

# **UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

***A STUDY OF CONCORD IN ENGLISH AMONG  
STUDENTS OF ISLAMIC SENIOR HIGH, WA AND WA  
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL***



**JUSTINE BAKUURO**

**AUGUST, 2015.**

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The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central sunburst or starburst design in red and white, surrounded by a blue ring. The text "UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA" is written in a circular path around the emblem.

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**A DISSERTATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION,  
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OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF THE MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY  
(ENGLISH) DEGREE.**

**AUGUST, 2015.**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **BAKUURO JUSTINE**, hereby declare that apart from the references to other people's works which have been duly acknowledged, this research is the result of my own effort and that it has neither in whole nor in part been presented elsewhere.

**Student's Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....



### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this research was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of research laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

**Supervisor's Name:** **DR. PAUL NAAH YEMEH**

**Supervisor's Signature:**.....

**Date:**.....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I profoundly pay homage to He that giveth my unworthy self the gift of knowledge to pursue this course. It is He who also granted me good health and the needed resources to complete this course. Thank you, ever-merciful Father in Heaven.

I am equally heavily indebted to my caring, inspiring and hardworking supervisor, Dr. Paul Naah Yemeh, who saw to the effective and timely completion of this work. Doc, your invaluable contributions to this work are very much appreciated. May the good Lord bless you abundantly and give you long life!

To the workers in the Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba, I say “kudos” for the warm reception you offered and continue to offer me each time I come there for whatever assistance. Your affable nature is unmatched and your words of encouragement to me would never be forgotten. Dr. Armah Abrafi (H.O.D), auntie Lizzy, auntie Pearl, sister Dzidzorm and all others present, I say thank you, thank you and thank you very much. May the Good Lord, the great rewarder of kindness, grant you all your hearts’ desires.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late father, Chrysantus Bakuuro, whose tireless efforts in preparing me for life have seen me this far. Dad, may the Good Lord keep your humble soul in restful eternity. I further dedicate it to my caring mother, Janet. I dedicate it also to my lovely wife and children: Madam Mercy, Callistus, Cadjetan and Catherine.



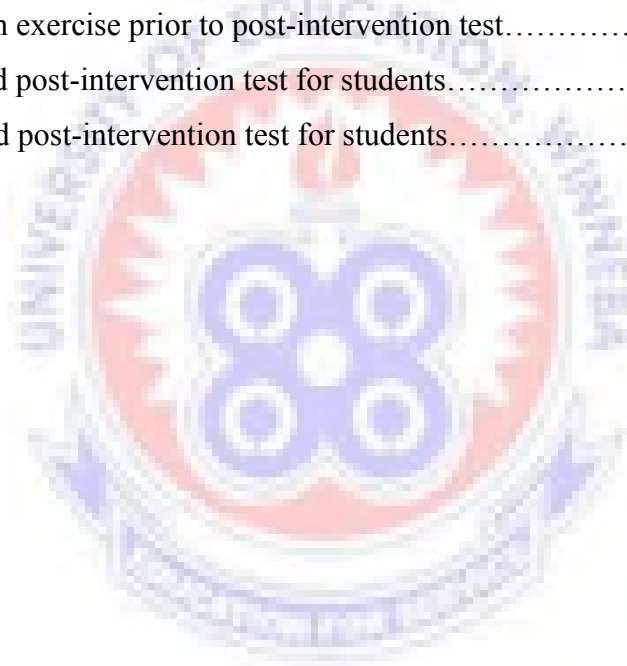
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## ABSTRACT

The major problem investigated in this study is the difficulties senior high school two students of Islamic and Wa senior high schools encounter in the use of concord in English grammar. The purpose of the study was to identify these concord learning challenges, find out why those challenges exist and find appropriate ways to help the students. The instruments used to collect data were intervention tests. The research design included pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention. The study discovered that most of the students could not apply the rules of concord correctly. They had very serious problems with subject-verb concord. Most students applied concord rules correctly to a very large extent after they were taken through the rules guiding concord in the intervention procedure. In conclusion, this research has proved that an intervention procedure is very important in assisting students to overcome their concord learning challenges.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Without grammar, English-and all other languages-would be gibberish. Grammar- the art of writing and speaking correctly by adhering to usage standards and rules- allows people to communicate.

Without common form and structure and left to their own devices, people would not understand each other's word order or sentence construction. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the prescriptive approach to grammar, in which rules had to be memorized and sentences parsed, has been replaced with a descriptive approach, in which analysis and observation are key concepts of language change and development. When learning a foreign language, it is imperative to study the grammar to understand how it is structured, that is, whether it is generally descriptive or prescriptive by nature. In concord analysis, rules are clearly spelled out and grammatical accuracy is measured by ones adherence to these rules (prescriptive grammar).

This study sought to dig deep into the problems that learners of concord in English come face to face with in their academic exploration. The study further questioned why these learning challenges exist and winded up on feasible measures to reduce, if not eliminate, these challenges.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Language, as a tool for communication, is as old as time itself. From the stone age era till date, man has made conscious efforts at governing language by setting standards or rules which would define accuracy in language use. Without conforming to rules,

the primary function of language as a tool for communication may be compromised since meaning can be changed merely by the addition or omission of even just a little element in a grammatical structure. It is, thus, imperative for the language user to aim at bettering his/her language by following prescribed rules.

The purification or betterment of a language largely depends on the efficient and careful enactment of its rules of grammar. By the bettering of a language, one understands little else than the extensive teaching of its just forms, according to analogy and the general custom of the most accurate writers. This teaching however, may well embrace also, or be combined with, an exposition of the various forms of *false grammar* by which inaccurate writers have corrupted, if not the language itself, at least their own style in it. It is only in cases susceptible of a rule, that any writer can be judged deficient. One can censure no man for differing from him, till he can show him a principle which he ought to follow. The rules in English grammar must, thus, be observed if we are to avoid having our students grope in the dark regarding grammar and usage or holding them to ransom for wrong usage. Rule observation in English Grammar underscores the primary aim of the subject *concord* which bewitches many students of a second language, including those of the Queen's Language.

Grammar plays a central role in the use of every language. The English Language, just like any other language, is crafted to a large extent, on grammatical rules and guidelines. Hardly can one make a correct statement in English without the interplay of one grammatical rule or the other. Many students, especially those who learn English as a second language (L<sub>2</sub>), are mostly caught in the web of these rules. Concord, unarguably, plays a major role in the right application of grammatical rules without which one would be lost in speaking good or acceptable English. A great

percentage of the errors found in our students' essays are concord-related. Basically, a good English student must be one who has a good grasp of concord. Despite the frantic efforts and energies that educators, particularly English educators, have invested into putting students right on the path of concord and English Grammar for that matter, much has not been achieved in this endeavor. English language teachers should have kept this problem at bay but the problem still persists, if not in an even higher dimension. Also, the presence of sophisticated learning avenues such as language laboratories and censored recordings of native speakers among others as well as the comparatively high percentage of speakers and users of the English language the world over today, do not seem to provide any respite in checking this grammatical deficiency.

In Ghana, English is used as an official language and the medium of instruction in our schools from the upper primary level to all higher levels. Sey (1973 p.8) says, "A single grammatical error in the speech of a public speaker, even if it is immediately corrected, is an almost indelible stigma on his public image". The need to study English is, therefore, crucial for students as well as sectors of the population since it is the main medium of instruction for official work and international communication. English language at the senior high school (SHS) level is to give students the confidence as they communicate in the language. Students at the senior high school level are to study some essential rules governing the use of English language.

In fact, the general aims of teaching English as a subject at the senior high school level, according to the Ministry of Education Teaching Syllabus for English (Senior High School), September 2007, include among others to:

1. Reinforce language skills and competence acquired at the Junior high school level.
2. Develop further, the language skills and competence which were acquired at the Junior High School Level.
3. Improve the communicative competence of the students and give them confidence to communicate.
4. Raise students' level of proficiency in English usage and their ability to communicate with other users of English.
5. Enable all Senior High School products deal effectively with the accumulated knowledge of their chosen fields and be able to communicate such knowledge through the speaking and writing of English.

It is almost impossible to have our senior high school students, of today in particular, compose a paragraph of their own "safely" without any grammatical error, specifically in the area of concord. Minor errors are constantly repeated and with their widespread nature, they appear to be correct in the eyes of learners. It is undoubtedly the responsibility of language purists to get our large chunk of students today, who are consumed by this "calamity," out of this language mess. As Broughton et al (1968) put it: "Certainly, repeated errors become confirmed and unless the learner is made aware of them, he cannot learn from them." Our failure to identify the causes of this menace and feverishly find antidotes to them will stagnate the growth of English grammar among students. Surely, the fact is undeniable that language can be learnt without errors as Nelson (1964) puts it: "It is just as unrealistic to reckon on language learning without errors as to reckon on existence without sin. Similarly, according to Corder (1969), "Language learning is a creative goal-oriented, developmental process....errors are, therefore, unavoidable". However, it is equally a fact that the

language learner can rise above grammatical errors if a number of critical factors are observed.

According to Lord (2011), a well-known Scottish Enlightenment Philosopher, the standard of taste, both in arts and in manners, is “The common sense of mankind.” This means that man’s determination of good or bad depends on man’s strict adherence to rules and norms found to be useful to him. The poor nature in which students tackle problems relating to English grammar in general and the rules of concord in particular, gives cause for worry. Our students’ neglect or inappropriate use of grammatical rules in the English language could be called to question since it will be an obvious departure from the norm as expatiated by Brown (2004) and Lord (2011). For us to maintain the age-old purity of the Queen’s language, we must seek, assiduously, to address some of the drawbacks that confront learners, especially about the grammar of it, which in the opinion of Lord, will pass for the English grammarian’s application of common sense.

Campbell (2006) indicates: “In what regards the laws of grammatical purity, violation is much more conspicuous than the observance.” The non-adherence of students to rules, especially second language (L<sub>2</sub>) students of English, remains a long-standing challenge to English writers and educators who tirelessly work for the development and sanctity of the language.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Researchers have debated whether grammar should be taught in the classroom and students, for their part, have generally looked upon grammar instruction as a necessary evil at best and an avoidable burden at worse.



Concord, a central aspect of English grammar, has become very problematic among the students of today in general and the senior high school students in particular.

Generally, the subject “concord” is categorized into four thematic areas under which all issues relating to concord in English fall. These four thematic areas include subject-verb, verb-verb, noun-pronoun and point of time past-verb concord. Students are unable to match the appropriate verbs with their subjects in terms of number. Just imagine a Senior High School (S.H.S) two student making a statement such as:

*The students **knows** their rights.*

This is a gross violation of the rules of English grammatical concord. Among other violations of concord rules, the researcher in his interaction with English students (as he teaches English language) observed the following:

1. *I **does** all my homework, sir!*
2. *Two thousand cedis **are** not enough for me.*
3. *Each of us **have** a red pen.*

This is exactly the situation among our senior high school students today. It is very worrisome, given that the English language is the springboard on which all other subjects can be learnt. It is the official language of instruction in Ghana and if students fail to grasp its rudiments such as concord, then one would be right to conclude that the entire educational system is in jeopardy.

Indeed, this messy situation has also been observed by Widdowson (1990). He observed that students at the senior high level in particular commit concord errors across all the four key dimensions of concord: Subject – Verb, Verb – Verb, Noun – Pronoun and Point – of – time – past – Verb concord. He adds that these errors range

from proximity to grammatical concord, pronoun and its antecedent to headword identification in complex noun phrases, the s–inflection to demonstrative pronouns, adjectives as headwords to two titles for one person and so on.

A learner of the English language must learn the rules with precision so that he or she does not soil his/her image whenever the person expresses himself or herself. These errors do not exclude concord.

According to the 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2001 edition of the Daily Graphic, which carried the caption: “WAEC nails Government, parents for students’ failure in English”, it was reported that WAEC- released studies at the time had traced the poor performance of candidates in English to poor construction and concord errors. The report further reiterates that the poor performance of the candidates in the May/June WASSCE within the period had declined with mass failures recorded in English language. The newspaper therefore went further to reveal an intriguing statistics about students’ poor performance in English language. The statistics indicates that in 2001, of the total number of students who wrote the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in Nigeria, 41.13% failed in English. In the year 2002, the percentage failure was 40.18%.The same thing can be said about the abysmal performance put up by students in external written examinations in Ghana. The English language which is the official language in the country should therefore be properly taught in schools to enable the students to express themselves well in both spoken and written English. One aspect of grammar that not only students, but all users of English, need very much to communicate well and write good English language as their second language is concord. This concord problem manifests itself when the students ask or answer questions, both in and outside the classroom as well as in their writing and speaking. The difficulty of the students in the study and use of

concord is probably as a result of the inability of the students to adequately grasp the rules governing it.

Another confirmation of this problem is the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) (school candidates) May/June 2006 Chief Examiner's Report. In a summary of candidates' weaknesses, the chief examiner for English has the following to say:

*The general performance of the candidates revealed that many of them have still not grasped the rudiments of English Language. The performance of the majority was disappointing.*

They observed among others, the following:

- A. Poor syntactic structures or faulty constructions.
- B. Wrong application of subject-verb and pronoun antecedent agreements.
- C. Use of wrong tenses.

The conclusion drawn from the above revelation attests to the fact that the difficulties students have as regards the study and use of concord are, undeniably, a contributory factor to the poor performance in core English Language at the senior high school level in general. It is against this background that this researcher has set out to investigate the difficulties faced by students as far as the study and use of concord are concerned at the senior high school level with specific reference to Wa Senior High school and Islamic Senior High, both in the Upper West region of Ghana.

This mess in English Grammar, which many learners especially those of Senior High School, are battling with is what the researcher sets out to investigate. As has been discussed above, various authorities, including the West African Examinations council (WAEC), have all identified concord as a major problem confronting students of the senior high in particular and all other levels in general.

Though the findings of these authorities are general in nature, they reflect the exact situation in our schools. Performance of students in the study schools in this work have been abysmal over the years and the researcher wants to investigate the exact problems, find out the underlying causes and find the way forward.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study basically attempted to find out why students encounter difficulties in studying concord which is an integral part of English grammar. It further sought to discover how these difficulties encountered by students could be remedied. Available literature under review in this work points out that students encounter a myriad of challenges in studying concord and researchers have suggested antidotes to these challenges. There are, however, many types of difficulties that students encounter in studying concord and there are many more effective and feasible ways by which students can be helped out of the situation. It is in this context that the present study was undertaken to capture valuable insights into how students of concord could be salvaged from these difficulties. This study also aimed to add to the knowledge base in the area of concord.

### **1.4 Research objectives**

The objectives in this research are to find out the following:

- a. the difficulties senior high school students encounter in studying concord in English,
- b. the reasons why senior high school students encounter difficulties in studying concord in English and

- c. feasible ways of helping senior high school students to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study aimed at finding solutions to the following key questions:

1. What difficulties do Senior High School students encounter in studying concord in English?
2. Why do Senior High School students encounter difficulties in studying concord in English?
3. How can Senior High School students be helped to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English?

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

The researcher encountered a lot of problems to get the data for this work. In the first place, the worst of the problems encountered by the researcher was that the students, especially those at Wa Senior High school, did not want to cooperate with the researcher for fear that he needed the information from them for something sinister, as they were of the view that he wanted the information about them to be sent to either the District Education Office or the Regional Education Office since the researcher was working in the Ghana Education Service. He had to show his Student Identification Card which showed that he was a student doing a Master's program at the University of Education, School of Foreign Languages and Communication, before their fears were somehow allayed.

Also, he had financial constraints. There were certain times when the researcher could not go to conduct the exercises as a result of lack of money. Moving

all the way from Winneba to Wa to conduct the intervention tests put a lot of financial constraints on the researcher.

Again, as a teacher of English myself at the senior high level, some biases may have affected the kind of questions and responses I solicited from participants in the study. This is because I already have my own views and experiences regarding the topic “concord”.

Finally, using students who predominantly belong to the Dagaare/Waali language grouping because the two schools are situated in Wa, may not have exposed the inter-language variety of concord problems among students. It is possible that L1-induced concord errors may vary from one language to another and so if one of the schools used in this study was to be dominated by a completely different language grouping, e.g Fanti, these variations could have shown in the findings.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

This study centered on one distinct class of respondents-students in senior high school. Concord is a topic under core English language and so all senior high school students learn concord. One hundred and forty (140) form two students of both Wa Senior High School and Islamic Senior High, Wa, were given a total of 150 written grammar exercises from where concord errors were identified and analysed.

The sample size of one hundred and forty (140) for students was deemed appropriate as the written grammar exercises of these students conveniently unveiled the concord complexities which kill “The English in our students”. Apart from the fact that the information from them was sufficient for this study, the time constraints did not allow for a bigger sample size if analysis was to be thorough.

Concord is learnt at almost every stage of the English student's academic ladder. Unarguably, the Senior High School level is the most crucial and critical as far as one's progression or otherwise in the academic field is concerned in Ghana. This informed the researcher's choice of Senior High School two students who are the "mid-baked men" of knowledge at the Senior High level and not any other class of learners. This study was by nature qualitative.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The review of literature showed that active students of the English language are caught up in the web of grammatical concord regarding the mastery and appropriate enactment of its rules and terminologies.

Admittedly, a wide range of difficulties come the way of the concord learner and identifying such difficulties for learners and teachers alike to be consciously aware of their ways would help them (teachers and students) find ways of overcoming them for effective grammar learning and instruction.

Admittedly, there has been some investigation of the difficulties faced by students in the area of English concord. However, students may face diverse challenges in this area for different reasons and there may be many more different remedial strategies to arrest this situation. For instance, some teachers of grammar employ theoretically recommended methods without necessarily taking into account they and their learners' potential difficulties. Teachers may not be conscious of difficulties which are serious and may thus hinder students' learning of English grammar and do not choose the method of instruction that would pose fewer difficulties and problems to their learners.

It is in this context that the present study was undertaken to capture valuable insights into how the difficulties students of concord in English grammar encounter and how they could be helped out of these difficulties. Teachers of English grammar, by this study, are furnished with the reasons for the difficulties students encounter which will serve as the benchmark for effective teaching and learning.

The study also primarily aimed to add to the stock of knowledge in the field of concord.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into five (5) chapters. Chapter One was the Introduction to the study whilst Chapter Two discussed Literature Review. Chapter Three looked at the Methodology for this research and Chapter Four contained the Discussion of Research Findings. Finally, the Summary and Recommendations of the study came under Chapter Five.

