

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

ANALYSIS OF CONCORD ERRORS AMONG SDA SENIOR HIGH  
SCHOOL STUDENTS OF BEKWAI MUNICIPALITY IN ASHANTI  
REGION, GHANA

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Master of Arts (English) degree.

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## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **COMFORT TORNYELI AZASU** declare that this Dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR:** Dr. Peace Chinwendu Israel

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**DATE** .....

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Comfort Tornyeli Azasu

## **DEDICATIONS**

This work is dedicated to the God Almighty for the strength, wisdom and knowledge. Also, to my lovely husband, mum, siblings and all my friends.



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## ABSTRACT

The poor performance of students of Bekwai SDA Senior High School in English language has been a source of worry to many people because other subjects they study have also been affected too. The most disturbing aspect of the problem is the students' inability to use the language to communicate effectively both in speaking and in writing. Their sentences are full of concord errors. This has been attributed to their negative attitudes towards the L<sub>2</sub> as most of the students feel comfortable using the L<sub>1</sub>. This study focused on concord errors among the students, and the sources/causes of the problems. Information gathered was from the primary sources. Students were given questionnaire to elicit information on their attitudes towards the English language. Written scripts, test items as well as interviews were used to extract information on students' knowledge and use of concord. Corder's (1974) model of error analysis was adapted to analyze errors identified from the corpus. Finally, the results of the study were analyzed and discussed, and suggestions and recommendations were given for the necessary actions to be taken to help students become proficient in the use of the L<sub>2</sub>.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the background to the study, the problem and the significance of the study.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The English language plays a very important role in the academic pursuit of students of senior high schools and other levels of education. English is used as a medium of communication at all sectors of life. In our schools, English plays a pivotal role since all the textbooks and instructional materials like syllabi and teachers guides have been written in English. This indicates the high value our educational system places on the language. English happens to be one of the core subjects taught in both junior and senior high school levels of education, and any individual who aspires to climb high in the academic ladder owes it an obligation to, at least, have a credit in the English language. Therefore, mastering English language is very important to students in Ghana.

Students are obliged to communicate in English whenever in school but the reverse is what we see in SDA Senior High School. This attitude is not helping the proficiency of our students in the L<sub>2</sub> since a good control of the language is a panacea for the achievement of better results in other subject areas. In that case,

everybody is expected to be competent in the language in order to function effectively in school, at work places and among other speakers of the language.

The downward trend of performance of students especially in English language has been a source of worry to the parents, government and other stakeholders. If this trend is not curtailed, one wonders the kind of future this nation has, since it will be unimaginable and suicidal to entrust the nation in the hands of leaders who cannot communicate effectively in the formal language of the country. Indeed, the level of proficiency in the English language at all levels of education raises concerns from the public, and students of SDA Senior High School are not left out in the bracket.

The English syllabus for senior high schools aims to improve students' communicative competence, raise their level of proficiency in English usage and also prepare them to function effectively on their own. To achieve these goals, students must be more conversant with grammar in the English language.

First of all, we are in the global village and English has become an international language all over the world. We as Ghanaians are to some extent more disadvantaged and we are already battling it out because English is studied in Ghana as a second language compared to the British who have it as a first language. If the learners/students are not guided to grasp the basic principles of how the language operates, then we are compounding the problem and the learners will suffer severe impediments of language transfer.

Language is spoken and written and it follows some systematic principles which have been accepted and used by members of any given society. Grammar is one

of the most integral parts of the English language which needs to be given the necessary attention. One main aspect of grammar which poses a lot of problems to students is concord. It is believed that a good grasp of the concept is a panacea to good performance in English language as well as other subject areas. The researcher's experience through interactions with students in and outside the classroom as well as colleague teachers reveals that concord is a problem at all levels of education. Concord rule deviances tend to bring out negative responses from both native and non-native speakers/ hearers alike. Such errors reflect badly on the speaker's personality since they tell us something about his educational background. It is for this reason that the classroom teacher needs to know errors students make and why they make them to enable him devise appropriate strategies to eliminate them.

Moreover, the Chief Examiner's Report in (2013) indicates that WAEC is unhappy with students' performance in English. It is said, the poor performance of English is particularly worrisome because it would be impossible for any candidate to do well in examinations if English language as a medium of expression is not mastered. One major weakness of the students is poor orthography and syntax; prominent among them is concord errors. The committee, therefore, called for a return to the policy of placing emphasis on lexis and structure.

It is for this reason that the researcher decides to analyze concord errors, look into possible areas of concord errors, and what can be done about the situation to improve students' competency in English.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many people express serious concerns about the poor standard of English language at various levels of education in our country. This poor standard is attributed to a number of factors, among is concord errors. Speaking and writing are useful only when they communicate meaning to both the speaker and the listener or the writer and the reader. This is possible when they both follow the rules of putting words together. This is called language usage. It makes language the same for everyone.

Students of SDA Senior High School have serious problems with concord. This becomes bare when they communicate, both in speech and in writing. The students are confronted with this problem as a result of their inability to adequately grasp the concept of concord and its rules.

The structure of the English sentences depends largely on the subject and its interacting verbs. Subject-verb concord is most basic in English language and it is being taught at all levels and for this to persist at the senior high level poses a big challenge and calls for attention. Most students do not understand concord, not even to identify the forms/sources. This reflects in every aspect of their work in the classroom.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research are:

1. To highlight the concord errors of students of SDA Senior High School.
2. To analyze the sources of concord errors in their communications.
3. To come out with useful suggestions that will help students overcome the difficulties they face in the use of concord.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study sets out to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What concord errors do students make in their communications?
2. What are the sources of the problems facing students in use of concord?
3. What measures can be put in place to assist students of SDA Senior High School to overcome the difficulties they face in the use of concord?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research will help to enhance students' academic performance in all subject areas and their general life as a whole since they turn to be good communicators. That is to improve students' grammatical competency and accuracy in their articulation and build upon their proficiency in the English language. This research work is justifiable because English is an important springboard for the learning of other subjects and so it needs to be taught well and learnt well.



The study will also help teachers and whoever uses English language to be able to use concord correctly in the language.

Finally, it will motivate teachers to adopt new ways of teaching grammar especially concord.

### **1.6 Delimitation**

SDA Senior High School comprises fifty (50) streams of classes in the school - twenty one (21) streams in SHS 1, sixteen (16) streams in SHS 2 and thirteen (13) streams in SHS 3. However, for the sake of quality work and time constraints the study is confined to only sample students of SHS 2, which is a representation of the school.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature on the topic under discussion. It looks at the relevance of literature to this study and the specific directions it can give to the researcher with regards to the analysis of data, as well as findings and recommendations.

The following are examined:

- What is concord?
- Types of concord
- Possible areas where students concord problems arise
- Error Analysis
- Error Analysis in Language Teaching



#### 2.1 What is concord?

Concord is a grammatical agreement between two words in a sentence. This agreement (concord) happens when a word changes form depending on the other words to which it relates. It is an instance of inflection, and usually involves making the value of some grammatical category such as 'gender and person' to agree with different words or parts of the sentence. For example; we say 'I am/he is' but not 'I is/he am'. This is because in grammar, the verb and its subject must agree in person or in number. The pronouns 'I' and 'he' are first

and third person singular respectively, so are the verb forms ‘am’ and ‘is’; therefore the verb must be selected so that it has the same person as the subject.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) opine that concord refers to the agreement relationship between two grammatical units.

Wiredu (1999) explains that the term concord in grammar is used to refer to the agreement relations which exist between two grammatical units so that when one unit displays a particular feature the other unit will also display a similar feature.

Blake (1988) is also of the view of the principle that the form of one grammatical unit in a sentence is influenced by the features of a different unit within the same sentence is referred to as concord. Hence concord reflects on number, person and gender. That is what the conventional rules of grammar require. Drennam (2003) supports Blake (1988) by describing concord as an agreement between words in gender, number, case or person. She cites these examples:

**Gender:**

- The queen has lost her crown.

The ‘queen’ is singular and a feminine gender, it takes a singular feminine pronoun ‘her’. Therefore, ‘queen’ has agreed with ‘her’ in gender.

**Number:**

- The shoes are too small.

The ‘shoes’ is a plural subject and it agrees with ‘are’ which is a plural verb. So ‘shoes’ has agreed with ‘are’ in number.

**Person:**

‘Person’ has to do with whether the noun or pronoun used is in the ‘first’, ‘second’ or ‘third’ person singular/plural. For example:

- I am thankful.
- He has done the exercise.
- Lydia and Joan have done the exercise.
- They have done the exercise.
- The boy likes his friends.
- The students like their friends.

According to Downing and Locke (2006) concord is a number (singular or plural) and person with verb, which are determined by subjects. They further state that concord is manifested in only those verb forms that show inflectional contrast.

Furthermore, Sekyi-Baidoo (2003) also explains that the verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, the subject can be singular or plural; and ‘person’ can be seen as the relationship between the speaker and the one he is speaking to or what he is speaking about. Moreover, concord in broad terms means agreement between the subjects and the verbs as well as other elements of the clause structure (Babajide, 2010; Leech & Svartvik, 1994). The idea of concord in the grammar of English suggests that for an English sentence to be correct and meaningful, its constituent parts must be in perfect agreement.

From the explanations of the various scholars, concord simply is seen as an agreement between the various parts of a sentence. Hence, the subject and the

verb in the sentence should display similar features. That is a singular subject must occur with a singular verb, and a plural subject must also be accompanied by a plural verb. It is an agreement between words in gender, number, case/person or any other grammatical category which affects the forms of the words.

So, concord (agreement) is the relationship between two grammatical units such that one of them displays a particular feature (e.g. plurality) that accords with the displayed (or semantically implicit) feature in the other.

## **2.2 Types of Concord**

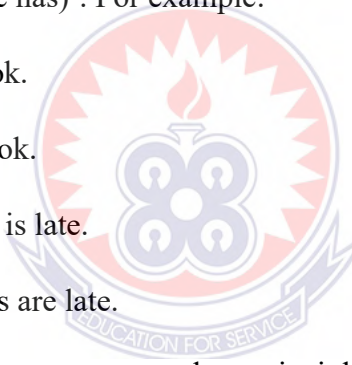
Communication is achieved primarily through speech or writing. To achieve proficiency in communication, whether oral or written, the knowledge of such grammatical elements like concord and others is necessary. There are different types of concord in the English language. Many scholars have analyzed concord and put them into various groups depending on the relationship that exists between the words of a constituent/ sentence.

To Quirk and Greenbaum (1990), the most important type of concord in English is concord of number between subject and verb. Hence, Estling-Vannestal (2007) opines that the subject and the verb are the two most important items in the sentence. According to her, concord is classified into four different types – grammatical, notional, concord of proximity and distance concord. These are discussed below:

### 2.2.1 Grammatical Concord

The grammatical concord is also known as subject-verb agreement/concord; this is an agreement between the subject and its interacting verb. The subject and the verb have to agree grammatically and the phenomenon is called subject-verb concord. The verb is considered to be the heart of the sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject (Woods, 2010). This implies that a singular subject requires a singular verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb. Estling-Vannestal (2007) again states that grammatical concord is when the verb and the subject ‘belong together (I have; He has)’. For example:

- I have a book.
- He has a book.
- The student is late.
- The students are late.



Drennam (2003) enumerates the principles governing the subject-verb agreement. To her, the most basic is the grammatical concord; that is, a singular subject requires a singular verb. Example:

- My son watches TV after dinner.

A plural subject requires a plural verb, example:

- My sons watch TV after dinner.

If the subject is a noun phrase (a phrase is a group of words forming a conceptual unit, but not a sentence, i.e. there is no verb), the number of the verb depends on the number (singular or plural) in the main phrase.

A clause in a position of a subject counts as singular for purposes of concord:

- What they say is wrong.
- To teach English language as a subject is not an easy task.

Prepositional phrases acting as subjects also counts as singular:

- After the exams is the time to relax.
- In the evenings is cool to think.

Nominal relative clauses on the other hand, since they are equivalent to noun phrases, may have plural as well as singular concord:

- What were once human dwellings are now nothing but piles of rubble.
- What was once a forest is now a desert.

It should be noted that plural words and phrases (including coordinated phrases) count as singular if they are used as names, titles, quotations etc. For example:

- Peace and Love is perhaps the best designed hotel in Amansie.
- K. Gyasi and Sons is doing very well in the construction business.

Exceptions to the concord rule arise with singular nouns ending with an apparent plural –s (measles, mathematics, physics etc.) or conversely plural nouns lacking the inflection (cattle, people, clergy, etc.); for example:

- Measles is a serious disease.
- Our people are complaining of economic hardship in the country.

Kirkpatrick (2013) classifies grammatical concord as verb agreement. According to her verb agreement is also known as concord and refers to the fact that a verb must ‘agree’ with the appropriate subject in number. Therefore, number agreement indicates that a singular noun is usually accompanied by a

singular verb; while a plural noun is usually accompanied by a plural verb. However, two factors interfere with grammatical concord as discussed above, and this brings us to notional and proximity concord.

