UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ANALYSIS OF ERRORS IN STUDENTS ESSAYS: THE CASE OF FORM

TWO STUDENTS OF GHANA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TAMALE

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of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

Signature:……………………………….
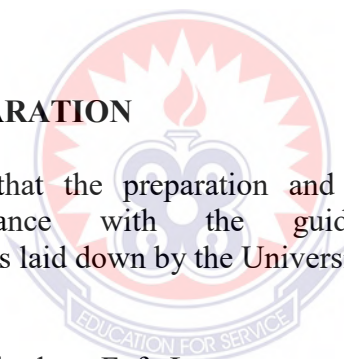
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Charlotte Fofo Lomotey

Signature :…………………………

Date:………………………………

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Madam Akua Janet of blessed memory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TABLE CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLE

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study that analyzed errors in the written essays of form two students of Ghana Senior High School in Tamale. The study sought to find out the types and causes of errors in the written essays of students in the Senior High Schools. The data used for the analysis of the errors comprised written essays of the students in form two. From this, a total of 2,128 errors were identified from two essay topics. seven error types were identified and they include concord errors, punctuation errors, spelling errors, tense errors, article errors, and errors of preposition. From the study, concord errors had the highest frequency with errors on punctuation being the lowest. Based on the findings of the study, causes of errors in learners" writings were identified as interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of instruction as well as L1 interference. The pedagogical implications of the errors in the students" essays have also been discussed in the study. Finally in the study, some suggestions are made to various stakeholders to ensure effective teaching and learning of the English Language in the senior High Schools in Ghana.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the Study

The English language is widely used by people of different socio-cultural backgrounds. As a result, it has become a unifying force and also a vehicle for international communication. This is because the language makes it possible for people of diverse language backgrounds to communicate and participate in economic, political and cultural activities far beyond their local areas. In Ghana, English has assumed a central position in our national life. According to Dakubu (1988) the country is linguistically heterogeneous as there are about forty five (45) different indigenous languages. To break the language barrier, English has become an effective medium of communication in our multilingual setting. Therefore, acquiring a high proficiency in English in Ghana is essential. It is for this reason that Senior High school students in Ghanaian schools should be well equipped with the rules of the language so that they can function effectively and efficiently both in Ghana and around the world.

Though students at all levels of our educational system are taught English language, they still find it difficult to express themselves especially in writing. They mostly commit errors in their writings especially in essays. It‟s being argued that the impact of the first language of learners on English is heavily felt whenever they write in the English language (Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002). Errors are inevitable part of language learning and acquisition. This implies that we cannot do away with errors when learning a second language. The phenomenon of errors has long occupied the attention of second language teachers and researchers. Errors in language learning are regarded as the linguistic phenomena which deviate from the language rules and standard usages (Owu-Ewie & Lomotey, 2012). This reflects the language learners‟

1

deficiency in language competence. Though errors are important in second language learning, many language teachers just correct errors their students make but do little to see the patterns of the errors or find the causes of the errors.

This research work is conducted in Ghana Senior High School in Tamale; the capital of the northern region. The school is one of the largest schools in the region when it comes to population. Tamale is predominantly a Dagbani speaking metropolis because majority of the inhabitants are Dagombas. As a result, about 85 percent of the students who are admitted into the school are predominantly Dagbani speakers. Based on this, the commonest language spoken in the school is Dagbani. It is important to remark that even teachers speak the local language with students in school and sometimes during lessons because more than half of the teacher population in the school is native Dagbani speakers. To further worsen this situation is the fact that the school is located in a suburb of Tamale called Kukuo where the inhabitants constantly interact with the students in the local language. It is therefore not surprising that some of the students sometimes ask teachers to explain classroom works in Dagbani.

This prevailing situation contributes in no small measure to the inability of the students to express themselves fluently in English language and to construct meaningful sentences in English language. This contributes to the poor performance of students in the English language paper in both internal and external examinations. It is also good to state that teachers who never studied English language at the University level are allowed to teach English language in the school. This, I believe, also contributes to the poor performance of students in English language in the school since such teachers have little knowledge in the various aspects of the English language and may not be able to appropriately teach the students. It is in this light that the current study seeks to analyze the causes, and the type of errors students of Ghana Senior High School in

Tamale commit in their essays, the implications of these errors in their essays and the most frequent errors in their essays.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

The general perception of many Ghanaians is that the standard of English of students in our Senior High Schools (SHS) has fallen considerably. The proponents of this view quickly compare the language competence of SHS students to those who hold the „O" Level or Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) which existed some years ago to arrive at their conclusion. They are of the view that the „O" Level or M.S.L.C holders were by far better than the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate (WASSCE) holders as far as proficiency in English is concerned. The researcher, who is a teacher, believes that mere rhetoric towards addressing the poor standard of English in Ghana is not the solution; we must as a nation go beyond recognition of the problem. All stakeholders must spend their energy and resources to address the seriousness of the problem by investigating the causes and identifying the real writing problems of our students and recommending achievable solutions. It is hoped that the recommendations from the study would be implemented.

It has been observed that students of Ghana Senior High School face some difficulties with the use of certain structures of the language. This reflects in their written essays and exercises where they constantly make errors such as wrong spelling of words, wrong use of punctuations, tenses, articles and concord errors. This goes a long way to affect their performance in class exercises, tests and examinations, and later their WASSCE since they are always marked down due to these errors which most teachers rather see as mistakes. They often commit errors such as concord errors, spelling errors, verb tense errors, punctuation errors and prepositional errors in their

3

essays. It is however believed that the use of error analysis can help remedy this ailing situation.

Presada and Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They confirmed that Error Analysis (EA) could reduce the number of errors in their students" works. Errors play an important role in learning a second/foreign language; from this, teachers can determine the level of mastery of language among their students and discover what they still have to learn, unlearn, or relearn. It is important for teachers to recognize the errors their students commit, because they would have the opportunity to understand the different processes through which these errors are caused. To better correct students errors, it is important to analyze the causes of these errors.

According to Corder (1974), systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching. Although errors are seen as a part of the teaching and learning process, it is also significant for teachers to realize that if the errors are not identified and remedied, they may pose a challenge to the learner in future. In view of this, the present study focuses on analyzing the common errors that the form two students of Ghana Senior High School commit in their English writings, the causes of these errors and their implications in the teaching of English language in the school since knowing the causes of learners" errors is an effective way to help reduce them. It is believed that learning a second/foreign language is a gradual process, during which errors are made at all levels of learning. However, the use of Error Analysis and appropriate corrective measures can help effective teaching and learning of English language. Although errors are seen as a part of the teaching and learning process, it is also significant for teachers to realize

4

that if the errors are not identified and remedied, they may pose a challenge to the learner.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the common errors form two students of Ghana Senior High School commit in their writings. The study also analyzes the causes of these errors as well as their implications on learners" writings. The study also made some suggestions for future research.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to identify the types of errors that occur in the English essays of form two students of Ghana Senior High School.
2. discuss the causes of these errors.

1.5 Research Questions

The study seeks to find out the following:

1. What are the types of errors that occur in the English essays of form two students of Ghana Senior High School?
2. What are the causes of these errors?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Language acquisition studies, both first and second, are very much interested in how competence is developed. It is therefore imperative that at every stage of the learners" language development, we should be concerned about their progress. The study is therefore relevant to the learner, syllabus designer, textbook writer and the teacher. To the learner, the study will enable him/her to know his/her errors and why

s/he made them. Learners" error also provide the syllabus designer and textbook writer with an authentic and reliable input because errors give a fair picture of the problems associated with second language learning. To the teacher, the study will assist him/her to correct the students" errors because without the knowledge of why errors are made, no teacher can devise effective measures to eliminate them. The study also provides the tool for remedial teaching of the English language in SHS. The findings will give adequate knowledge about the precise difficulties that learners" face and this will be a useful guide for the teacher to focus on those areas that pose problems. The data compiled in the research will assist the SHS teachers to identify areas that need reinforcement and emphasis in their teaching.