### **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

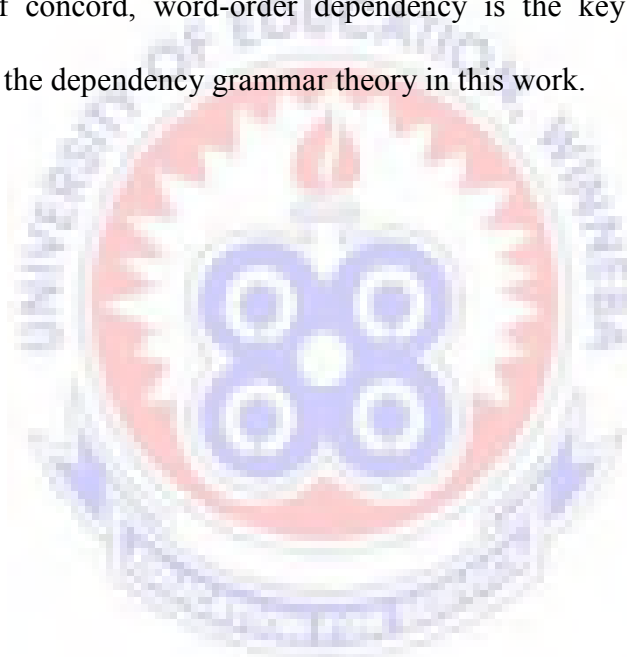
By the nature of the subject concord, which is a rule-governed enclave within the terrain of English grammar, one would easily and rightly so, conclude that the topic belongs to the traditional grammar theory in which language is prescriptive rather than descriptive as early on indicated. With the operations of the rules of concord, it is abundantly obvious that concord depends on the Dependency Grammar Theory.

Beason (2005) indicates that, “Concord is prescriptive by nature as its rules maintain the correct dependency of lexis to make grammatical sense”.



The dependency grammar theory, dating back to the middle-ages and still useful today, starts from the premise that words “depend” on each other for the sentence to make sense. The structure of a language is determined by looking at the relationship between a primary word and its dependents. This theory of grammar competency works very well with German/Dutch and English, which allow for word order mobility.

Relatedly, concord is concerned with the rightful combination of lexis or words in a sentence to make both social and grammatical sense. Across the four dimensions of concord, word-order dependency is the key thing and hence, the application of the dependency grammar theory in this work.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The English teacher is often portrayed as an “unattractive grammar monger whose only pleasure in life is to point out the faults of others” (Baron, 1982, p. 226). For the most part within the classroom, any mention of grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror. Many teachers have tried to make grammar teaching a non-threatening, imaginative and useful activity within the English curriculum.

Previous studies on students’ and teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of grammar instruction in the context of language teaching and learning suggest a disparity between students and teachers. While students favor formal and explicit grammar instruction and error correction, teachers favor communicative activities with less conscious focus on grammar (e.g., Brindley 1984; Kumaravadivelu 1991; Leki 1995; Schultz 1996, 2001; Spratt 1999).

#### 2.1 Attitudes towards Grammar Instruction

According to the Traditional Grammar Theory, in teaching grammar, three areas have to be considered: *grammar as rules*, *grammar as form* and *grammar as resource*. For many L2 learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and having an intellectual knowledge of grammar. Teachers often believe that this will provide the generative basis on which learners can build their knowledge and will be able to use the language eventually. For them, prescribed rules give a kind of security.

A better approach is perhaps to see grammar as an aspect made of many resources that we have in language which helps us to communicate. We should see

how grammar relates to what we want to say or write and how we expect others to interpret what our language use is and its focus.

According to Widdowson (1990: 86), "... grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and a purely lexical categorization of reality." Given that many learners – and teachers – tend to view grammar as a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use – „a linguistic straitjacket“ in Larsen-Freeman’s words (2002: 103) – the conception of grammar as something that liberates rather than represses is worth investigating.

According to Morelli (2003), students perceived themselves as having a better attitude towards grammar instruction in context, while performing slightly better after having experienced the traditional grammar instruction. Elkilic and Akca (2008) reported generally positive attitudes of students studying English grammar at a private primary English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom towards studying grammar. In particular, however, a little over 50% of their subjects claimed to enjoy grammar very much and only about 10% reported finding some difficulty in learning and remembering grammar.

## **2.2 Student Expectations on Grammar Instruction**

Student expectations of traditional, explicit grammar teaching have been confirmed by many teachers. Burgess and Etherington (2002:40-44) also conclude that teachers believe that explicit teaching of grammar is favored by their students because of expectations and feeling of insecurity.

Since the 1970s, attention has shifted from ways of teaching grammar which has been seen to be a powerful undermining and demotivating force among L2

learners. In terms of motivation and learner success with languages, grammar has been seen to be a problem and to stand in the way of helping learners to communicate fluently. The rules of grammar are taught in the classroom. They may know the rules perfectly, but are incapable of applying them in their own use of the language. Teachers' recognition of this process (i.e., of transferring declarative knowledge about grammar into procedural knowledge) as a problem for many of their students has been reported by Burgess and Etherington (2002:442). Haudeck (1996) has reported that many learners have difficulty in internalizing grammar rules, although these have been taught intensively (1996, cited in European Commission, 2006).

### **2.3 The use of Grammatical Terminology**

Metalinguistic discussion (i.e, the use of grammatical terminology to talk about language) is seen by Stern (1992:327) as one of the characteristics of explicit grammar teaching. According to Burgess and Etherington (2002: 444), teachers believe that their students see grammatical terminology as useful and that its use does not present a particular difficulty for students.

Descriptive grammarians acknowledge the fact that language is dynamic and its use is constantly changing, although not in major ways, the problem for ESL/EFL-English as Second Language/English as Foreign Language- learners, however, is that there is a time-lag between the awareness of such changes and their acceptance as the proper use of the language according to Lester (2005).

As Morelli (2003:33-34) has observed, "Grammar can be taught traditionally or contextually, but student perception should be considered by teachers in the decision-making process. Students need to feel confident that educators have met their

needs... and educators should be willing to consider the attitudes and perceptions of students when making decisions about how to teach grammar.”

## 2.4 Concord

“Concord” or “agreement,” according to Aronoff and Fudeman (2010), “Occurs when one element in a sentence takes on the morphosyntactic features of another element.” In basic terms, concord refers to agreement between two or more words in a sentence. English grammatical concord is very important for correct English usage.

Lutrin and Pincus (2004) define concord as that in which the words in a sentence must match or agree with one another.

Concord, according to Duskova (1977) is agreement in gender, case, number or person between different words that share a reference.

Tuurosong(2012) defines concord (subject–verb) as a grammatical relationship in which a predicate/verb must agree with the subject in number and person. By number, he means the relationship between the speaker and what he/she is speaking about. The term “agreement” according to him is used to describe the type of grammatical changes that take place between the subject of a sentence and its verb. He adds that it has to do with the “cordial” relationship that must exist between the subject and the main verb or the first element of the verb phrase. Tuurosong’s definition is aspect–specific of concord, that is subject and verb concord.

Yankson (1994), sees concord as the necessary agreement/coherence needed in a sentence/statement to yield a flawless grammatical structure. As to what informs this unfortunate attitude of non-adherence to the rules of concord on the part of both native and non-native students, one has to probe through research.

## 2.5 Aspects of Concord and their Underlying Principles

The term *concord* basically embodies any sort of grammatical agreement that occurs in a correct grammar construction. By this yardstick, one may find several forms of agreement that occur in various grammatical structures without which agreement such structures would have lost their grammaticalness. Readily, the type of concord that comes to mind for many English users is that of subject- verb. Perhaps, this is attributable to the fact that it is the broadest and most intricate of all the aspects of concord.

Many scholars have generally agreed on four primary dimensions of this topic as per the grammar of English language, with subject-verb concord always leading the discussion. The forms of concord include: Subject-Verb, Noun- Pronoun, Verb-Verb and Point of time past-verb. Of these four parts, there are nineteen sub-aspects. The nineteen sub aspects of these four main aspects include:

### a) Subject – Verb Concord

According to Yankson (1994),subject-verb concord has thirteen sub-aspects as follows: - Grammatical concord - Proximity concord - Headword Identification in complex Noun phrases - The “s”-Inflection - There + verb +Noun phrase - Semi – conjunctions/Intervening expressions - Two titles for one subject - Adjectives as Headwords - The Indefinite pronouns “All” and “some” - Intervening prepositional phrases - Plural Inflectional concord - Other Indefinite pronouns (Apart from “all” and “some”) -Notional concord

**b) Verb – Verb concord**

- Chain of verbs in one construction

**c) Noun – pronoun concord**

- Nouns and their corresponding pronouns - The demonstrative pronouns: This /These/ that and those. - Pronoun and its antecedent concord

**d) Point of time past – verb concord**

- Adjuncts referring to time past

As early on indicated, the works of many English grammar scholars on grammatical concord such as Yankson (1994), Tuurosong (2012), Nelson (1964), Heid, Dulay and Burt (1997), Richards (1976), Duskova (1977), Corder (1969), Broughton et al (1968), Latin (1996), Labov and William (1999), Cambell (2006) and Lutrin and Pincus (2004), Litty (2011), Anto (2004), Baidoo (2000) among other scholars, have all basically identified these four as the aspects of concord in English grammar. The basic concept behind each of the aspects of concord according to the above cited scholars are explained briefly in the ensuing paragraphs.

Subject- Verb concord operates under the principle that singular verbs should go with singular subjects whilst plural verbs should go with plural subjects. This type of concord has in it, some intricacies which many a student has fallen victim to in one way or the other. These intricacies lie in six identified sources of errors: typical development errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors, memory limitation concord errors, plural inflectional concord errors and the inability to identify noun headwords.

Noun-Pronoun agreement on the other hand ensures that the appropriate pronoun should be used to replace a noun, both in terms of number and gender.

*“My niece has lost his pen”* and *“Students don’t take his studies seriously”*, are thus inaccurate grammatically because there is no concord between “My niece” and “his” in the first sentence and “Students” and “his” in the second sentence as gender and number are disregarded.

Verb-Verb concord is guided by the principle that when a number of verbs (two or more) are found in a construction, they should agree in terms of tense (present or past). Where there is tense disagreement, the reader or listener is confused about time in an expression.

*She came and take the gun and shoot herself*, is for instance wrong because we are left in the dark as to whether the actions conveyed in here are habitual or not.

Finally, the rule behind Point of time past-Verb concord is that a point of time past element (e.g, yesterday, in those days, that morning, etc) must always take on past tense verbs only. *I sleep late last night* is thus incorrect since there is no agreement between “sleep”, the verb and “last night” the point-of-time-past element.

## **2.6 Difficulties of Studying Concord**

According to McGraw (1971), the agreement of a verb with its subject in a sentence is a major headache for most English students. This, he opines, stems from the fact that students basically have a difficulty identifying and classifying subjects in sentences. Whilst a singular subject could be taken for a plural one and vice versa, some students simply cannot tell the specific “right” subjects in their sentences for the



right verbs to be chosen to agree with them. He cited a few cases where students in a high school committed concord errors as follows;

1. *Two thousand, five hundred dollars are needed for the project*, instead of replacing the verb “are” with “is”.
2. *The government, as well as citizens, do not seek the growth of the country*, instead of using the verb “does” in place of “do”.

On his part, Lester (2005) mentions that many learners of English as a second language get themselves confused by the grammatical rules that pertain in their mother tongue. Rules of the mother tongue ( $L_1$ ) often contradict those of their second language ( $L_2$ ), thus propelling learners to commit concord errors unconsciously. Pointing out a few cases in his research, he indicates that in some languages, a singular verb for instance can partner both a plural and a singular subject in a sentence, thus rendering the principle of subject number in concord worthless. Similarly, Yankson (1994) draws a very clear line of difference between concord as pertains in some local Ghanaian languages and concord in English.

He cited a few examples in his native Fanti Language. These differences draw the English student back in his study of concord as he is often tempted to apply rules of his  $L_1$ . He identifies the wrong use of the female pronoun “she” and the male pronoun “he” as common examples of this problem of  $L_1$  interference. Beason (2005), another English grammarian, points out the fact that most students of English grammar fall short in their application of the rules of concord due to the limitations that go with some of the rules. Students, he argues, are left at the crossroads when they are faced with exceptions to some fundamental rules governing concord. Among other exceptions, he identifies the first person singular “I” which takes plural verbs

though a singular subject and the second person plural or singular “You” which takes plural verbs regardless of its subject number in a sentence.

Another renowned English grammar writer, Latin (1996), underscores the fact that problems of concord among students occur basically due to the inability of students to note the dynamism of verbs as pertains in verb – verb concord, one of the aspects of this topic. Verbs must agree with one another where they occur in a chain or move with point-of-time-past references in one sentence to avoid confusing the reader or listener about time. In the following simple sentences written by some high school students, Latin points out that many students have failed to recognize the relevance of tense in respect of time:

1. *Jones slept late but wakes up early.*
2. *Last year, Chelsea takes the champions cup.*

In the first sentence, the issue of time is not clear as the speaker combines both present and past tenses. Either the verb “slept” should be made present, that is “sleeps” or the verb “wakes” made past, that is “woke” for there to be agreement between the two verbs, in which case time will be catered for. In the second sentence also, according to Latin, the use of the point of time past reference “Last year” calls for only the past tense form of the verb, hence the verb “takes” ought to be “took” to give way for concord and time definition.

Also, Brown (2004) attributes students’ difficulties in studying grammatical rules to what he calls “false grammar” by which inaccurate writers corrupt the language and their own styles of writing. Thus, authorship shares in this blame. Relatedly, Charles (1999) intimates that, *Nothing comes out of a sack except what is in it*. This means that the teacher of English, whose own competence level is so low, cannot by any means, raise the language level of his pupils or students above his own.

At best, he can only bring them up to his level and even here, his success is dependent on a host of other variables.

Sysoyev (1999) conducted some experimental lessons in order to address L<sub>2</sub> grammar teaching to students through an integrative method which proposes three stages: *Exploration, Explanation and Expression* (EEE). This method is proposed out of the increasing difficulties students are confronted with in their bid to learn what Sysoyev calls “real language,” that is grammar. By exploration, the student is guided to find patterns and formulate rules after being provided with sentences which illustrate such rules. At the explanation stage, the student is challenged to summarize what his findings are after the exploration. In the final stage, expression stage, the student practises the production of appropriate utterances with others, paying attention to the patterns and grammatical rules discovered during the exploration. This method is Sysoyev’s response to one of the underlying difficulties students encounter in studying grammatical rules which is the form – based or meaning – based approach to teaching grammar.

Thrush (2001) developed a study to deal with significant problems involved in writing for international audiences including non – native speakers of English. In order to address these problems and the somewhat low rate of English speakers in some fields, a number of systems were developed, namely: Plain English, Simplified English and Controlled language. These systems are geared, in her own words, “To produce English that is easily readable, accessible and usable.” Of the three systems, controlled language targeted the accurate application of grammatical rules in the English language to enhance effective communication. She explains that these systems are based on the manner in which readers process texts, and consequently they have the tendency to concentrate on and apply similar rules of writing. Through

Thrush's work, it is revealed that wrong grammatical rules in written texts are often imbibed by readers or learners, exposing them to wrong grammatical usage.

Master (1991) developed a study concerning the use of active verbs with inanimate subjects since this is a source of difficulty in writing for students whose L<sub>1</sub> are Asian languages. He stated that although active verbs with "instrumental or inanimate subjects" are widely used in English, particularly in scientific prose, Japanese students, for example, find this structure unacceptable. Master's study reveals that an active verb with an inanimate subject is possible in English only when the subject has an "inherent function" represented by the verb. He indicated that the inherent function of a thermometer, for instance is to measure, of a graph to show, of a law to state, and so on.

Through the analysis of subject – verb pairs from *Science News*, the author provides several examples of students' errors in the use of the passive in place of the active voice, which suggest that "writers may have an interlanguage rule requiring active verbs to have inanimate subjects" in the first case and in the second case, despite being aware of the fact that in English inanimate subjects can have an active verb, they over-generalize the rule and this could be due to the uncertainty as regards which verbs the rule can apply to. Hence, the accepted use of passive and active verbs as well as inanimate subjects in sentences poses yet another challenge, especially to L<sub>2</sub> learners of concord.

Thurman and Larry (2003), argue that students' difficulties in learning concord rules emanate primarily from lack of "repetition" or constant practice which in educational circles, is said to be the *mother* of learning. They believe that if grammatical rules are to stick and stay with the learner, the learner must make a conscious effort to put them to use regularly. He admits that the rules of concord are

quite numerous and the student needs time and practice to master them. Labov (2009) and William (2009) equally share in this view.

Needless to say from the works of the foregoing writers and researchers, there really exists a problem – Why students encounter difficulties in studying Concord in English. This work sought to dig deeper into this reality and map out more feasible interventions to check it.

## **2.7 English Grammatical Concord in Perspective**

Almost always when the West African Examination Council (WAEC) results, both Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results are released, English is one of the subjects that records the greatest number of failures. Human beings all over the world communicate with one another in different languages and there is even a greater need now than before for us to be more serious as far as English Language is concerned. It is against this background that the poor performance of students in this area has become the greatest worry to parents, teachers, and opinion leaders, stakeholders and education authorities.

Many scholars have, therefore, written on or talked about grammar in general and concord in particular. Some of these people attempted to define grammar, subject, verb, subject-verb agreement and noun-pronoun/antecedent agreement.

In order that language accomplishes its communication function, both the speaker and the addressee need to share the same signals used in the transmission of the message. Grammar is of great importance in this case, for even in a situation where two people speak the same language, if the speaker sounds ungrammatical, communication is greatly impaired.

Blanche (1981), in explaining concord, states:

*Some words in sentences have matching forms to indicate their grammar relations. This is called agreement. Verbs agree with their subject and pronouns agree with their antecedents.*

The above statements mean that when we construct sentences, we should make sure that our verbs agree with their subjects so that grammatical rules are not broken. Palmer (1994:90) is of the view that “The choice of the verb is determined by the occurrence of the subject”. He goes on to say that, “But if we pair them wrongly, we shall produce sentences which will be immediately recognized as ungrammatical”. What he intends to say is that a plural subject requires a plural verb whereas a singular subject requires a singular verb. A violation of any of these rules is considered therefore ungrammatical.

Palmer’s assertion above that wrong pairing of the verb produces ungrammatical sentences, is supported by Leonard and Laurence (1994). They say, “...these elements (subject and verb) occur in pairs. The subject of a sentence must be paired with a verb to make a complete statement”.

Swain (1980), touching on the subject under discussion, also states that “Verb forms change according to whether the subject is singular or plural or according to whether the subject is first, second or third person”. It can be realized from the above quotation that the choice of the main verb present tense is determined basically by the subject and vice versa.