### 2.2.2 Notional Concord

Notional concord is the agreement of verbs with their subjects and pronouns with their antecedent nouns on the basis of meaning rather than grammatical form. This implies that notional concord depends on the speaker's idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker. Notional concord is focusing on the meaning of the whole entity (Crystal, 2004); as in:

- Fifty dollars is a lot of money.

Parrot (2000) opines that plural nouns lacking the inflection (-s) such as a collective noun is considered singular when it refers to a group. In this case, the noun takes a singular verb. For example;

- The public is tired of demonstrations.
- The committee has accepted my proposal.

In these examples, 'public' and 'committee' are subjects in the sentences which refer to groups and are therefore treated as singular. This implies that the group is considered as a single undivided body.

On the other hand, when a collective noun is used to refer to the individual members of a group, the noun is treated as plural.



Examples:-

- The staff are meeting this weekend.
- The audience are enjoying every minutes of the show.

In the above examples, the subjects ‘staff’ and ‘audience’ are treated as plural because they refer to the individual members of the group.

Also, Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) assert that notional concord is agreement of verb with subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that idea. This means notional concord refers to the agreement between subject and verb not based on number and person, but on the speaker’s perception. Therefore, the speaker chooses a singular or plural verb based on his/her own idea about number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker of the idea.

Group or collective nouns such as team, crowd, audience, family, public, committee, army, government, congregation and others fall into this category.

So it is accepted to say

- My family is in Kumasi.
- My family are in Kumasi.
- The government have broken all their promises.

To them, collective nouns notionally are plural but grammatically singular. Although, singular and plural verbs are more or less interchangeable in these contexts, the choice is based, if on anything, on whether the group is being considered as a single undivided body, or as a collection of individuals. Thus,

plural is more likely than singular in “The audience were enjoying every minute of the show”; because consideration is being given to the individual reactions of members of the audience. Contrastingly, singular has to be used in a sentence like “The audience was enormous”.

### **2.2.3 Proximity Concord**

According to Wiredu (1999), proximity concord refers to the agreement between the verb and its subject based not on ‘notion’ but on the fact that there is a ‘nominal group which is immediately close to the verb. Concord of proximity does not, however, agree with the real subject in the sentence or the clause, it agrees with the closest noun and the number of that specific noun (Crystal, 2004). That is, it denotes agreement of the verb with a noun or pronoun that closely precedes it in preference to agreement with the head of the noun phrase. For instance, two singular nouns joined by ‘either.....or, neither.....nor, not.....but, and or’ take a singular verb; and if the subjects are plural, then the verbs must also be plural. However, in case one subject is plural and the other one is singular, the subject that is close to the verb must agree with the verb. That is how the principle of proximity works in grammar of the English language.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1985) affirm that the principle of proximity denotes agreement of the verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it and

sometimes in preference to agreement with the headword of the subject.

Examples:

- No one except his own supporters agree with him.
- Either the students or the teacher is late.
- Neither the farmer nor the labourers are not happy about the officer's attitude.
- The villagers or the king is invited.

#### **2.2.4 Pronoun Concord**

According to Wiredu (1999), this refers to agreement which exists between a pronoun and the noun it refers to. The agreement here involves three major features associated with pronouns – number, person and gender. This implies that noun pronoun concord calls for agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent in terms of number, person and gender. A pronoun which refers back to a singular noun phrase is in the singular, and a pronoun which refers back to a plural noun phrase is in the plural. Examples;

- The boy likes his toys.
- The boys like their toys.

If a sentence contains a proper noun 'Sammy' and later a pronoun 'he' refers to the same person, we say that they agree in number and gender. Example:

- Sammy is my friend, he is my friend.

‘Sammy’ is the same as ‘he’. ‘Sammy’ is a masculine singular subject and it agrees with ‘he’ which is also a masculine singular pronoun. ‘Sammy’ and ‘he’ agrees in person as well as in number.

### 2.2.5 Concord of Person

Quirk and Greenbaum (1990) state in addition to number concord, there is concord of person in the present tense. Examples:

- I am tired. (1<sup>st</sup> Person Singular Concord)
- You are tired. (2<sup>nd</sup> Person Singular Concord)
- He is tired. (3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular Concord)

But in the past tense, only the verb ‘be’ has distinctions of person:

- I was tired. (1<sup>st</sup> Person Singular Concord)
- He was tired. (3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular Concord)
- You were tired. (2<sup>nd</sup> Person)

It is further explained that in a coordinate subject noun phrase where the coordinator is *or* or *nor*, the last noun phrase determines the person of the verb in accordance with the principle of proximity. For example:

- Either my friend or I am signing the contract.
- Neither you nor the girl knows the answer.

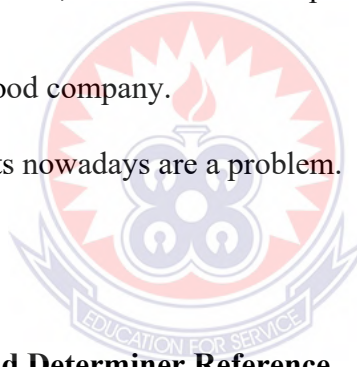
### 2.2.6 Subject-complement and Object-complement Concord

Again, Quirk and Greenbaum (1990) state clearly that there is concord of number between subject and subject complement and between direct object and object complement:

- My sister is a hardworking nurse. (subject complement concord)
- The sisters are hardworking nurses. (subject complement concord)
- I consider my sister a hardworking nurse. (object complement concord)

This type of concord arises naturally from the semantic role of the two complements. However, there are few exceptions:

- Dogs are good company.
- The students nowadays are a problem.



### 2.2.7 Pronouns and Determiner Reference

It is also usual that the agreement between a pronoun or determiner and its antecedent is co-reference rather than grammatical concord. A reflexive pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person and gender.

Examples:

- She hurts herself.
- I conducted the test myself.

Personal pronouns and possessive determiners in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons agree with their antecedents in number, but those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular also agree with their antecedents in gender. For example:

- Mavis knows that she is wrong.
- The boys were not ready, so I left them.

The relative pronouns *who*, *whom*, and *which* agree with their antecedent in gender. For example:

- That's the boy who took your money.
- Give the money which you took from my pocket to him.

Dondieu (2009) is of the view that the principles underlying concord (or agreement) govern the relationship of various parts of a sentence to one another; therefore, language users must adhere to them.

From the above discussions, it is apparent that concord is a grammatical agreement between two words in a sentence. The agreement between a subject and its accompanying verb or a pronoun and its antecedent or any other elements of a constituent structure is what concord is all about. Thus, concord or agreement occurs when one element in a sentence takes on the morphosyntactic features of another element. There is no freedom of choice between the forms of verbs especially where subject – verb agreement is concerned. Inadequate understanding of such rules of grammar is the general cause of errors.

### 2.3 Possible Areas of Concord Errors

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) state “the rule that the verb matches its subject in number may be called grammatical concord.” Difficulties over concord arise through conflict between these and the other two – notional and proximity concord. According to Woods (1999), different language teachers have different approaches to grammar in the classroom. Most people, who have considered the definitions and overlooked it, have found a tension between form and grammar as a source for meaning. He points out that the various approaches teachers use to teach concord is the genesis of concord errors among the students. This problem arises since many people are uncertain about where parameters lie. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) see the different concord types to be the likely areas where students’ concord problems rest.

On the other hand, Sakyi- Baidoo (2003) asserts that there are rules governing the way grammatical items are put together. Violation of these rules makes sentence construction ungrammatical. He lists the following areas as where students’ concord problems rest:

- a. Certain nouns which are plural in form but singular in meaning, generally take a singular verb. The most common of these are Mathematics, news, statistics, linguistics, electronics, ethics, physics, dynamics etc.
- b. A collective noun takes a singular verb when the clause is considered as a unit, a plural verb when the members of the class are considered individually. Examples:
  - The crowd is in a festive mood.

- The crowd are in a festive mood.

- c. Plural numbers take a singular verb when they are in a phrase to indicate a sum or a unit.
- d. Such indefinite pronouns as anybody, each, either, everybody, neither, nobody, no one and somebody generally require a singular verb.
- e. When the subject is a relative pronoun, the verb agrees with the antecedent of pronoun.
- f. When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'and' the plural form of the verb is required.
- g. When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'or', 'nor', 'but', a singular form of the verb is required.
- h. When one of the two subjects is connected by 'or, nor, but' one is singular and the other is plural, 'then, the verb agrees in number with the nearer one.

Both scholars hold the same view on the possible areas where students' concord problems rest. They attribute the problems to inability of learners to grasp the rules in the various concord types; and they commit a lot of errors as a result of this problem. There are cases where variation exists in subject –verb concord. Usually, when a subject consist of two coordinate heads (that is when the subject is a noun group with two heads joined together by 'and', the verb goes into the plural base form but if the subject is thought to form a singular notional entity, then singular verb with the (-s) form is used.

Again, a compound subject that is joined by 'and' or 'both' is plural except



when the joined words make a single unit or when they both refer to the same person or thing as in:

1. Rice and stew is my favourite .
2. My teacher and advisor is in school today.
3. My teacher and advisor are in town.
4. Both Maame and Gladys are leaving for Accra.
5. Maame's mother and advisor like disciplined students.

Sentences of this nature pose problems to students since they do not get the concept very well. In sentence 1 and 2, the subjects used refer to one entity (unit) – ‘rice and stew’ is just an item (a meal) and ‘my teacher is the advisor’, so the noun ‘advisor’ refers to the same person, ‘my teacher’, therefore, the subjects in 1 and 2 take singular verb. However, in 4 and 5, the subjects used are two individuals joined with a conjunction ‘and’ which form a compound subject, so they take a plural verb. This has to do with notion rather than the form of the sentence. Notional concord poses a lot of problems since it solely depends on the speaker's perception of numbers.

Moreover, Yankson (1994) also groups concord errors into six categories as:

### **Typical Developmental Errors**

Developmental errors, according to him, are errors that are typical of all second language learners. Even though most of the learners know the guiding principles, they still commit errors. Presumably, such people have not fully

internalized the formation rules; that is the concord system has not registered on their memory with sufficient firmness. Typical errors under this head have to do with the inflectional problems of persons, especially third person singular nouns/nominals. Examples:

\*Life **have** not been easy. (the verb ‘have’ has not agreed with the subject, the appropriate verb to be used is ‘has’)

\*Unemployment **attract** people to engage in crime. (the correct verb form is ‘attracts’)

\*Our teachers **is** not teaching. (‘is’ cannot go with the subject, the correct verb is ‘are’)

### **Notional Concord Errors**

The principle under notional concord sometimes comes into conflict with grammatical concord - thus, the rule that a singular subject requires a singular verb is ‘notional concord’. Examples:

\*The society at large hold the university students in a high esteem.

\*The energy of the employed able-bodied men are being wasted.

He explains that the speaker conceives of ‘society’ as a collective noun, as a collection of individual people, and it is this notion of plurality, rather than grammatical singular subject, ‘society’ which selects the plural verb ‘hold’ in the first example. However, the error can also be explained in terms of proximity in example two, that is the speaker is influenced by the immediately

preceding plural noun, 'men' in his choice of the plural verb. Speaker in the second example, it is the situational context which selects the plural noun for the speaker. To him the workers do not possess one individual energy; each one of them possesses his own energy. His conception of the noun, 'energy' is therefore plural and it is this notion of plurality which comes into conflict with grammatical concord which would demand a singular verb in the context.

### **Proximity Concord Errors**

Other errors can be attributed to the principle of proximity, that is, the verb agreeing with the noun immediately preceding it in a sentence. Sometimes students become confused with the verb form that should follow the nouns in the context since their understanding of this principle is not fully grasped. For instance:

\*A long discussion on Senchi conscientious about our challenges have finally come to an end.

\*The reason for the high cost of living in our towns and cities are unacceptable.

You can see that in the above sentences, the students use plural verbs because the nouns preceding the verbs are in the plural forms; this is incorrect since those nouns are not the head of the noun phrase, so the principle of proximity cannot be applicable in this context.

### **Memory Limitation Concord Errors**

When noun phrases acting as subjects of sentences are somehow long, most students tend to forget the right subject which should have entered into concord relationship with the verb because of the distance in terms of memory span - between the noun phrase and the verb phrase. For example:

\*A closer look into the performances and achievements of some certificate holders have shown that our educational institutions need total transformation.

The use of 'have' in this sentence is unacceptable, and can be attributed to memory limitation since the student could not identify the right word (the head of the noun phrase) to match with the verb.

### **Plural Inflectional Concord Errors**

Some words (nouns) originally ends with (-s), but these nouns are not plurals. Some students misconstrue them to be plural since they end with (-s), and they use them with the plural forms of verbs; it is incorrect that way.

Examples:

\*Mathematics have been a difficult subject to many students.

\*Tuberculosis are a deadly disease.

The students have mistaken the (-s) endings of the nouns for the plural inflection and assigned them plural verbs.