1.7   Limitations

This study is limited to only the form two students of Ghana Senior High School. It is also limited to only the General Arts classes. In all a total of four classes were used for the research work due to large numbers of students in these classes. A total of fifty students were sampled for the research work. Each of the students wrote two essays for the research work. In all a total of one hundred essays were marked and the errors collated from these essays were used for the analysis. Though there are many schools in the Tamale metropolis, the research work was conducted only in Ghana Senior High.

1.8   Delimitation

The study concentrates on the errors that form two students of Ghana Senior High School commit in their English writings. The study also looked at the causes of the errors and their implication on the teaching and learning of English language.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 reviews related literature on the study. This focuses on theoretical views that are closely relevant to error analysis. It includes what constitutes an error, causes of error, the significance of errors and related studies. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology adopted for the study. In this chapter, the instruments and sampling technique used for the study, as well as data analysis, are discussed. The results of the study are discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis revealed that students committed spelling, concord, punctuation, article, tense, and omission of word errors. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the study. This includes the summary of findings of the study, the pedagogical implications, as well as suggestions for future research study.

1.10   Conclusion

This chapter discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem and purpose of the study. The chapter further discusses the objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study and delimitations of the study. The final element in this chapter is the limitations and organization of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework to error analysis. The chapter also discusses the concept of error and the distinction between error and mistake. This chapter also discusses the importance of errors in language learning, especially in second language learning. The causes of errors, error categorization and hierarchy of errors are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter finally discusses a review of related studies on students" error problems.

2.1   The concept of Errors

In language study, errors can be termed as the deviation from the norms or rules of a language. Brown (1994) defines linguistic errors as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. For Burt, Duley and Krashen (1982), errors are the flawed side of a learner"s speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from norms of mature language performance. Errors are studied in order to identify the learning process and the strategies employed in learning another language (Lungu, 2003). Corder (1981) defines an error in the context of the effectiveness of the utterances made by language users. Corder (1981) identifies what he calls "covertly idiosyncratic" and "overtly idiosyncratic" errors. The former refers to flaws in utterances that are grammatical but do not clearly convey the speaker"s intended meaning. Overtly idiosyncratic errors on the other hand, occur in sentences that appear to be ill–formed but whose meaning is transparent to the listeners. Corder"s provision of these broad error categories was preceded by that of Burt and Kiparsky (1972). They

8

classified errors in terms of whether they were "global" or "local". Global errors can be considered synonymous with what Corder refers to as covertly idiosyncratic errors while local errors, on the other hand, are synonymous with overtly idiosyncratic ones.

As mentioned by Maicusi and Maicusí (2000), in the language learning process, errors have always been regarded negative, and must be avoided. As a result, they contend that teachers tend to show a suppressive attitude to their students. On one hand, errors are considered as a failure of teaching process and on the other hand, they are seen as a natural result that can hardly be avoided, so we should deal and learn from them. Therefore, errors can be a very helpful means in learning a second language as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) explain, learners" errors are significant in three ways:

(1) They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered.

(2) They serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned.

(3) They serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

2.2   Errors and Mistakes

It is good for a second language teacher to know exactly what errors his students make and why they make them. This will help him/her to adopt effective teaching strategies in order to handle his students" errors. Applied linguists differentiate between "error" and "mistake". Every language has a set of rules or a code for generating a well – formed sentence. A violation of this set of rules may result in an error. According to Yankson (1994), an error is a noticeable deviation from the rules of a target system. It is a breach of the language code. It may occur as a result of lack of knowledge or misapplication of the rules of the second language. Errors are current, systematic and

9

reveal ones level of competence in the language. Brown (2000) sees a mistake in performance) as a performance error in that it is the learner‟s failure to utilize a known system correctly, while an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the Interlanguage competence of the learner.

Corder (1967) refers to a mistake as unsystematic errors and systematic ones are errors. Unsystematic errors occur in one‟s native language and are not significant to the process of language learning. Systematic ones on the other hand, occur in second language. Errors cannot be self-corrected but a mistake, if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker, can be corrected. Another way of identifying the difference between an error and a mistake is by looking at the frequency of the deviation. The identification of an error by observing, analyzing and classifying to reveal the system operating within the learner, leads to error analysis. A learner's error is a reflection of lack of understanding of the underlying competence in the language that he/she is learning (Mezrag, 2013). This is important to this study because the researcher has to give distinction between what becomes an error and what will be termed a mistake.

2.3   Types of Errors

The taxonomy of errors in this study is based on the classification of Dulay et al (1982). According to them, the most commonly used taxonomies are based on

(a) Linguistic category

(b) Surface strategy

(c) Comparative analysis

(d) Communicative effect.

The choice of this classification is based on the fact that, most of the errors committed by the second language learners in our classroom fall under this classification. James (1998, pp. 102-103), also argues that "a taxonomy must be organized according to certain constitutive criteria. These criteria should as far as possible reflect observable objective facts about the entities to be classified". This means that before errors can be put into a certain class, they should show certain features that identify them as belonging to the class. Dulay et al (1982, p. 145), in their discussion about taxonomies "focused on error taxonomies that classify errors according to some observable surface features of the error itself without reference to its underlying cause or source" and they call this description taxonomies. The various taxonomies and their specific types of errors are discussed as follows:

2.3.1 *Errors based on linguistic category*

This taxonomy classifies errors according to the language component or linguistic constituent (or both of them) which are affected by the error. Language components include phonology (pronunciation), syntax and morphology (grammar), semantic and lexicon (meaning and vocabulary), and discourse (style). A constituent includes the elements that comprise each language component. For example, within syntax one may ask whether the error is in the main or subordinate clause, which constituent is affected, e.g. the noun phrase, the auxiliary, the verb phrase, the preposition, the adverb, the adjective, and so forth.

2.3.2 *Surface strategy taxonomy*

This taxonomy concentrates on the ways in which surface structures are altered. Analyzing errors from a surface strategy perspective holds much promise for researchers concerned with identifying cognitive processes that underlie the learner's reconstruction of the new language. Using this taxonomy, Dulay et al (1982, p. 150)

11

divide errors into the following categories: (1) Omission (2) Addition (3) Misformation (4) Misordering.

2.3.2.1 Omission

This is typical for the early stages of L2 acquisition, whereas in the intermediate stages, misformation, misordering or overuse is much more common (Dulay et al, 1982). Omission means that an item which must be present in a well-formed utterance is absent. There is evidence that grammatical morphemes (e.g. nouns and verbs, inflections, articles, prepositions) are omitted more often than content morphemes which carry the meaning (Dulay et al 1982, pp. 154 -155). For example, in *My father teacher*, the grammatical morphemes "is" and "a" are omitted.

2.3.2.2 Addition

This is the second category of surface strategy taxonomy and also the opposite of omission. The presence of an extra item which mustn't be present in a well-formed utterance is characteristic of addition (Dulay et al 1982, p. 156). Dulay et al divide omission into double markers as in *Did you went there*?; regularization as in *Sheeps* and *cutted*, and simple addition which contains the rest of additions pp. 155-158).

2.3.2.3 Misformation

This refers to "the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure" (Dulay et al, 1982, p. 158). There are three types as well:

(a) regularization - an irregular marker is placed by a regular one, as in *sheeps* for sheep

(b) Archi-forms refer to the use of one member of a class of forms instead of using all the members, e.g. using "this" in the situation when either *this* or *these* should be used, and (c) Alternating forms - represented by "free alternation of various members of a class within each other", as in *those dog* and *this cat* used by the same learner (Dulay et al, 1982:, p. 157). For instance a learner may make these utterances *Do all the childs go*

12

through all the stages? (regularization) *I have take one pocket* (archi-form and omission). We talk of misordering when we come across an utterance where a morpheme or a group of them is incorrectly placed, as in "I get up at 6 o'clock always" where always is misordered. This utterance should have been written "I always get up at 6 o'clock".