Baidoo (2000:497) also supports this idea of relationship between the subject and the verb making a complete grammatical structure by saying:

*The predicate/verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, we mean the subject can be singular or plural.*

According to Baidoo (2000), compound, collective and mass nouns are created as singular or plural. In addition to being singular or plural, a subject can also be the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person. He goes on to add that person can be seen as “The relationship between the speaker and what he is speaking about”. From this quotation, we realize that when a speaker speaks about something or himself, it is FIRST PERSON (I/we, me, us,). The person he/she speaks to is the SECOND PERSON which has general meaning of “you”. The person or thing the speaker speaks about is THIRD PERSON. Still talking about agreement, Baidoo (2000) says:

*Where there is an auxiliary, the subject agrees with the auxiliary. Where there is more than one auxiliary, agreement is with the first. The problem we normally have with subjects (i.e. third person subjects) is to establish whether they are singular or plural, so that we can select the appropriate form of the verb for them.*

Talking about pronoun-Antecedent Agreement, he says:

*Pronouns are substitutes which are used in place of nouns to prevent repetition of nouns. If substitutes act in place of nouns, then there is every reason why they should agree with their antecedents so that it will be possible for us to associate them with these nouns in whose place they perform.*

From the above definition of pronouns, it would therefore be ungrammatical and unpleasant in our ears if someone spoke: *Pious told Pious’ sister to bring the books back to Pious for Pious to see the books.* It would be jarring (i.e. unpleasant) in our ears because we would expect the speaker to replace the name (Pious) sometimes with “him” and “his” in the course of that sentence.

Agreement between pronouns and antecedents according to Baidoo (2000) covers;

- Agreement in number
- Agreement in function and case

Yankson (1984) has the following assertion to make:

*The rule for the formation of English subject-verb concord is that a singular subject requires a singular verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb.*

He stresses that the noun-verb agreement is very basic in an English sentence. He goes further to enumerate five main categories of subject-verb (concord) errors as:

- Typical development errors
- Inability to identify noun headword
- Notional concord errors
- Plural inflectional concord errors
- Memory limitation concord errors.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), commenting on concord in English, says “The most important type of concord in English is the concord of number between subject and verb”.

Wiredu (1998) supports this assertion on the concord system ((i.e, subject-verb agreement made by Quirk and Greenbaum by stating that “The most important concord relation in English exists between the subject of a clause and its accompanying verb”. From the above assertion, it is clear that the subject-verb agreement system of a language is very important for one who wants to learn to speak well in the said language, in this case, English language.

MacIver (1986) has the belief that “Concord means agreements or harmony”. Thus in grammar, we apply this word as meaning, perfect agreement between a subject and verb having the same number and person”.

Oluikpe (1981) comments on pronoun/antecedent agreement that “The second rule of agreement states that a pronoun must agree in number, gender and case with its antecedent”. He adds further that this rule implies that:



- i) A pronoun replacing a noun must have the same number as the noun it replaces
- ii) A pronoun replacing a noun must be masculine if the noun is masculine: feminine if the noun is feminine: and neuter if the noun is neuter.
- iii) A subject noun must be replaced by a subject pronoun: an objective noun is replaced by an objective pronoun.

Glatthorn and Rosen (1990) make a concise summary of concord by saying that: “Violating concord rules is synonymous to a goat wearing a shirt, a part of trousers and sun glasses”.

Their analogy points out the undeniable fact that violating concord rules can be extremely serious and humorous. This means that the effect of such a violation of concord rules is not only confusing but also makes our understanding of such ungrammatical sentences very difficult. Brown (1987) defines concord as “The grammatical relationship between a subject and a verb or pronoun and its verb, or demonstrative adjective and the word it modifies”. The above is an indication that the subject of a sentence can also be a pronoun and not necessarily a noun. The demonstrative adjectives or pronouns *this*, *that*, *these* and *those* indicate whether the noun it is referring to is a singular or a plural noun. Also, a demonstrative adjective shows whether the noun it is referring to is far or near to the speaker. The demonstrative adjective is followed by the noun that is being referred to always and therefore, there is the need for an agreement between the demonstrative adjective and the noun. In the expression, “This boy is my son.” The subject is “This boy”. There is concord (i.e, agreement) because “This” is singular and “boy” is equally singular.

According to Pooley (1996), the clash of rule versus usage is strikingly apparent in the matter of concord in number between the subject and the verb in

idiomatic English construction. He went on to add that despite several centuries of rule-making and school teaching in which formal concord has always been vigorously imposed, the free idiom of English overlaps retraining barriers again and again to produce construction eminently fitting for exact communication though horrifying to grammarians and logicians.

Hornsby (2006) defines concord as “The fact of having the same number, gender or person”. He further gives its synoptic meaning as agreement. He is, in fact, trying to say that the subject must always agree with the verb in person. What this means is that when the subject is singular, the verb must also be singular. With regards to gender, where the subject is a masculine or feminine pronoun, a feminine pronoun must correspond to a feminine noun and a masculine pronoun must also correspond to a masculine noun.

Ron (2002) agrees that in languages, agreement or concord is a form of cross-reference between different facts of the sentence or phrase. Agreement happens when a word changes form depending on the other words it relates to. One does not for instance, say “You is” in English because “is” cannot be used when “You” is used as the subject. It does not agree with “You”. Here, the grammatical form is “You are”, even though the verb still has the same functions as well as basic meaning.

Swain (1994) says “A common error in academic writing is the use of a wrong form of the verb for its subject”. In other words, a common error is when the verb form chosen does not agree with the subject of the sentence or clause. He went further to state that concord error can affect the clarity of a piece of writing.

Branch (1981) argues that certain words in sentences have matching forms to indicate their grammatical relations. He argues that the sort of grammatical relationship he is referring to is known as agreement. He goes on to add that verbs

always agree with subjects while pronouns also agree with their antecedents. In, for instance “She eats”, the pronoun “She” is the subject and it is a third person singular. The word “eats” on the other hand is a verb. It is also a singular verb so there is an agreement between the subject and the verb because both “she” and “eats” are singular in terms of number.

Pronouns also agree with their antecedents in the sense that when the third persons, i.e, *he, she, it* are used, they must agree with their antecedents. In the sentence “I threw the pens to him and he caught them” “pen” is the antecedent of “them”.

McGraw (2002:215), talking about agreement of subjects and verbs, says: *Number refers to the form of a word that indicates whether it is singular or plural. A verb must agree with its subject in number. Singular subjects indicate one and require singular verbs plural subjects indicate more than one and require plural verbs. With most regular verbs, add „s“ or „es“ to form the singular.*

The above simply means that, it is ungrammatical to use a plural verb with a singular subject and vice versa. It is therefore wrong to construct sentences such as :

- Kofi *go* to school on Mondays
- The man *walk* to church on Sundays
- Kofi and Ama *goes* to school on Mondays
- The men *walks* to church on Sundays.

They are wrong because:

1. Kofi is a singular subject/noun and must go with a singular verb „goes“.
2. The man is a singular subject and requires a singular verb „walks“.
3. Kofi and Ama is a plural subject and requires a plural verb „go“ and
4. The men is a plural subject and does not require a singular verb but a plural verb „walk“

McGraw is rather quick to add that: *An exception to the rule occurs with the pronouns I and you. Both take the plural form of a verb even when you refer to one person. The only exception is be: when I is the subject the verb form is am.*

The above indicates the pronoun *I* and *you* (singular) always require plural verbs.

It is ungrammatical therefore to make them go with singular verbs in sentences. It is wrong therefore to construct sentences such as:

- I *eats* rice once a week.
- I *goes* to school on Mondays.
- You (one person) *eats* “fufu”.
- You (one person) *goes* to school.

Talking on notional concord, Wiredu (1998:112) explains that “It is the agreement between the verb and the subject”. This agreement, to him, “...is based on the speaker’s perceptions”. What Wiredu is trying to say is that English group or collective nouns may take plural or singular verbs depending on the perception of the speaker. The general rule of notional concord is that a plural verb is used if the thought is of the individuals in a group rather than the group as a singular unit and vice versa. The singular words *girl, school, child, station, table, man, pen*, etc are distinguished from the plural versions through their formal differences. For example, *girl* is different from *girls*. We can tell that anytime we see the word *girl*, it is singular while anytime we see the word *girls*, we know it is plural. These formal differences enable singular or plural verb forms to satisfy the concord rules.

There are however certain words which cannot be said to be either singular or plural. Some examples are team, congregation, staff, French, army, clergy, club, Portuguese, committee, company, audience, class, etc. The above words can choose

either a singular verb or a plural verb depending on the context in which they are used.

Yankson (1989:310) shares the same ideas with Wiredu when he says:

*If the group is being considered as a singular individual body, the singular verb will be chosen. However, if the group is being perceived as a collection of individuals, the plural verb is a more likely candidate.*

From the quotations on notional concord, it is however clear that consideration is being given to the action of the individual members of audience, staff, and congregation resulting in the choice of the plural verbs *are*, *have* and *support* respectively in the following sentences.

- The audience *are* tired of watching the film
  - The staff *have* been served
  - The congregation *support* me
- but it is equally correct to say
- The audience *is* tired of watching the film
  - The staff *has* been served
  - The congregation *supports* me.

Yankson (1989:32) sums it up by saying:

*On the whole, the plural is said to be more popular in British speech.*

*The advice to foreign learners is: when in doubt, it is safer to go by grammatical concord which says a singular noun selects a singular verb, a plural noun, a plural verb.*

Qirk and Greenbaum (1973:176) also add their voice to the definition of notional concord defining it as: *Agreement of verb with subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that idea.*

Baidoo (2000) contributes to notional concord as the agreement between the verb and the subject according to perception: that is the idea of numbers rather than the actual display or the presence of a grammatical feature for the idea. What this means is that while we can distinguish between singular and plural forms of the same words, for instance, the plural form of teacher is teachers, with others for example class, crowd, and team it is very difficult to do that.

Defining notional concord, the Online Dictionary of Languages Terminology says it is the type of concord decided by the speaker's idea or perception rather than in grammatical reality. If a speaker for example says "A group of teachers have come", he or she is correct under notional concord. The perception is that, it is singular individuals rather than the grammatically singular group. Notional concord simply means, in deciding whether two parts of speech are in concord or not, one considers the concept of notion that is denoted and formal characteristics of the parts of speech. Another example of notional concord is; "Senior management have been resisting the changes to the company for some years now." Whereas "Senior management" is considered singular, "have been" is plural. This lays emphasis on the fact that the individual senior managers, constituting the group are referred to as singular. The notion is that one of the groups of individuals is acting individually and is therefore plural and the verb is also plural. Notional concord normally deals with collective nouns. McGraw (1993:559), talking about concord with regard to intervening prepositional phrases, says "The subject of a sentence is never the object of a preposition. The verb must agree with the actual subject of the sentence, not with the object of the preposition."

This implies that in “ The colour of the roses pleases me”, the actual subject of the sentence is “colour” and it is singular, “ of the roses” is a prepositional phrase, the verb “pleases” is therefore singular.

From the foregoing discussion, there is no denying the fact that all the authorities are pointing at one major or central theme, AGREEMENT. Agreement is the key word. An agreement between a subject and its accompanying verb or a pronoun and its antecedent. Even the Bible says that “Two people cannot stay or move together unless they agree on something”. The old adage “Birds of a feather flock together” also supports the point made by the bible.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

Among many other issues pertaining to concord discussed in the review of literature above, some highlights in respect of the research questions of this study are worth identifying.

In respect of research question one, difficulties SHS students encounter in studying concord, various authorities emerged with different findings. McGraw-Hill (1971) points out the difficulty of students to identify subjects in sentences as a challenge. Lester (2005), Anto (2004) and Yankson (1994) also saw negative influence of the L1 as one difficulty. Beason (2005) and Litty (2011) identified rule exceptions in concord as one of the challenges too. Latin (1996) saw dynamism of the verb as equally posing a big threat to students, whilst Annan (2000) and Litty (2011) discovered headword identification in noun phrases. Finally, Master (1991) found active verbs with inanimate subjects to be a key impediment on students’ understanding of concord.

With regards to research question two-why SHS students encounter difficulties in studying concord-Thurman & Larry (2003), Labov (2009), William (2009) in their studies discovered lack of practice of concord rules on the part of students as a leading reason whilst Brown (2004) attributed students' woes to "false grammar" by authors who mislead students on the rules guiding concord. Charles (1999) pointed out tutor incompetence as an underlying cause of this menace as his counterpart Palmer (1994) in his research found little attention to teaching the concept "subject" as a major cause. Pooley (1996) also uncovered in his work that the "free idiom of English" which overlaps restraining grammatical rules breeds this concord canker among students. The temptation to transfer L1 grammar to English was equally revealed a study by Anto (2004) as yet another reason for students' concord learning difficulties.

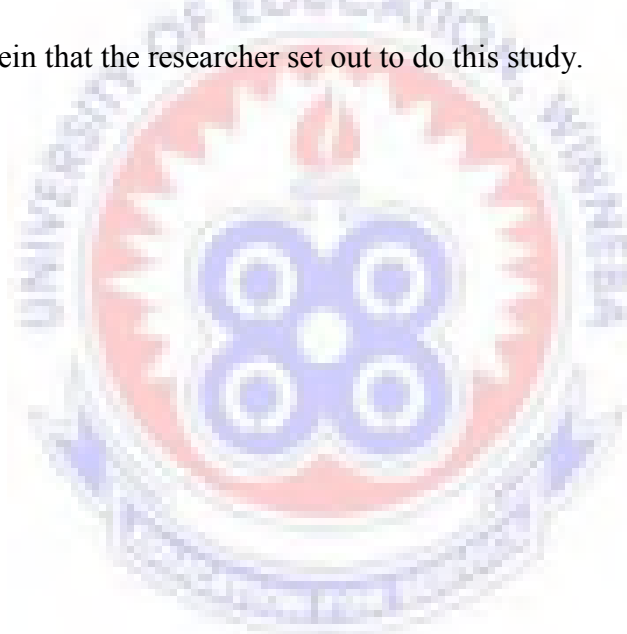
On research question three-ways of helping SHS to overcome their concord learning difficulties-Stern (1992) as well as Burges & Etherington (2002) proposed the use of grammatical terminology in the teaching of English grammar. Swain (1980) and Morelli (2003) in separate studies equally found the use of prescriptive/traditional grammar to teach concord as a way out. Thrush (2001) suggested the use of what she called "systems" ,namely: plain language, simplified English and controlled language; as a feasible way of arresting the situation. And last but not least, Sysoyev (1999) discovered the form/meaning-based approach to teaching grammar as an antidote to overcoming these challenges.

The summary of reviewed literature in this work above points out that students encounter myriad of challenges in studying concord, different reasons account for this and there are various ways of overcoming concord learning challenges. Researchers have suggested antidotes to these challenges. There are, however, many types of



difficulties that students encounter in studying concord, many reasons why students encounter these difficulties and there are many more effective and feasible ways by which students can be helped out of the situation. It is in this context that the present study was undertaken to capture valuable insights into how students of concord could be salvaged from these difficulties.

After reading the works of the various authors, cited and not cited in this work, who studied the subject matter of my topic (concord), I discovered that very little data could be found to address the key objectives of this research. Therefore, it is in an effort to fill this gap of finding many more feasible solutions to the research objectives herein that the researcher set out to do this study.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This segment of the study looked at the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, concord aspects, data collection tools, validity and reliability as well as the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

It therefore looked at the set of methods used by the researcher for the identification and discussion of the problems which accounted for the violation of concord rules by students of Wa Senior High School, Wa and Islamic Senior High school, Wa both in the Upper West region of Ghana. Data was collected both during formal instructional hours and outside the classroom. The methods involved the selection of a sample of one hundred and forty (140) students from both schools in this study. Instruments used for data collection were mainly intervention exercises.

#### 3.1 Research Design

According to Quirk et al (1973), a research design is the framework that outlines the direction and organization of any study. Speaking on the same issue, Wiredu (1996) says that the design of any research describes in detail, all the procedures and methods the researcher employs in his work.

This work can best be described as an action research as it is a deliberate attempt to have a solution to an educational problem. It is a deliberate investigation of a problem. In this study, the purpose is finding solution to a classroom problem. An action research is “The study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of life within it” ( Elliot 1999). This work is an action research design model.

This study is qualitative in nature as it uses research questions and not hypothesis. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), *Qualitative research is one in which information synthesis is the norm rather than testing hypothesis*. They add: *In qualitative research, numbers, tables, charts and diagrams may be involved in the analysis but in so far as the study is premised on research questions and not a hypothesis, the study remains qualitative*.

According to Wheeler & Holloway (1985), *Qualitative research involves deriving information from observation, interviews or verbal interactions and focuses on the meanings and interpretations of the participants*.

On his part, Kahn (2006) sees qualitative research as *A research that seeks to provide answers to carefully outlined research questions without the bias of hypothesis*.

From the views of these scholars on what a qualitative research is, this study is a model of qualitative research. The researcher analyzed the data of answered grammar exercises on concord to arrive at answers to the three research questions in the study. Tables, charts and numbers were involved in the analysis but as far as the analysis of information was the focus of the study to arrive at answers to the research questions and not the testing of a hypothesis, one may rightly conclude that the study is qualitative in nature.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population in any study, according to Olukpe (1981), refers to the participating elements from which data would be collected for the study. Similarly, Schindler (1976) also defines population in research as the *focal participants in a study*.

The researcher focused on the second year students of Wa senior high school and the second year students of Islamic senior high school, Wa. Seventy (70) students, both male and female, from each school were randomly selected from all the classes in form two in both schools. In each class, the researcher countered all students and told them to note their numbers. Then, he asked all bearers of odd numbers to step aside. He sparingly picked either of the two groups in each class, i.e, either the odd number bearers or even number bearers. To maintain fairness, he went on to apply the same procedure to each selected group that had more students than the required ratio per class, i.e, 14 per class for Wa SHS and 18 per class for Islamic SHS. The study, thus, has a sample population of one hundred and forty (140) students. The overall sample population of this study was one hundred and forty (140) people (comprising only students). Being an English tutor himself at Wa Technical Institute, the researcher had a fair idea about the problems of students with regards to concord.

The researcher was greatly motivated by the generally poor performance of students in concord related tasks in grammar exercises and written texts to embark on this study. The choice of year two students is motivated by the fact that they are the middle class of learners at the senior high school level and the outcome of the results in the study can be widely accepted to represent the entirety of senior high school students.

### **3.3 Sample**

According to Oluikpe (1981), a sample in research refers to *the subjects selected for a study*. Distinguishing between population and sample in research, Oluikpe adds that whilst population identifies the broader category of research participants, e.g students of Wa SHS, sample on the other hand stands for the

particular people or elements chosen from the population for a study. In selecting the participants for this study, the researcher maintained a high sense of neutrality.