### **Inability to Identify Noun Headword**

Under this, all the errors under Proximity and Memory limitation can also be attributed to the inability of the students to identify the headword of the noun phrase. Sometimes students are not able to identify noun heads in noun phrases or even the subjects of sentences. This makes the situation more complex than what one can think of, students find it cumbersome to differentiate between singular and plural nouns or singular and plural verbs since they do not know the headword. Example:

\*The boy together with the girls are visiting the zoo.

\*Climbing mountains are a challenge people enjoy.

According to him, the second language learners' interlanguage is characterized by inconsistencies. This reflects most commonly in subject\_verb concord, as in:

\*He refuses to go to school until his mum buy him a new shoe.

\*The school also have a sufficient teachers who are responsible.

\*Rhymes helps in their language acquisition process and encourage them to listen carefully.

Such inconsistencies are signs that the learners are passing through transitional phase in their language learning development and that, as time goes on, they will, hopefully 'arrive at a system'.

Again, Kirkpatrick (2014) says concord per se is not a big issue in English since verbs in English generally have the same form, irrespective of

number, apart from the change of form in the third person singular of the present tense when *-s* or *-es* is added to the base form. A difficulty only arises when a subject takes the form of a singular noun linked to a plural noun by *of*, as in

\*A number of problems has arisen.

Although it is grammatically correct to use a singular verb here, it is common in modern usage to have the verb agreeing with the plural noun because it is nearest to it, thus sounding more natural, as

- A number of problems have arisen.

This is becoming more and more common, although it is grammatically wrong. So you could say that common sense is now prevailing. She also attests to the fact that group or collective nouns such as committee, family, government, jury etc. can cause problems in relation to verb agreement since some of these words can be accompanied by either a singular or a plural verb depending on the context. That is, the choice depends on the notion of the speaker, whether he wishes to emphasize the unity of the group of things or people referred to, or whether the individual components are to be emphasized.

Another area where the principle of agreement can be troublesome is when the subject is made up of two or more singular nouns connected by a phrase, which in some way, emphasizes the 'togetherness' of the nouns, such as together with, as well as, with and plus, the verb takes the singular form. But most learners become confused as a result of the presence of the intervening phrase(s).

## 2.4 Error Analysis

Second Language (L<sub>2</sub>) learning is a process that is clearly not unlike the first language (L<sub>1</sub>) acquisition in its trial-and-error nature. Inevitably, learners will make mistakes in the process of acquisition and that process will be impeded if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback on those errors. To analyze learner language in an appropriate perspective, it is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and errors because technically they are two different phenomena.

Mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a ‘slip’, in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. Native speakers make mistakes. When attention is called to them, they can be self-corrected. However, error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker; it reflects the competence of the learner (e.g. Does John can sing?). Thus, an error is a learner language that deviates from, or violates a target language rule. Carl (1998) defines error as an unsuccessful bit of language, which seems to be succinct and compact a description. Accuracy occurs when learner language conforms to the rules of the target language, error occurs when it does not. The fact that learners do make errors, and these errors can be analyzed and corrected, led to a surge of study of learners’ errors, called Error Analysis. This is a method used to document the systematic errors that appear in the learner language. It studies the types and causes of language errors. Error analysis became distinguished from Contrastive Analysis by its examination of errors attributable to all possible sources, not just those resulting from negative

transfer of the native language. It is still widely used in language classes. The attraction of the Error Analysis lies in one's ability to isolate variability in responses, such as distinguishing true errors from mistakes.

Originally, error analysis mainly consisted of more impressionistic collection of common errors and their linguistic classification. This information was basically used to sequence items for language instructions or for remedial lessons (Ellis, 1985). However, today, Error Analysis has transformed into a systematic procedure used by both researchers and teachers to collect samples of learners' language, identify the errors in the sample, describe the errors, classify the errors according to their hypothesized causes and educate their seriousness. Even though the process for error analysis is more systematic and comprehensive today, it continues to experience changes as more and more proposals are added in an attempt to streamline it. Corder (1974) for instance, elaborated five distinguished stages in the procedure for Error Analysis (Lenon, 1991). These are:

- Collection of a sample of learner language
- Identification of errors
- Description/classification of errors identified
- Explanation of errors
- Evaluation of errors

(Ellis, 1985; Lenon, 1991)

According to Corder (1974) the following are the forms/types of errors that occur in the learner language:



Pre-systematic errors: these errors occur when the learner is unaware of the existence of a particular rule in the target language – the learner cannot give any account of why a particular form is chosen.

Systematic errors: this occurs when the learner has discovered a rule but it is the wrong one – the learner is unable to correct the errors but can explain the mistaken rule used and type.

Post-systematic errors: this occurs when the learner knows the correct target language rule but uses it inconsistently (makes a mistake) – the learner can explain the target language rule that is normally used. This procedure, Corder's (1974) steps in error analysis has been common in many studies involving error analysis. However, Lenon (1991) proposes a revision of stage two (2) of Corder's (1974) procedure especially in second language research. He proposes that in identifying errors, the first consideration should be unambiguously defining error. Lenon (1991) illustrates his proposals through a study of the narrations produced by four advanced learners, aged 20-24 years, who were German university students of English

Agor (2003) also analyzed concord errors in the writings of 300 teacher trainees from three (3) selected colleges in Ghana. Like Edu-Buando (1997), Agor (2003) chose the written texts or essays of participants as the corpus. Findings and conclusions from Agor (2003) showed that teacher trainees hardly had any explicit knowledge of concord rules. He recommended more attention for the teaching of English at the training level. The present study attempts to

analyze senior high school students' errors in concord usage using Corder's (1974) model.

## **2.5 Error Analysis in Language Teaching**

Since Corder (1967) highlighted the importance of considering errors in the language learning process, there has been a shift in emphasis towards an understanding of the problems learners face in their study of a language. Errors are indispensable to learners since the making of errors can be regarded as 'a device the learner uses in order to learn' (Selinker, 1992).

Also, Corder (1967) noted that a learner's errors are significant in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language. Research has provided empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving grammatical accuracy (White, Spada, Lightbown and Ranta, 1991; Carroll and Swain, 1993; Trahey and White, 1993). Indeed, as Carter (1997) notes, 'Knowing more about how grammar works is to understand more about how grammar is used and misused'. There is a need for students to recognize the significance of errors which occur in their writing, to fully grasp and understand the nature of the errors made. This requires English language teachers to be better equipped, more sensitive and aware of the difficulties students face with regard to grammar so that they can guide their students to become proficient.

Error Analysis has made significant contributions to language studies. For instance, it has refocused attention on error from a language processing and language acquisition perspective (Lenon, 1991).

Corder's (1974) analysis of learner errors has proved that the learner makes a significant cognitive contribution to learning (ibid). This insight has unveiled the strategies the learner uses to assimilate the rules of the language. This knowledge has been useful in shaping both first and second language research and teaching and learning (Ellis, 1985). For instance, Corder's (1967) "inbuilt syllabus theory" which determines the order in which grammar is acquired has given linguistic researchers and educators clues about how to organize the language syllabus (Lenon, 1991).

All these strengths nevertheless, there are widespread doubts in SLA about how errors explain the route or path learners take to learn language (Ellis, 1985). It is therefore not comprehensive enough to explain the process of language acquisition and processing. Fortunately, error analysis is a dynamic concept and as it continues to be streamlined, its impact on research and language teaching and learning will increase.

To conclude, it is important to establish the relevance of Error Analysis adopted as the framework for this study. The focus was to find out the correct use of concord, to eliminate any prejudice and to find the situation, that is, whether the students could use concord correctly or not.

Error Analysis was used in the study to analyze the errors students made. It

involved the five stages commonly used to analyze errors. For the purpose of this study, these stages were adopted to suit the nature of the study.

## **2.6 Summary**

The literature review touches on the various views of authors on concord, the types of concord and the possible areas where students' concord errors rest. Concord is a common syntactic feature especially of synthetic languages which present a variety of morphological shapes signifying the syntactic function of words: number, gender and case in nouns and adjectives, tense and aspect as well as number and person in verbs etc.

Most of the problems students face persists as a result of their inability to understand the underlying principles of concord, even to talk of identifying different parts of speech as well as noun heads in sentences.

This chapter has also reviewed available literature on error analysis as the important strategy underpinning the present study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods used in analyzing concord errors among the students of SDA Senior High School, Bekwai municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It gives an overview of the research design, the sources of data collected, the population and sample of the study and the type of sampling method used. It also discussed the methods, techniques and instruments of investigation that have been used for the study.

Methodology refers to ways of obtaining, systematizing and analyzing data Polit and Beck (2004). Creswell (2003) portrays it as a coherent group of methods that harmonize one another and that have the capability to fit to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question(s) and suits the researcher's purpose. Hence, Bowling (2002) explains that methodology is the complete structure of the research study, the size and sample methods, the practices and techniques utilized to collect data and the process to analyze data.

#### 3.1 The Research Design

Research design is a plan, a roadmap and blueprint of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions (Kothari, 2004), it is the heart of any study. Burns and Grove (2002) support the view of Kothari (2004)

that research design is a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Thus, research design is a model or action plan upon which the entire study is built, dictates the manner in which a study is conducted and provides the roadmap of study in terms of the sample, data collection instruments and analysis procedure. The overall purpose of this study is to analyze concord errors among students of SDASS. In order to reach the overall purpose of this study, a survey research design was used. The study is not restricted to perception through the physical eye only; rather, it involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people – perhaps about their characteristics, opinion, attitudes or previous experiences – by asking them questions and tabulating their answers. The ultimate goal is to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of that population. A survey research could be explained as a non-experimental study which mainly concentrates in extracting data about actions, assumptions, choices and attitude of a population through direct interrogation of a sample of the population (Polit and Hungler, 1996).

A survey is designed to gather data about predomination, dispersion and inter relations of the variables in a group. To Polit and Beck (2004) surveys gather information about the values, attitudes, activities, knowledge, aim and opinion of the people. It is concerned with conditions that exist, properties that prevail, beliefs, point of view or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt or trends that are developing and this does not usually involve the manipulation of any variable in any way.

Also, Creswell (2005) opines that surveys are procedures in research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people in order to describe the attitude, opinions, behaviours or characteristics. Descriptive surveys are appropriate for assessing current practices and conditions and to make wise decisions and plans to improve upon them.

Anastas (1999) also confirms that descriptive survey designs are used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon and to describe *what exists* with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. Descriptive research designs typically are characterized by the following:

- Use of observation of the subject under study in its natural setting or environment,
- Serves as a pre-cursor to more quantitative research design,
- Can form the basis for developing a more focused study,
- Can yield rich data that leads to important recommendations, and
- Collection of large amount of data for detailed analysis.

The use of the descriptive survey in this study therefore is to find out concord errors among the students and analyze the sources/causes of such errors in their communication. It is also to find out their attitudes towards grammar in particular and English language in general. According to Robson (2003) many or probably most surveys are carried out for descriptive purposes and are hence labeled as surveys. In this descriptive study, the researcher measures and describes the characteristics being studied in its natural environment. This is consistent with the purpose of the present study to analyze and describe concord

errors among students of SDASS.

The descriptive survey was considered the most appropriate design for conducting the investigation since it is the one that deals with things as they currently are (Creswell, 2003). This design is a very valuable tool for assessing opinions and trends. In survey, data can be collected in numerous ways. The most common methods used for survey data collection are questionnaires and interviews etc. Polit and Hungler (1996). Flexibility and broadness of scope are the greatest advantages of survey research. A survey would be useful in fulfilling the purpose of the study to analyze concord errors among the students of SDASS in Bekwai municipality.

### **3.2 Sources of Data**

Students of SDASS in the Bekwai municipality in Ashanti Region of Ghana were engaged in the data collection process.

#### **3.2.1 SDA Senior High School**

The Seventh - Day Adventist Senior High School, (SDASS) for short is the first institution established in Ghana by Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The school was founded in February, 1953 by the church purely as a private institution. The school existed alongside two other institutions – the Training College, Seminary and Printing Vocation which were established back at 1947.



The motto of the school is *Lumen Tuum Fulgeat* which translates as *Let Your Light Shine*.

SDASS is committed to equal education for boys and girls and does not discriminate on the basis of tribe, colour, sex, denomination or religious affiliation. Equal opportunity is given to every applicant and you can gain your admission and sustain your studentship by your academic capabilities and good conduct. Students' enrolment during the first year of the school was twenty (20) – nineteen (19) boys and a girl. The school by this time had four (4) tutors and one of them, Mr. I. K. Garbrah held the fort as caretaker/ headmaster pending the appointment of a substantive one. The first headmaster, Mr. N. C. Marberly, an American, arrived later the same year, 1953.

