls the verb in each case. As a result, their structures could not agree in terms of subject and verb as the rule of concord states.

4.1.3.3 Correlative conjunction concord errors

These types of conjunctions connect similar parts of a sentence, such as adjectives, nouns, and clauses. However, unlike coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions are combinations of coordinating conjunctions, not only a single word. They always come in pairs and link grammatically equivalent items. Some commonly used correlative conjunctions are; ‘As.....as,’ ‘Both.....and’, ‘Neither.....nor’, ‘Either..... or’, ‘Not only.....but also’, ‘Not...but’, ‘Whether...or’ etc.

Consider the following examples:

- i. We like playing volleyball **as** much **as** football
- ii. **Both I and** Kofi went to the market
- iii. **Neither** Oscaria **nor** Exornam fails to make me comfortable

For correlative conjunctions only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb. Therefore, if the subject after ‘nor’ or ‘or’ as the case may be is singular, use a singular verb, but if the subject after ‘nor’ or ‘or’ as the case may be is plural, use a plural verb. Some wrong constructions the students made are:

1. Neither the female students nor male students in my class **likes** the short teacher

2. Either our father or mother **buy** his books.
3. Neither the headmistress or the teacher **are** in school.
4. Either the short boy or the slim girl **disturb** in class.
5. Either the teacher or the headmistress **love** him.

The sentences are faulty and this could be attributed to the students' failure to apply the rules governing the usage of correlative conjunctions which states that when two subjects are found in a sentence, only the subject after the second part of the correlative conjunction controls the verb appropriately. Table 4.1.3 is a summary of the coordinated-subject concord errors identified in the data.

Table 4.1.3. Coordinated-subject concord errors

Type of errors			Frequency of errors	Percentage
Coordinating errors	conjunction	concord	3	25%
			4	33%
Subordinating errors	conjunction	concord	5	42%
Correlative conjunction concord errors				
Total			12	100%

Table 4.1.3 shows the different coordinated subject concord errors made by the students in their construction and the different coordinating subject concord errors are presented on fig4 below. The different types of coordinated-subject concord errors realized shows that few of the students could not decipher between the use of the conjunctions to agree with the verbs in the English language. The information in Table 4.1.3 is presented in Figure 4.1.3.

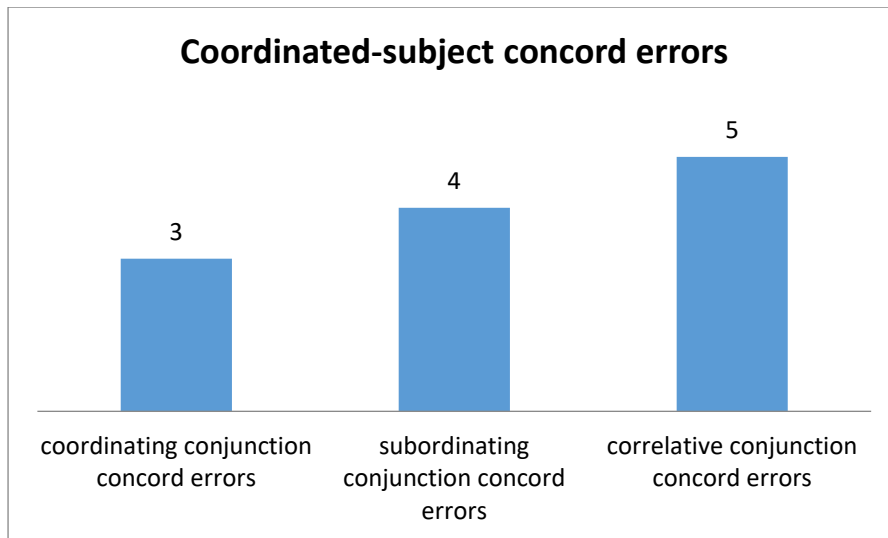


Figure 4.1.3. Coordinated-subject concord errors

Figure 4.1.3 shows the different coordinated subject concord errors made by the students in their constructions and the different coordinating subject concord errors are presented on the figure. The different types of coordinated-subject concord errors realized reveal that few of the students could not decipher between the uses of the conjunctions to agree with the verbs in the English language. In a similar study, Arthur (2009) looks at teaching concord at junior high schools. One of her findings revealed that coordinated subject concord errors were among the various concord errors identified in the scripts of her subjects. Her study also indicated that students, on the area of coordinated subject concord errors, could not appropriately apply coordinators well in their constructions to match with their right subjects. From this, she recommends that the Basic Education English Language syllabus should include more of the rules of concord.