At Wa senior high, students were picked from form two A to E at random, making sure there was gender balance. He used the numbering strategy of random sampling in which all the students are first counted and all those with odd numbers separated from those with even numbers. Many as the classes were, even taking only students with odd or even numbers still gave very high numbers so the researcher chose one group first-either those with odd numbers or those with even numbers- and did another number sampling to beat down the numbers. Thirty five (35) males and thirty five (35) females each were drawn from that school.

At the Islamic Senior High School, students were equally drawn from form two A to D via this same numbering strategy of random sampling, maintaining the same male-female ratio of 35 students each. In terms of ethnicity, the sampled students represent quite a myriad of ethnic groups in Ghana, with many coming from the Upper West region. This may be as a result of the geographical location of the sample schools. Further details of the sample population (demographic features) are captured later in this chapter under item 3.7.

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

Strong et al (1993) opine that instrumentation in research refers to the *tools implored by a researcher to facilitate data collection*. Without instruments, there cannot be a research since every research is based on empirical evidence, known as data (no data, no research).

The researcher employed the use of exercises to gather the data for this study. These exercises were done in three stages concurrently to arrive at valuable conclusions. They were the pre-intervention test, Intervention test and Post Intervention test. See Appendices 1, 2, & 3. The elicitation strategies mentioned above, which the researcher used in this work (exercises), were not done in the vacuum. They were carried out, taking into cognizance, the various rules governing the use of concord as spelled out by various authorities on all the aspects of English concord.

As earlier indicated, concord has four broad categorizations and these four have a total of 19 sub aspects. The elicitation strategies used therefore cover all the nineteen (19) sub aspects.

### **3.5 Using the Research Instruments**

As mentioned earlier, the researcher conducted three series of tests spanning over a period of one and half months. These were the pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention tests. The results at each stage were discussed and the necessary inputs made by the researcher to prepare the students for the next stage. At all the intervention stages, the one hundred and forty (140) students did the exercises individually. We will now take a closer look at how each elicitation strategy was carried out.

#### **3.5.1 Pre –Intervention Test**

The researcher conducted a class test for students based on concord. The test was made of fifty (50) questions covering all the nineteen (19) identified sub aspects

of the subject concord. The reason for this high number of questions was to give enough opportunity for students to show what they knew and what they did not know about concord. The rationale for this test was to diagnose the exact concord challenges of students. The difficulty level of the test could be described as averagely moderate. See Appendix 1. Each of the 19 sub aspects of concord had at least 2 questions on it.

The instruction for the exercises was: *From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.* (See Appendices 1, 2 & 3). The students were given a period of one and half hours to accomplish each task under the supervision of the researcher and four other tutors in Islamic senior high school. In Wa senior high, the same questions were given to students and supervised by the researcher and three other tutors of the school. One and half hours was given to the students to allow them ample time to analyze and make the best of choices as answers to the questions so that every answer chosen could be considered as amply pre-meditated. The test was conducted the same day at both schools in concurrent order. That is, it was conducted at Islamic Senior High School on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 at 9:30 am during normal instructional hours. When it ended at about 11:00 am, the researcher left, immediately after collecting the scripts, for Wa Senior High School where he conducted the second test at exactly 12 pm. These time schedules were already arranged with the two schools and the tests, were conducted shortly one after the other to avoid any form of leakages, since the research participants in each school were informed about the participation of the other school.

Supervision was very strict as the supervisors (researcher and other tutors) maintained friendly interaction with the students during the tests. They wrote the tests

in their normal classrooms where they are taught and the classroom climate at the time of writing the test was generally very congenial. All students were present. No unfortunate incident was recorded in either school during the exercise.

The researcher marked the test scripts within two days all by himself. He did this very meticulously so as to avoid errors in marking which could undermine the outcome of the test. In that test, the performance of students was very poor as can be seen in Appendices 4 (a) & 4(b). The students had problems with almost every aspect of concord. Due to this poor performance, the researcher held a series of lessons, leading to the intervention test, in which he discussed the pre-intervention test and carefully took students through the basic rudiments guiding the topic *concord*. The lessons were held in the individual classes of the students at regular teaching hours. The discussion teaching method was basically used with a lot of classroom exercises interspersing each lesson. Students were carefully guided, through question and feedback, to arrive at concord rules by themselves. A sample of one of such lessons leading to the intervention test is transcribed in Appendix 5. The researcher also gave students a lot of take-home assignments on concord which were discussed in class. In the last lesson before the intervention test, the students said they had understood the fundamental guiding principles of concord as conveyed in appendix 5.

### **3.5.2 Intervention Test**

From the outcome of the pre-intervention test the researcher observed that some of the students did not have much problem with some aspects of concord, particularly, point of time past-verb concord. Their performance on questions pertaining to this aspect of concord was fairly impressive. The difficulty level of the test was the same as the pre-intervention test and it was basically purported to assess



the students' understanding of the guiding concepts of concord. See Appendix 2. There were still some challenges on some aspects of the topic, notable among which was subject-verb concord. See Appendices 6(a) & 6(b).

This is probably due to the broad nature of this aspect of concord. As earlier indicated, this is the "mother" of all the aspects of concord and indeed, when the subject concord is mentioned many people's knowledge on it end at subject-verb concord including some tutors of English. The researcher noted where students had problems and set more questions on those aspects than other relatively unproblematic aspects, e. g point of time past-verb concord.

The researcher discussed the pre-intervention test with the students during the intervention teachings. The discussions revealed interesting issues. Students gave various reasons for their choices of answers during the test. The researcher carefully noted these as some of the underlying reasons why students encounter concord learning problems. Before the intervention test was conducted, the researcher carefully took students through the guiding principles of concord in three different lessons of two hours each. See Appendix 5.

The researcher therefore painstakingly, organized classes with the sampled students in which he carefully explained to them the technicalities and basic rudiments guiding concord in English grammar. He did this in six successive lessons of two (two) hours duration each separately at the two campuses. That is, he did twelve (12) hours with each school. The last of the series of 12 lessons in both schools was a combined lesson of student research participants of both schools immediately before the post-intervention. Apart from the organized teaching schedules, the researcher also had one-on-one interactions with some of the students in which he

explained some concord problems to students. In the course of teaching the students as an intervention measure, series of class exercises and take-home assignments were given to students. The researcher in the course of teaching asked students questions pertaining to the three research questions in this study-what concord learning problems they have, why they encounter these problems and how they think they could be helped out of these problems. Their responses were carefully noted down and used as data in the overall analysis in this study.

The results of the take-home and class exercises were discussed and the students were expected to improve upon their knowledge of concord. The teaching was always done in a very relaxed friendly manner, interspersed with some entertaining digressions so as to sustain the interest and attention of the students. Very much time was however devoted to explaining the problematic areas of concord to students using as many examples as possible. The lessons covered all the four key and nineteen identified sub-aspects of concord, with more focus on subject-verb concord and noun-pronoun concord which proved to be more problematic to students during the pre-intervention test.

These intervention series of lessons were started by the researcher shortly after marking the pre-intervention test scripts on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015. The twelve hours per school were executed within four weeks starting from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 and ending on Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2015. At the end of the four – week teaching intervention period, the researcher then conducted the intervention test to ascertain the level of progress of the students about their knowledge on concord.

The intervention test had questions on all the nineteen (19) sub aspects of concord, with more questions on subject-verb concord which was identified to be more problematic to students. A total of fifty (50) questions were again used.

Students were to select from a variety of possible answers as they did in the pre-intervention test. The duration for the test was one hour, thirty minutes (See Appendix 2). Again, this was to give them ample time to carefully select their answers and any answer selected could be seen as pre-meditated and could be used to draw conclusions in the analysis of this study.

The tests were, as usual, conducted in concurrent order, this time starting with Wa Senior High School at 9:30 am on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 and ending at 11:00 am. The test started the same day at 11:30 am at Islamic Senior High and ending at about 1:00 pm. The marking of test scripts commenced on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015 since the researcher was time-constrained. Marking was over on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015. The supervision was, as usual, strict but relaxed. The students wrote the test in their usual classrooms under cool quiet conditions and the test was conducted under a generally congenial school environment. All students were present. No incident untoward was recorded during its conduct. As mentioned earlier, there was a significant improvement in performance of students in this test over the pre-intervention test. See Appendices 6(a) & 6(b).

### **3.5.3 Post – Intervention Test**

The last elicitation exercise, post-intervention test, was carried out on Wednesday May 20, 2015 in similar manner as was done in the pre and intervention tests. It was the same 50 grammar questions on all aspects of concord. The rationale

for this third and final test was to enable the researcher ascertain students' level of knowledge on concord after the first two tests. He wanted to know whether students could improve upon the performance in the intervention test and if they could, what extent of improvement. The duration of this exercise was the same one and half hours on the two campuses during their regular instructional hours. At Wa SHS, the exercise took place at 10 am, ending at about 11:30 am whilst at Islamic SHS it commenced at 12:30 pm and ended at about 2:00 pm. Three tutors at Wa SHS and four tutors at Islamic SHS assisted the researcher in supervising this test.

The results of the intervention test were, prior to this test, discussed with the students and the researcher noted down salient points and issues raised by the students, particularly the reasons assigned for the answers they gave to questions and their views on the three research questions in this study. As mentioned earlier, series of intervention teaching were done and the last one prior to the post-intervention test was a combined one of both schools. A transcription of this last intervention lesson is attached to this work. See Appendix 7. All 140 students from the two schools as usual presented themselves for the test and there was no incident recorded. See this test in Appendix 3. The performance of students in this test saw a great improvement over the last two tests, i. e, pre-intervention and intervention tests. Students did not have problems with many aspects of concord. Point -of -time -past –verb concord recorded no error on the part of all the 140 students. Data in respect of this assertion can be seen in the statistical tables in Chapter 4.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability**

According to Ur (1996), for any research to be considered factual and usable for societal growth, it must be subjected to some benchmarks. This, in his opinion,

means the work must satisfactorily answer some pertinent questions such as the mood of the participants during data collection, the period used for data collection, the mode of data collection, etc. Ur calls this validity and reliability of research findings.

The researcher, in order to get the correct responses from the respondents, sought the help of the English departments of the schools concerned and together with them at each of the schools, briefed all the respondents (students) on what was required of them when the exercises were given to them. The students were asked to do the intervention exercises the very day the exercises were given to them.

The researcher made the students know that he had not intended to find out their weaknesses for anything bad. He assured them that whatever responses or information they gave was to be held confidentially and surreptitiously.

### **3.7 Demographic Characteristics of the Research Participants**

The respondents were made up of one hundred and forty (140) students from eight different ethnic groups with an average age of fifteen years.

**STUDENTS**

<b>ETHNIC GROUP</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Dagaaba/Waala	44
Sissala	21
Fante	09
Asante	20
Mamprusi	07
Kusasi	08
Dagomba	17
Birifor	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

The researcher used the ethnic groups to represent some of the Ghanaian languages spoken and written and are used as the medium of instruction in the lower primary schools in our formal education sector. The researcher randomly selected those participants to create a sort of balance and fairness as far as the Ghanaian languages are concerned.

**3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter basically sought to describe how the study was conducted. It discussed the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, concord aspects, data collection tools, validity and reliability as well as the demographic characteristics of the research participants. Having spelled out how the entire study was executed, we shall now look at the analysis of the data collected.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter analyzed the data collected on this research. The instruments used for data collection were pre-intervention test, intervention test and post-intervention test. The analysis was done based on the instruments used above.

The researcher did an analysis of the three intervention strategies used in this study. The analysis showed that there was a generally significant performance improvement on the part of students from one intervention test to another. This analysis was done by using the research questions of this study as major sub-headings. The research questions were taken one after the other in the form of statements in chronological order.

#### **4.1 Difficulties senior high school students encounter in studying concord in English**

The intervention exercises yielded very relevant data in answer to research question one. The areas where students encountered difficulties in studying concord at the SHS level are explained below as revealed by data from the intervention strategy. One key area was grammatical and proximity concord.

##### **4.1.1 Grammatical concord and proximity concord**

Firstly, the data in the use of the intervention test indicated that the students did not fully internalize the formation rules. This rule states that a singular verb

requires a singular subject. A verb should, therefore, agree in an English sentence with the subject in number, person and gender. For example, under this category of concord, a student of Wa SHS committed mistakes such as:

- 1) Dakurah *know* where to go tomorrow.
- 2) She *make* us happy always.

See Appendix 6(a), Qn.1 & 2.

Again, these same mistakes were committed by a student of Islamic SHS in the pre-intervention test as follows;

- 1) Her uncles *teaches* her morals.
- 2) He *understand* Dagaare.

See Appendix 4(a), Qn. 3 & 8.

This shows that the concord system had not registered on the student's memory firmly.

Secondly, in the area of proximity concord, the verb agrees with the noun that is closer or nearer to it (i. e, the verb). The researcher realized, however that the use of "either.....or" and nether....nor" posed a lot of problems to most students. They thought "either.....or" and "nether.....nor" are always singular and so needed singular verbs. The data in the use of the pre-intervention test again, showed students committing such errors. One student of Islamic SHS committed the following errors:

1. Either the president or his ministers *has* come here. The verb „have“ should have been used instead of „has“ because of the plural noun “ministers” which is closer to the verb.



2. Neither the pastor nor his congregants *is* criminal. The verb “is” is used instead of “are” in the sentence. It should have read: Neither the pastor nor his congregants are criminal.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn .3 & 4.

Similarly, a student of Wa SHS committed the following errors in the post-intervention test:

1. Either the children or their father *are* doing the cleaning.
2. Neither Ama nor her classmates *comes* to school.

See Appendix 8(a),Qn. 31 & 32.

In sentence (1), the verb should have been a singular verb “is” because it comes immediately after a singular subject “their father”. The sentence, therefore should have read: “Either the children or their father is doing the cleaning.

The students obviously did not know that when one subject /noun is singular and the other is plural, the problem is resolved by resorting to what is known as proximity concord; that is whichever subject or noun comes last determines the number of the verb. In other words, if the second subject or noun is singular, the verb will be singular and vice versa. Next to grammatical and proximity concord, the data also showed that students had serious problems with headword identification in complex noun phrases and demonstrative pronouns.

#### 4.1.2 Headword identification in complex noun phrases and demonstrative pronouns

It was observed by the researcher also that students were unable to identify the headwords in complex noun phrases during the intervention test. This caused the errors they committed in noun-verb concord exercises. For instance, a student of Wa SHS committed such errors as:

- i) Indiscipline among students *are* on the increase. The correct sentence is indiscipline among students is on the increase.
- ii) All the members of my family *is* rich. Instead of: All the members of my family are rich.

See Appendix 6(a), Qn.24 & 25.

On her part, one student of Islamic SHS committed the following errors in the pre-intervention test:

- iii) The death of two students of our school *have* made the district director come to the school. Instead of: The death of two of our students has made the district director come to the school.
- iv) A box full of pens *were* found outside the classroom. The correct construction is rather; A box full of pens was found outside the classroom.

See Appendix 4(a), Qn. 26 & 27.

The researcher observed that students failed to realize that it is the headword in a subject NP which determines noun-verb, determiner-noun, noun-pronoun concord, etc. The researcher also noticed that it is very necessary, therefore, for the

language teacher to introduce his students to English noun modification before he or she teaches them concord.

Further analysis of data revealed that another problematic area was the use of demonstrative pronouns. The researcher observed that the students had difficulty distinguishing between „this“ and „these“ as well as „that“ and „those“. Students seemed confused about whether „this“ is singular whilst „these“ is plural and „that“ is singular whilst „those“ is plural. They therefore failed to select appropriate nouns to make it grammatical.

In the pre-intervention test, one of the students of Islamic SHS for instance, committed the following errors :

1. This *men* makes a lot of fun.
2. These *sheep* lost its shepherd.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn.28 & 29.

In the post-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS, on the other hand also made the following mistake:

These *phenomenon* are known as weathering.

See Appendix 8(a) Qn. 9.

#### **4.1.3 Verb-verb concord and semi-conjunctions**

On verb-verb concord, the researcher also realized in the pre-intervention test that a number of students did not know that English, like many West African languages,

maintains the sequence: verb/present-verb/past within clauses in sentences. As a result, a student of Islamic SHS constructed sentences such as:

- a. It was believed that in those days these same men went and *prevent* them from being beaten.
- b. They those days met once a month and *discuss* matters affecting them.

See Appendix 4(a),Qn. 25 & 36.

On his part, during the intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed errors as follows:

- a. Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they *can* pass their final examinations well.
- b. I sat for the last year's private WASSCE and *perform* well.

See Appendix 6(a),Qn.49 & 50.

Another thing the researcher realized was that students did not know that when semi- conjunctions (I .e intervening expressions) such as: together with, as well as, including, no less than, along with, in addition to, in conjunction with, with, in the company of accompanied by, etc, follow a singular subject , a singular verb is required. In the post-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed this error:

1. My father as well as my mother *are* kind ;instead of: My father as well as my mother *is* kind.

See Appendix (a),Qn. 17.

On her part, a student of Islamic SHS, in the pre-intervention test committed the error below:

1. The farmer with his dogs *are* going to the farm” ;instead of :The famer with his dogs *is* going to the farm.

See Appendix 4(b),Qn. 44.

One student of Islamic SHS, in the intervention test ,also committed the error below:

1. The pastor no less than the members of his church *are* hypocritical; instead of:  
The pastor no less than the members of his church *is* hypocritical.

See Appendix 6(b),Qn. 30.

#### **4.1.4 Two titles for one thing and adjectives as headwords**

Apart from the challenges of the verb –verb concord discussed above, the data also suggested that most students could not construct grammatical sentences with titles and adjectives as headwords. The rule states that if the two items that are joined refer to two different titles for one person the subject is considered singular and therefore the verb is also considered a singular verb. The researcher realized however that this posed a serious problem for the students. They thought they were to use plural verbs and so constructed wrong sentences. In the post-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed such errors as:

B. My father and pastor *come* here on Mondays.

C. Our literature tutor and form master *come* from Nandom.

See Appendix 8(b), Qn. 39 & 40.

Similarly during the intervention test, another student of Islamic SHS committed the following errors:

D. The aspiring Member of Parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development *worship* with the church of Pentecost, Wa.

E. Your daughter and secretary *leave* for London.

See Appendix 6(b), Qn. 21 & 28.

As far as adjectives taking the position of headwords is concerned, students were also faced with the problems of using appropriate verbs for adjectives that are used as headwords. Examples: the poor, the rich, the deaf, the aged, the blind, etc. They did not know that when adjectives are used as headwords in noun phrases they have a generic reference and so are regarded as plural subjects/nouns and therefore take plural verbs. In the pre-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed the under listed errors:

1. The poor *needs* help. Instead of: The poor *need* help.
2. The blind *is* miserable. Instead of: The blind *are* miserable.

See Appendix 4(a), Qn. 42 & 43.