From these humble beginnings, the school has metamorphosed and matured into a fully-fledged school. In 1958, it was absorbed into the mainstream public system. The departure of the last expatriate headmaster Mr. J. D. Dorland saw the passing of the school into the hands of its first substantive African and longest reigned headmaster, Mr. C.Y. Kyeremeh in 1974. The Teacher Training College which had hitherto run alongside on the same premises was phased out. And the school was upgraded to offer Higher School Certificate (GCE A-Level) courses in Arts and Science in September, 1974. Later in 1990, a new crop of students were introduced to begin a new Secondary School education (Senior Secondary School). This came in to replace the GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels.

From 20 students in 1953, the school can now boast of 2,413 students (2014). This is made up of 1995 boarders and 418 day students. The gender ratio is almost equal. Male population is 1256 representing 52% and female 1,157 also representing 48% respectively. The school offers the following courses: General Arts, General Science, Agricultural Science, Business, Visual Art and Home Economics. The current numerical strength of teaching staff is one hundred and eighteen (118). This is made up of ninety six (96) males and twenty two (22) females under the leadership of Mr. George Oduro Yeboah (the current headmaster of SDASS).

It is assumed that students who are admitted into the senior high schools in Ghana have all passed through the basic school system and have written the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Therefore, they might have acquired the basic communicative skills to enable them fit into their new environment (senior high schools). But the case of SDASS today is very worrying; the situation needs to be addressed in order to salvage the future of this country, Ghana.

### **3.3 The Population of the Study**

The target population for the study was the second year students of SDASS in Bekwai municipality. SHS two students were targeted for participation as they had already been exposed to the concept under investigation (i.e. concord). They were students from Science, Agric and Visual

Art. The total number of students in the three classes was one hundred and thirty two (132).

### 3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

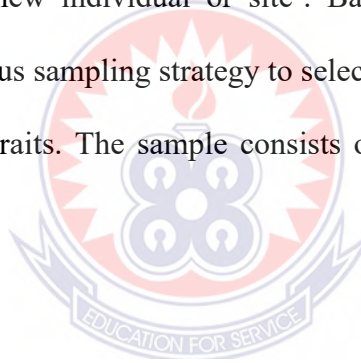
Sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of the population that conforms to a designated set of specifications to be studied. A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study (Polit and Beck, 2004).

The purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the second year students who were used for the study. This technique is more suitable for the studies located within the interpretive-qualitative framework.

According to Brink (1996), purposive sampling requires selecting participants who are knowledgeable about the issue in question, because of their sheer involvement in and experience of the situation. While Creswell (2003) states that purposive sampling refers to selection of sites or participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question, they must be willing to reflect on and share this knowledge. Again, Creswell (2008) indicates that ‘...in purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard used in choosing the participants and sites is whether they are *information rich*...’ This suggests that the participants were selected based on their particular knowledge of the phenomenon, for the purpose of sharing their knowledge and experiences with the researcher.

Purposive sampling was used because the researcher wanted to focus on those classes she taught in order to have an appreciable number for effective study and also for manageability. Many people perceive that students admitted into the vocational programmes are weak academically especially in the English language, so Visual Art was picked in order to have a blend of students for the study. In all a total of hundred (100) students were used for the study.

Creswell (2005) argues that selecting a large number of interviewees for qualitative research, in particular, will ‘result in superficial perspectives.....the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site’. Based on this idea, the researcher adopts homogeneous sampling strategy to select that number of students because of their common traits. The sample consists of fifty (50) males and fifty (50) females.



### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Research instruments are measurement tools (for example, questionnaires or scales) designed to obtain data on a topic of interest from research subjects. The instruments used for data collection in this study were interview, questionnaire, test item and written script. These instruments were selected because survey research allows for anonymous access into the thought processes and behaviours of a target group of people by asking the respondents to report this information themselves. It typically employs a face-to-face

interview or a telephone interview or a written questionnaire.

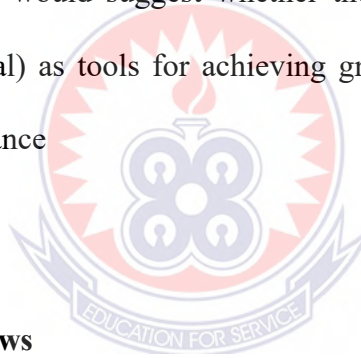
For the fact that this study focused on finding students' concord errors, the use of interviews, questionnaires, test and written script was appropriate. The use of the interviews was to supplement and extract data that could not be possible through the questionnaire and to validate some facts through triangulation.

Triangulation is the collection and analysis of data from varied sources. According to Sarantakos (2005), it refers to 'the practice of employing several tools (instruments) within the same research design'. Such data is compared to broaden the depth and scope of understanding of the research phenomenon and to verify conclusions and 'strengthen the study's usefulness to other settings'. One other reason for using these selected instruments was to certify validity and reliability of data collected through the process. Flick (2000) indicates that the strategy enables researchers to address all possible dimensions of a phenomenon, collect sufficient data for advancing knowledge; and address the limitations associated with using single technique for data collection.

### **3.5.1 Questionnaires**

A questionnaire is a means of eliciting the feelings, beliefs, experiences, perceptions or attitudes of some sample of individuals. As a data collecting instrument, it could be structured or unstructured. The researcher employed questionnaire to elicit information on attitudes of students of SDASS towards

learning of English language particularly grammar of which *concord* is the focus. This instrument was chosen because of uniformity of questions - each respondent received the same set of questions phrased in exactly the same way so that the data may be easily comparable. The questionnaires were designed/structured to test both cognitive and affective components in investigating attitudes of SDASS students to the English language, particularly grammar of which concord is part of. The purpose was to find out their knowledge of concord and their concord errors as well as their feelings about grammar and English in general. Thus, the goal of some of the questions was to elicit answers that would suggest whether the students perceive grammar (or language in general) as tools for achieving greater success, especially in their academic performance

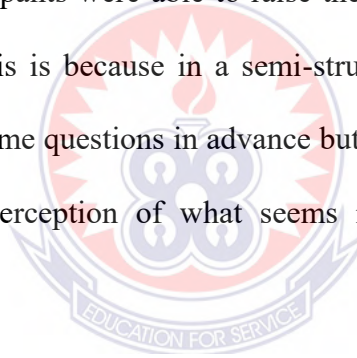


### **3.5.2 The Interviews**

An interview is a method of data collection in which one person (the interviewer) ask questions from the other (a respondent), interviews are conducted face-to-face or by telephone (Polit and Hungler, 1991). As part of data collection process, interviews were used to elicit facts from the students. Interviews were used because it supplements and extends our knowledge about individual(s) thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, meanings, interpretation etc. They are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participants' experience. The researcher used semi-structured interviews as the tool for data

collection to provide participants with the opportunity to fully describe their experiences. This method of data collection was chosen to allow the participants to share their own experiences in their own words, rather than being forced by pre-established lines of thinking developed by the researcher.

Interviews are also regarded as the best way for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Furthermore, interview methods were accepted as a valid method for studying experiences and perceptions about students. For this study, semi-structured interviews yielded rich data as participants were able to raise their views without the influence of the researcher. This is because in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer would work out some questions in advance but will be free to modify their order based upon his perception of what seems most appropriate in the context (Robson, 1993).



### **3.5.3 Test**

Ten questions were designed to cover the types of concord. This was done to find out how the students of SDASS could identify the various forms of concord. The questions were administered to all the hundred (100) students sampled.

### **3.5.4 Written Script**

End of term exam scripts were collected by the researcher for the study. The focus was on the written section (section B) of the paper. These scripts were examined to find out concord errors of the students (respondents).

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher administered the questionnaires and the test items to the students herself during their English periods. The selected students were first briefed about the purpose of the exercise before the questionnaire and the test item were distributed to them. They responded to the questions in the presence of the researcher, the questionnaire and the test item were collected after the exercise to ensure hundred per cent retrieval. The researcher then expressed gratitude to the students and advised them to study hard. For the interview, only some selected students were engaged. An interview guide prepared by the researcher was used for the exercise.

### **3.7 Tools for Analysis of the Data**

The basic tools of analysis of the data collected were item analysis, tabular and graph representations. And Corder's (1974) error analysis model was employed to aid in the analysis.



### 3.7.1 Corder's Error Analysis Model

Corder's (1974) model was adapted for the analysis of students' concord errors. This involved the stages commonly used to analyze errors. For the purpose of the study, these steps were adapted to suit the nature of the study after the selection of a corpus which was the 'test item and the written script (end of term exam script). The stages were:

- Identification of errors – all the errors were identified from the scripts (both the test and the exam script).
- Classifications of errors – errors were classified according to the types of concord. For instance, subject-verb concord, proximity etc. were identified.
- Explanation of errors – the researcher explained the causes/sources of the concord errors of the students.
- Evaluation of errors – this is the last step where the errors were evaluated to find the extent of the problem and if there would be the need for intervention.

### 3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study had attempted to find out concord errors of the students of SDASS in Bekwai municipality in Ashanti Region of Ghana, and the sources/causes of those errors. This was done by collecting data from sampled students. The data were analyzed using tabular and graph representations. The

model employed for the analysis of concord errors of the students was proposed by Corder (1974). The researcher believed that the strategy used for the study would lead to findings that would create platforms for other researchers due to the benefits students derived from the exercise. It also contributed to the improvement of students' proficiency in the English language as well as other subject areas. This could also help in their academic improvement and communicative competence generally.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the data collected from the students of SDASS. It starts with the data on the attitude of students towards grammar and English in general. Also, it presents the data collected using written script (i.e. end of term exam script) of the respondents. It is then followed by the analysis of the test item given to the respondents to test their knowledge on concord.

#### **4.1 Analysis of Data on Attitude**

This part of the research examined the attitudes of students of SDASS towards grammar and English language in general.

##### **4.1.1 Attitudes: An Overview**

Learning a language is influenced by a variety of factors. Two of the most important of which are the learner's attitude and perception toward the target language. These are the concepts which have been the focal points of sociolinguists as far as learner behaviour is concerned. Therefore, this study was conducted in an attempt to find out the students' attitude and perception and their impacts on learners' learning abilities as far as English is concerned.

Attitude is a positive or negative sentiment, or mental state, that is learned and organized through experience and that exercises a discrete influence on the affective and cognitive responses of an individual towards some other individual, object or event. It indicates the affective component and that it is both emotional and evaluative and shows the degree to which you like or dislike the attitudinal object. In Wenden's (1991) opinion attitudes involve cognitive component that deals with beliefs or perceptions about an object or a given situation, an evaluative component which is mainly like or dislike for the object, and a behavioural component that guides particular behaviour. Many attitude theories in psychology also suggest that attitude consists of three components which seem similar to that of Wenden's (1991):

1. Affect: which refers to the degree of like/dislike the person has for the object;
2. Cognition: which refers to the person's knowledge about the attitudinal object; and
3. Behavioural: which is related to reactions and intentions regarding the object.

In order to get a deeper insight into the minds of language learners, there is no more certain way than to study their beliefs. As in the area of language teaching, there has recently been an increasing emphasis on the styles and variables of learners. Additionally, learners' attitudes and beliefs are to join the growing body of research in the field. When learners step in a language classroom, they bring all their personality features including their beliefs, attitudes, and language styles to the learning environment. Almost all the

scholars admit that how successful people are in learning a language is exactly and directly influenced by what they think and how they evaluate the target language, the target language speakers, culture, and of course, the learning setting. Though merely investigating the attitudes and beliefs of learners may not guarantee any success, they, in turn, can be the guidelines for the next steps taken, as learners play the main role in any learning environment.

The concept of learners' attitudes has been the focus of attention in explanation and investigation of human behaviour offered by social psychologists. Attitude is considered one of the affective variables that has a great role in second or foreign language acquisition. The questioning of the role of affective factors in language learning came as a possible answer for the question, how it is possible for some people to learn a second language perfectly and proficiently whereas others, with the same opportunities and conditions to learn are failures, since all other answers attributed to teaching methods, knack or pedagogical matters have failed (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

The importance of attitudes in language learning and acquisition has been stressed by many researchers; they consider attitude as the most important factor in second language learning. It also correlates with other affective factors. For example, it plays a role in formation of motivation toward language learning itself (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). They wrote that learners' motivation for language study, it follows, would be determined by his attitude and readiness to identify and by his orientation to the whole process of learning a foreign language.

Surely, the degree of success in acquiring a second or foreign language (L<sub>2</sub>) is to a large extent determined by learners' individual differences such as aptitude, attitudes, and motivation. This remains an established fact in applied linguistic research (Baker 2001; Gardner 2001; Gass & Selinker, 2001). Though undeniably psychological phenomena, these differences cannot be explained on purely mental grounds. "The original impetus in L<sub>2</sub> motivation research comes from the social psychology since learning the language of another community simply cannot be separated from the learners' social dispositions towards the speech community in question" (Moiinvaziri, 2008). This is because an ESL/EFL learner's motivation in language learning is affected by his/her attitudes towards learning the language. The relation between motivation and attitudes has been considered a prime concern in language learning research. Examining learners' attitude is very important for teachers especially in language teaching because attitude influence the efforts that students expand to learn another language, therefore, language teachers need a clear understanding of attitudes and attitude-change theory in order to address the problems in the classroom. Ellis (1985) discusses the importance of attitudes and motivation in language acquisition stating that attitudes and motivation are crucial factors that help in determining the proficiency level that different learners achieved.