In her study, Concord Problems in Madina Two Junior High School, Annor (2011) found that J.H.S. pupils have more problems relating subject-verb, especially proximity concord, coordinated subject concord and pronoun-antecedent concord. She adds that teachers find it difficult explaining the rules of these categories of concord for

their pupils to understand. She explains that most teachers may not be quite familiar with the explanations behind the application of particular concord rules though they may be proficient in their use of these rules. Annor (2011) infers as reported in the literature e.g. Agor (2003), that the inability of some teachers to adduce correct reasons for their answers may also be an indication of the carry-over effect of the not too encouraging performance in English concord among some teacher-trainees.

4.1.4 Noun-pronoun concord errors

Like a machine, for a sentence to be grammatically correct, all its parts should agree with one another. When a pronoun is used to refer to a noun used, there must be an agreement. A pronoun which refers to a singular noun phrase is in singular, and a pronoun which refers to a plural phrase is in plural (Leech & Startvik, 2002). For example,

1. He goes to his work place.
2. They go to their work place.

A pronoun is generally defined as a word which can replace a noun. The definition may be considered appropriate at the basic level where the learners are studying mainly words or the parts of speech. However, at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels, where phrases and clauses are taught, the definition must change accordingly. Hence, the pronoun may be defined as a word that can replace a noun or a noun phrase. Wiredu (1998) also defines pronouns as words which are used to replace a noun, especially where we do not want to repeat that noun. Instances of pronoun-noun concord errors are presented as follows:

4.1.4.1 Personal pronoun in the third person

Personal pronouns in third person must agree with their antecedents, both in number (with the singular pronouns; he, she, it) and gender, (Quirk et al, 2002).

Examples:

1. Victor goes to Winneba (He goes to Winneba)
2. Exornam exercises everyday (She exercises everyday)
3. The dog hunts on Fridays (It hunts on Friday)

This rule was bluntly violated by the students in sentences such as:

- i. Victor go to Winneba (He go to Winneba)
- ii. Exornam exercise everyday (She exercise everyday)
- iii. The dog hunt on Friday (It hunt on Friday)

4.1.4.2 A pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase

As Leech and Startvik (2002) write, a pronoun which refers to a plural noun phrase is plural. For instance,

1. Victor and Gloria do their homework (They do their exercise)
2. The teacher and his students go for their meal (They go for their meal)
3. Students do not want studies (They do not want studies)
4. A leather bag does not like water (It does not like water)

These rules of agreement between pronouns used to refer to nouns or noun phrases in the sentences were written:

1. Victor and Gloria *does their exercise
2. The teacher and his students*goes for their meal
3. Students *does not want studies
4. A leather bag and leather shoe *does not like water

Students who committed the errors in examples 1 and 3 thought that once the subjects are in plural forms, an –s should be added to the verb. In examples 2 and 4, some of the students also took the ‘2.the teacher and his students’ and 4. ‘a leather bag and leather shoe’ to be one subject and so matched them with singular verbs. Table 4.1.4 presents a summary of the noun-pronoun concord errors.

Table 4.1.4. Noun-pronoun concord errors

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Personal pronoun in the third person	5	33%
Pronouns which refer to a plural noun phrase	10	67%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.1.4 presents the different types of noun-pronoun concord errors committed by students and these are presented in Figure 4.1.4. The different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by students in their essays indicate that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for them.