In like manner, a student of Wa SHS in the intervention test committed the following errors:

1. The deaf *shouts* when talking. Instead of: The deaf *shout* when talking.
2. The rich *does* not worship God well. Instead of: The rich *do* not worship God well.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn. 42 & 45.

#### 4.1.5 The indefinite pronouns “all” and “some” and intervening prepositional phrases

Data generated from the study also showed that most students thought “all” and “some” are always plural. A student of Wa SHS in the post-intervention test therefore constructed sentences such as:

- a. All the kerosene *are* sold. Instead of: All the kerosene *is* sold.
- b. All the water in the barrel *are* finished. Instead of: All the water in the barrel *is* finished.

See Appendix 8(a), Qn. 30 & 4.

Also, a student of Wa SHS in the post-intervention test made the following mistakes:

- a. Some of the kerosene *are* sold. Instead of: Some of the kerosene *is* sold.
- b. All of the oil *are* shared. Instead of: All of the oil *is* shared.

See Appendix 8(b), Qn. 34 & 35.

Whilst “some” and “all” were problematic for most students, it seemed that challenges with the use of inflectional concord and some indefinite pronouns were even more serious. Indeed, it was also noticed in this research that some subjects with the plural inflection mark “s” are often confused for plural subjects. Thus, another student of Islamic SHS in the pre-intervention test made such statements as:

- (i) Emphasis were laid on the “verb”.
- (ii) Statistics *show* that women live longer than men.

In (i) the verb “were” should be “was” and in (ii) the verb “show” should be “shows”.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn. 47 & 48.

Indefinite pronouns, apart from “all” and “some”, such as none, each, every, anyone, someone, etc, also confused some students in this study when they stand in subject position in a sentence. One student of Wa SHS in the intervention test made such scandalous statements as:

- a) None of the *boy* is here.
- b) Anyone in this room *need* to pray.

In (a) *the boy* should have been *the boys* and the verb “are” should be “is”. In (b), the verb “need” should be “needs”.

See Appendix 6(b), Qn. 10 & 16.

Finally, fractions were shown to be problematic for most students who used them to construct sentences.

Some of the mistakes committed by a student of Wa SHS in the intervention test include:

- (i) *Two third* of Ghanaians *are* illiterates.
- (ii) *One sixteenth* of my father’s property *belong* to me.

The verb “are” in (i) should have been “is” whilst “belong” should have been “belongs” to match their corresponding singular subjects “Two third” and “One sixteenth”, respectively. See Appendix 6(a), Qn. 46 & 47.



## 4.2 Performance analysis of Concord Learning Difficulties among Students

The relevant data which the intervention strategy used in this study provided in answer to research question 1 are analyzed using tables and charts as follows. Details of the performance of students in all the pre-intervention tests on all the four main aspects of concord are shown in the tables that follow. The intervention tests and the post-intervention tests are analyzed in block under each table for all the four key areas of concord.

### 4.2.1 Subject-verb concord

During the pre-intervention test subject verb concord stood out very clearly as the most problematic aspect of concord. Proximity concord, an aspect of subject-verb concord recorded the highest error frequency with a total of eighty(80) errors, representing fifty seven(57) percent of the total errors committed by students in that test. See table 1 below. The indefinite pronouns „all“ and „some“ recorded the lowest number of errors; thirty four (34), representing 24% of total number of errors committed in that test. Grammatical concord errors were also high-77, representing 55% of total number of errors committed in that test as can be seen in table 1 below. Intervening prepositional phrases also had the second lowest total number of errors of 43, representing 30% of total number of errors committed. See table 1.

**Table 1: Performance of Students on Subject-verb Concord in Pre-intervention****Test**

CONCORD CHARACTERISTICS	Wa SHS=70				Islamic SHS=70				Total	Percentage
	Error Frequency		Percentage		Error Frequency		Percentage			
	M =	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=	M=35	F=		
	35	35	35	35	35	35		35		
Grammatical concord	19	14	54	40	23	21	66	60	77	55
Proximity concord	16	15	45	43	16	11	46	31	59	42
Headword identification	17	15	49	43	26	22	74	63	80	57
The “s”-inflection	16	15	46	43	16	11	46	31	58	41
There +Verb+ NP	21	14	60	40	15	13	43	37	63	45
Semi-conjunctions	20	18	57	51	19	13	54	37	70	50
Two titles for one subject	18	18	51	51	18	16	51	46	70	50
Adjectives as headwords	09	11	25	31	16	14	46	40	50	35
“All” and “some”	06	08	17	23	10	10	29	29	34	24
Intervening prepositional phrases	14	13	40	37	07	09	20	25	43	30
Plural inflectional concord	10	08	29	23	15	13	43	37	46	32
Indefinite pronouns	15	16	43	46	08	06	23	17	45	32
Notional concord	17	16	49	43	16	11	46	31	60	42

In the intervention test, subject-verb concord continued to record the highest number of errors. Grammatical concord and two titles for one subject topped the list with the highest number of subject-verb concord errors committed. They both recorded totals of 37 errors each, representing 26% each of total errors committed in that test. They are closely followed by proximity concord which had 36 total number of errors, representing 25% of total number of errors committed in that test. The least number of errors were committed under „all“ and „some“ which had a total of 20 errors, representing 14% of total errors committed in this test. The second lowest of

total number of errors was recorded under intervening prepositional phrases which had 24 errors, representing 17% of total errors committed in that test.

In total, subject-verb concord again topped the list in this test with 37 errors representing 64% of all the errors committed in the post-intervention exercise. Two titles, proximity and headword identification recorded the highest error ratio of 4 each, representing 3% each of total number of errors committed in that test. Notional concord, plural inflectional concord, semi-conjunctions, There + verb + NP as well as grammatical concord each recorded a total of 3 errors, representing 2% of total errors committed in that test. The s-inflection, “all” and “some”, intervening prepositional phrases and indefinite pronouns were aspects which recorded the lowest error ratio of 2 each, representing 1% each of total number of errors committed in that test.

#### **4.2.2 Verb-verb concord**

During the pre-intervention test, verb-verb concord recorded a fairly high number of concord errors of 92, representing 65% of total number of errors committed in that test as in table 2 below. The 92 errors is the total number of errors committed by both schools as can be seen in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Performance of Students on Verb-verb Concord in Pre-intervention Test**

CONCORD CHARACTERISTICS	Wa SHS=70				Islamic SHS=70				Total	Percentage
	Error Frequency		Percentage		Error Frequency		Percentage			
	M =	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=		
	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35		
Tenses of verbs in one sentence	24	20	68	57	27	21	77	60	92	65
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	20	68	57	27	21	77	60	92	65

At the intervention stage, the number of errors committed under verb-verb concord dropped from the 92 at the pre-intervention stage to 46, representing 32% of the total number of errors committed at that stage.

In the post-intervention test, a total of 10 errors, representing 29% of total errors committed in that test were recorded.

#### 4.2.3 Noun-pronoun concord

In the pre-intervention test, pronoun-antecedent concord which is a sub aspect of noun-pronoun concord, recorded the highest total number of errors of 83, representing 59% of the total number of errors committed in this test as shown on

table 3 below. Nouns and corresponding pronouns came second with 80 errors, representing 57% of total number of errors committed in that test. The use of demonstrative pronouns also came close with 79 errors, representing 56% of total number of errors in that test. See table 3.

**Table 3: Performance of Students on Noun-pronoun Concord in Pre-intervention Test**

Concord Characteristics	Wa SHS=70				Islamic SHS=70				Total	Percentage
	Error Frequency		Percentage		Error Frequency		Percentage			
	M =	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=		
	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35		
Nouns and corresponding pronouns	20	18	57	51	23	19	65	54	80	57
Demonstrative pronouns	19	17	54	48	24	19	68	54	79	56
Pronoun and antecedent	22	20	62	57	25	16	71	45	83	59

As can be seen in the analysis in this paragraph, in the intervention test, noun-pronoun concord saw a significant improvement over the pre-intervention test. Nouns and corresponding pronouns had the highest number of errors of 40, representing 28%

of total number of errors committed in that test. This is followed closely by use of demonstrative pronouns which recorded a total of 38 errors, representing 27% of total number of errors committed in this test. The aspect with the lowest number of errors was pronoun and antecedent concord which had a total of 36 errors, representing 25% of all errors committed in that test.

At the intervention stage, noun-pronoun concord saw an increase in performance on the part of students, just as all other aspects of concord. 40 errors, representing 28% of total number of errors in that test were registered on noun and corresponding pronoun concord. A total of 38 errors, also representing 27% of total errors committed in this test were recorded for demonstrative pronoun concord whilst a total of 36 errors were recorded on pronoun-antecedent concord and that represents 25% of all errors recorded in this test.

A total of 11 errors were committed on noun-pronoun concord in the post-intervention test. This represents 8% of the total number of errors committed in this test. Pronoun and its antecedent concord topped the list with a total of 5 errors, representing 4% of all errors committed in that test whilst nouns and corresponding pronouns came second with a total of 4 errors, representing 3 % of all errors in that test. Demonstrative pronouns came last with 2 errors, representing 1% of all errors committed in that test.

#### **4.2.4 Point of time past-verb concord**

Point of time past-verb concord has proved to be the least problematic to students. In the pre-intervention test, only 52 errors were recorded, representing 37% of total number of errors committed in that test. See table 4 below.

**Table 4: Performance of Students on Point of Time Past-verb Concord in Pre-intervention Test**

Concord Characteristics	Wa SHS=70				Islamic SHS=70				Total	Percentage
	Error Frequency		Percentage		Error Frequency		Percentage			
	M =	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=	M=	F=		
	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35		
Adjuncts of time past	13	09	37	25	16	14	45	40	52	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	13	09	37	25	16	14	45	40	52	37

At the intervention stage, the total number of point of time past –verb concord errors dropped to 9, representing 6% of all the errors committed in the intervention test.

In the post-intervention test, no error was recorded. All the questions on this aspect of concord were correctly answered by all the students. See appendices 8(a) and 8(b).

#### **4.3 Why Senior High School Students Encounter Difficulties in Studying**

##### **Concord in English**

Another research question which this study set out to address was: *Why do senior high school students encounter difficulties in studying concord in English?* Here again, the research instrument used in this study-the intervention strategy-

yielded relevant data to answer this question. The reasons behind the difficulties of students on the topic concord were identified in the analysis as follows.

Firstly, in the area of proximity concord, the verb agrees with the noun that is closer or nearer to it (i. e, the verb). The researcher realized, however that the use of “either.....or” and “nether....nor” posed a lot of problems to most students. They thought “either.....or” and “nether.....nor” are always singular and so needed singular verbs. The data in the use of the pre-intervention test again showed students committing such errors. A student of Islamic SHS committed the following errors:

1. Either the president or his ministers *has* come to the Independence Square.  
The verb “have” should have been used instead of „has“ because of the plural noun “ministers” which is closer to the verb.
2. Neither the pastor nor his congregants *is* criminal. The verb “is” is used instead of “are” in the sentence. It should have read: Neither the pastor nor his congregants are criminal.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn.3 & 4.

Students were equally unable to identify the headwords in complex noun phrases during the intervention test. This causes the errors they committed in noun/subject-verb concord exercises. For instance, a student of Wa SHS committed such errors as:

- v) Indiscipline among students *are* on the increase. The correct sentence is:  
Indiscipline among students *is* on the increase.
- vi) All the members of my family *is* rich. Instead of: All the members of my family *are* rich.

See Appendix 6(a), Qn. 24 & 25.



On her part, a student of Islamic SHS committed the following errors in the pre-intervention test:

- vii) The death of two students of our school *have* made the district director come to the school. Instead of: The death of two of our students *has* made the district director come to the school.
  - viii) A box full of pens *were* found outside the classroom. The correct construction is rather; A box full of pens was found outside the classroom.
- See Appendix 4(a), Qn.26 & 27.

The researcher observed that students failed to realize that it is the headword in a subject NP which determines noun-verb, determiner-noun, noun-pronoun concord, etc. The researcher also noticed that it is very necessary, therefore, for the language teacher to introduce his students to English noun modification before he or she teaches them concord.

The data also suggested that most students could not construct grammatical sentences with two subject titles and adjectives as headwords. The rule states that if the two items that are joined refer to two different titles for one subject, the subject is considered singular and therefore the verb is also considered a singular verb. The researcher realized however that this posed a serious problem for the students. They thought they were to use plural verbs and so constructed wrong sentences. In the post-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed such errors as:

- A. My father and pastor *come* here on Mondays.
- B. Our literature tutor and form master *come* from Nandom.

See Appendix 8(b), Qn.39 & 40.

Similarly, during the intervention test, a student of Islamic SHS committed the following errors:

- C. The aspiring Member of Parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development *worship* with the church of Pentecost, Wa.
- D. Your daughter and secretary *leave* for London.

See Appendix 6(b), Qn.21 & 28.

As far as adjectives taking the position of headwords are concerned, students were also faced with the problems of using appropriate verbs for adjectives that are used as headwords. Their main difficulty here was whether to consider such headwords as plural or singular. Examples: the poor, the rich, the deaf, the aged, the blind, etc. They did not know that when adjectives are used as headwords in noun phrases they have a generic reference and so are regarded as plural subjects/nouns and therefore take plural verbs. In the pre-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed the under listed errors:

1. The poor *needs* help. Instead of: The poor *need* help.
2. The blind *is* miserable. Instead of: The blind *are* miserable.

See Appendix 4(a), Qn.42 & 43.

In like manner, one student of Wa SHS in the intervention test committed the following errors:

1. The deaf *shouts* when talking. Instead of: The deaf *shout* when talking.
2. The rich *does* not worship God well. Instead of: The rich *do* not worship God well.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn.42 & 45.

Another thing the researcher realized was that students did not know that when semi-conjunctions (I .e intervening expressions) such as: together with, as well as, including, no less than, along with, in addition to, in conjunction with, with ,in the company of ,accompanied by, etc are used to connect two elements that form the subject in a sentence the first element should be made to agree with the verb. In the post-intervention test, a student of Wa SHS committed this error:

1. My father as well as my mother *are* kind; instead of: My father as well as my mother *is* kind.

See Appendix 8(a), Qn. 17.

On her part, another student of Islamic SHS, in the pre-intervention test committed the error below:

1. The farmer with his dogs *are* going to the farm” ;instead of :The famer with his dogs *is* going to the farm.

See Appendix 4(b), Qn. 44.

A student of Islamic SHS, in the intervention test, also committed the error below:

1. The pastor no less than the members of his church *are* hypocritical; instead of:  
The pastor no less than the members of his church *is* hypocritical.

See Appendix 6(b),Qn. 30.

Finally, fractions were shown to be problematic for most students who used them to construct sentences. Some of the mistakes committed by a student of Wa SHS in the intervention test include:

- (i) *Two third* of Ghanaians *are* illiterates.

- (ii) *One sixteenth* of my father's property *belong* to me.

The verb “are” in (i) should have been “is” whilst “belong” should have been “belongs” to match their corresponding singular subjects “Two third” and “One sixteenth” respectively.

See Appendix 6(a), Qn.46 & 47.

Most students found it very difficult to identify the subjects in their sentences so that they could match them with the right verbs. They ended up selecting the wrong subjects which causes the selection of the wrong verb, leading to their failure to construct concord grammatical sentences. From the foregoing data gathered on subject identification in sentences, the assertion could be drawn that subject identification in sentences is one reason for the concord learning difficulties of SHS students.

As the researcher interacted with students during the intervention teachings, he observed that the students' inability to grasp all the intricacies of concord identified above stemmed from the fact that students do not read extensively, they don't practice the rules of concord, they have difficulties in identifying subjects in sentences, exceptions to rules confuse them and they have difficulty in mastering the myriad of concord rules, among other factors. The students attested to these facts when the researcher, in the course of teaching, interrogated them on why they have those shortcomings. See Appendix 7.

Mother tongue (L1) interference was identified to be one of the reasons. During the intervention teachings, the researcher identified that the L1 influences students both negatively and positively, as far as concord is concerned. Interacting

with students and asking their views on this matter, they were of the opinion that the L1 has negative influences on students' study of concord as indicated by Lester in the literature review of this work but that the L1 equally has positive influences on their study of concord.

When the researcher challenged students to demonstrate the positive and negative influences of the L1 on concord in English, a student of Islamic SHS listed the following literal translations from Dagaare to English, which do not make sense:

Dagaare	English
1. <i>O ba laara.</i>	He <i>doesn't</i> laugh.(Correct)
2. <i>Ba ba laara.</i>	They <i>don't</i> laugh.(Correct)

From the above, *ba* is the verb in both sentences and it means "doesn't" or "don't". In terms of concord, this does not make literal sense. It is obvious that a student whose L1 is Dagaare would have a subject-verb concord problem if he transfers this knowledge from Dagaare into English. This is because the verb "ba" in Dagaare remains the same whether used as singular or plural. It doesn't show number. See Appendix 5(a)

On her part, another student from Wa SHS illustrated the positive influence of the L1 as follows:

Dagaare	English
1. <i>Zaameng, n da ba di bondirii.</i>	Yesterday, I <i>did not</i> eat.(Correct)
2. <i>Zaameng, n ba di bondirii.</i>	Yesterday, I <i>not</i> eat.(Incorrect)

From the illustration, the Dagaare L1 learner of concord would do positive transfer of knowledge from Dagaare to English since he would realize that points of

time past references usually go with past tense verbs. He/she would therefore have no problem with point of time past-verb concord. Based on the above data, one can assert that L1 interference is one of the problems students face in learning concord and yet, it also influences students positively in their study of concord.

#### **4.4 How Senior High School Students can be helped to overcome their Problems in Studying Concord in English**

The third and final research question which this study set out to address was: *How can senior high school students be helped to overcome their problems in understanding concord in English?*

During the intervention teachings, the researcher inquired the students of their opinions on ways by which they (students) could be helped out of their concord learning predicaments. Among other factors, some five major suggestions were made by the students.

They believed that if more English tutors were available, they would have always had better attention from the teachers and that would have enabled them get to assimilate the intricacies of concord which bedevil them in their studies.

They were of the opinion also that if they (students) were to be doing extensive reading it would have healed them of their challenges in studying concord.

Third, the students blamed their woes on the limited teaching/learning aids that were at their disposal for the study of English. They mentioned the lack of good English readers and standard textbooks.

The students further argued that if they had more instructional time for English, it would have served as a respite in helping them to master the rules of concord.

And finally, the data analysis in this study further revealed the fact that intervention exercises are a very formidable tool in helping students out of their woes in concord. The performance of students in the three intervention tests clearly shows a consistently remarkable amelioration in students' performance. This is conveyed in the tables and charts that follow.