This study is focused on the students at the senior high schools. This is because the main aim of the senior high school teaching syllabus of the English language is to train the students to become proficient users of the language. It is important to know how students feel towards the language designed for them to

study so that people concerned especially educational planners could use the feedback to evaluate their work. It would also help curriculum and instruction designers to invent language teaching programmes that generate the attitudes and motivation which lead to production of more successful (English) learners. Besides, it can help material writers invent new ways of teaching and instructors pick up task that tackle students' motivation and attitudes.

#### **4.2 The Questionnaire**

The administration of the questionnaire to the students of SDA Senior High School is to determine their attitudes to grammar as well as English language. A total of one hundred (100) students from three (3) different classes (2 Science, 2 Agric, and 2 Visual Art) were provided with the questionnaire.

The majority of the students forming sixty percent (60%) of the population are between the ages 15 and 17 while thirty six percent (36%) falls between 18 and 20. Only four percent (4%) of the students are above twenty (20) years. With this ninety percent (90%) are boarders while ten percent (10%) are day students.

Looking at the age range of the students, it can be construed that the students are mature to provide answers that reflect their true feelings to a large extent. Items on the questionnaire were read one after another to the respondents and they were guided on what was required of them to do. The questionnaire was designed to obtain responses on cognitive and affective domains with suggestions given on both the cognitive and affective domains, which students

responded. The following were some items on the questionnaire which were specific on the cognitive and affective domains:

- A. English language is very crucial in your academic work as a student.
- B. I can pass my exams in other subjects without being proficient in English.
- C. I feel bad to speak English with my friends/mates.
- D. I do not need English after school to function well in my career.

Specific suggestions to elicit their feelings on English language, and grammar in particular were

- E. Which aspect of the English language do you like most?
- F. Why do you like the aspect you have chosen?
- G. If you have a choice which aspect would you not like to do and why?
- H. Do your teachers teach you concord?

Questions 'F and G' were made open-ended so that the respondents could provide their own answers. The intention is to elicit information on how students use concord since that is the focus of this study.

#### **4.2.1 Responses on the Cognitive Domain**

The table below shows responses given by the respondents reflecting their perception about the relevance /irrelevance of the English language. The letters are used to represent the questions on the table.



### Perception Chart

Question	Response (in %)					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
A	48	28	11	8	5	100
B	6	9	17	27	41	100
C	6	10	13	28	43	100
D	NIL	5	8	26	61	100

**Table 1**

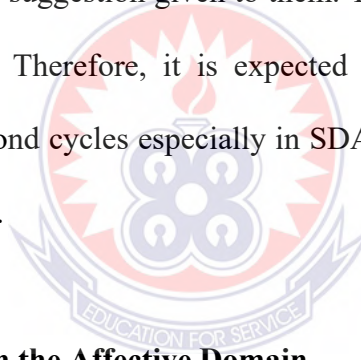
#### 4.2.2 Analysis of the Responses

From the table above, it is obvious that 76% of the respondents agreed that English language is very crucial in their academic work as students, but 13% disagreed with the suggestion. Only 11% of the respondents were not sure of whether English is important to them or not. However, 60% respondents disagreed with the suggestion that a student could pass his examinations without being proficient in English language; and 15% respondents agreed with the suggestion. This implied that they thought it could be possible to pass examinations without being good at English. Again, 17% respondents were not sure of which side they took.

To the suggestion that the students feel bad to speak English with their mates/friends, 71% respondents disagreed, and 16% respondents agreed to the suggestion while 13% of the respondents were not sure.

Finally, 87% respondents disagreed to the suggestion that they would not need English to function well in their career; 5% respondents agreed while 8% respondents were uncertain.

From the analysis of the responses, it is apparent that the majority of the respondents know the significance of the English language in their academic pursuit. They agreed that English plays an important role in their lives as students. This is evident in the number of respondents that agreed on the suggestions provided. Even with the suggestion on the role of English in their career after school, the majority of them, not less than 87% respondents, disagreed with this suggestion given to them. This is a proof that they are aware of its importance. Therefore, it is expected that at least a good number of students at the second cycles especially in SDASS would take English language seriously in school.



#### **4.2.3 Responses on the Affective Domain**

On this domain, the students were expected to indicate their feelings towards the English language by stating which aspect of the English language they like and why, and also, which aspect they would not like to do and why. Two of the questions were open-ended to give students the opportunity to express their feelings and also to check concord of their constructions since that is the focus of this study.

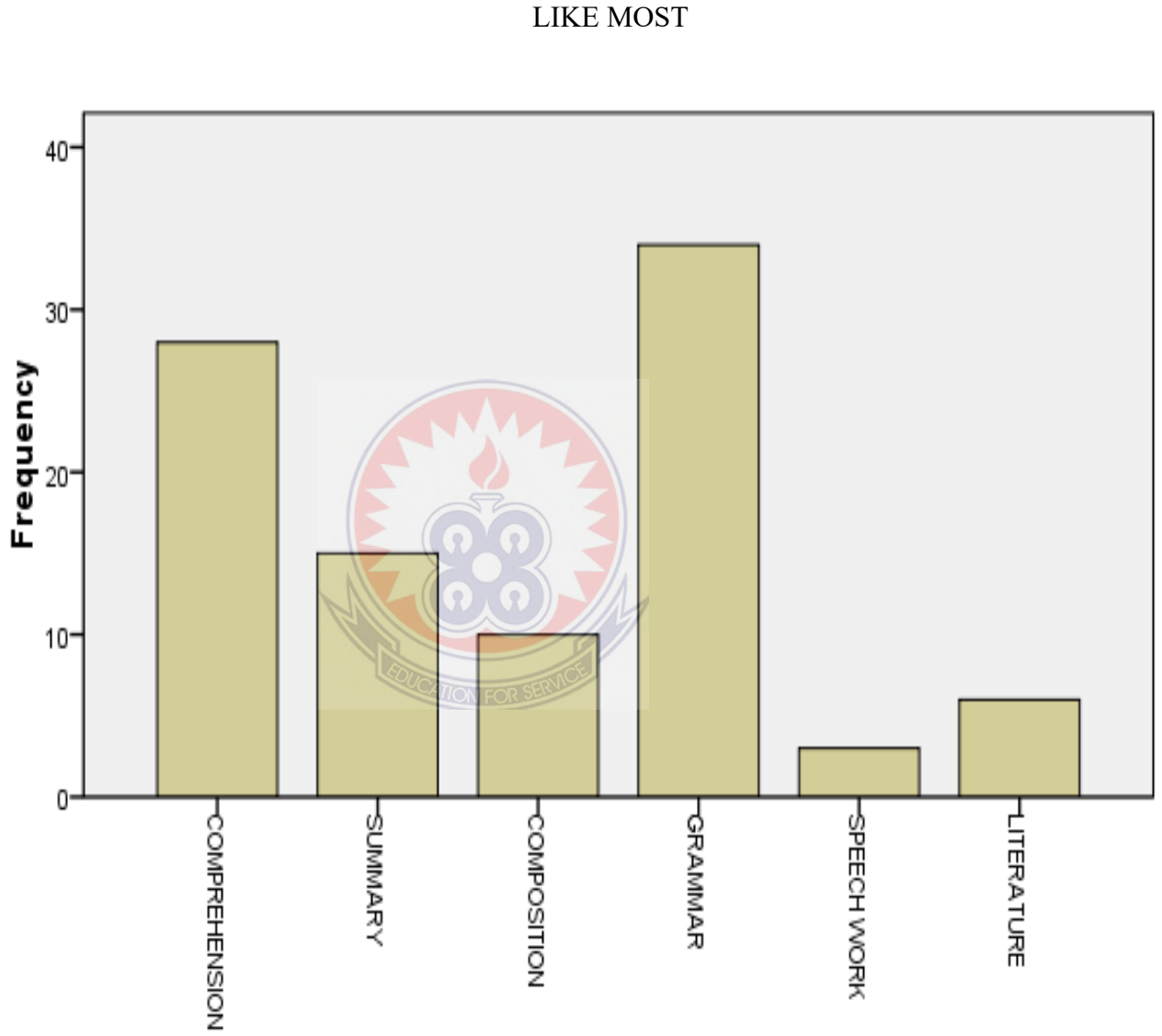
**Preference Chart**

Aspect	Most Preferred	Least Preferred
Comprehension	28	3
Summary	15	22
Composition	12	4
Grammar	32	30
Speech Work	3	12
Literature	6	27
Total	96	98

**Table 2**

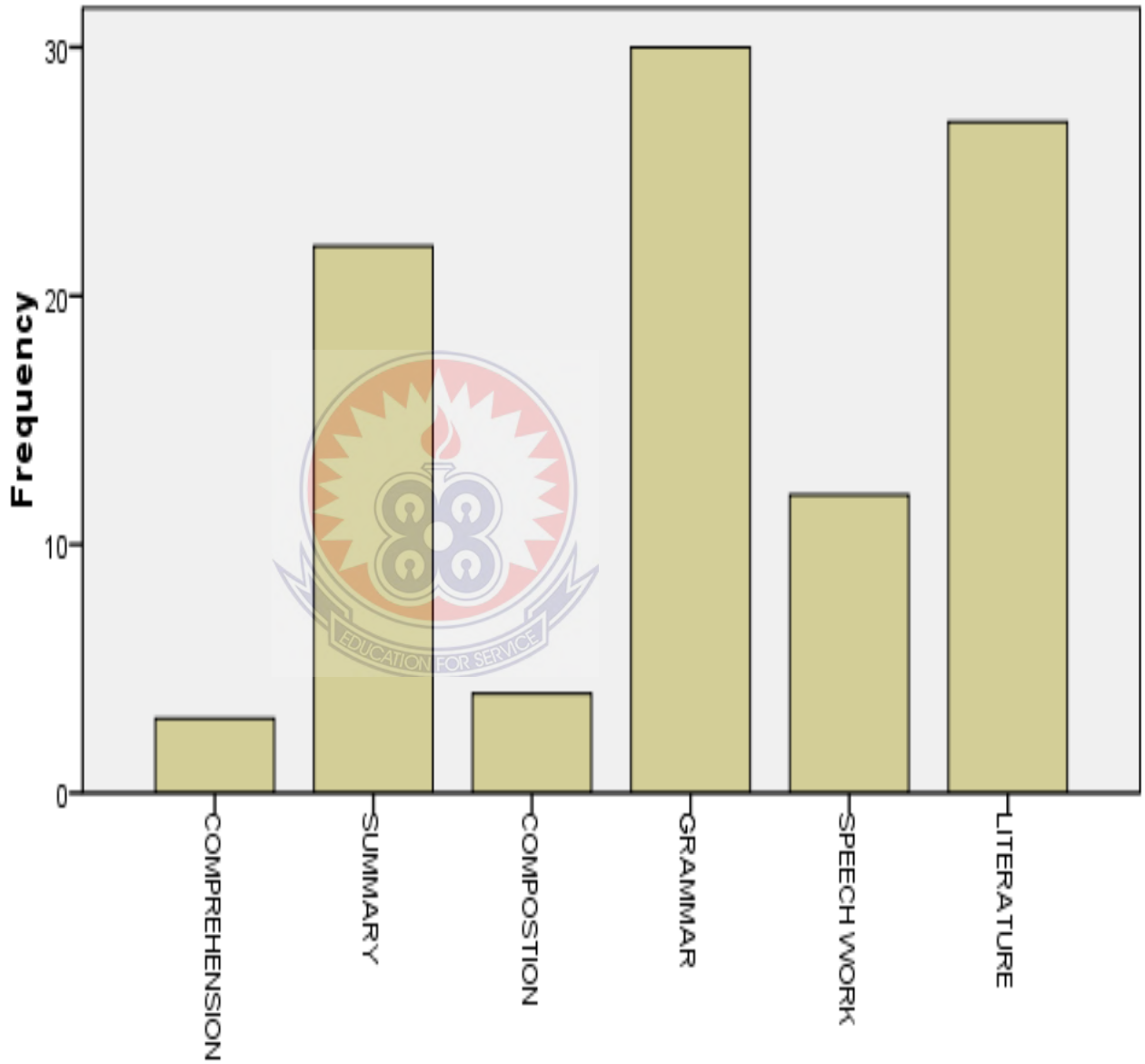


### Graphical Representation of the Responses



LIKE MOST

LEAST PREFERRED



LEAST PREFERRED

#### **4.2.4 Analysis of the Responses**

With the question on which aspect of the English language respondents like most, 28% respondents chose Comprehension, 15% Summary, 12% Composition, 32% Grammar, 3% Speech Work, 6% Literature and 4% respondents chose none of the aspects. This implied that the 4% respondents liked all the aspects.