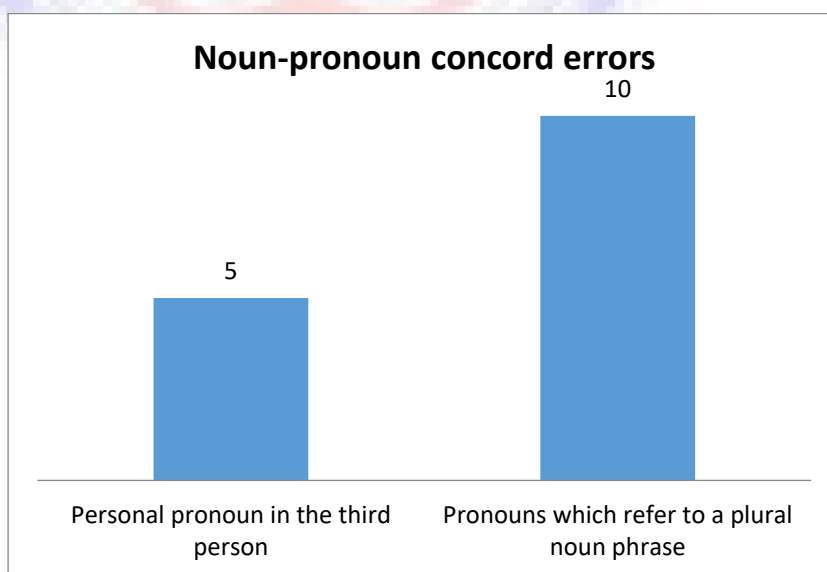


Figure 4.1.4. Noun-pronoun concord errors

A pronoun is often used to mean a word which substitutes for the noun. This meaning explains why the pronoun shares a lot in common with the noun in both syntactic and semantic properties. One important property of the English pronoun which should be discussed in relations to this study is the pronoun paradigms or systems. Obi (2009), in a related study, discusses noun-pronoun concord errors and concluded that students' difficulties in noun pronoun concord had to do with their inability to get nouns and their prospective pronouns to agree in number, person, gender and case. Her findings or conclusion is rightly linked with this present study as it was found in the scripts of forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No.1 Junior High School that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for the students.

4.1.5 Verb-verb concord errors

This refers to the agreement between the verb in the first clause of a sentence and a subsequent verb or verbs in the second clause. For example,

- i. The thief tied the young girl and raped her.
- ii. Kwame ate his meal before he left.

The two sentences above, made it clear that there has been consistency with the use of the verbs that appeared first in the sentences and those that followed, especially in tense. In sentence (i), it is seen that there is an agreement between the first verb (tied) and the second verb (raped) in tense (all in past tense). It also can be observed that in sentence (ii), the first verb (ate) agrees with the second verb (left) in terms of tense. The following illustrate the verb-verb concord errors made by the students.

Verb-verb preset tense concord errors

This type has to do with being consistent with the type of tense one has chosen. It is against the use of multiple tense in sentences; the mixture of present tense and past tense is inappropriate in the English Language. Consider the following:

1. We go to town on Tuesdays and buy materials for sale.
2. She comes to work and carries out her duties and goes back home
3. The dog barks at any anyone who disturbs it and even bites when it gets serious.

The students could not follow the above verb-verb consistency order and so they mixed the verbs (present and past tenses together consequently producing inappropriate sentences). These sentences are:

1. I bake the bread and *ate it alone
2. The bus stops at the road side and we all *alighted
3. The bus gets to our destination and we *alighted safely
4. When we go to the woman, she says he *was from Adina.
5. Master and I advise them to be careful about what they just *got themselves into.

4.1.5.2 Verb-verb past tense concord errors

Has to do with being consistent with only the past tense that one has chosen. It is against the use of multiple tense in sentences; the mixture of present tense and past tense is inappropriate in the English Language. Consider the following:

1. We got to town on Tuesday and bought materials for sale.
2. She came to work and carried out her duties and went back home
3. The dog barked at anyone who disturbed it and even bites when it got serious.

The students could not comply with the above verb-verb past tense concord consistency order and hence, they mismatched the verbs. Thus, instead of keeping to only the past tense that they started with, they mixed them (past tense and present tenses together thereby producing deviant sentences). These following sentences are wrongly constructed:

1. I baked the bread and *eat it alone
2. The bus stopped at the road side and we all *alight
3. The bus got to our destination and we *alight safely
4. When we went to the woman, she said she *is from Adina
5. Master and I advised them to be careful about what they just *get themselves into

Table 4.1.5 presents a summary of the verb-verb concord error that students committed.

Table 4.1.5. Verb-verb concord errors

Type of error	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
1. verb-verb present tense errors	13	65%
2. verb-verb past tense errors	7	35%
Total	20	100%

The different types of verb-verb concord errors identified indicate that getting a second verb in the right tense to agree with the first verb used is a challenge to the students. The information in Table 4.1.5 has been presented in Figure 4.1.5.