2.3.2.4 Misordering errors

Misordering is indicated by the incorrect placement of certain morphemes. Examples:

    a.   She slaps all the time her son instead of She slaps her son all the time.

    b.   You are eating rice? instead of Are you eating rice?

2.3.3   Comparative analysis

The comparative taxonomy classifies errors on the basis of comparing the structure of L2 errors to other types of constructions, mostly common to errors made by children during their L1 acquisition of the language in question. In this taxonomy, we look at two main error categories: (1) development errors and interlingual errors (2) ambiguous errors and the grab bag category of other errors (Dulay et al, 1982, pp. 163-164). Developmental errors refer to errors which are similar to those made by children who are acquiring the target language. These errors are in contrast to intralingual errors. This means that, most of the errors committed by L2 learners are developmental and learners will soon overcome them. Interlingual errors are, as Dulay et al (1982, p. 171) argue, "similar in structure to a semantically equivalent phrase or sentence in the learner's native language". For instance, it is common to hear a native Dagbani speaker make such utterance as *I have birthday*. Ambiguous errors could be classified as both developmental and interlingual errors. Such erroneous utterances usually reflect the learner's L1 and at the same time, are similar to errors produced by children during their L1 acquisition (Dulay et al, 1982, p. 172).

13

2.3.4 Communicative effect

This taxonomy focuses on the effect the errors have on the listener. Dulay et al (1982, p. 187) argue that "errors that affect the overall organization of the sentence hinder successful communication, while errors that affect a single element of the sentence usually do not hinder communication. They therefore group them into global errors and local errors.

2.3.4.1 Global errors

Global errors are the misuse of structures which damages or breaks down communication. For example conjunction errors, which involve the overall meaning of the sentence and major constituent classes of the sentence or transformations, will seriously, influence comprehension of sentences. e.g. *I saw their department*. Readers or listeners do not know what the sentence means.

2.3.4.2 Local errors

This refers to errors which will not damage communication. Such as lexical errors, noun errors, and adverbs, etc do not usually cause major problems. e.g. *A trousers*. Trousers are consider to be plural so the indefinite article "a" is not needed. Ellis (1997) maintains that "classifying errors can help us to diagnose Learner's learning problem at any stage of their development and to plot how changes in error patterns occur over time". This categorization can be exemplified as follows:

a. Omission

i. Morphological omission: *A strange thing **happen** to me yesterday.*

ii. Syntactical omission: *Must also say the names?*

b. Addition

i. In morphology: *The book**s is** here.*

ii. In syntax : ***The** London.*

14

iii. In lexicon: *I stayed there **during** five years ago*

c. Selection

i. In morphology: *My friend is olde**st** than me.*

ii. In syntax: *I want **that** he comes here*

d. Misordering

i. In pronunciation: *fignisicant* for „*significant"*, *prulal* for „*plural"*

ii. In morphological: *get upping* for „*gating up"*

iii. In syntax: *he is a dear to me friend.*

iv. In lexicon : *key car for „car key*

2.4 Causes of Errors

Knowing the cause of an error a student commits in his/her essay is very important because it helps the teacher to render/give the appropriate remediation. However, there seem not to be a generalized approach on the causes of errors in students" essays. For example Burt and Kiparsky (1976) cited in Ellis (1997) suggest that the causes of students errors in second language acquisition can be put into global and local errors. Global errors violate rule involving the overall structure of a sentence. These errors are more grievous and rank higher in the error hierarchy than local errors. Local errors on the other hand occur in a particular constituent or clause of a complex sentence. For example errors in tense and aspect are local errors. In the view of Touchie (1986), language learning errors consist of components like phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic. This implies that, at every level of meaning, an error can occur.

In another development, Richards (1971) made three categorizations of causes of second language errors which include interference errors, intralingual errors and development errors where learners try to build up hypothesis. According to Richards,

intralingual errors can be broken into overgeneralization, ignorance of rules, incomplete application of rules and false hypothesis. Also looking at the causes of second language errors James (1998) identifies the following as causes of errors:

1 Interlingual errors

2 Intralingual errors

3 Context of learning

4 Communication strategy - based errors

Laurell (1987), from synthetic perspective, makes taxonomy of interlingual errors as morphology, syntax, phonological and semantics. According to him, morphological errors involve omission and addition. Syntax errors involve misordering, while phonology errors involve substitution and addition of sounds. Semantic error on the other hand is a substitution of words, for example substituting *sensible* for *sensitive.* The last cause of error to be discussed in this study is that made by Brown (2002). Brown identifies the following as causes of second language errors: interference errors, interlingual errors, context of learning and communication strategies.

2.4.1 *Interlingual transfer*

Interlanguage transfer as a cause of error mostly occurs at the initial stages of L2 learning. The L2 learners frequently transfer L1 structures to the L2. This happens because the native language is the only previous linguistic source the learner can draw vocabulary from. We very often hear a Dagbani speaker or learner of English say *sheeps* because in Dagbani there is plural for sheep. Again it would not be a surprise to hear a Dagbani learner of English produces a structure like *man tall black*. This is because in Dagbani, adjectives modify nouns instead of pre-modifying as in English. This means that, familiarity with the native language of the learner will help the teacher to detect and analyze such errors.

16

2.4.2   *Intralingual transfer*

This cause of errors extends beyond interlingual transfer in L2 learning. Intralingual transfer is one within the target language itself. This occurs when learners begin to acquire new structures in the target language. As learners progress, in the target language, their previous experiences in the target language begin to include structures in the target language. This causes negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization. For example after learning that, nouns form their plural by adding /-s/, a learner can overgeneralize this rule to include all nouns and will therefore add /-s/ to man to read "mans". Types of intraligual errors according to James (1980) include false analogy, misanalysis, incomplete rule application, over redundancy, over-elaboration and hypercorrection.

2.4.2.1 False analogy

It is a situation where learners incorrectly think the new item learned behaves like another item already known. For example learners have learnt that the plural form of dog is dogs, so they think that sheeps is the plural form of sheep.

Misanalysis

This is where the learner has formed a wrong hypothesis or rule in the L2 and is practicing with it. James (1980) gives an example as where the learner thinks)(its) can be the plural of(it).

Incomplete rule application

It is the situation where the learner does not apply all the rules necessary to be applied in a particular situation.

Avoidance redundancy

The language learner tries to avoid items he finds redundant to make his learning or communication easier but ends up making errors. For example, I have pen

instead of I have a pen.

Overelaboration

In this situation the language learner over looks co-occurrence restrictions because he or she does not know that certain words go together with certain complements (counterparts) or prepositions. An example by James (1998) is when the learner ignores that the verb to enjoy is followed by gerund and not the infinitive; I enjoy eating and not *I enjoy to eat*.

Hypercorrection

This result from the learner's over- monitoring their L2 output. Overgeneralization means that the learner uses one member of the set of forms also in a situation when the other member must be used. For example, other/another, much/many, some/any (James, 1998). Here, we realize that the learner does not distinguish between the two.

Context of learning

This overlaps both interlingual and intralingual transfers. Context here refers to classroom learning situation. In the classroom situation, the teacher or the textbooks can lead the learner to make faulty hypothesis about language. Richards (1971) calls this false concepts while Stenson (1974) terms it induced errors. Students often make errors because of wrong instructions or explanations from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook or wrong pattern in a drill. Some instances of context of learning errors are illustrated as follows:

2.4.3.1 *Teacher–talk induced errors*

This kind of errors might be caused by both, native or non–native teachers if they do not provide models of the standard target language in class.

18

2.4.3.2 Materials–induced errors

Teaching materials such as textbooks, pamphlets, pictures and flash cards with errors make the learners confused and they make similar errors in their course of learning the target language.