The other question which required the respondents to indicate which aspect of the language they would rather not do, 3% respondents chose Comprehension, 22% Summary, 4% Composition, 30% Grammar, 12% Speech Work and 27% chose Literature. However, 2% chose none of the aspects to indicate that they would like to do all the aspects. With the question whether teachers teach concord, only 32% could recall that they were taught concord and 68% said they were not taught.

#### **4.2.5 Summary of the Cognitive Domain**

This aspect of the study intends to determine the attitudes of the students of SDASS to English language in general and particularly grammar. From the evidence gathered, it could be construed that most of the students find grammar of the English language difficult and would not like to do it. From the chart, we could assert that 30% respondents chose grammar which was the highest among the least preferred aspects, which implied that they would not like anything to do with grammar. They said, “Grammar is very complicated, it has cumbersome

rules which are difficult to comprehend and therefore makes grammar lessons become boring”. Even though some students, that is, 32% respondents preferred grammar considering the fact that it is useful to them in terms of the use of the language, majority of them never appreciated its importance. The 32% respondents saw grammar as an aspect they would like to study, but this number was less than a half of the population which implied the majority perceived grammar to be very demanding and they preferred other aspects to grammar, for instance, they said they liked comprehension because answers to comprehension questions are readily available in the passages.

It is evident that attitude and perception play significant roles in enabling learners to learn effectively. Learners’ motivation, the type of task at hand, cultural background and previous experiences are all contributive to the way learners behave and perceive learning strategies and their ability in maintaining higher levels of learning. In relation to the learners’ cultural background and previous experiences, it was recorded that 92% lived among people who had nothing to do with English language, both home and school, the priority was on the use of vernacular. One could have thought that the school environment (the boarding house) could have given the students great opportunity to change their perception about the language and become inspired to use English as they see others use it, but that was not the case here. The students were just resolute; they were rather influenced negatively as far as learning English is concerned.

Regarding teachers, it is noteworthy to state that, they need to have a clear understanding of the language being taught and student beliefs, because

learners with realistic and informed beliefs are more likely to behave effectively in the class, work harder outside the class, and (crucially) persist longer with language study; this must be taken into consideration particularly due to the fact that when students' beliefs and performance do not match, they become frustrated and disappointed with the class and with themselves resulting in hindrance in the intake of the material. Therefore, it can be concluded that having positive or negative attitudes towards a certain language and the way learners perceive that language can exert considerable influence upon their performance on the language itself.

The curriculum designers need to put a great deal of thought into developing programmes which maintain students' interest and have obtainable short term goals. Instructors must encourage students and make the language learning process a more motivating experience.

### **4.3 Analysis of Written Scripts**

The researcher's intention is to find out how students use concord and the sources of concord errors in their written (essay) scripts (end of term examination answer script) of students for analysis. One of the questions that almost all of them tackled was "Write a letter to your friend abroad describing what your headmaster had done to improve sports in your school".

In all, fifty (50) scripts of fifty (50) participants were analyzed. Each of the scripts was critically examined to find out how they use concord and also identify the various causes/sources where students' concord errors arise.



From the examination of the scripts, it was realized that the problem of students went beyond the issue of concord. Other areas identified that were equally important in the study of language were spelling, tense, punctuation etc., but for the sake of this study, the analysis covered only concord aspect of the scripts. The following were some of the sentences that appeared in most of the scripts:

- i. \*The headmaster have provide material and equipment which help the school team ...
- ii. \*The headmaster have provides the school with sports materials ...
- iii. \*The headmaster have made ...
- iv. \*Every term he give those who take part in school team ...
- v. \*The park have being fenced.
- vi. \*Member who are not in my school ...
- vii. \*Many of them is now attending in my school ...
- viii. \*All these thing has enable them to do well.
- ix. \*... since there were traffic on the road.
- x. \*I beat the girl whom I liked very much after she told me to stop drinking. I did not mind him and continue to drink.
- xi. \*Some players does not take part in the sports activities.

Using Corder's (1974) model for this analysis, it was realized that most of the errors made by the students were grammatical, the most basic, which everyone expected that students of SHS should not have had problem with.

With the grammatical concord/subject-verb agreement, the rule spells out clearly that the 'subject' must agree with its interacting verb. That is the subject must agree with the verb in number and in person; a plural subject goes with a plural verb and a singular subject goes with a singular verb. But most students failed to apply this knowledge when writing. It was discovered that thirty four (34) scripts representing 68% studied contained this error, which is subject –verb agreement. For instance, items (i) – (viii) contained such problem. With item (i), the students wrote “The headmaster have provide”, the subject here is singular and it can only go with singular “has provided” to be in agreement, but they selected plural “have provide” which was even wrong in terms of concord. Item (ii), (iii), (v), and (viii) had similar problems. Apart from grammatical concord, the researcher also identified verb concord within the same structure, for example, “have provide” in (i) and “have being fenced” in (v) are grammatically unacceptable. This is an indication that students do not understand this rule. This is as a result of students' inability to identify nominal phrases functioning as subjects of the sentences.

One other cause noted was their inability to identify headwords from the NPs. Thirty six (36) scripts representing 72% contained the evidence of this problem, for example, items (vii), (viii) and (ix) attested to that fact.

Verb concord is another problem identified from the scripts. Students could not use the perfect forms of the verbs correctly, and this ran through forty four (44) scripts representing 88%. For instance, items (i), (ii), (v) and (viii) provided attested to the fact. This implies that students do not know that

‘have/has/had’ should accompany the past participle form of any verb used to form the present/past perfect aspect which is called past perfect tense.

In addition, the students also lack knowledge of pronoun concord; they used them without considering persons or gender. Item (xi) is an evidence of how students confuse the personal pronouns we use in the English language particularly he/she, and his/her; where ‘he’ should be used, they use ‘she’ instead or his instead of her and vice versa. Again, ‘it’ was also used wrongly by most of the students. For example, ‘It help them to enjoy ...’. The verb, ‘help’ did not agree with the subject ‘it’, and this had appeared in 40 scripts examined representing 80%. Some of them also confused “its” with “it’s” in their writings. They did not know that the two are not the same – “its” is a possessive/adjective form of “it” while “it’s” is a contracted form of a pronoun and a verb, that is, “it is/it was/it has”. Another instance noted was how they used the reflexive pronouns, for example, “People indulge theirself in this act because...” This is an indication that the students had no in-depth comprehension of the pronouns and how they are used. It is very necessary that students are taken through pronouns and their various forms in their grammar lessons. The table below shows personal pronouns and how they are used.

### Personal Pronouns

	Nominative	Objective	Possessive	Adjective	Reflexive
Singular	I	me	Mine	my	Myself
	you	you	Yours	your	Yourself
Plural	He/She/It	him/her/it	his/hers/its	his/hers/its	himself/herself/itself
	We	us	Ours	our	Ourselves
	You	you	Yours	your	Yourselves
	They	them	Theirs	their	Themselves

**Table 3**

A good understanding of the personal pronoun table above, we believe, will help students in no small measure minimize (if not totally eradicate) concord errors in this area of grammar.

#### 4.3.1 Summary of the Written Script

From the analysis, it was clear that students had serious problems with concord and grammar in general. The majority of them did not understand the grammatical rules especially in connection to concord. Teachers need to teach the concord of grammar thoroughly and they must take students through the conjugation of the various verbs especially how to use the perfect forms of the verbs. For instance, the verb “have” presents students with concord problems, so teachers need to guide their students to overcome this difficulty. Students should

also be encouraged to take reading story books and other materials seriously so that they can learn some of these rules on their own.

#### **4.4 Test Item**

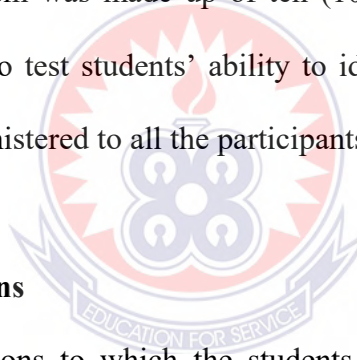
A test item made up of ten questions was administered to all the hundred (100) respondents from all the three (3) classes selected. The objective of the test was to find out students' knowledge of concord. The test is analyzed below.

##### **4.4.1 The Test Item**

The test item was made up of ten (10) questions with multiple choice options designed to test students' ability to identify various forms of concord. The test was administered to all the participants from the three (3) classes.

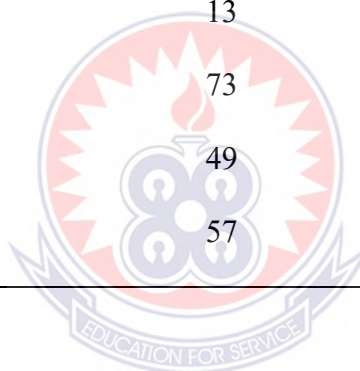
##### **4.4.2 The Questions**

The Questions to which the students responded are discussed in this section. The questions from the test are numbered 1-10 (Appendix B). Hence, the number 1-10 would represent the questions on the table below.



**Tabulation of Correct and Incorrect Responses (Raw Score)**

Question	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses
1	43	57
2	76	24
3	76	24
4	22	78
5	42	58
6	35	65
7	13	87
8	73	27
9	49	51
10	57	43

**Table 4****4.4.3 Analysis of Responses**

From the questions given, students were required to choose the correct word to fill in the blank spaces in the sentences provided. All the respondents returned their scripts/responses.

The analysis for question 1, 43% of the total population had the answer correct while 57% had it incorrect. With question 2, 76% correct answers and 24% incorrect answers; question 3, 76% correct and 24% incorrect; question 4, 22% correct and 78% incorrect; question 5, 42% correct and 58% incorrect; question

6, 35% correct and 65% incorrect; question 7, 13% correct and 87% incorrect; question 8, 73% correct and 27% incorrect; question 9, 49% correct and 51% incorrect and finally, question 10 had 57% correct answers and 43% incorrect answers.

It was clear that question 7 had the greatest number of incorrect responses, which was 87% out of the total number of responses. This was followed by question 4 with 78% incorrect responses; then question 6 with 65% incorrect responses, the question 5 had 58% incorrect responses and question 1 with 57% incorrect answers. Question 9 had 51% incorrect answers, question 10 with 43% incorrect answers, question 8 with 27% incorrect answers and finally questions 2 & 3 with 24% incorrect responses each.

However, with the correct responses, questions 2 & 3 had the highest number of correct responses representing 76% each. This was followed by question 8 with 73%, the next was question 10 with 57% and question 9 with 49%. Then, question 1 had 43%, question 5 with 42%, question 6 with 35%, question 4 with 22% and question 7 with 13% correct responses respectively. The error types that occurred were discussed below.

The number with the highest number of incorrect responses implied that the number had the lowest number of correct responses. For instance, question 7 had the highest number of incorrect responses of 87%. This was an indication of the degree of difficulty students had in that area of concord - verb-verb concord.

It is no doubt that most students did not know the various aspects of tenses and therefore did not use them correctly. This was manifested when 87% of the participants had the question on verb- concord wrong.

#### **4.4.4 The Explanation of the Errors**

In this section, the errors manifested in the answers provided by the students were explained using Corder's (1974) model of error analysis.

##### **4.4.4.1 Error Types (Item 1)**

Question 1, instead of the correct answer 'is', 57% chose the wrong option. Most of the students thought the 'subject' of the sentence was plural because of the word 'graduates' which was closer to the verb and therefore must agree with the verb. This implied that the students conceived of the structure "The + number + of + noun plural" as constituting a grammatical plural subject noun phrase, and therefore assigned to it a plural verb. This is an indication of students' inability to identify the headword of the subject NP, which in the structure is "number" – a singular subject noun requiring a singular verb. The NP "The number of graduates" contained a headword and modifiers. 'The' pre-modified and "of graduates" post-modified the headword "number" and therefore the modifiers should not be mistakenly taken as the headword. It would be very useful if students are helped to understand the concept of modification of nouns.



#### 4.4.4.2 Item 2

In question 2, the subject – singular, should agree with the verb in the same form. But the students thought because the adverb ‘always’ that occurred between the subject and the verb ended with ‘s’, therefore the verb should not be inflected. Some also thought ‘s’ added to the verb makes it plural. This is a clear indication that students did not understand subject verb agreement.

#### 4.4.4.3 Item 3

Question 3 has similar structure (i.e. the subject) to that of question 1 but question 3 is of notional concord. The headword of the subject is “staff” which is a collective noun and it is considered as a unit. The meaning of the sentence implied that individual members of the “staff” were being referred to rather than the “staff” as a group/unit. Hence the subject required a plural verb to be in concord relationship. Most of the students chose singular verb as they looked at the “staff” as a single unit. Then, 24% students who did not understand the principle of notional concord chose the wrong option.

#### 4.4.4.4 Item 4

In question 4, “rice and beans” is considered to be a single meal popularly called “wakyee” in the local language, therefore it is a singular subject which requires a singular verb to be in agreement. Many of the students thought

the subject was plural because of the conjunction “and”, and chose a plural verb. This is an indication of how subject \_verb agreement poses problems to some students. The structure “NP + and + NP” ( noun phrases /nominal clauses) which function as subject noun phrases are treated as plural when joined by the conjunction “and”, therefore take a plural verb. However, when two nouns or noun phrases joined by “and” refer to the same person or the same thing/quality a singular verb is used.