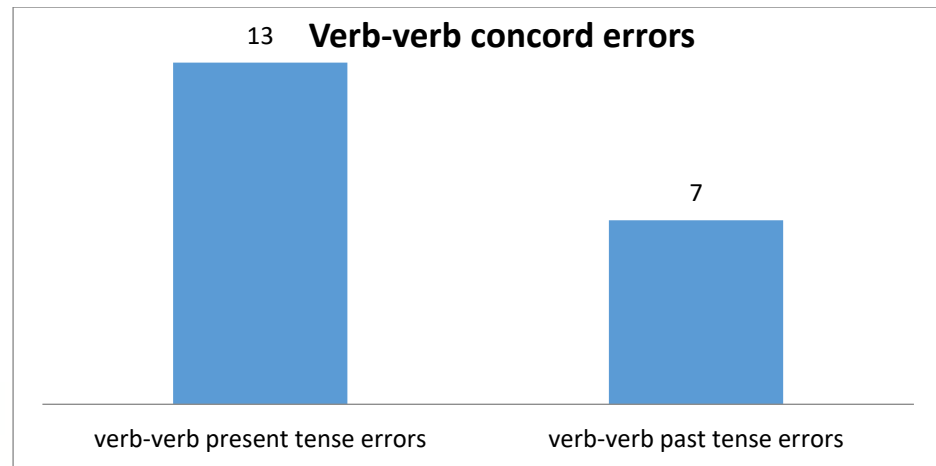


Figure 4.1.5. Verb-verb concord errors

In a study by Abdulmumini (2018), concord errors committed by Level 200 English University students in Northern Nigeria revealed that concord errors are the commonest grammatical errors committed by students. He also stated that this has been a regular report made by researchers on error analysis in English. He revealed from his findings that verb-verb concord errors were the most occurred types of errors in his analysis of the students' work, and as a result advised that teachers in their bid to teach concord should give particular importance to verb-verb concord as it dominated the other concord errors in his study.

4.1.8 Summary of the categorization of concord errors

Table 4.1.6 and Figure 4.1.6 present a summary of the categories of concord errors identified in students' scripts.

Table 4.1.6. Summary of the categories of concord errors

Categories of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage of errors
Subject-verb concord errors	80	60%
Determiner noun concord errors	15	11%
Coordinated subject concord errors	12	9%
Noun-pronoun concord errors	7	5%
Verb-verb concord errors	20	15%
Total	134	100%

Table 4.1.6 and Figure 4.1.6 indicated that subject-verb concord errors constitute the highest error which could be found in the students' written scripts. This has a percentage of 60% with 80 cases recorded in this study. It can be said that the concord errors may be due to simplification strategy and over generalization of English language rules. Some substitution errors like give instead of gave, come instead of came and went instead of go might have resulted from inadequate competence and practice in the target language. They also reveal that verb-verb concord errors have a total of 20 error occurrences representing 15% which was due to lack of knowledge of the basic rules on verb-verb concord, thereby resulting in students producing deviant construction of sentences.