2. 4.3.3 Exercised–based induced errors

The learners make errors while doing exercises especially on sentence combining when the teacher has provided the learners with two different sentences to put together. For instance, if learners have been taught that (if) is equivalent to (when), and they are given these sentences (I will eat and the food is rice) to combine, this is what they will likely produce; I will eat when the food is rice instead of I will eat if the food is rice.

2.4.3.4 Errors induced by pedagogical priorities

Learners" achievement tends to match with teacher expectations based on what they wish to achieve. Some teachers choose to prioritize one of the following: accuracy or fluency. Thus, if fluency is considered as superior, accuracy would have lower priority or vice versa.

2.4.3.5 Look–up errors

There are many learners" dictionaries and grammar books which provide guidelines on how to search aspects of the L2. However, learners fail to read them and as a result, they are unable to build their vocabulary stock. In addition, the learners sometimes incorrectly use the new words from the dictionary.

2.4.4 Communication strategies

Error handling is a serious issue in L2 teaching and learning. L2 teachers need to be conversant with ways in which errors can be handled to bring less harm to the learner. We should be able to determine in the classroom which errors to treat or ignore.

19

These communication strategies can be verbal and non-verbal mechanism (Brown, 1980). This cause is characterized by holistic strategies or approximation. Here, learners lack the required form of the language item so they tend to use an equivalent or another near item in the target language. It takes a number of forms. The first is to use a synonym; the second is to coin a word, for instance, using leave in place of live or peace in place of piece.

2.4.4.1 Avoidance

This arises when a learner consciously avoids certain language items because he/she feels uncertain about and prefers avoiding to committing an error. There are several kinds of avoidance, for example syntactic, lexical, and phonological or topic avoidance (Brown 1980).

Prefabricated patterns

These are memorized phrases or sentences, as in *tourist survival* language or a pocket bilingual phrase book, and the learner who memorized them usually doesn't understand the components of the phrase, (Brown, 1980). However, their advantage is as Hakuta (1976) notes: they "enable learners to express functions which they are unable to construct from their linguistic system, simply storing them in a sense like large lexical items.

Cognitive or personality style

This can also cause errors. For example, Brown (1980, p. 180) suggests that, "a person with high self-esteem may be willing to risk more errors, in the interest of communication, since he does not feel threatened by committing errors as a person with low self-esteem".

Appeal to authority

This is a strategy when the learner, because of his/her uncertainty about some structures directly ask a native speaker, a teacher or looks up the structure in a bilingual dictionary (Brown 1980:180).

Language switch

This is applied by the learner when all the other strategies have failed to help the learner. So the learner uses his/her native language to get the message across, regardless of the fact that the hearer or listener may not know the native language (Brown 1980:180).

2.5   Approaches to the Study of Errors

According to Latiff and Bakar (2007), there are four approaches to L1 interference in L2 learning. These are contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) which is the traditional approach, Error Analysis (EA); the contemporary approach, Interlanguage Analysis (IA) and Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) as the modern approaches. For the purpose of this study, the error analysis approach is discussed in this chapter.

2.5.1   Error analysis

In reaction to the weaknesses found with contrastive analysis, Error Analysis (EA) emerged in the 1960s to demonstrate that the errors L2 learners make are not always due to the learners" native language but due to other factors. The EA model holds the view that, factors like communicative strategies and the quality of second language instruction result to L2 errors (Hashim, 1992). Other causes of errors identified by Richards and Schmidt (2002) are overgeneralization errors, simplification errors, developmental errors, communication based errors, avoidance errors and overproduction errors. EA deals with the learners" performance in terms of cognitive processes. It recognizes the input learners receive from the target language. The basis of

21

error Analysis is the fact that learners" errors provide us with an understanding of the underlying process of second language acquisition (Erdogan, 2005). Ellis (1985) is of the view that Error Analysis consisted of "common" errors and their linguistic classification. Therefore, the goal of (EA) is pedagogical. This implies that, Errors in second language acquisition should prompt teachers to find appropriate remedial measures or strategies to help learners because, errors in second language acquisition is inevitable.

According to Corder (1976), EA is reserved for the study of erroneous utterances produced by a group of learners of a second language. Language teachers should therefore use appropriate methodologies to assist second language learners. Keshavars (1997) suggests that there are two branches of error analysis; theoretical and applied. According to Keshavars, theoretical error analysis is concerned with the processes and strategies of second language learning and similarities with first language. Applied error analysis on the hand deals with organizing remedial courses and devising appropriate materials and teaching strategies based on the findings of theoretical errors analysis. Pit Corder, an ardent proponent of EA through a series of articles contributed to the field of error analysis by giving it direction (Ellis, 1985). In 1974, Corder came up with the procedure of error analysis and suggested the following stages in EA research. They are; identification, description, explanation and evaluation stages. In the collection of errors, samples of the learners" language are selected to determine the patterns of change in the occurrence of errors.

Secondly, the errors are identified. Corder (1974) is of the view that there should be a distinction between systematic errors and haphazard mistakes. The third step in EA is the description of the errors. For the purpose of analysis, errors are classified by their grammatical behaviour, whether an error is phonological,

22

morphological or semantic. The next stage is the explanation of the errors. Here the teacher makes an understanding why an error is made. Is the error interlingual (between languages), as a result of negative transfer or interference from L1 and most importantly is the error is intraligual (within a language), that is factors not caused by cross – linguistic influence. The final step is error evaluation. That is, what effect the error has on whoever is being addressed. In other words, how serious is the error, does it affect intelligibility or acceptability? It must be stated that, error evaluation is necessary only if the purpose of EA is for pedagogy.

2.5.2   Interlanguage

The concept of Interlanguage was suggested by Selinker (1972) in order to draw attention to the possibility that the learner's language can be regarded as a distinct language. In the view of James (1972), Interlanguage is a system which holds a half-way position between knowing and not knowing the target language. According to Nemser (1971), Interlanguage is an approximative system. This is because the learner makes successive attempts towards the target language. This assertion can be supported by Selinker (1971) when he identifies five fossilization processes as follows:

2.5.2.1 Language transfer

Here, sometimes rules and subsystems of the Interlanguage may result from transfer from the first language variety or system with its own particular characteristics and rules (Jie 2008). Based on the theory that while learning a second language, learners build up a system for themselves which is different in some ways from their first language and second language systems. The system which learners build up for themselves has been called Interlanguage. According to Adjemiam (1976), Interlanguage consists of a set of linguistic rules which can generate novel or meaningful utterances. This means that, though Interlanguage is between the L1 and the

23

L2 of the learner, certain meaningful utterances can be deduced from it. Ellis (1990) maintains that, Interlanguage theory can provide an explanation to how both children and adults acquire a second language. This means that, not only children but also adult learners of L2 develop a system of their own which is neither their L1 nor L2 since they are yet to internalize the structures of the L2 they are learning. To further buttress the above assertion, Tarone et al (1976) posited that, Interlanguage productions have the following characteristics:

a. Second language speakers rarely conform to what one expects native speakers of the target language to produce.

b. Interlanguage productions are not an exact translation of native utterances

c. Utterances in the second language are not randomly produced

d. Interlanguages are spoken either by adults or by children when second language acquisition is not simultaneous with that of the first language. From his claims, it means that, Interlanguage is not any haphazard language produced by L2 learner, but it does not also conform to standard rules of the target language. This explains why

Interlanguage production has no age; both children and adults who are learning a language form a system of language which is between their L1 and the target language. It is therefore very crucial for language teachers to employ appropriate remedial measures to assist learners to avoid the tendency to stop developing their Interlanguage grammar in the direction of the target language. This can bring about fossilization Selinker (1972). The processes of fossilization include;

2.5.2.2 Transfer of training

Some elements of the Interlanguage may result from specific   features of the training process used to teach the second language.