#### 4.4.4.5 Item 5

The subject of the sentence in question 5 is similar to that of question 1. The headword of the NP (the subject) occurred with post-modifiers (with his children). The headword “man” – singular, required a singular verb. Most students thought the subject was plural because of “children” forming part of the NP and they chose plural verb to agree with the subject. This is as a result of students’ inability to identify noun heads (headwords) in a complex NPs, and it is the major cause of noun \_ verb concord errors. The headword in the subject NP determines noun-verb, determiner - noun or noun - pronoun concord. It is therefore necessary for language teachers to introduce their students to English noun modification when teaching concord.

#### 4.4.4.6 Item 6

The error noted here is attributed to the principle of proximity, that is, the verb agrees with the noun immediately preceding it in a sentence. In this question, as much as 65% respondents were wrong because they did not understand the principle of proximity. Some also could not identify the verb that agrees with the pronoun “I” and they chose “is”. Even though they knew “I” was singular, they failed to identify that “I” only agrees with “am” but not “is”.

#### 4.4.4.7 Item 7

Question 7 has to do with verb\_verb concord. When more than a verb is used in a sentence, needed care must be taken that a particular sequence is maintained depending on the tense in use. That is, verb/present – verb/present or verb/past – verb/past, the sequence should be maintained within clauses/sentences. Both verbs must agree in form. In all the options given in the question, only option ‘D’ agreed in form and in concord relationship but students failed to identify this. This is an indication of the difficulty students’-face in using verbs.

#### 4.4.4.8 Item 8

This sentence contained demonstrative noun phrase, and the demonstrative pronoun acting as a pre-determiner/modifier to the noun

“situations”. Students were required to choose the correct determiner to agree with the noun. Some students found it difficult to make distinction between the two (this and these) demonstratives, resulting in the error.

#### **4.4.4.9 Item 9**

Sentence 9 contained two independent clauses, but the second clause/sentence derived its meaning from the first sentence. The two had noun\_ pronoun concord relationship. The error made by the students in selecting the correct option was that they thought “opinions” was an abstract noun and should be represented with “it”; they forgot that the noun was plural in form. The noun\_ pronoun concord rule is that a pronoun takes the same form – singular/plural – as the noun subject headword which precedes it and which the pronoun refers to in the sentence. Therefore, the pronoun in that sentence should be plural in order to be in concord with the noun it refers to. The pronoun occurred in the objective case, so ‘they’ which is nominative is not the appropriate case, ‘them’ is. The source of this error here can also be attributed to memory limitation; that is, students did not know or recall which word in the sentence the pronoun refers to.

#### 4.4.4.10 Item 10

This sentence is similar to question 7, that is, it contained verb\_verb concord. The students failed to recognize that the independent clause was in the past and the same form should be maintained in the dependent clause.

### 4.5 The Interviews

Interviews were also conducted to elicit more information about the attitudes of students towards English language especially grammar, and also to get information on how students use concord. In all twenty five (25) respondents were involved in the interview. Semi-structured questions were used to allow the respondents express their feelings rather than being forced by pre-established lines of thinking developed by the researcher. The analysis of the interview revealed that 90% respondents were comfortable using the L<sub>1</sub>. Even though they found themselves in an environment (the boarding house) which was a good opportunity for them to learn and use the English language, they were not inspired to use English language because that was the tradition they came to meet in the school. The students disclosed that when they were in the first year, they tried to use English in their daily conversations, but each time they attempted, their seniors would heckle them and sometimes punished or called them names because the seniors claimed it was an insult to them – why should they (seniors) ask questions in L<sub>1</sub> and the juniors reply in English? As a result of this, the juniors were discouraged and resorted to copy the seniors blindly. That

was the reason the majority of students preferred using their L<sub>1</sub> and they were happy with it.

The most disturbing aspect of the situation is that teachers who are to serve as role models to the students also engage students in the L<sub>1</sub> and this includes in the classroom setting sometimes. It is very clear that the environment has not challenged the students to use the English language and this has affected their performance. Already, the students are from environments where the local language is dominating and nobody seems to have anything to do with the target language; the school environment which is supposed to groom them has nothing positive to offer them, rather it worsen their plight by instilling negative attitudes in them against the English language.

With the issue of grammar, it was noted that most of the students did not enjoy grammar lessons because they had conceived grammar to be difficult. Some of them believe that English is not studied so they were not prepared to read and no matter what, when they sit in for the examination, they will pass, so they are only interested in their elective areas. They agreed that they were taught concord but could not identify the types, they only mentioned subject\_verb agreement. This area too was not mastered well because the students were not ready to sit down to study and do revisions on their own. It was also confirmed that students did not have relevant materials that would help them in their studies. Though some books were supplied to them, those books did not adequately treat the issue of concord.

On the question of what should be done to help them in their learning of

English language especially grammar, the students suggested that the approach some teachers use must be checked. In their opinion, “Some teachers are interested in giving notes rather than explaining the concepts, and at the end of the lesson we do not understand anything”. They equally claimed they were afraid to ask questions too and suggested that relevant materials should be provided for them.

#### **4.5.1 Summary of Findings**

This section of the research presented an analysis of data collected for the study. The data included the response to the questionnaire administered to all the participants selected. The questionnaire was designed to find out the attitudes of the students to English language and grammar in particular. It was discovered that students had negative attitude towards English language and this affected their use of the language as well as their general performance in school. Students written scripts were also studied to find out how they use concord and possibly the causes of their concord errors. Errors identified were analyzed and discussed. Again, a test was administered to all the hundred (100) students selected to find out their knowledge of concord. It was designed by the researcher to elicit information on how students of SDASS could identify the various forms of concord. The responses given by the respondents were tabulated to determine the frequency, as the high rate of incorrect responses selected by the students indicated the degree of difficulty students have in that

aspect of concord.

Finally, interviews were conducted to extract information from students on their attitudes towards learning of English language, use of concord and difficulties in relation to concord as well as the usefulness of textbooks provided to them. The worrying issue is that there are a lot of irrelevant materials which do not have adequate information on grammar; hence there is the need for material which covers the critical grammatical topics such as concord.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this research and draws conclusions on the language of the selected students particularly in grammar, the errors collected on concord as well as the interviews conducted.

Finally, suggestions and recommendations were made in the area of the pedagogical implications of all the data analyzed and discussed by the researcher.

#### 5.1 Students' Attitudes to Grammar and their Effects

The study examined students' attitudes towards English language and grammar in particular because attitude is the major determining factor to proficiency in language acquisition. It was revealed that attitude played a role in the poor performance of the students in grammar. This has affected the English language in general as well as other areas of their academic work. It is necessary that further investigation into this area to find suitable solutions to what accounts for students' dislike of grammar as well as English language in general is a way of attempting to find an antidote to the problems that hinder our educational system.

The data collected on students' attitudes towards English language

especially grammar gave an indication that students had negative attitude towards English and grammar in particular which includes concord. The data showed that only 32% (less than half of the population) liked grammar, and in their own opinions “grammar is too complicated”. However, the students realized the significance of English language in their academic endeavour as indicated in the data on their perception of the L2. Why then should these students who recognized the importance of English in their academic pursuit would not see the importance of grammar and like it?

One cannot blame the students in this matter because it could be possible that teachers could not play their part well to ensure that students develop positive attitudes towards the L2. Or possibly, teaching of grammar lacks the innovation and effectiveness to generate motivation in the teaching and learning process. Lack of relevant textbooks and other teaching/learning materials contributed immensely to this problem as revealed by the interviewees. Any programme designed for students or people for learning needs some materials as a guide and if this is lacking, the programme becomes ineffective. This unfortunately is the case in our classrooms. Because the necessary materials to support teaching and learning are not there, both teachers and students experience the negative effects. How these factors are assessed indicate the rate at which these affect the students in the classroom.

As a matter of fact, attitude is clearly an individual-driven trait but at least two external factors contribute to its development: environmental and pedagogic. The environmental factor includes social, cultural, political and

economic imperatives that shape the L<sub>2</sub> educational milieu. The pedagogic factor refers to how interaction between teachers, learners and the learning situation develop positive or negative attitudes in the learner. Most of the scholars claim that L<sub>2</sub> development is influenced by teachers' attitudes more than parental or community wide attitudes. Therefore, teachers need to consider all they do to impact knowledge in the language classroom so that learners can benefit from the teaching and learning process.

## 5.2 Error Types Recorded

In the written scripts, there were errors of grammatical concord. Students failed to match the subjects with the appropriate verbs. There were instances where they could not identify headwords in the NPs, which should match with the verbs. Concord of verbs was another worrying issue discovered. This implied that students did not know the conjugation of the various verbs in the various tenses and aspects. They used the various forms incorrectly. Pronoun concord also created problems for most of the students. They did not know the forms of pronouns in the English language, so pronouns which functioned as subjects and occurred with modifiers, they found it difficult to identify the noun heads.

The errors recorded in the test item also included grammatical concord as a result of students' inability to identify noun heads. Notional concord, proximity concord, determiner\_noun concord, pronoun and verb\_verb concord

were also identified. These problems noted were indication that students did not understand the concept of concord. With the verb\_verb concord, students failed to maintain the sequence, that was, verb/present – verb/present or verb/past – verb/past within clauses/sentences – two verbs used must agree in form. It was discovered that students used the verbs incorrectly. It was also noticed that most of the students did not know the aspects of tenses, especially the Perfect Tenses. That was why most of them had problem with verb concord.

In addition, modification of the noun phrases was another area where students had little or no knowledge at all. They could not differentiate pre\_modifiers and post\_modifiers, hence the difficulty in identifying headwords of the NPs. If students were aware of this, there was no way they would have problem with subject\_verb agreement.

Another cause of concord errors among the students could be traced to their knowledge of word classes/parts of speech. The students lacked adequate knowledge of word classes; hence identifying functions of words in a context posed a lot of problems to the students. The errors noted indicate that most of the students in SDASS have concord problems.

### **5.3 A Review of Interviews**

Again, it was revealed that students had serious problem with concord and as a result could not flow easily in their communications, some even suggested using the L<sub>1</sub> to explain the points they were making during the

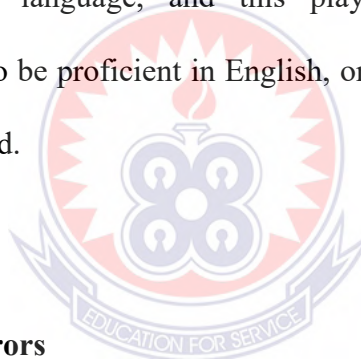
interview. The students interviewed revealed that there were no recommended textbooks hence teachers were using different materials they could lay hands on to guide them in the teaching and learning process. Although there are a lot of books in the open market for students to use, most of these books are not useful to the students especially on concord. They contain little information on concord aspect of grammar, and some are even misleading. The students' inability to use the L<sub>2</sub> has been affecting the students' performance in the school especially in the English language. This is the basis of the problems they face in concord aspect of grammar.

Again, some teachers could be blamed for the students' negative attitude towards the L<sub>2</sub> because they did not motivate their students to learn and use the language. The teachers themselves communicated with the students in the L<sub>1</sub>, and sometimes to the extent of using the L<sub>1</sub> in the classroom. How then can a child be motivated to learn the target language? Students are mostly influenced by what they are taught by their teachers, so if teachers instill negative attitude in the students, it would be very difficult to transform such students because they would see nothing wrong with what they copy from their teachers. It came to the light that the foundation of the students was already weak because some of the teachers at the basic level were unqualified to teach English Language. This has a negative effect on the caliber of students who gain admission into the school and the chain continues as the same students proceed to the SHS, and if nothing is done to save the situation, the problem gets compounded.

Although English is an official language in Ghana, its teaching and

learning often pose some challenges to both teachers and students in our schools. Studies have however revealed that the challenges posed by the use of English as second language in Ghana is as a result of how the language is taught and learned at all levels of education in the country. For example, Afful (2007) has revealed that some teachers of English as a second language do not have the requisite training or qualification before teaching the subject in some schools in Ghana. For this reason, certain aspects of the English language such as grammar, is often relegated in the English language classroom.

The importance of grammar and the need of adequate knowledge of concord is the core of any language, and this plays a key role in any human communication. To be proficient in English, one needs to have full control over the issue of concord.