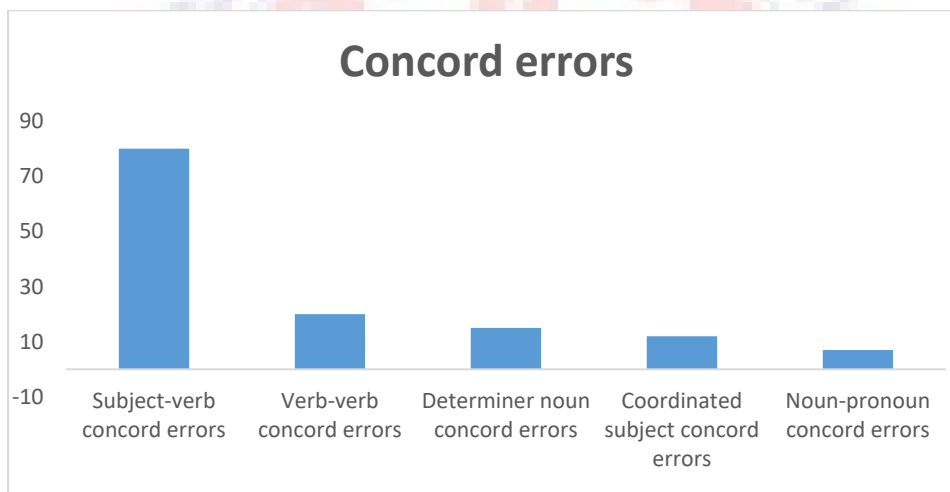


Figure 4.1.6. Summary of the categories of concord errors

The next is noun-pronoun concord errors constituting 5% representing 7 cases clearly shows that students are not familiar with the rules of concord in terms of verb-verb tense agreement. Determiner noun concord however, recorded 15 cases of errors representing 11% of determiner noun concords committed by the students in their written essays. Finally, coordinated subject concord errors recorded 12 cases of error occurrence each representing 9% of errors identified in the students' written essays.

In a study to identify learning deficiencies in English writing, Nganbam (2016) examined 60 native Arabic speaking students. In all, 15 categories of errors were classified to find out the cause of syntactic errors, which type of errors are more frequent, areas of weaknesses and the problems that tend to occur in writing compositions. The findings show that errors made by the learners were due to mother-tongue interference, misuse of sentence fragments, and lack of grammatical knowledge, formation and development errors. The findings of a similar study conducted by Neda (2012) revealed that Malaysian ESL students have problems in writing tasks, especially in language use regarding concord and punctuation. The first language interference also contributed to errors in their writings. In relation to this, the findings of the present study have revealed that learners of Akatsi No.1 Junior High School have difficulties in the use of concord, punctuation, articles and vocabulary register. Others were wrong organization of ideas, orthographic and semantic errors. These errors as said earlier, hinder the meaning of ideas in pupils' essays, however, their identification, through Error Analysis helped the researcher to realize the causes of such errors and helped to rectify the problem through constant practice in class exercises, test and homework.

4.2 Causes of students' errors

Selinker (1972) as quoted in McDough (1986), Taylor (1975) and Brown (1980), have identified the following factors as the common causes of errors; interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, the learner's background, the context of learning including both teaching materials and teaching methods adopted by teachers.

4.2.1 Inter-lingual transfer

The transfer of the features of one language to the foreign one results in inter-lingual error. Such transfer can be either positive or negative. Positive transfer leads to the facilitation of learning while the negative transfer leads to errors. Interference

(negative transfer) is the negative influence of the mother language on the performance of the target language learner. Brown (1980) and Yankson (1994) argue that it is committed by all learners irrespective of their mother tongue. Interlingual transfer (that is, transfer from the mother tongue or any other previously learnt language) in second language learning is a major cognitive strategy that learners fall back on when their linguistic means falls short of achieving their communicative ends. The influence of the mother tongue and the pervasiveness of interlingual transfer are indisputable, especially in learning situations where students' exposure to the second language is confined to a few hours per week of the formal classroom instruction (Mahmoud, 2000).

Hence, interlingual transfer is a strategy that is readily available to the learners to compensate for the inadequacies when attempting to communicate in the foreign language. Deviations resulting from interlingual transfer have been recorded at all linguistic levels, Gass and Selinker (1994). The interlingual errors that students committed under this structure are singular subjects with plural verbs. The following examples show that students committed errors in the use of subject-verb concord:

1. The pastor support the hardworking members in the church.
2. The secretary write a letter of appreciation to the boss.
3. My teacher buy gift for me.
4. The staff secretary read the minute.
5. The room are nice for use.

Although the subjects in each of the above structures are singular, the students matched them with plural verbs. And this could be as a result of the absence of the third person singular inflection –s in the students' first language L1. Erkaya (2000) describes this kind of errors as interlingual. It occurs as a result of the use of an element from one

language while speaking or using another. Most of the students speak Ewe and in Ewe, verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense.

4.2.2 Overgeneralization

This is the use of one form or construction in one context and extending its application to other contexts where it should not apply. Examples of overgeneralization include the use of 'eated' and 'goed' as the past tense forms of eat and go and the omission of the third person singular s under the heavy pressure of all other endless forms. It should be noted that simplification and overgeneralization are used by learners in order to reduce their linguistic burden. For example, the learner already knows that the plural of "dog" is dogs, in the same way, he or she thinks that 'informations' is the plural for the singular noun 'information'. Richard (1974) confirms this, that they are items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalization based on partial exposure to the foreign language.