24

a. **Strategies of second language learning**: Some elements of the Interlanguage may result from a specific approach to the material to be learned.

b. **Strategies of second language communication**: Some elements of the Interlanguage may result from specific ways people learn to communicate with native speakers of the target language.

c. **Overgeneralization of the target language linguistic materia**ls: Some elements of the Interlanguage may be the product of overgeneralization of the rules and semantic features of the language. What can be deduced from the processes of fossilization is that, pedagogical procedures are key to the acquisition of a second language. Again as language teachers, our knowledge of the relevance of learner errors plays an important role in our attempt to assist learners to acquire the second language (English Language).

2.6   Importance of Errors in Language Learning

The most important and innovatory feature of EA is that it is quite error-friendly, meaning that errors are not seen as something negative or pathological anymore, but as Corder claims, "a learner's errors are significant in that, they provide the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language" (Corder, 1967, p. 167)This shows that, as language teachers we should not see errors are negative development to language learning, rather errors should assist us to develop appropriate remedial instructions to help L2 learners to fully internalized structures they have problems with. Selinker (1969) has noted three ways by which errors are important in language learning. These are errors make the language teacher aware of the progress of learners in the language learning process, errors also make the language researcher have insights into how language is learnt and errors help language learners get involved in hypothesis

25

testing to know if what they have learned is being used appropriately. This implies that errors in language learning are important to the language learner, language researcher and language teacher.

Richards (1971) from linguistic, psycholinguistic and pedagogic perspective sees errors language learners make as having the following importance:

1. Linguistically, errors help us to discover what constitutes human intelligence.

2. Psychologically, errors can reveal mental processes involved in language.

3. Pedagogically, errors help language teachers identify and analyze learners' errors and design appropriate ways of dealing with these errors. From the above analysis of the importance of errors it is right to say that, the basic importance of errors in language learning is to provide feedback to both the teacher and the learner. Errors also tell teachers something about the effectiveness of their teaching materials and teaching techniques and show them which parts of the syllabus has been adequately learned or taught and the areas that need extra attention.

2.7   Related Studies

In recent times a lot of research work has been carried out in the area of error analysis. These studies have delved into errors in written essays of second language users. While most of the studies in Ghana have focused on the errors made by undergraduates, a few of them have also examined the pattern of errors of Ghanaian students in SHS. The various researchers in those studies agree that, error analysis is a necessary tool far better proficiency in L2 acquisition. Yankson (1994) analyzed the errors in the use of English by students of the University of Cape Coast and University of Nsuka in Nigeria. In this study he identified concord errors and errors involving complex noun phrases in the essays of the students. He went further to trace the cause of those errors to Intralingual and developmental sources. According to Yankson

26

(1994:2), "developmental errors refer to errors that are typical of all L2 learners while intralingual errors are those committed as a result of the learners" partial knowledge of the data of the target language".

Edu-Buandoh (1996), on the other hand, provides a preliminary report on study of error patterns in the written essays of Senior High Students in the Central Region of Ghana. The purpose of the study was to identify the most frequent recurring errors and possible causes. The researcher grouped the identified errors into spelling, Concord, preposition, tense, articles and punctuation errors. According to her, the purpose of her study was to draw the attention of teachers of English, policy makers in Education and even students to the problem of poor standard of English and to recommend appropriate ways of solving the problem. Similarly Anyidoho (2002) studied the writings of final year University students of University of Ghana – Legon. According to Anyidoho (2002: 64), "in order to avoid the problems of relying on the results of external examinations in evaluating the proficiency level of students in English, a long term research project involving the collections and analysis of samples of students writing over a number of years was embarked upon. The study identifies concord errors, word choice, omission, preposition, punctuation and spelling errors. Students were given the opportunity to correct their own deviant sentences when the scripts were given to them. The purpose of this was to distinguish between errors and mistakes in the essays of the students.

Another study in error analysis is Ngor (2003). In this study, the researcher examines the concord problems in the essays of teacher trainees in teacher training colleges in Ghana. According to the researcher the students lack explicit and implicit knowledge of the rules of concord in English. This implies that, the country,,s educational system shows a bleak picture since would-be teachers cannot express

27

themselves using simple grammatical rules. Dzameshie (1997), in his study "Towards a communicative approach to teaching English as a second language in Ghana" addresses the crucial question "what should be the primary goal of teachers who teach English as a second language in Ghana?" He argues that the current approach in ESL pedagogy in Ghana that sees language as grammar rather than as a means of communication is deficient and therefore advocates that communicative skills-oriented approach whose ultimate goal and mission should not be merely to equip the learner with grammatical competence in the language. This means that teachers of English should view language primarily as a means of communication rather than as grammar.

Dzameshie therefore advocates that because of the dominant role English plays in Ghana, it is imperative to adopt a communicative approach In ESL in Ghana. Pomeyie (2009) also looks at" the problems of tense usage in the written English essays of students in SHS "according to her, SHS is the gateway to tertiary level, and therefore, there is the need to improve the status of English language of SHS students. She observed that SHS students have serious problem with tenses in English and surprisingly teachers are not aware of it. This means that teachers should step-up their game when it comes to teaching of English language in our schools. Safo-Adu (2009), in his book "Your English is you" examines the error patterns of students in their essays. The purpose is to draw attention to certain wrong expressions and grammatical errors which feature prominently in the speeches and written works of students. The revelations of the various studies have confirmed that indeed the standard of English of SHS students has fallen and proper recommendations be given to improve upon it.

Likewise, Huang (2006) presents an analysis of 34 English essays from Taiwanese students. The errors he identified included categories of grammar, mechanics, style and usage. He then concluded that the most EFL students" errors were

28

not due to insufficient command of linguistic complexity. On the contrary, the students made basic errors such as subject-verb-agreement or incomplete sentences indicating intralingual errors. Of the three elements of writing; content, organization and language, it is reasonable to say that language has been considered the most difficult for L2 writers due to their limited language proficiency or limited linguistic knowledge. Silver (1993) explains that inadequate language knowledge at times, leads to ineffective L2 writing on account of the difference between the first and second language. Again, Kim (2002) conducted a study to examine the sources and the nature of learners" errors. He used 30 writing samples of Korean students from college freshman students who were registered for TOEIC class. Most of the learner"s errors were in the areas of verbs, prepositions, articles, plural/singular agreement, adjectives and conjunctions. The study showed that most of the learners" errors were developmental errors.

Furthermore, Weigle (2002) advocates that because of the constraints of limited second language knowledge, writing in a second language may be hampered due to the need to focus on language rather than content. She also confirms that it is impossible for L2 students to write properly in a second language without linguistic knowledge regarding grammar and vocabulary. That is, L2 writing can be more difficult if learners are not able to acquire the syntactic properties of the English language, which makes them rely on their first language as well as overgeneralize rules when writing in English language. Obviously, from the above discussion, it is realized that there is a peculiar problem impeding the effective writing of second language learners. The causes can emanate from ignorance and inappropriate use of L2 rules as well as the difference between the L1 and the L2 systems. For example, Sarfaz (2011) argues that though students are taught grammatical rules of target language, they lack practice and positive

29

feedback. Due to this, L2 writers employ their own systems, eventually leading to errors in their writing.

2.8   Conclusion

The discussion so far has indicated that there is no single way of categorizing and analyzing errors that occur in the writings of students. They all depend on the focus of the researcher. The discussions have given the researcher an idea of how to create major categories as the reference point for the types of errors to look out for in this study. The discussion has also indicated that the problem of errors in the written essays of students still persists .The discussion has also revealed that the sure way of analyzing students errors is for the language teacher to understand the L1 of the learner to be able to understand why certain errors are committed. The teacher should also see errors in students‟writings as a learning situation.
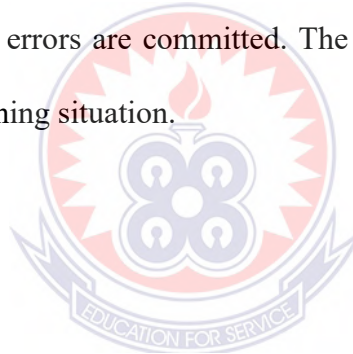
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3. 0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in conducting the research. It begins with the research design, population, sampling technique and sample size, data collection strategies, data collection procedure, data analysis and data presentation.