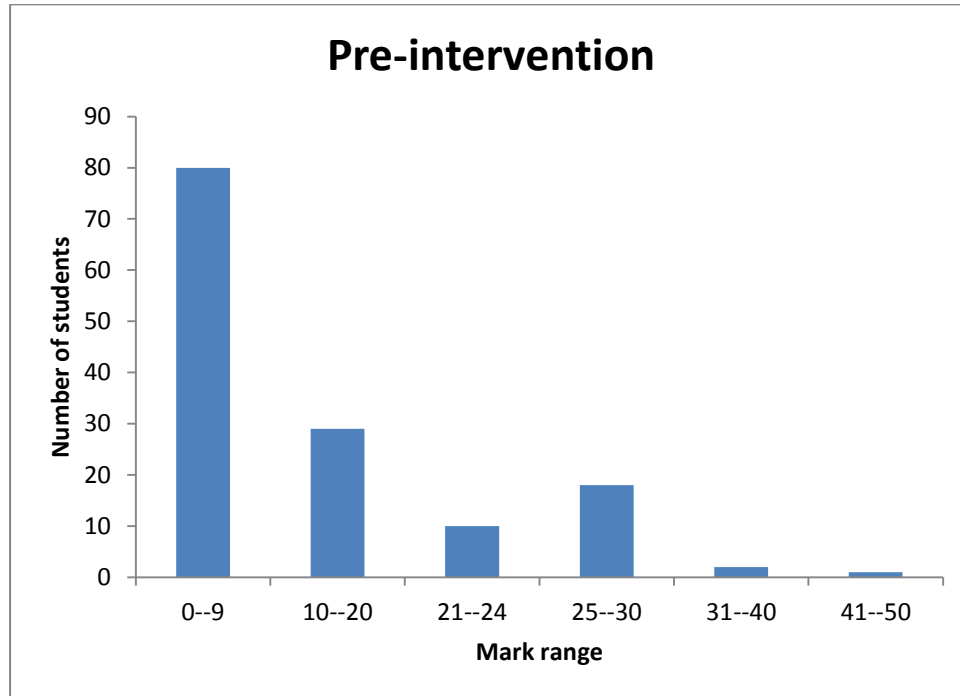
#### 4.5 Performance Analysis of Students in the Intervention Tests

**Table 5: Students' Performance in Pre-intervention Test**

MARK RANGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS		Total	Percentage
	Wa SHS = 70	Islamic SHS = 70		
<b>0-9</b>	38	42	80	57
<b>10-20</b>	16	13	29	21
<b>21-24</b>	02	08	10	07
<b>25-30</b>	11	07	18	13
<b>31-40</b>	02	00	02	01
<b>41-50</b>	01	00	01	01
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				

It is clear from table 5 above that 80 out of the total of 140 students scored below 10 marks, 21 scored 25 marks and above and 39 of them scored between 10 and 24 marks inclusively. Therefore, only 21 of them, representing 15% of the 140 students passed in that test. See table 5 above. This is graphically represented below.

**Figure 1: Bar Chart Showing Students' Performance in the Pre-intervention Test**



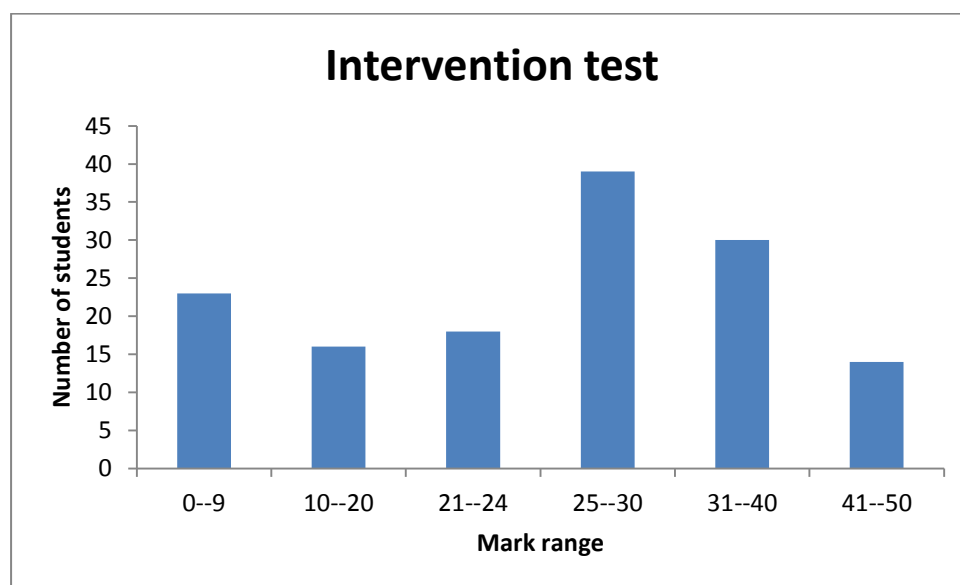
**Table 6: Students' Performance in Intervention Test**

MARK RANGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS		Total	Percentage
	Wa SHS = 70	Islamic SHS = 70		
<b>0-9</b>	09	14	23	16
<b>10-20</b>	07	09	16	11
<b>21-24</b>	09	09	18	13
<b>25-30</b>	24	15	39	29
<b>31-40</b>	11	19	30	21
<b>41-50</b>	10	04	14	10
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>



From the above table, 83 students out of the 140 scored 25 marks and above, representing 60% of the total number of students whilst 23 of them also scored below 10 marks. 34 of them scored between 10 and 24 marks inclusively. Remarkably, 14 of the total number of students scored above 40 marks. This is graphically represented below.

**Figure 2: Bar Chart Showing Students' Performance in the Intervention Test**

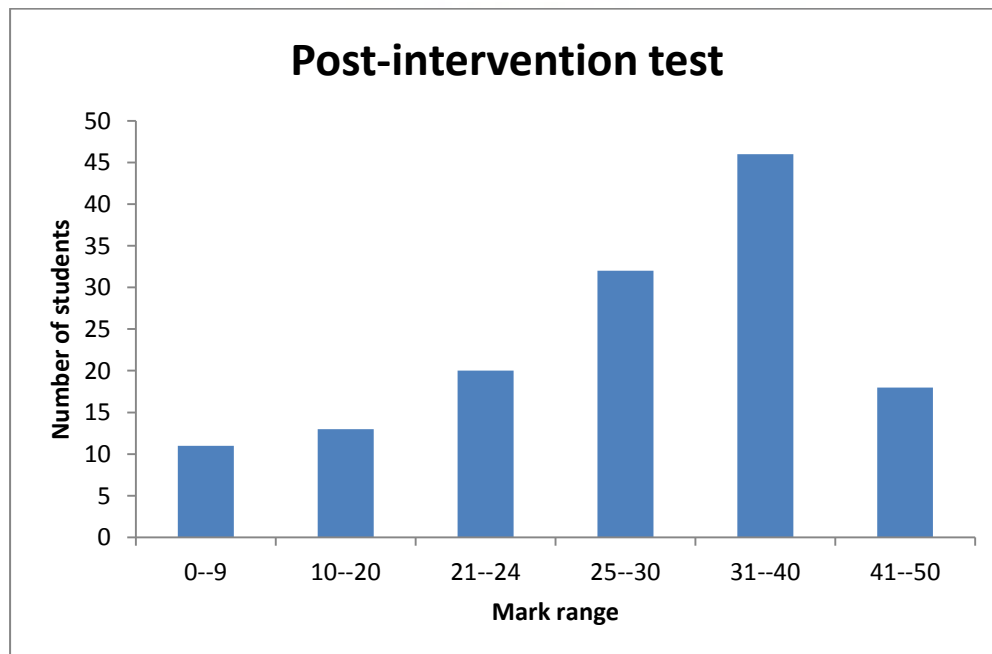


**Table 7: Students' Performance in Post- intervention Test**

MARK RANGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS		Total	Percentage
	Wa SHS = 70	Islamic SHS = 70		
0-9	03	08	11	08
10-20	04	09	13	09
21-24	09	11	20	14
25-30	15	17	32	23
31-40	29	17	46	33
41-50	10	08	18	13
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>

Ninety six (96) of the total of 140 students in this test scored 25 marks and above as can be seen from the table above, 11 scored below 10 marks whilst 33 scored between 10 and 24 marks inclusively. A remarkable number of 18 students scored above 40 marks, an improvement over the previous test. This is represented graphically below.

**Figure 3: Bar Chart Showing Students' Performance in the Post-intervention Test**

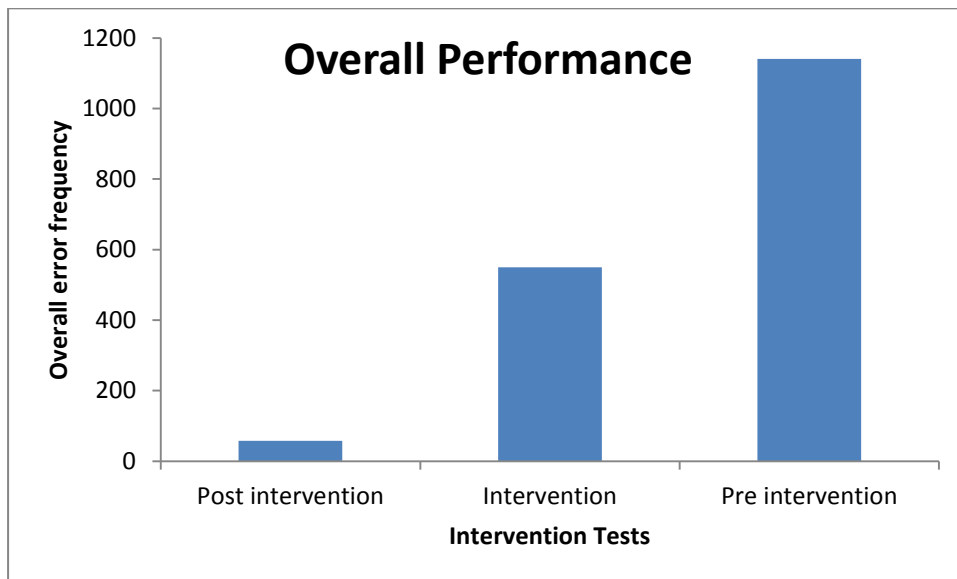


#### 4.6 Overall Performance Index

The outcome of the intervention tests with regards to error frequency is graphically represented below. The figures 1141,550 and 58, which are the total error frequencies of the pre-intervention, intervention and post intervention tests respectively (as can be found on the preceding tables), form the statistics in this chart. Clearly from the chart, there is a consistent rate of improvement from one test to the other. See figure 4.

**Figure 4: Bar Chart Showing the Overall Error Index in the Intervention**

**Tests**



#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter contains an analysis of the data collected for the study. The analysis and data interpretation were done along the lines of each research question. For clarity of the data, tables and charts were used as mentioned in chapter one. The overall outcome of the intervention tests revealed a drastic fall in error from the pre-intervention test to the post-intervention test.

The Chapter identified the appropriate data that provided answers to the three leading research questions in this study. Based on the data analyzed in this study, if intervention tests are properly executed as done in this research, it would help students to overcome their concord learning challenges.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This is the closing chapter of the study and it has spelled out the findings in this study as well as some useful recommendations based on the findings. These suggestions are deemed a “launching pad” by the researcher for improving upon English grammatical concord among senior high students. In previous chapters, the research questions were used as sub-headings to facilitate a good focus on issues discussed. Therefore, the findings are presented using the research objectives/questions as sub-headings for the same purpose.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

##### 5.1.1 What difficulties do senior high school students encounter in studying concord in English? (Research Question 1).

An analysis of the data revealed that senior high school students face some difficulties in studying English concord. The key ones are explained below.

First, data analysis in this study revealed that the student’s mother tongue (L1) affects him or her in some aspects of concord due to the syntactic differences between languages. There are some positive influences of the L1 on the student in learning concord, however.

Second, it was noticed that subject-verb concord posed the greatest threat to students, obviously due to its numerous aspects. Point of time past-verb concord, however, did not prove to be difficult to students.

On the various aspects of concord, peculiar challenges were encountered by students as discussed in chapter four.

Firstly, one of such areas was grammatical and proximity concord. The data in the use of the intervention test indicate that the students did not fully internalize the formation rules. This rule states that a singular verb requires a singular subject. A verb should, therefore, agree in an English sentence with the subject in number, person and gender. This therefore shows that the students had not understood the concord system.

Secondly, in the area of proximity concord, the verb agrees with the noun that is closer or nearer to it (i.e., the verb). The researcher realized, however that the use of “either.....or” and “neither....nor” posed a lot of problems to most students. They thought “either.....or” and “neither...nor” are always singular and so needed singular verbs. The data in the use of the pre-intervention test again showed students committing such errors. The students obviously did not know that when one subject or noun is singular and the other is plural, the problem is resolved by resorting to what is known as proximity concord; that is whichever subject or noun comes last determines the number of the verb. In other words, if the second subject or noun is singular, the verb will be singular and vice versa. Next to grammatical and proximity concord, the data also showed that students had serious problems with headword identification in complex noun phrases and demonstrative pronouns.

Again, it was observed by the researcher that students were unable to identify the headwords in complex noun phrases as well as select appropriate nouns to match their respective demonstrative pronouns during the intervention test. This causes the errors they committed in noun-verb concord exercises. The researcher observed that students failed to realize that it is the headword in a subject NP which determines

noun-verb, determiner-noun, noun-pronoun concord, etc. The researcher also noticed that it is very necessary, therefore, for the language teacher to introduce his students to English noun modification before he or she teaches them concord.

Further analysis of data revealed that another problematic area was the use of demonstrative pronouns. The researcher observed that the students had difficulty distinguishing between „this“ and „these“ as well as „that“ and „those“. Students seemed confused about whether „this“ is singular whilst „these“ is plural and „that“ is singular whilst „those“ is plural. They therefore failed to select appropriate nouns to construct grammatical structures.

Other areas of difficulty were verb-verb concord and the use of semi-conjunctions. On verb-verb concord, the researcher also realized in the pre-intervention test that a number of students did not know that English, like many West African languages, maintains the sequence: verb/present-verb/past within clauses in sentences.

Another thing the researcher realized was that students did not know that when semi- conjunctions (I .e intervening expressions) such as: together with, as well as, including, no less than, along with, in addition to, in conjunction with, with, in the company of, accompanied by, etc. ,are used to connect two elements making the subject in a sentence, the first element in the series should be made to agree with the verb.

Apart from the challenges of the verb –verb concord discussed above, the data also suggested that most students could not construct grammatical sentences with titles and adjectives as headwords. The rule states that if the two items that are joined refer to two different titles for one person the subject is considered singular and

therefore the verb is also considered a singular verb. The researcher realized however that this posed a serious problem for the students. They thought they were to use plural verbs and so constructed wrong sentences.

As far as adjectives taking the position of headwords are concerned, students were also faced with the problems of using appropriate verbs for adjectives that are used as headwords. Examples: the poor, the rich, the deaf, the aged ,the blind, etc. They did not know that when adjectives are used as headwords in noun phrases they have a generic reference and so are regarded as plural subjects/nouns and therefore take plural verbs.

Furthermore, data generated from the study also showed that most students thought “all” and “some” are always plural whilst intervening prepositional phrases were seen as expressions of addition. Whilst “some” and “all” were problematic for most students, it seemed that challenges with the use of inflectional concord and some indefinite pronouns were even more serious.

Indeed, it was also noticed in this research that some subjects with the plural inflection mark “s” are often confused for plural subjects. Indefinite pronouns, apart from “all” and “some”, such as none, each, every, anyone, someone, etc., also confused some students in this study when they (pronouns) stand in subject position in a sentence.

Finally, fractions were shown to be problematic for most students who used them as subjects in sentences.

### **5.1.2 Why do senior high school students encounter difficulties in studying concord in English? ( Research Question 2).**

From the analysis of data, it was revealed that the inability of students to overcome their concord learning challenges was due to certain reasons.

In proximity concord for instance, students became confused as to whether to select the first or the second subject to agree with the verb. They argued that this type of subject-verb concord was similar to semi-conjunctions as subjects in sentences, hence the reason behind the difficulty to distinguish between the two.

On headwords in complex noun phrases, the students had problems identifying their headwords. Where there were subjects with two titles, they misunderstood the subjects to be plural ones instead of singular. Where adjectives stand in subject position in a sentence, the students also mostly took them for singular subjects instead of plural ones.

In the use of intervening expressions or semi-conjunctions in a subject, they selected the second subject instead of the first, thereby confusing it with proximity concord. And finally, one other reason for their woes in concord was identified to be the use of fractions as subjects in sentences.

The study further revealed five major reasons that account for the poor performance of senior high students in concord in English, apart from the concord context problems identified above. These were disclosed by students to the researcher during the intervention teachings where he asked them to tell why they encounter those challenges in their academic exploration of concord. The reasons include: generally poor reading habit of students, lack of constant practice of concord rules by



students, difficulty in identifying subjects in sentences, rule exceptions and difficulty in mastering the numerous rules of concord. See Appendix 7.

First, it was revealed in the study that students of today, especially those at the senior high level, do not read extensively so as to polish their English grammar. If they were reading extensively, they would consciously or unconsciously learn the rudiments of concord in English.

Second, the study has shown that students do not put the concord rules they are taught into practice in their day to day use of English, making them (students) forget these rules easily.

Third, students, according to this study, find it difficult to identify subjects of sentences. In subject-verb concord however, one needs to know the subject first before considering which verb to select to match it.

The fourth reason for students' concord learning problems is the exceptions to some rules. Students find it confusing for instance that "I", a singular subject, should take plural verbs, contrary to the rule in grammatical concord.

Finally, the rules of concord are numerous, making it difficult for the student to grasp all of them. This leaves many of the students confused as to which rule to apply on what aspect of concord.

### **5.1.3 How can senior high school students be helped to overcome their problems in studying concord in English? ( Research Question 3).**

Five primary findings provided answer to this question. They were answers given by students during the intervention teaching which the researcher carefully

identified. These suggested remedies were the training of more qualified English tutors, doing extensive reading, provision of adequate and quality teaching/learning resources for English, the teacher making extra time to explain the rudiments of concord and teachers conducting as many intervention tests as possible for students. See Appendix 7.

First, the study pointed out that if more qualified teachers of English are trained, students will not face much problems in English grammar in general and concord in particular. It would take care of the large class sizes, thereby promoting effective teaching and learning.

Second, it was found that if students do extensive reading, it will cure them of their grammatical malaise, including concord. By reading broadly, the student would come across concord constructions and that would enhance understanding of concord concepts in class.

Third, it is revealed in this study that one way of checking these concord learning challenges is the provision of enough and quality teaching/learning aids in English. With the teacher properly armed, he would be able to deliver effectively.