4.2.3 Hypercorrection

Occasionally the keen efforts of teachers in correcting their students' errors induce the students to make errors in otherwise correct forms. Stenson (1978) calls this type of error "induced errors." For example, the teacher's insistence that the third person takes verbs with the -s- marker in English language, makes learners produce sentences with the -s- marker in all verbs, regardless of whether or not the nominal group is plural.

4.2.4 Context of learning

Errors can occur as a result of teaching methods and materials within the classroom. Taylor (1975) thinks that the faulty presentation of structures or words in a textbook, improper contextualization of patterns, and teachers' ignorance might lead to errors. Brown (1987) explains that students make errors because of misleading explanation from teachers, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook or

even because of a pattern that was rudely memorized in a drill but not properly contextualized. James (1998, p. 191-200) divides induced errors into the following subcategories: materials - induced errors, teacher - talk induced errors and exercise-based induced errors. All these are factors that can promote errors in learning.

4.2.5 Learner's background

The background of a learner could be another cause of grammatical concord error. Leech et al (1982) affirms this view by saying that the decline in students' standard of speaking and writing of the English language can be attributed to the background of the average learner. The learners' socio-economic background, the fact that the parents are not able to be supportive in providing learning materials, books, computers, television at home for their children can also affect the learners' concord usage. This happens to be the case in Akatsi, where a common radio set cannot be found in some households, let alone talking of computers, textbooks or pamphlets for the pupils to learn something.

4.3 Summary

The chapter focuses on the analysis of concord errors in the written essays of Akatsi No 1 Junior High forms 2 and 3 Students. The results of the findings revealed that students commit a lot of different types of concord errors in their scripts. Prominent among these errors includes; subject verb concord errors, determiner noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun pronoun concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, inverted subject concord errors and constructions with more than one concord errors. The analysis has also discovered that students' errors could be traced to lots of concord rules as: overgeneralization, hypercorrection, context of learning, Lack of practice, Inappropriate teaching methods used by some teachers, Language transfer-interlingual and intralingual.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter has analyzed the data which comprises the students' scripts, interview and observation and the general impression obtained was that forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School had a lot of concord errors in their written and spoken language as a result of the influence of their first language on the English language, faulty teaching by teachers, overgeneralization of grammar rules by students, learners' background, hypercorrection, teaching methods and materials as well as the competence of teachers, first language L1 interference, and lack of motivation and practice by students in the classroom and at home. Waring (2001) highlights that the learning of vocabulary items should be consistent so that they are not easily forgotten. It is very important to practice and review previously taught vocabulary. Moreover, Schmitt (2000) claims that since forgetting is natural and vocabulary learning is incremental, words are learned gradually from numerous exposures. The study consequently suggests that learners should be given enough room to practice well, any grammatical structure learnt in order to minimize the amount of error occurrences in their writing

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study as follows: the role of the concord errors in the teaching and learning of English, pedagogical implications, suggestion for future research and conclusion. The purpose of the study

was to identify the concord errors that learners commit in their writings. The study employed a qualitative approach to study students of Akatsi No 1 Junior High School in the Akatsi South District of the Volta of Ghana. Data were gathered from 82 students. The concord errors that were identified were categorized as subject-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors, and constructions with more than one concord errors. The findings of the study are discussed in the next section.

5.1 Summary of findings

A total of 133 errors were recorded from the essays of the 82 pupils. Subject-verb concord errors had the highest frequency, recording 80 occurrences, representing 60%. Errors in this category bothered on singular subjects with plural verbs, plural subjects with plural verbs, relative pronoun subjects with singular verbs, demonstrative-pronoun subject verb agreement, and headword concord errors. The different types of subject-verb concord errors identified revealed that getting a verb to agree with its subject is a big problem from the point of view of respondents, particularly, singular subject with third person singular verb in the present tense.