3.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative case study involving students of Ghana Senior High School in the Northern Region of Ghana; precisely, in the Tamale Metropolis. Qualitative research is multi – method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that, qualitative research is concerned with multiple perspectives. The choice of this research design is because; it produces the detailed description of participants" feelings, opinions and experiences: and interprets the meanings of actions (Denzin, 1989). In terms of language testing, for example, Bachman (1998) showed in his study that, qualitative research results provide the relationship between information processing with performance specifically and deeply. Chalhoub – Deville and Deville (2008), too argued that, qualitative approaches are employed to achieve deeper insights into issues related to designing, administering and interpreting language assessment.

Creswell (1994) describes research as a master plan specifying the research methods and procedures. This study analyses the errors made by form two students of Ghana SHS Kothari (2004) describes research design as a plan, a roadmap and a blueprint strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions. In addition, Owu-Ewie (2012) confirms that research design provides the

most valid and accurate answers possible to the research questions stated. In this study, the qualitative research design was used. For Owu-Ewie (2012), a qualitative research implies a detailed verbal description of characteristics, case and setting by using interviews, observations and documents as the data collecting procedure. Therefore, different data sources were employed to identify errors in the written essays of form two students of Ghana SHS. A qualitative content analysis of the students" writings was conducted based on the error analysis approach. As Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006 p. 464) state that, "content or document analysis is a research method applied to written or visual materials for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material". For this, the written essays of the learners were analyzed for the common errors they commit.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population for the study is all SHS two students of Ghana Senior High School. The total school population was about two – thousand, three hundred and fifteen (2,315) students. Out of this, about eight hundred and four (804) students comprising five hundred boys and three hundred and four girls made up the entire population of the form two students. This number is drawn from the five programmes run by the school; General Arts, Home Economics, General Science, Agric Science and Business. The class distribution for the five programmes include: General Arts – four classes, General Science – three class, Agric Science – two classes, Home Economics – two classes and Business – two classes.

The researcher decided to sample students from the four General Arts Classes because these classes have the highest number of students in terms of population. It was also convenient because, the researcher teaches in all the four General Arts classes. This

helped the researcher to get the needed data for the research work. In all, fifty students were sampled randomly to take part in the essay writing. This was to enable the researcher have ample time to look thoroughly into each student‟s essay. In all, a total of one hundred essays were marked and the errors collated for the research. This means that, each student wrote two essays.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population is known as sampling (Polit, Beck, &Hungler, 2001). It can also be referred to as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behaviour with which to conduct a study. The sample size for the research consists of 50 students from form two classes which involve 30 boys and 20 girls. In sampling, a portion that represents the whole population is selected (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001).The researcher selected the form two classes because those were the classes he taught.

3.4 Source of Data

Creswell (2013) affirms that research instruments involve data collection and are designed to answer research questions. This study made use of students‟ written essays, forming the basic source of data to answer the research questions. Written essays were given to students since they are the outcome of a planned language production.

3.5 Instruments for Data Collection

A research instrument is a systematically prepared document purposely designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data (Parahoo, 1997). Parahoo argues that a research instrument is a systematically prepared form or document purposely designed through compilation of

questions to elicit responses from respondents with the aim of collecting data. Hence, the researcher used students" written essays for the study. The main objective of this study is to analyze students "writing errors, hence the use of written essays as the major instrument of the study.

The researcher used the written works of students because it enabled him to use the essays of students for the analysis of the errors. It also enabled the researcher to access the data at his own convenience. To ensure confidentiality, the students were asked not to write their names on the essay. Instead, number codes were given to the students to write on their scripts. The first essay was written at the proposed time by the students. The second essay was written as part of their semester examination.

3.6 Ethical Issues

To ensure that, the result of this study is accepted, the researcher followed some ethical issues. First the researcher sought the permission for everything he did. He had the permission from the headmistress of the school, the head of the English Language Department, and the sampled students. For the students, the researcher assured them that, their essays scripts would be burnt immediately after the research.

3. 7 Data Analysis and Presentation

The Errors Analysis (EA) approach is used to analyze errors in the essays that were collected for the study. The data was analyzed using the inductive synthesis approach, where data was reduced to meaningful units to readers by way of categorization and coding. This was done using content analysis to get the errors. In addition, the errors were presented on bar charts to identify their frequency. The researcher in analyzing the data, created the following categories of errors: spelling errors, punctuation errors, concord errors and lexical errors (wrong use of words). After

the categories were created the individual errors were coded under their respective categories.

An error in this study is when a student writes a word or structure wrongly and continues to use the faulty word/structure throughout the essay. If after using the wrong word or structure, the student later writes the appropriate one, it was considered an error and was therefore not counted. It must be noted that some errors belong to one or more categories. For example, "I have big head" belongs to omission error, agreement error and at the same time literal translation error. In such a case, the error would be discussed under the error categories it appears.

In another situation, if a student makes the same error twice or thrice, it is counted once, but the error is counted if it is made by another student.

The data was presented using bar charts based on percentages of the errors committed.

3.8 Validity

Validity is important in research work because it establishes the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable. Researchers aim to verify that their findings are consistent with the raw data they collected. They want to make sure that if some other researchers were to look over the data, they would arrive at similar findings, interpretations, and conclusions about the data. This is important to ensure that there was nothing missing in the research study, or that the researcher was not sloppy or misguided in his or her final report.

In this study, the researcher can report that, the instrument used to gather the data for the research as well as the findings arrived at all valid. The major instrument used to gather the data for the research work was test and end of semester examination where students" essays were marked and the results collated for the research work. It is impossible for research to be 100 percent valid that is the optimism of perfection. In

qualitative data, the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias. Validity, then, should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state.

In this research work, the researcher can state that, the findings arrived at are valid. This is because, the researcher was personally involved in the work and the data gathered for the research work. The individual involvement of the respondents, i.e. the students gives credence to the fact that the research instrument used gives a valid outcome of their responses. For instance, the tests conducted, revealed a massive lack of knowledge about some basic structures in the English language and the fact that most students in the senior high schools cannot express themselves with minimal errors in English language. Internally, the data provided by the research can be sustained.

3.9 Reliability

Reliability is essentially a synonym to consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. For a research to be reliable it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found. A reliable instrument for a piece of research will yield similar data from similar respondents over time. Denzin (1983) suggests that reliability as replicability in qualitative research can be addressed in several ways: stability of observations (whether the researcher would have made the same observations and interpretation of these if they had been observed at a different time or in a different place);parallel forms (whether the researcher would have made the same observations and interpretations of what had been seen if he had paid attention to other phenomena during the observation); inter-rater reliability (whether another observer with the same theoretical framework and observing the same phenomena would have interpreted them in the same way).

Based on this, this research work can be said to be reliable. The main instrument employed to gather data for the work would show consistent results if administered any time under the same conditions. Tests and end of semester examination were used to find out the category of errors, their causes and frequency of their occurrence in students" essays. This revealed different categories of errors in students" written essays. The researcher therefore believes that if the same instrument is administered on students with the same or similar learning difficulties and under the same condition, the results gathered would be the same or similar.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the methodology used by the researcher to conduct this research. It starts, with the research design used for the study. It also discusses the population, sampling technique and sample size. The data collection strategies employed to collect the data which include document and observation. The chapter further discusses the ethical use raised and finally how the data is analyzed and presented in the study.
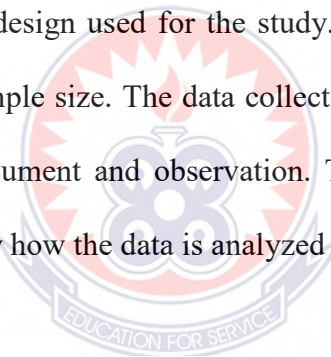
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0   Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis and presentation of the data collected. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents a discussion and analysis of errors committed by learners in their writings. Such errors include concord errors, punctuation errors, spelling errors, tense errors and article errors. The second section discusses the causes of these errors. Based on the findings of the study, several factors were realized to be the causes of errors in learners‟ writings. On concord, the analysis showed that learners could not apply the principle of subject verb agreement as well as pronoun and antecedent agreement and this was due to incomplete learning of rules. On punctuation errors, punctuation marks were wrongly used and some were even omitted. This was due to ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete learning of rules as well as L1 interference. Spelling errors were due to incomplete learning of rules which led learners to add incorrect elements, omitted needed elements and in other cases substituted letters in words. This situation could also be attributed to context of learning problems.