Fourth, time allocation on the school timetable for English is said to be woefully inadequate in this research. The study showed that if there is extension of instructional hours to allow for better understanding of concepts taught, there would be an improvement in students' performance in concord.

Fifthly, the three intervention tests have provided an interesting revelation. There was a steady improvement in performance by the students at each intervention stage. It was discovered therefore that more intervention exercises can boost students'

understanding of the concepts in concord. Perhaps, this was the most striking revelation.

And finally, mother tongue interference was blamed for some concord errors committed though they admitted that it equally had its positive influences on concord in English.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Teachers of English should spend more time on the subject-verb segment of concord when treating the topic. The most confusing rules about concord, according to this study, are those on subject-verb.

The second recommendation is that, given the crucial role that concord plays in English grammar, the topic needs to be taught more frequently in class. Of the two grammar periods per week on the school general timetable, one should be allocated to the teaching of concord every week. Teachers should treat it as many times as possible because it serves as the baseline for the understanding of most topics in the English language. If that is done, the student would have had a good grasp of its concepts. This would enhance general grammatical development in our students.

My third recommendation is that teachers of English should endeavor to read and research into topics thoroughly before setting out to treat them. This will step up their content knowledge base in the subject, thereby making them be on top the job in class. It is said that you give out only what you have. If the teacher is lacking knowledge on a topic, he or she would certainly not be able to deliver.

My fourth and final recommendation is that students should be encouraged to do extensive reading as it will cure them of their grammatical malaise, including concord. By reading broadly, the student would come across concord constructions

and that would enhance understanding in class. Parents should therefore encourage their wards at home to read more.

Among other factors, the chapter spelled out some valuable suggestions aimed at improving the study of concord in particular and English grammar in general. These include: focusing more on subject-verb concord, teaching concord more frequently, organizing in-service training and extensive reading.

### **5.3 Summary**

This chapter outlined the key findings in the study. The concord learning problems of students, the reasons why students make concord mistakes and feasible ways by which the student could be assisted to surmount these problems were the focus of the discussion.

The concord learning challenges of students (research question one) were revealed through the intervention tests. The main challenges include L1 interference, subject-verb concord as well as peculiar challenges in identified areas of concord.

As to why students encounter concord learning problems (research question two) ,generally poor reading habit of students, lack of constant practice of the rules of concord, difficulty in identifying subjects in sentences, rule exceptions and difficulty in mastering the rules of concord were the data found in answer.

And finally, the question of how students could be helped to overcome their concord learning problems (research question three) was answered with the following data: training of more qualified English tutors, encouraging students to do extensive reading, provision of adequate quality teaching/learning resources, teachers making extra time to teach concord and teachers conducting as many intervention tests as possible.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**PRE – INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 HOURS**

**Name:**..... **Class:**.....

**School:**.....

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

1. The trees in our orchard (are/is/have) attractive.
2. A group of boys (live/living/lives) here.
3. Either the president or his Ministers(has/have)come here.
4. Neither the pastor nor his congregants(is /are) criminal.
5. That bundle of sticks (was/were/have) brought by mum.
6. Some sugar (need/needing/needs) to be added to the gari.
7. The downtrodden in our society (deserve/deserves) our help.
8. The aged (knows/knowing/know) their end is near
9. My secretary and typist ( have/having/has) fast fingers
10. Our outgoing S.P and presidents of the Debating club (speak/speaking/speaks) fluent English
11. Kenkey and fried fish with hot pepper (makes/making/make) a good lunch for me
12. The colonial government (did/does/do) not establish more schools
13. Back at the J.H.S, I (using/use/used/uses) to top my class in English
14. Yesterday, Hawawu (cuts/cutting/cut) her hand with a knife
15. The news was (broadcasted/broadcasting/broadcast/broadcast) from Radio Ghana, Accra.
16. The pastor as well as his followers (fear/fears) God
17. In the company of other ministers, the president (travel/travelling/travels) to Ethiopia for the AU. Summit.
18. My uncle in addition to his wife and children (were/was/have being) involved in an accident.
19. The angry soldier jumped down from the car, loaded his gun and (fired/firing/fire/fires) the thief.
20. Pregnant women were made to lie prostrate so that they (could/can/will/should) be spared.
21. He goes to school early but often (returned/returning/return/returns) late.

22. There (goes/going/gone/go) Dakurah again; he is still angry.
23. There (was/were) signs that everybody understood it.
24. There (live/lives/living) a man who has no hometown.
25. It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.
26. The orphans (eats/eating/eat) form the hands of philanthropists.
27. Their young ones (misbehaves/misbehave) because of them.
28. This (man/men/men's) makes a lot of fun.
29. (These/ this) sheep lost its shepherd.
30. (This/Those/That/These) days, there was no technology.
31. Derry is one of the farmers who (win/wins/winning) Best farmer Awards almost every year.
32. One of the issues of life that (frighten/frightens) me is the Judgment Day
33. His daughter is one of the girls who (are/is) selected for the Miss Wasec Beauty competition.
34. These (phenomena/phenomenon) is known as weathering .
35. The departure of my father (has/have) left me needy.
36. They those days met once a month and(discuss/discussed) matters affecting them..
37. Either the children or their mother (knows/know) the reason.
38. Neither the commander nor his men (shoot/shoots) poorly.
39. Either Abu or Cynthia (lacks/lack) good manners.
40. Ama and her brother (help/helps) their parents at home.
41. Joe (caught/cutted/cut/cuts) his hand yesterday.
42. The poor (needs/need) help.
43. The( is/are) miserable.
44. The farmer with his dogs(are/is) going to the farm.
45. The rich (does/do) not worship God well.
46. I (hate/hates) lazy people.
47. Emphasis (were/was) laid on the "verb".
48. Statistics (show/shows) that woman live longer than men.
49. None of the (students/student/students") (has/have) a red pen.
50. Each one of you (does/do) your own thing at home.

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 HOURS

Name:..... Class:.....

School:.....

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

1. Dakurah (know/knows/known) where to go tomorrow
2. She (make/making/makes) us happy always.
3. He (understand/understanding/understands) Dagaare.
4. I (read/reads/reading) the Bible every day.
5. Either the president or his ministers (has/have) come to the independence square.
6. Neither the pastor nor his congregants (is/are) criminal.
7. Indiscipline among students (are/is/have) on the increase.
8. Her uncles(teaches/teach/teaching) her morals always.
9. The death of two students of our school (have/has) made the district director come to the school.
10. None of the( boy/boys) is here.
11. One of subjects that (give/gives/giving) me problem in mathematics.
12. My parent (doesn't/don't) know.
13. They (eats/eat/eating) a lot.
14. The students (misbehaves/misbehave) towards our teacher always.
15. There (have/has) been misunderstanding between the two political parties.
16. Anyone in this room(need/needs)to pray.
17. It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.
18. Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they (can/could) pass their final examination well.
19. They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters effecting them.
20. My father as well as my mother (are/is) kind.
21. The father with his dogs (are/is)) go to farms.

22. The pastor no less than the member of his church (are/is) hypocritical.
23. In the olden days, our grandparents (suffered/suffers/suffer) a lot.
24. Indiscipline among students (are/is) on the increase.
25. All the members of my family (are/is) rich.
26. My father and pastor (comes/come/coming) here on Mondays.
27. Our literature tutor and form master (come/comes) from Nandom.
28. The aspiring member of parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development (worship/worshiping/worships) with the church of Pentecost.
29. The poor (needing/need/needs) help.
30. The pastor no less than the members of his church (are/is) hypocritical.
31. Either the children or their father (are/is/have) doing the cleaning.
32. Neither Ama nor her classmates (comes/coming/come) to school late.
33. All the water in the barrel (are/is) finished.
34. Some of the oil (have/are/is) stolen
35. The color of the roses (please/pleases/pleasing) us.
36. The flowers for the garden (is/are) pretty.
37. Mathematics (is/are) a difficult subject.
38. Statistics (show/shows/shown) that women live longer than men in Ghana.
39. Emphasis (was/were) placed on summary writing.
40. None of the (house/houses) (has/have) blue paint.
41. Everyone (know/knows/known) the right thing.
42. Each of us (thinks/thinking/think) about retirement.
43. Ghana underutilizes (it/her/it's/his) natural resources.
44. The hero in this play was born with a golden spoon in (his/her/their) mouth.
45. Three quarters of the earth's surface (is/are) covered with water.
46. Two thirds of Ghanaians (are/is) illiterates.
47. One sixteenth of my father's property (belongs/belong) to me.
48. (This/These) books belong to our teacher.
49. (These/This) minister is actually hard working.
50. These (day/days) civilization has reached everyone.



### APPENDIX 3

#### POST-INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 hours

Name:..... Class:.....

School:.....

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

1. I (work/works) hard in school.
2. Children (like/likes) playing with toys.
3. Bayor and I(come/comes) from the same village.
4. You (know/known) the rules of the game.
5. Our father as well as his wives (take/takes) good care of us.
6. The ministers in the company of the president (depart/departs) for the U.S.
7. My friend together with her parents (were/was) at the graduation ceremony.
8. Banku and fried fish with hot pepper (makes/making/make) a good lunch for me
9. My father as well as my mother (are/is) kind.
10. At the SHS, I (using/use/used/uses) to top my class in Physics.
11. Last Tuesday, Rose (cuts/cutting/cut) her hand with a blade.
12. The news was (broadcasted/broadcasting/broadcast/broadcast) from Radio Ghana, Accra.
13. The confused passenger jumped down from the car, loaded his pistol and (fired/firing/fire/fires) the driver.
14. Young women were made to stand up all day so that they (could/can/will/should) be exonerated.
15. She goes to school late but often (returned/returning/return/returns) early.
16. There (goes/going/gone/go) Francis again; he is still angry.
17. There (was/were) signs that nobody liked it.
18. There (live/lives/living) a citizen who has no country.
19. Their colleagues (believe/belief/believes/beliefs) in them.
20. The jobless (eats/eating/eat) from the hands of the working class.
21. Our young ones (misbehaves/misbehave) because of us.
22. These (man/men/men's) make a lot of observations.
23. The poor (getting/gets/get) help
24. Indiscipline among students (are/is/has) on the increase.
25. All the members of my family ( is/are/do) rich.

26. The death of two students of our school (have/has/is) made the district director come to the school.
27. A box full of pens (were/was/have) found outside the classroom.
28. The blind (appear/appears) miserable.
29. The deaf (demonstrates/demonstrate) when talking.
30. All the kerosene (are/is) sold.
31. All the water in the barrel (are/is) finished.
32. Some of the oil (have/are/is) stolen.
33. The color of the roses (attracts/attracting/attract) us.
34. Some of the kerosene (is/are) sold.
35. Some of the oil (is/are) stolen.
36. Statistics (reveal/reveals/revealing) that women live longer than men in Britain.
37. Emphasis (was/were) placed on the rules of concord.
38. None of the (door/doors) have red paint.
39. My father and pastor (come/comes) here on Mondays. Instead of: My father and pastor comes here on Mondays.
40. Our literature tutor and form master (come/comes) from Nandom. Instead of: Our literature tutor and form master comes from Nandom.
41. The aspiring Member of Parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development (worship/worships) with the church of Pentecost, Wa. Instead of: The aspiring Member of Parliament
42. Your daughter and secretary (leaves/leave) for London.
43. One sixteenth of all Nigerians (is/are) actively involved in business.
44. The flowers in our yard (are/is/have) nice.
45. A group of boys (live/living/lives) across the road.
46. One bundle of sticks (was/were/have) bought by the pedestrian.
47. It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.
48. They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters affecting them”.
49. Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they (can/could) pass their final examinations well
50. I sat for the last year’s private WASSCE and (perform/performed) well.

**APPENDIX 4 (a)**  
**ANSWERED PRE – INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 HOURS**

Name: Sherifa Sunguwa Class: 2A School: Isomie SHS

**PRE – INTERVENTION TEST 1.5 HOURS**

**APPENDIX 6 (a)**

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

- The trees in our orchard (are/'s/has) attractive.
- A group of boys (lives/living/lives) here.
- Her uncles (teach/teaches) her morals.
- Neither the pastor nor his congregants (is/are) criminal.
- That bundle of sticks (was/were/has) brought by mum.
- Some sugar trees (need/needs) to be added to the garb.
- The down-trodden in our society (deserve/deserves) our help.
- He (understand/understands) Dignere.
- A secretary and typist (have/having/has) fast fingers.
- Our outgoing S.P and presidents of the Debating Club (speak/speaking/speaks) fluent English.
- Kente and fried fish with hot pepper (makes/making/make) a good lunch for me.
- The colonial government (did/do/does) not establish more schools.
- Back at the L.I.S, I (use/used/uses) to top my class in English.
- Yesterday, Hawawa (cut/cutting/cut) her hand with a knife.
- The news was (broadcasted/broadcasting/broadcast/broadcasts) from Radio Ghana, Accra.
- The pastor as well as his followers (fear/fears) God.
- In the company of other ministers, the president (travels/travelling/travel) to Eritopia for the A.L. Summit.
- My uncle in addition to his wife and children (were/was/has been) involved in an accident.
- The angry sub-jar jumped down from the car, hauled (is/are) and (free/firing/fire/fires) the thief.
- Pregnant women were made to lie prostrate so that they (can/could/will/should) be spared.
- He goes to school early but often (returns/returning/return/return) late.
- There (goes/going/gone/go) Dakarah again, he is still angry.
- There (was/were) signs that everybody understood it.
- There (live/lives/living) a man who has an hometown.
- It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.
- The death of two students of our school (have/has) made the District Director come to the school.
- A box full of pens (were/was) found outside the classroom.
- This (man/men/men's) makes a lot of fur.
- (This/these) sheep lost its shepherd.
- (This/Those/That/These) days, there was no technology.
- Derry is one of the farmers who (win/wins/winning) Best Farmer Awards almost every year.
- One of the issues of life that (frighten/frightens) me is the Judgment Day.
- His daughter is one of the girls who (are'g) selected for the Miss Wasce Beauty competition.

- ~~XX~~ These (phenomena/phenomenon) is known as weathering.  
~~XX~~ The departure of my father (has/have) left me needy.  
~~XX~~ They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters affecting them..  
~~XX~~ Either the children or their mother (knows/know) the reason.  
~~XX~~ Neither the commander nor his men (shoot/shoots) poorly.  
~~XX~~ Either Abu or Cynthia (lacks/lack) good manners.  
~~XX~~ I (go/goes) to work early.  
~~XX~~ Dada and I (study/studies) together.  
~~XX~~ The poor (needs/need) help.  
~~XX~~ The blind (is/are) miserable.  
~~XX~~ The farmer with his dogs (are/is) going to the farm.  
~~XX~~ The rich (does/do) not worship God well.  
~~XX~~ I (hate/hates) lazy people.  
~~XX~~ Emphasis (were/was) laid on the "verb".  
~~XX~~ Statistics (show/shows) that woman live longer than men.  
~~XX~~ None of the (students/student/students') (has/have) a red pen.  
~~XX~~ Each one of you (does/do) your own thing at home.

11  
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- ~~44.~~ These (phenomena/phenomenon) is known as weathering.
- ~~45.~~ The departure of my father (has/have) left me needy.
- ~~46.~~ They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters affecting them..
- ~~47.~~ Either the children or their mother (knows/know) the reason.
- ~~48.~~ Neither the commander nor his men (shoot/shoots) poorly.
- ~~49.~~ Either Abu or Cynthia (lacks/lack) good manners.
- ~~50.~~ We (make/makes) use of natural resources.
- ~~51.~~ My uncle and I (use/using/used) to live here.
- ~~52.~~ The deaf (shout/shouts) when talking.
- ~~53.~~ The <sup>poor</sup> (is/are) miserable.
- ~~54.~~ The farmer with his dogs (are/is) going to the farm.
- ~~55.~~ The rich (does/do) not worship God well.
- ~~56.~~ I (hate/hates) lazy people.
- ~~57.~~ Emphasis (were/was) laid on the "verb".
- ~~58.~~ Statistics (show/shows) that woman live longer than men.
- ~~59.~~ None of the (students/student/students') (has/have) a red pen.
- ~~50.~~ Each one of you (does/do) your own thing at home.

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## APPENDIX 5

### Intervention Exercise Leading to the Intervention Test

After the pre-intervention test, which was purely diagnostic, the researcher noticed that the students generally did not understand the fundamental principles of concord and so he spelled out some remedial guidelines aimed at helping students to understand the concepts underpinning the topic “concord”. These are explained below.

#### a. Subject-verb concord

1. Grammatical concord: singular subjects, e.g. child, boy, tree etc. take singular verbs, e.g. eats, walks, goes, etc. E.g.: *Kofi reads a lot at home*. If the verb were to be “read” it would be wrong.
2. Proximity concord: When “Either...or” and neither...nor” are used with twin subjects, the subject closer to the verb should agree with the verb. E.g: *Either Olu or his parents know the road*. If the verb were to be “knows” it would be wrong.
3. Indefinite pronouns: Indefinite pronouns such as everyone, none, each, etc. are singular by nature and should take singular verbs. E.g: *Each of the boys has a pen*. If the verb were to be “have” it would be wrong.
4. Headword identification in complex noun phrases: In noun phrases, the headword should be made to agree with the verb. E.g.: *The demise of three family members has confused him*. If the verb were to be “have”, it would be wrong.
5. Subjects with s-infections: Subjects ending with “s” but which are singular in nature should take singular verbs. E.g. *Statistics shows that Africans are stronger than Europeans*. If the verb were to be “show”, it would have been wrong.
6. There +Verb +Noun Phrase: When this structure is used, the middle element (verb) should be singular. E.g: *There has been misunderstanding between the two parties*. If the verb were to be “have” it would have been wrong.
7. Semi-conjunctions/Intervening expressions: When these expressions, e.g together with, as well as, accompanied by, etc are used with twin subjects the first subject should agree with the verb. E.g: *John in the company of his*

*siblings, studies Mathematics*. If the verb were to be “study” it would have been wrong.

8. Two titles for one thing: If two titles or descriptions refer to one subject in a sentence, the verb to agree with that subject should be singular. E.g: *His uncle and mentor teaches him morals*. If the verb were to be “teach” ,it would have been wrong.
9. Adjectives as headwords: When adjectives, e.g the poor, the blind, the religious, etc are used as subjects they take plural verbs. E.g: *The wealthy find it difficult to be religious*. If the verb were to be “finds” it would be wrong.
10. The indefinite pronouns “All” and “some”: Although these two pronouns suggest plurality by their nature, they take singular verbs when made to go with non-count nouns, e.g water. E.g: *All the salt was used* .If the verb were to be “were” it would have been wrong.
11. Intervening prepositional phrases: The subject of a sentence can never be the object of a preposition ,hence in prepositional phrases the element other than the object of the preposition should be made to agree with the verb. E.g: *The beauty of the flowers attracts me*.If the verb were to be “attract” it would have been wrong.
12. Use of fractions: When fractions stand in subject position in a sentence, they are singular subjects and should take singular verbs .E.g: *Three quarters of them knows them*. If the verb were to be “knows” it would have been wrong.
13. Notional concord: Some subjects can be matched with either plural or singular verbs depending on the perception of the speaker, e.g police, PNC ,staff, etc. E.g: *The audience keep enjoying the programme*. If the verb were to be “keeps” it would have been wrong.