In the case of plural subject with singular verb, the students mismatched the subjects and the verbs. That is, the subject of each of the sentences is plural, but the verbs are singular. In each case, the subjects of each of the sentences under singular subjects with plural verbs are singular but the students matched them with plural verbs. In the category of demonstrative pronoun-subject verb agreement errors, the students used demonstrative pronouns as subjects but they violated the rule of subject-verb agreement. The demonstrative *this* and *that* are one of the classes of determiners that can take both. The headword-verb concord errors are also attributed to the inability of

the students to identify the headword from a string of words. In the relative pronoun-subject with singular verbs, the principle of proximity (attraction) is applied when a sentence has two clauses; the main and the subordinate, and the subordinate is a relative clause. The students mismatched the antecedents of the relative clauses which must agree with the verbs. Singular antecedents were matched with plural verbs and plural antecedents were matched with singular verbs.

Verb-verb concord errors were second with 20 instances, which represents 15%. Errors in this category were on the different types of verb-verb concord errors identified which indicated that getting a second verb in the right tense to agree with the first verb used is a challenge to the pupils. These errors were due to incomplete learning of rules as well as overgeneralization of rules learned. Noun-pronoun concord errors ranked third with 7, representing 5%. Noun-pronoun concord errors were categorized into personal pronouns with the third person and pronouns which refer to a plural noun phrase. These errors inhibited the meaning of texts in student' writings. The different types of noun-pronoun concord errors made by pupils in their essays showed that getting the noun and pronoun to agree with verb in structures in English Language is a challenge for them.

Constructions with more than one concord errors recorded 12 errors, representing 9%. This talks about constructions with more than one type of concord errors. It could be one construction with a plethora of different types of concord errors. This could be subject-verb concord errors and verb-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, or any others. These errors were mainly caused by overgeneralization of rules and incomplete learning of rules by students.

Another category of concord error is determiner-noun concord errors and which had 15 occurrences, representing 11% of the total number of errors. Here, the different

types of determiner-noun concord errors from students' scripts indicated clearly that students could not make a distinction between the singular count, plural count, and non-count nouns. These errors occurred due to forgetfulness and ignorance of the use of the rule in terms of determiners and their usage in English language. Coordinated subject concord errors and inverted subject concord errors were the types of errors that recorded the least frequency of occurrence of 12, representing 9% each.

Based on the findings of this study, several factors were identified to be the causes of errors in learners' writings. The first cause worth mentioning is the way English Language is taught at the lower primary level. Lessons in English, as well as other subjects, are taught mostly in the learners' native language. It consequently becomes a problem when they get to the Junior High School and have to express themselves in the English language. This results in the transfer of forms from the first language L1 to English language. For example, most subject-verb concord errors, were due to the context of instruction. Careless writing also contributed to the occurrence of these errors. Tense errors found in the writings of learners were also mostly due to incomplete learning of rules, overgeneralization of rules learnt and context of instruction. The learners' first language L1 also contributed to errors found in the study.

5.2 The role of concord errors in the teaching and learning of English

The findings of the research revealed that learners' concord errors help teachers identify the problems learners encounter in the English language class. Frequent exercises on the investigations of learners' concord errors and the frequency with which they occur will help the teachers devise suitable strategies to organize remedial lessons. Presada and Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They

confirmed that Error Analysis (EA) could lessen the number of errors in their students' work. This is important because, errors provide adequate feedback that informs the teacher on the effectiveness of teaching techniques. Karra (2006), Mohammed (2013) and Jabeen et al (2015) have also maintained that concord errors are crucial in English language teaching for many reasons. Some of the reasons are that; they help the teacher to know a student's progress, provide feedback; they make the researcher aware of the effectiveness of one's teaching techniques, and show one what parts of the syllabus has been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

Besides, they note that errors enable the teachers to decide whether they must devote more time to the item they have been teaching and provide information for designing a remedial syllabus or a program of re-teaching. Also, errors show how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner uses, and help the learner to learn from these errors. According to Richards (2002), errors play the role of enabling the teacher to discover, identify and analyse learners' mistakes as well as designing the appropriate methods for solving them. Again, errors are very important to the learner. This to Richards (2002) serves as a tool through which the learner discovers the rules of the target language which could not be understood earlier and with time, these learners will be able to identify and correct their errors. Again, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) suggest three significance of learner errors. (1) They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered; (2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and (3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

5.3 Pedagogical implications

This study has pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of English Language. When students are aided to correct their errors, they become more accurate in using the second language L2. Brown (2006) recommends that error correction can be very helpful in L2 learning. Since consistent practice leads to perfection, teachers should design learning tasks that encourage practice of forms and structures learnt. This can be done through role-play, drama, conversation, and peer-teaching. Teachers should also provide pupils with reading materials about things in their immediate environment to help them to read both at home and in school. The content of the reading material should communicate relevantly to the learners at their level. This will enable them enjoy the reading and as they read a lot, writing becomes easier and enjoyable because they will have knowledge on concord and enough vocabulary to express themselves. Teachers should also create opportunities for students to practice orally in the target language to make them efficient in the language. This can be done through self-talk and simulated conversation with peers. Their concord usage can also be improved by encouraging them to practice the rules on concord both in school and at home. With this, their knowledge on concord awareness will be improved to help limit errors in both their written and oral works.