Tense errors on the other hand, occurred due to overgeneralization where learners used verbs wrongly leading to distortion of the meaning of their utterances. The situation could also be attributed to L1 interference. On article errors, learners used articles wrongly and in some cases where articles were needed, they were omitted. Finally, learners omitted words such as prepositions and linking verbs making their utterances incomplete. The analyzed data have been represented in simple percentages and bar charts. These are further explained with examples in their various sections. After analyzing the data, different types of errors were identified from students‟ written

38

essays. Based on the identification and description of errors, the researcher made a category of errors based on the data collected. The following error categories were identified and analyzed: orthographical errors (spelling errors), semantic errors or wrong use of word, punctuation errors and concord errors.

4.1   Categorization of Errors

After analyzing the data, different types of errors were identified from students" written essays. Based on the identification and description of errors, the researcher made a category of errors based on the data collected. There was some little difficulty in making these categorizations of errors because sometimes some of the errors cut across the various categories. Nevertheless, the following error categories were identified and analyzed: orthographical errors (spelling errors), lexical errors, punctuation errors, concord errors, prepositional errors, verb tense errors and article errors.

4.1.1   Concord (agreement) Errors

Aarts (2010) explains that in English subject-verb agreement is when the subject and verb in a sentence agree in number. That is, they both must be singular or plural. There is no singular subject with a plural verb or vice-versa. For example: *"He teaches Mathematics"* and "*The parents plan for the children"s future"*. In these situations, *"teaches"* is singular and it agrees with the singular subject *"he"* whereas in the second sentence, the verb *"plan"* is plural and it also agrees with the plural subject *"the parents"*. The reciprocal placement of the two verbs in the two sentences would have defied the agreement rule, thus resulting in the sentences being grammatically wrong. According to Quirk Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) each noun phrase is either singular or plural, and its number is determined in general by its head, which is typically a noun. Lorimor (2007) assumes that agreement (between the verb and the subject) is a basic principle of language. The conclusion could be that one does not

know the language unless if one understands the rules of subject-verb agreement and can apply them in context. In relation to this, Corbett (2006) argues that in some languages, word order consistently affects agreement patterns while in other languages the effect of the word order on agreement appears sporadically and it is speaker or situation-dependent. The concord error types identified in the data are discussed in the following sections.

4.1.1.1 Subject-verb agreement

This is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second or third) and number (singular or plural).Generally speaking, the predicate or verb must agree with the subject in number and in person. By number, we mean the subject can be singular or plural. In addition to being singular or plural, a subject can also be first person, second person, and third person. Person can be seen as the relationship between the speaker and what he is speaking about. In English, a count noun takes an –s when forming its plural. However, with verbs it is the third person singular form in its present tense that takes an –s. An agreement error therefore occurs when a plural subject is used with a singular verb. About 300 of these errors were committed by students in their essays as shown in some examples from students essays.

1. Our former teacher told me that, every course are important.

2. Everybody thinks that, science are difficult.

3. Most of my friends offers general arts.

4. In general art, we offers literature which involve reading books and poems.

5. we have a lot of brilliant student in our class

In the sentences, the subject-verb agreement principle is violated. It can be seen that these are developmental errors which occur during the learning process. Developmental errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypothesis about the target language

on the basis of limited experience Haydari (2012).This could also be attributable to negative intralingual transfer because the students made faulty generalization of the rules they have learnt .The students who made these errors had difficulty in locating the noun heads and their number.

4.1.1.2 Noun-pronoun agreement

Noun-pronoun agreement is the correspondence of a noun with its antecedent in number (singular, plural), person (first, second, third), and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) (Sorenson, 2010).Traditionally, one of the basic principles of pronoun agreement (also called noun-pronoun agreement or pronoun-antecedent agreement) is that, a singular pronoun refers to a singular noun while a plural pronoun refers to plural noun but it is sometimes complicated when the pronoun is indefinite. Some of the students could not apply this rule and the result is about 200 errors committed by students in their essays. Some examples include following:

1. Everyone must bring them books and poems.

2. One of the girls has their books.

3. The community members are not helping their selves

4. The chief themselves defecates in the bush.

5. All students must bring his/her own book.

4.1.1.3 Singular-plural errors

Singular and plural phenomena exist in English as well as many other languages. In English, only count nouns actually have plural forms. Count nouns represents items that exists in separate units you can count such as trees, pens, dogs, etc. non-count nouns represents items existing as a mass, such as powders and liquids (sand, water) or concepts (honesty, economics). In addition, unlike a singular count-noun that must have a/an as a determiner, eg. (This is an apple) plural count nouns can appear or

41

occur without a determiner eg. (I like pens). In the essays of the students used for the study, most of them have difficulty dealing with singular and plural nouns and verbs. This accounted for about 191 errors committed by students under this category. The following are some examples of the errors identified from the data:

1. The environmental protection agency <u>are</u> doing little to stop open defecation.

2. Sometimes they beat the gon-gong for every citizens to join in the clean-up exercise.

3. It was announced that everybody should put their <u>sheeps</u> in the house.

4. Many progress <u>have been</u> made by many students who study science.

4.1.1.4 Relative pronoun (subject) with singular verb

In the principle of proximity concord, attraction is applied when a sentence has two clauses; main clause and dependent clause and the dependent is a relative clause. A relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun; who, whom, that, which, and whose. The relative pronoun can be singular or plural depending on its antecedent. Their agreement is in respect to the number of the antecedents that is the nouns which they refer to. The relative pronouns therefore take the verbs that agree with their antecedents. For example, in the sentence*; This is the boy who tells stories*. In the sentence above, the antecedent of who is boy. Since the noun boy is singular, the relative pronoun who is also singular and therefore takes a singular verb tells. This rule was not adhered to by the students in their essays and as a result committed about 100 errors under the relative pronoun rule as shown in some of the examples from the students essays;

1. This is the boy who <u>tell</u> stories.

2. We saw the man who <u>steal</u> fowls.

3. The houses which my father built <u>was</u> confiscated.

4. The times when the classes <u>was</u> organized was not told.

5.   The teacher and students who <u>comes</u> for cleaning were few.

In the sentences, it can be seen that the students lack the knowledge of pronoun and antecedent agreement. This could be as a result of limited content learnt in that area.

### 4.1.1.5 Demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors

Demonstrative pronouns are used to refer to things and persons in space. They can be contrasted based on number and are of two sets; this and these on one hand and that and those on the other. This and these are used to refer to entities that are proximal (close by) while that and those are used to refer to entities that are distal (further away) (Aarts, 2010).*This* and *that* are singular and these and those are plural. When these demonstrative pronouns are used as subjects they must agree with the verb. Analysis of the data gathered from the students" essays revealed that they violated this rule. Some of the students could not distinguish between the singular and plural use of the pronouns and as well the use of that and those. Under this about 150 errors were collated from the students" essays. This could be attributed to inadequate learning or fossilization and context of learning problems. Some examples as captured from students" essays include;

1.   This <u>make</u> my English teacher angry.

2.   These <u>was</u> the number of people who attended the meeting.

3.   This <u>were</u> my classmates.

4.   These <u>is</u> the number of students who attend class regularly.

From the examples above it can be seen that the students could not apply the rule of demonstrative pronouns being in agreement with the verbs they precede resulting to deviant structures. A summary of subject-verb agreement errors is shown in Table 4.1.1 and illustrated in Figure 4.1.1.