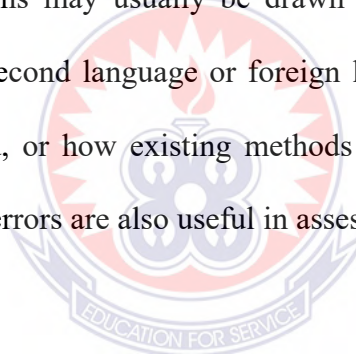
#### **5.4 Sources of Errors**

It was revealed from the study that the main cause of the problem students are facing regarding concord errors is the students' inability to use the second language. As a result, students commit errors when communicating in the L<sub>2</sub>. Again, students commit errors because of ignorance of rule restrictions. Most of the students are ignorant about grammatical rules as far as concord is concerned. Language environment – classrooms are probably the only available places for the practice of oral communication skills because of the geographical location of the school and the background of the students themselves. However,

even in the classrooms they are encouraged to use the L<sub>1</sub>; one then wonders when these students could practise what they have learnt. The environment is not motivating the students/learners to learn the language and use it proficiently.

#### **5.4.1 The Need for Errors Analysis**

The analysis of learners' errors provides insights into the nature of language, especially into the innate nature of the learner's system, they provide even more insights into the process of language teaching and learning. As such, concrete conclusions may usually be drawn from the results of the analyses regarding how a second language or foreign language can be more effectively taught and learned, or how existing methods of teaching and learning can be improved. Again, errors are also useful in assessing teaching materials.



#### **5.4.2 Pedagogical Implications**

- Making use of hierarchy of difficulty – hierarchies of difficulty are basically established in terms of frequencies errors of different classes and subclasses. In the ESL/EFL classroom, more benefit can be derived from the results achieved in error analysis because the teacher can have a clear idea regarding where the main problems of his students lie, and what should be placed more emphasis in teaching.

- The usefulness and need of remedial programmes – when the result of error analysis shows high frequencies of errors, remedial programmes of some kind are necessary.
- The development of error based teaching materials and syllabuses for use in the language class especially in grammar lessons where concord is part. Patterns of errors can be built up into a classified inventory of errors together with the most revealing examples in the corpus.
- Implications for individualized instruction – as one of the general trends in teaching English as a second language and in education in general is towards individualization of instruction, the error analysis practice is perhaps one of the most effective means of understanding the individualities of the learner.
- Understanding the strategies of the learner – understanding students' learning strategies, the teacher will be in a better position to teach.
- Implication of teaching methodology – as revealed, some teachers of English language shirk the responsibility of teaching grammar, which is the core of the language. The more the students are guided to learn and use the language, the better proficient they become. Teachers need to modify their approach slightly sometimes in order to meet the needs of the individual learners.



## **5.5 Conclusion**

The researcher decided to go into this area of study (analysis of concord errors among the students) to find out the concord errors among the students and the causes of their inability to communicate meaningfully and effectively using the L<sub>2</sub> as she observed the difficulties most of the students faced when they were engaged in conversation. It was noticed that students' inability to use the English language manifested in their performance of English language in school, not only that, but other areas of study. However, the issue of attitude was included in the study because of its significance in the acquisition of the second language/foreign language as one of the motivating factors in language teaching and learning. The study revealed that most students had concord problems and grammar in general, they preferred this to be taken away from the syllabus if they had a choice because they thought this aspect was too complicated. The challenges students had in their use of concord were manifested in the errors collected in the written scripts and test items. These were confirmed through the interview section. In addition, lack of recommended textbooks which contained enough information on concord also contributed negatively to the plight of the students.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been proposed:

### 5.6.1 Recommendations for Teachers

The students' inability to use the second language has been affecting students in their performance in English and other subjects. Most of them cannot express themselves meaningfully both in speaking and in writing.

The researcher therefore recommends the following as measures to curb the falling standards of English among students.

- There is the general demand for improvement in the standard of written and spoken English in schools in Ghana. This should have a national focus so that educators as well as parents should let students see that it is good to speak English language. When this is done, students will take pride in using English. Therefore teachers who speak the L<sub>1</sub> and encourage students to use it should put a stop to that.
- Teachers should take steps to encourage the students to read more books at all levels of education in Ghana, especially at the basic and second cycle school levels. When the reading culture is reinforced among learners at a tender age, it will go a long way in improving the students' use of L<sub>2</sub> and their communicative competence in English Language. The students have been brainwashed with the erroneous view that English language is not a subject to be studied, and this view must be corrected before the decline in the use of English reaches a state that nothing can be done to redeem it.

- Teachers of English should try as much as possible to emphasize concord relations in their grammar lesson design. This, we believe will motivate and sustain the students' interest throughout the teaching and learning process, and also meet the needs of the learners.

### **5.6.2 Recommendations for Ghana Education Service (GES)**

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and the GES make available in the schools – both basic and second cycle levels, adequate reading materials and aids in English Language teaching. This would, to a large extent, rekindle students' interest in the study and teaching of the language. In this regard, supplementary readers must be made available for use by students so that as they read the books they can acquire more vocabulary that they can use in communication. Reading will also help the learners to understand concord better so that they can avoid concord errors in their communications. The few library books that are in the schools should also be used by students and pupils. Some teachers are of the view that when the pupils use the books they will get torn, so they keep pupils from using those books. This should be stopped. Also, the textbook division of the GES should help resolve the problem of inadequacy of reading books in the schools, and when this is done it will help solve the problem of poor performance in the use of English.

It is also recommended that the study of the English language be intensified in the Ghanaian schools at all levels of education so as to equip the learners with the pre-requisite skills and techniques to effectively communicate

in the L2. To resolve the growing decline of the English language, the GES should improve her supervisory role in schools and encourage teachers to spend time teaching English grammar to students and pupils. This implies that the GES must ensure that tutors are monitored and motivated to do their work well.

Teachers should be encouraged to use a child-centred approach in their teaching so that children will be encouraged to explore the use of language in a friendly environment. Teachers who are made to teach at the basic schools should also be equipped to teach and lay a good foundation in the language for future learning of the language. The notion that whoever speaks English well can teach it as a subject should be discarded so that proper attention will be given to the teaching and learning of the subject.

It is also recommended that teachers of English language should be equipped through workshops, seminars and in-service training with modern techniques in the teaching of English language as a second language to update their knowledge and skills.

Again, the GES and the government should recognize that majority of the students are weak and so they should allocate more resources in the form of teaching aids and materials to assist tutors bring them to the desired level.

Government should devote more resources to listening and oral skills so as to help improve the students' learning of the English language. This is because English is an international language and there is the need to listen to all kinds of pronunciation and the use of concord so as to make communication effective.

Furthermore, government should provide enough teaching materials and

aids to be used for the course so as to facilitate the teaching of English language. There should also be enough reference books, more computers, dictionaries and phonetics books equipped with CDs, DVDs etc. In addition to these, there should be more audios to listen to and video tapes to watch so as to minimize the English language deficiency.

More importantly, each school should have well equipped English language clinic or laboratory to assist learners. There should also be good libraries stocked with the recommended textbooks and other reading books to help facilitate teaching and learning of English. Alternatively, steps should be taken to improve access to the e-library by our educational institutions so as to facilitate the teaching and learning of English as a subject in the Ghanaian schools. This way, the unavailability of reading lists, recommended textbooks, etc will be a problem of the past.

Lastly, it is recommended that just as the French students visit French speaking countries such as Togo, France, Benin and Senegal, students who do well in English should be supported to visit the native speakers. This is because language is a culture, a way of life and the fastest means of learning a language is to stay with the native speakers of that particular language. When this is done, it will enable learners of a language to understand the people, their culture and discern the little nuances in meanings in the language, and it will motivate others also to work hard. For this dream to materialize, all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Business Organizations should assist by sponsoring educational programmes so as to produce the necessary human resource for the

development of the country. Alternatively, the government of Ghana should liaise with the British Government to set up language laboratories with all the necessary gadgets in all schools especially senior high schools, so as to develop the students' comprehension of the rules governing the language, oral and aural skills. This would have a positive impact on the standard of their English and also mitigate concord errors. Besides this, students should be encouraged to read story books, journals, articles and listen to foreign news on channels such as CNN, BBC and so on. This would sharpen the comprehension of the language, oral and aural skills of the students so that they become proficient.

### **5.7 Suggestions for Further Studies**

This study did not cover all the issues concerning attitude as far as teaching and learning a language is concerned because that is not the ultimate goal of the study. The main focus of this study is to analyze the concord errors among students of SDASS. Therefore, there is the need for further investigation into attitudinal factors, how they influence teaching and learning of English language, especially grammar aspect (concord). It is also necessary to look at the elements that influence or impede students' acquisition of language and its rules/structures so as to plan lessons to meet the various needs of the learners.

It is important for teachers of English Language at all levels of education to study and analyze error patterns of their students to know the challenges of their students in order to design adequate lesson notes, and also adopt strategies

that will help students grasp the concept they teach. More teachers should study problems of students regarding the use of the L<sub>2</sub> in our schools, to help them with the challenges therein.

Even though, this research has tried to find out students' knowledge of concord and analyzed their concord errors, this is only an aspect of grammar; therefore, more research should be carried out in grammar so that challenges students face with grammatical rules will be made clearer to them.



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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE ON ATTITUDES TO GRAMMAR AS WELL AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS OF SDA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, BEKWAI MUNICIPALITY

#### **Confidentiality**

The information you provide on this document will be held secret by the researcher including your identity. You are assured that the information provided would not be used for purposes other than what is stated on this document, which is to find out the attitude of students towards English Language.

#### **Section A: Personal Data**

Please tick (✓) the response that is most appropriate.

1. Residential status: Boarder [ ]      Day [ ]
2. Gender: (a) Male [ ]      (b) Female [ ]
3. Age: (a) 12-14 years [ ]    (b) 15-17 years [ ]    (c) 18-20 years [ ]    (d) over 20 years [ ]

#### **Section B: Linguistic Exposure**

Tick (✓) the appropriate option for the items provided.

1. What language is used by most people in your community?

Akan [ ]                      Ewe [ ]                      Ga [ ]                      Other [ ]

2. Which language do you speak with your parents and siblings at home?

Akan [ ]                      Ewe [ ]                      Ga [ ]                      Other [ ]

3. How often do you speak English at home?

Always [ ]                      Often [ ]                      Rarely [ ]                      Never [ ]

4. How often do you speak English at school?

Always [ ]                      Often [ ]                      Rarely [ ]                      Never [ ]

5. How often do you listen or watch programmes on radio or TV in English?

Always [ ]                      Often [ ]                      Rarely [ ]                      Never [ ]

**Tick (√) appropriate option.**

**SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NS = Not Sure, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree**

1. English language is very crucial in your academic work as a student.

SA [ ]                      A [ ]                      NS [ ]                      D [ ]                      SD [ ]

2. I can pass my exams in other subjects without being proficient in English.

SA [ ]                      A [ ]                      NS [ ]                      D [ ]                      SD [ ]



3. I feel bad to speak English with my mates/friends.

SA [ ]            A [ ]            NS [ ]            D [ ]            SD [ ]

4. I do not need English after school to function well in my career.

SA [ ]            A [ ]            NS [ ]            D [ ]            SD [ ]

5. i. Which aspect of English language do you like most?

Comprehension [ ]    Summary [ ]    Composition [ ]    Grammar [ ]    Speech  
Work [ ]    Literature [ ]

ii. Why do you like the aspect you have chosen?.....

iii. If you have a choice, which aspect would you not like to do and why?  
.....

6. i. Do you ask questions during English lessons? Yes [ ]            No [ ]

ii. If 'No' why?

a. I understand the lesson. [ ]

b. I find it difficult to ask questions [ ]

c. I trust the teacher [ ]

d. I fear the teacher will punish me [ ]

e. I feel shy to ask questions [ ]

f. No chance for asking questions [ ]

7. i. Do your teachers teach the concord aspect of grammar? Yes [ ] No [ ]
- ii. Have you been taught types of concord? Yes [ ] No [ ]



## APPENDIX B

Choose the correct word (s) to fill in the blank spaces in the following sentence.

1. The number of graduates ..... increasing every year.

- A. are                      B. is                      C. being                      D. were

2. The boy always ..... to school.

- A. walks                      B. walk                      C. walking                      D. is walk

3. The staff of SDASS ..... not been paid for some time now.

- A. having                      B. has                      C. are                      D. have

4. Rice and beans ..... my favourite food.

- A. are                      B. were                      C. have been                      D. is

5. The man with his children ..... the wedding party.

- A. attend                      B. are attending                      C. is attending                      D. were attending

6. Either the boys or I ..... going home tonight.

- A. is                      B. am                      C. are                      D. were

7. I always ..... what my teacher ..... me to do.

- A. did/tells                      B. do/told                      C. does/tells                      D. did/told

8. And when ..... situations arise teachers are not left out.

- A. this                      B. these                      C. their                      D. that

9. All the opinions are reasonable. So let ..... be taken into consideration.

- A. it                      B. they                      C. them                      D. their

10. I was very hungry because I ..... not tasted any food.

- A. did                      B. had                      C. have                      D. has



## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions for Students

1. What language do you speak most in school?
2. Why most of the students do not use English in the school/boarding house?
3. Do you enjoy grammar lessons? Were you taught concord, and what types of concord do you know?
4. Do you have textbooks that help you in your studies?
5. What do you think should be done to help you in the learning of English especially grammar?