A conducive language learning environment, if created, will enable even the timid child in the class to freely use the language. The researcher believes that with persistent practice through dramatization and peer interaction, the students will master the rules of the language to aid curb the error occurrences in their writings. Again, language lessons should be learner-centered so that the learners will be actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Hence, teachers should facilitate the teaching and learning process with all activities centered on the learners' interest. The teaching and learning process should be made exciting and interesting. This could be

achieved when the teacher adopts innovative ways in order to devise effective teaching and learning activities for learners to practice. Most significantly, the teacher must be abreast with knowledge of the subject matter as well as the techniques to make him/her proficient and a good model of the target language to learners. This would in turn help him/her to teach the learners the phonological, morphological, syntactic and the semantic rules pertaining to the language.

Furthermore, teachers should have an in-depth understanding of the first language L1 structure of their learners to be able to identify the sources of their errors in order to provide the required assistance to these learners where necessary. This way, they will aid minimize such errors. Additionally, the English Language syllabus only spells out topics but does not suggest how these topics can be effectively taught. Although there are handbooks, they do not provide enough information for effective teaching. The researcher suggests that the syllabus should include a variety of child-centered approaches to guide the teacher to teach learners based on their learning abilities. The syllabus should also be designed with its corresponding textbooks to enable teachers get appropriate materials for learners. Finally, information in the textbooks should also match the topics in the syllabus.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study examined the concord errors the students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School make in their writings. Researchers may also look at other categories of errors other than those found in the present study. Future research may focus on the effect of phonological deficiency on pupils' reading. Again, researchers may investigate how errors in the writing of the second language L2 of second language L2 learners are corrected by both teachers and learners in the classroom. The researcher also suggests

that this study could be extended to other schools in the Akatsi South District of the Volta Region, with an increase in the number of participants.

5.5 Conclusion

The study aimed at analyzing the concord errors made by Forms 2 and 3 students of Akatsi No. 1 Junior High School. The errors identified were subject-verb concord errors, determiner-noun concord errors, coordinated subject concord errors, noun-pronoun concord errors, inverted subject concord errors, verb-verb concord errors and constructions with more than one concord errors. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that language teachers are given adequate training on appropriate language teaching approaches for all levels to make them effective and efficient in the class they are assigned. This will enable them to help their students become proficient in the target language. As this study adds to existing knowledge on learners' concord errors, it is envisioned that more research is conducted on other linguistic aspects in the classroom.

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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participants: Would you kindly respond to this questionnaire which forms part of my research project? RESEARCH TOPIC: An analysis of students' concord errors: A case study of Akatsi No.1 Junior High School, Akatsi.

Instructions to respondents: Please read very carefully through each item, and respond honestly to all the questions below. Tick the options that best relate to you and your opinion with a \surd .

SECTION A: Personal information

1.1 Gender: Male Female

1.2 Age range

10 – 12 13 – 16 17 - 20

1.3 Form / Class

JHS 1 JHS 2 JHS 3

1.4 Number of years in your current class

1 year 2 years 3 years

SECTION B:

2.1 The study of English is essential in your life after school

Agree Neutral Disagree

2.2 English language cannot be acquired without learning it simply because is used everywhere.

Agree Neutral Disagree

2.3 English lessons are not important because English language is used in almost all subject.

Agree Neutral Disagree

2.4 Learning English language is difficult and boring because it is composed of many aspects.

Agree Neutral Disagree

2.5 Students do not understand concord lessons when they are taught.

Agree Neutral Disagree

SECTION C

3.1 Teachers hardly teach concord lessons during English periods.

Agree Neutral Disagree

3.2. English teachers attend classes regularly

Agree Neutral Disagree