**EXCEPTIONS:** The subjects “you” and “I” in subject verb-concord do not follow the rules spelled out in grammatical concord.

1.You:The pronoun “you” can be used to replace either singular or plural nouns. However, whether it is used to replace singular or plural noun, it takes plural verbs.

E.g: a. *You hate lazy people*.(correct)

b. *You hates lazy people*.(incorrect)

2.I:This pronoun is singular by nature and therefore ,in conformity with the rule in grammatical concord, should take singular verbs. However, it takes plural verbs.



- E.g: a. *I pray every morning.*(correct)  
b. *I prays every morning.*(incorrect)

### **b. Noun-Pronoun Concord**

1.Pronoun and its antecedent concord: When a pronoun is used to replace a noun(its antecedent),the verb should agree with the antecedent and not any nominal element before the antecedent. E.g: Joojo is one of the traders who sell faster. If the verb “sell” were to be “sells”, it would have been wrong because the antecedent of the pronoun “who” is traders and not Joojo

2. The demonstrative pronouns :*This, That, Those, These*: ”This” and “That” are singular pronouns and require singular verbs whilst “These” and “Those” are plural pronouns and require plural verbs. E.g:

- a. *This boy*.....(correct).  
b. *This boys* .....(incorrect).  
c. *These houses*.....(correct).  
d. *These house*.....(incorrect),etc.

3.Nouns and corresponding pronouns: Singular nouns should be replaced with singular verbs and vice versa. Also, a masculine noun should be replaced by a masculine pronoun and vice versa.

- E.g: a. *Ama lost her book.*(correct)  
b. *Ama lost his book.*(incorrect)  
c. *The students left his pens here.*(incorrect)

### **c. Verb-Verb Concord**

When verbs in a grammatical structure are two or more, they should maintain the structure :present-present or past-past.

- E.g: a. *He came and went back home.*(correct)  
B. *He came and goes back home.*(incorrect)

### **d. Point Of Time Past-Verb Concord**

When points of time past references are used in sentences ,the verb(s) in those sentences should be in the past tense.

- E.g: a. *Last year, she bought a car.* (correct)  
b. *Last year, she buys a car.* (incorrect)

APPENDIX 6 (a)

ANSWERED INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 HOURS

Name: EBENEZER DABUD Class: 2C School: K/A S/S

INTERVENTION TEST 1.5 HOURS APPENDIX 8 (a)

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

- ~~X~~ Dakurah (know/knows/known) where to go tomorrow.
- ~~X~~ She (make/making/makes) us happy always.
- ~~X~~ He (understand/understanding/understands) Dagaare.
- ~~X~~ I (read/reads/reading) the Bible every day.
- ~~X~~ Either the president or his ministers (has/have) come to the independence square.
- ~~X~~ Neither the pastor nor his congregants (is/are) criminal.
- ~~X~~ Indiscipline among students (are/is/have) on the increase.
- ~~X~~ Her uncles (teaches/teach/teaching) her morals always.
- ~~X~~ The death of two students of our school (have/has) made the district director come to the school.
- ~~X~~ None of the (boy/boys) is here.
- ~~X~~ One of subjects that (give/gives/giving) me problem in mathematics.
- ~~X~~ My parent (doesn't/don't) know.
- ~~X~~ They (eats/eat/eating) a lot.
- ~~X~~ The students (misbehaves/misbehave) towards our teacher always.
- ~~X~~ There (have/has) been misunderstanding between the two political parties.
- ~~X~~ Anyone in ~~this~~ room (need/needs) to pray.
- ~~X~~ It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.
- ~~X~~ Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they (can/could) pass their final examination well.
- ~~X~~ They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters effecting them.
- ~~X~~ My father as well as my mother (are/is) kind.
- ~~X~~ The father with his dogs (are/is) go to farms.
- ~~X~~ The pastor no less than the member of his church (are/is) hypocritical.
- ~~X~~ In the olden days, our grandparents (suffered/suffers/suffer) a lot.
- ~~X~~ Indiscipline among students (are/is) on the increase.
- ~~X~~ All the members of my family (are/is) rich.
- ~~X~~ My father and pastor (comes/come/coming) here on Mondays.
- ~~X~~ Our literature tutor and form master (come/comes) from Nandom.
- ~~X~~ The aspiring member of parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development (worship/worshipping/worships) with the church of Pentecost.
- ~~X~~ The poor (needing/need/needs) help.
- ~~X~~ The pastor no less than the members of his church (are/is) hypocritical.
- ~~X~~ Either the children or their father (are/is/have) doing the cleaning.
- ~~X~~ Neither Ama nor her classmates (comes/coming/come) to school late.
- ~~X~~ All the water in the barrel (are/is) finished.
- ~~X~~ Some of the oil (have/are/is) stolen.
- ~~X~~ The color of the roses (please/pleases/pleasing) us.
- ~~X~~ The flowers for the garden (is/are) pretty.
- ~~X~~ Mathematics (is/are) a difficult subject.

- ~~38.~~ Statistics (show/shows/shown) that women live longer than men in Ghana.
- ~~39.~~ Emphasis (was/were) placed on summary writing.
- ~~40.~~ None of the (house/houses) (has/have) blue paint.
- ~~41.~~ Everyone (know/knows/known) the right thing.
- ~~42.~~ Each of us (thinks/thinking/think) about retirement.
- ~~43.~~ Ghana underutilizes (it/her/it's/his) natural resources.
- ~~44.~~ The hero in this play was born with a golden spoon in (his/her/their) mouth.
- ~~45.~~ Three quarters of the earth's surface (is/are) covered with water.
- ~~46.~~ Two third of Ghanaians (are/is) illiterates.
- ~~47.~~ One sixteenth of my father's property (belongs/belong) to me.
- ~~48.~~ (This/These) books belong to our teacher.
- ~~49.~~ Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they (can/could) Pass their final examinations well.
- ~~50.~~ I sat for the last year's private WASSCE and (perform/performed) well.

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Good!

APPENDIX 6 (b)

ANSWERED INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 HOURS

Name: HAMZA FUSEINI Class: 2A School: ISLAMIC SHS

INTERVENTION TEST 1.5 HOURS APPENDIX 8 (b)

From the options provided in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate option to complete each sentence.

1. Dakurah (know/knows/known) where to go tomorrow
2. She (make/making/makes) us happy always.
3. He (understand/understanding/understands) Dagaare.
4. I (read/reads/reading) the Bible every day.
5. Either the president or his ministers (has/have) come to the independence square.
6. Neither the pastor nor his congregants (is/are) criminal.
7. Indiscipline among students (are/is/have) on the increase.
8. Her uncles (teaches/teach/teaching) her morals always.
9. The death of two students of our school (have/has) made the district director come to the school.
10. None of the (boy/boys) is here.
11. One of subjects that (give/gives/giving) me problem in mathematics.
12. My parent (doesn't/don't) know.
13. They (eats/eat/eating) a lot.
14. The students (misbehaves/misbehave) towards our teacher always.
15. There (have/has) been misunderstanding between the two political parties.
16. Anyone in this room (need/needs) to pray.
17. It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.
18. Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they (can/could) pass the final examination well.
19. They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters effecting them.
20. My father as well as my mother (are/is) kind.
21. Your daughter and secretary (leave/leaves) for London.
22. The pastor no less than the member of his church (are/is) hypocritical.
23. In the olden days, our grandparents (suffered/suffers/suffer) a lot.
24. Indiscipline among students (are/is) on the increase.
25. All the members of my family (are/is) rich.
26. My father and pastor (comes/come/coming) here on Mondays.
27. Our literature tutor and form master (come/comes) from Nandom.
28. The aspiring member of parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development (worship/worshiping/worships) with the church of Pentecost
29. The poor (needing/need/needs) help.
30. The pastor no less than the members of his church (are/is) hypocritical.
31. Either the children or their father (are/is/have) doing the cleaning.
32. Neither Ama nor her classmates (comes/coming/come) to school late.
33. All the water in the barrel (are/is) finished.
34. Some of the oil (have/are/is) stolen
35. The color of the roses (please/pleases/pleasing) us.
36. The flowers for the garden (is/are) pretty.
37. Mathematics (is/are) a difficult subject.
38. Statistics (show/shows/shown) that women live longer than men in Ghana.
39. Emphasis (was/were) placed on summary writing.



## APPENDIX 7

### Intervention Exercise Prior To Post-Intervention Test

After the intervention test, the researcher identified nine (9) areas which still posed great challenge to students. They included grammatical, proximity, verb-verb, s-inflection, nouns and corresponding pronouns, Demonstrative pronouns, pronoun and antecedent, semi-conjunctions as well as two titles for one subject concord. The researcher revised the guiding rules on these aspects of concord as in Appendix 7 above with them and gave them a take-home assignment. This was the assignment:

*In your own words, explain each of the following areas of concord with the help of an example:*

1. Grammatical concord
2. verb-verb concord
3. Concord with s-inflection subjects
4. Concord with nouns and corresponding pronouns
5. Concord with demonstrative pronouns
6. pronoun and its antecedent concord
7. concord with semi-conjunctions
8. concord with two titles for one subject
9. proximity concord.

The researcher told the students that each one of them was going to answer a question verbally in class when they bring the home work. On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2015, the students in both schools were merged at the assembly hall in Wa SHS. They brought their work and the researcher randomly asked them questions on these aspects and the lesson went as follows:

**Researcher:** Mary, what do you understand by noun and its antecedent concord?

**Mary:** Sir, it means that when you have a sentence in which a demonstrative pronoun is used, the noun closest to the demonstrative pronoun, i.e. the antecedent, should be made to agree with the verb and not any other noun.

**Researcher:** Excellent! Please, clap for her! (Students clapped for Mary)

**Researcher:** Reuben, give an example of a sentence in which we have noun and its antecedent concord.

**Reuben:** It is one of the goats that destroy the plants.

**Researcher:** Is Reuben right?

**Students:** Yes, sir! (In chorus)

**Researcher:** Yes, he is very right. “Goats” is the antecedent of the pronoun “that” and it is plural, therefore the plural verb “destroy” is the right verb to match it.

**Researcher:** Hamza, what is your understanding of proximity concord?

**Hamza:** It is the situation where when you have two subjects in a sentence, joined by semi-conjunctions like as well as, together with, along with, etc. the first subject is made to agree with the verb.

**Researcher:** Good. Clap for him! (Students clap for Hamza)

**Researcher:** Can any volunteer give us an example of this type of concord? (Several students raised their hands)

**Researcher:** Yes, let's listen to Cynthia.

**Cynthia:** The teacher as well as her pupil's works hard.

**Researcher:** Yes, Salifu, is she right?

**Salifu:** No, sir.

**Hawii:** Sir, she is right!

**Students (In chorus):** Yes....,sir!!

**Researcher:** Salifu, she is right because the singular subject "the teacher" is the first subject in that sentence and must be made to agree with a singular verb, hence the use of the verb "works".

**Researcher:** O.k?

**Salifu:** Yes, sir.

**Researcher:** My next question: Sherifa, what is your understanding of verb-verb concord?

**Sherifa:** It means that when more than one verb are found in a sentence, the verbs should either all be in the past tense form or present tense form and not a mixture of the two.

**Researcher:** Correct! Ebenezer, give us an example quickly!

**Ebenezer:** I went to the market, bought some ingredients and returned home.

**Researcher:** Janet, is Ebenezer right?

**Janet:** Yes, sir!

**Researcher:** That's true.

**Researcher:** Sampson, explain the meaning of grammatical concord.

**Sampson:** This means that singular subjects in sentences take singular verbs whilst plural subjects take plural verbs.

**Researcher:** That's correct. But, Aboagye, can you give us an exception to this rule?

**Aboagye:** No idea, sir.

**Researcher:** Can anyone help Aboagye?

**Students (In chorus with many hands raised):** Yes....,sir!

**Researcher:** Ok, Stanley, please help him out.

**Stanley:** The subject “I” is singular but takes plural verbs.

**Researcher:** Good! George, explain to us the meaning of concord with two titles for one subject.

**George:** Sir, this is the situation where two descriptions of one thing are given as subject in a sentence, e.g, My friend and brother...

**Researcher:** That’s correct .Banzie, give us an example of such concord.

**Banzie:** Our father and role model does wonderful things.

**Researcher:** Is Banzie right, class?

**Students(In chorus):**Yes...,sir!

**Researcher:** Right, right, he is perfectly correct. I’m highly impressed by your responses this morning. I hope in the next intervention test you will all score 100%.

**Students(In chorus):**Yes...,sir!

**Researcher:** If there are any questions on any aspect of concord, please ask them.(class remained silent for about a minute)

**Researcher:** Are we all o.k with this topic? Can you answer every questions on it?

**Students (In chorus):**Yes. ., sir!

**Researcher:** Alright, please continue to revise your notes on this topic in preparation for our next intervention test on Wednesday May 20,2015.

**Students:** Yes.....,sir!!!

**Researcher:** Enjoy the rest of your lessons and have a nice day!!

**Students:** Tha.n.k you, sir!!!!

**NB: The students appeared to have understood the basic rudiments of concord by their responses in this intervention lesson.**

The researcher, in the lesson before the second intervention test, decided to solicit students’ views on why they (students) face problems in their study of concord as well as ways by which they think they could be helped to overcome these problems. Among other factors mentioned, the researcher noted the following key ones which were widely accepted by many students. In identifying each one of them as a major point, the researcher asked students to raise their hands to give their answers .After an answer was selected, the students were asked to raise their hands if they agreed with the particular answer given by the individual student. For the factors selected as



major, the hands in support were about half or more than half the class. Those answers that had very few hands in support were not captured as key points by the researcher. The key points were noted as follows:

**Researcher:** *Why do you encounter difficulties in studying concord?*

- Students :**
1. Subject identification in sentences
  2. Lack of reading materials to do extensive reading
  3. Lack of practice of concord rules in daily use of English
  4. Rule exceptions
  5. Rule mastery

**Researcher:** *In what ways can you be helped to overcome your concord learning difficulties ?*

- Students :**
1. More English tutors
  2. Extensive reading/regular speaking of English on the part of students
  3. Provision of adequate teaching/learning materials
  4. More instructional time
  5. Frequent intervention exercises

APPENDIX 8 (a)

ANSWERED POST-INTERVENTION TEST FOR STUDENTS 1.5 HOURS

Name: Gordon Dan-Nibui 2E School: WASEC

POST-INTERVENTION TEST 1.5 hours APPENDIX 10 (a)

From the options presented in brackets in each question below, select the most appropriate form to complete each sentence.

- (work/works) hard in school.
- (like/likes) playing with toys.
- Buy or and (cons/comes) from the same place.
- All the water in the barrel (is/was) finished.
- The father as well as his wife (take/takes) good care of us.
- He is a minister in the company of the president (elects/elected) for the U.N.
- She (sits/sat) together with her parents (work/work) at the graduation ceremony.
- (Two/Two) days, there was no technology.
- These (phenomena/phenomena) are known as weathering.
- (I) the S.H.S. (is/are) addressed by our my class in Physics.
- Last Tuesday, Rose (cut/cutting) her head with a blade.
- The news was (broadcasted/broadcast) broadcasted from Radio Ghana, Accra.
- The confused passenger (jumped/jump) from the car, landed his parcel and (fixed/fixed) the driver.
- Young women were made (to stand up) a day so that they (could/could) should be exonerated.
- She goes to school (but) not often (remembers/remembers) and early.
- There (is/are) (going/going) Farmers (again) to be elected.
- My father as well as my mother (are/are) and.
- There (is/lives/living) a village with five no country.
- Their colleagues (dislike/believe/believe) in their.
- The jobless (can/can) from the hands of the working class.
- My young ones (inhabitants/inhabitants) because of the.
- These (men/men) make a lot of decisions.
- The poor (get a gift) get help.
- Indiscipline among students (are/are) the increase.
- All the members of my family (is/are) all.
- The death of two students of our school (has/has) made the district director come to the school.
- A box full of pens (were/were) found outside the classroom.
- The child (appear/appear) miserable.
- The deaf (communicate/communicate) when talking.
- All the kerosene (are/are) sold.
- Either the children or their father (are/are) during the cleaning.
- Neither Ama nor her classmates (come/come) to school.
- The colour of the robes (attracted/attracted) us.
- Some of the kerosene (is/are) sold.
- Some of the oil (is/are) stolen.
- Patricia (reveal/reveal/revealing) that twenty-five longer than men in prison.
- The players (was/were) played out the rules of concord.
- Some of the doors (doors) have red paint.
- My father and pastor (confer/confer) here on Monday. Instead of My father and pastor.

comes here on Mondays.

40. Our literature tutor and form master (come/comes) from Nandom.

41. The aspiring Member of Parliament for Wa West and minister of local government and rural development (worship/worships) with the church of Pentecost, Wa.

42. Your daughter and secretary (leaves/leave) for London.

43. One sixteenth of all Nigerians (is/are) actively involved in business.

44. The flowers in our yard (are/is/have) nice.

45. A group of boys (live/living/lives) across the road.

46. One bundle of sticks (was/were/have) bought by the pedestrian.

47. It was believed that in those days these same men went and (prevent/prevented) them from being beaten.

48. They those days met once a month and (discuss/discussed) matters affecting them".

49. Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they (can/could) pass their final examinations well.

50. I sat for the last year's private WASSCE and (perform/performed) well.

$$\frac{39}{50}$$
 V. Good!



- 41 My father and pastor (Levin) were on Mondays. Instead of my father and pastor coming here on Mondays.
- 42 Our Member later and form army (George) from N. India.
- 43 The spring Member of Parliament for Wa West and Minister of Local Government and rural development was George with the name of George. We
- 44 The chairman and secretary (Levin) were in the
- 45 The secretary of all Nigerians (Levin) actively involved in business
- 46 The fathers in our year (Levin) were in the
- 47 A group of boys (Levin) were in the
- 48 The bundle of it also (Levin) were in the
- 49 It was believed that in those days there were men who were and poverty/presented them from being beaten.
- 50 The days that were on a ranch and Levin were in the
- 51 Students were made to write several mock examinations so that they could be prepared for their final examinations well.
- 52 It was for the last year's private WASSCE exam (Levin) were performed well

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V. Good!