43

Table 4.1.1*:* A Summary of Concord Errors

Type of Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage
Subject verb agreement error	300	31.8
Noun pronoun agreement error	200	21.25
Singular-plural agreement errors	191	20.2
Relative pronoun(subject) with singular verb errors	100	10.6
Demonstrative pronoun(subject) –verb errors	150	15.9
Total	**941**	**100**
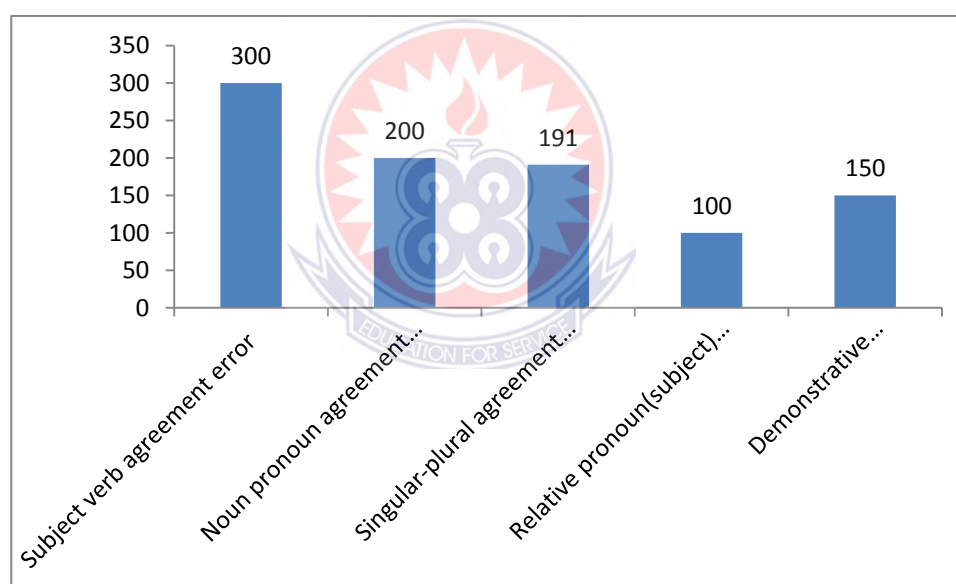
Figure 4.1.1: A Summary of Concord Errors

From the figure it can be seen that the major concord error the students committed was the subject verb agreement error. This can be attributed to the fact that most of the students could not identify the head nouns in their sentence. According to Quirk Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) each noun phrase is either singular or plural, and its number is determined in general by its head, which is typically a noun.

44

Lorimor (2007) assumes that agreement (between the verb and the subject) is a basic property of language. Any violation of this principle is an agreement error. It is evident that the students involved did not understand the subject verb agreement principle partly due to LI interference. Another agreement error worthy of mention is the noun – pronoun agreement error. Noun-pronoun agreement is the correspondence of a noun with its antecedent in number (singular, plural), person (first, second, third), and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) (Sorenson, 2010).

4.1.2   Orthographical (Spelling) Errors

The way students pronounce words has to a large extent influence how the word is spelt or written. L1 speakers learning a second language have difficulty producing certain words/sounds in the L2 especially when those sounds do not exist in their native language. For example, American students learning Akan (Twi) may make spelling errors like "na" instead of "nya" (to get/have) because they are likely to produce /n/ (ny) as /n/. In the same way, Akan learners of English have difficulty producing the inter-dental sound sounds /ð/ (th) because the sounds are absent in Akan (Owu-Ewie & Lomotey, 2012). Spelling errors can be L1 induced, intralingual or context of learning. In this study, the words considered as errors did not occur once. If they occur twice they were counted as errors and counted once if made by the same students. With orthographical or spelling errors, the following sub-categories were recorded; insertions, omission, sound change, sound inversion. Below is the explanation of each of the sub-categorizations of orthographical errors with some examples from students" essays.

4.1.2.1 Letter insertion

In these examples, external letters were added to the original or correct words which make the spelling of the word wrong in the essay. It sometimes involves

45

doubling a single letter. Though about 123 of such cases were found in students essays, a few have been used in this work. Some examples as found in students essays are;

1. I beth you for I bet you

2. Morden for modern

3. Writing for writing

4. Accademic for academic

5. Dinning hall for dining hall

4.1.2.2 Letter omission

In this instance, students omitted or deleted some letter from the correct forms of the words making them incorrect. It involves either the omission of a vowel or a consonant form the correct form of the word. In this case about 150 errors were identified in students" essays. Some examples found in students essays include:

1. Sincerly – sincerely

2. Head – heard

3. Mad – made

4. Hole – whole

5. Knowlege – knowledge
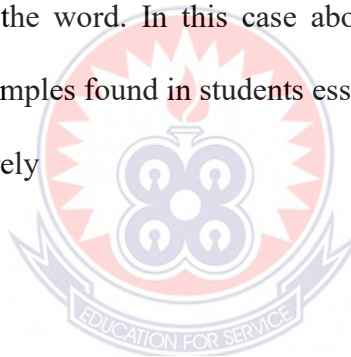
4.1.2.3 Letter change

This type of spelling errors involves the change of a letter or letters in the original or correct form of the words. Analysis of the data reveals about 200 of such cases in students written essays. Some examples as captured from students" essays include:

1. Becouse – because

2. Hole – whole

3. Persue – pursue

4. Distroy – destroy

5. Colledge – college

6. Essense – essence

46

4.1.2.4 Sound inversion

In these examples, sounds were inverted making the original words look different from what the students have produced. When the data was collated and analyzed from students written essays, it was observed that, about 130 of such cases were committed in the essays of the students. Some examples are

1. Recieve – receive

2. Acheive – achieve

3. Interveiw – interview

The Table 4.1.2 shows a summary of the errors under found in this category

Table 4.1.2: A Summary of Orthographical (spelling) Errors

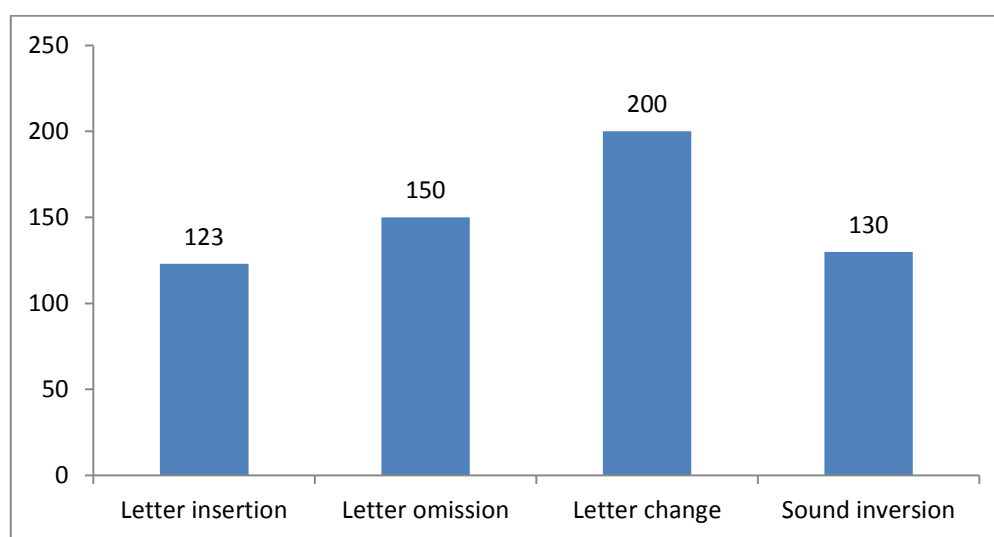| Type of error	Frequency	Percentage
Letter insertion	123	20.4
Letter omission	150	24.9
Letter change	200	33.1
Sound inversion	130	21.6
Total	**603**	**100**

47

Table 4.1.2 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.2.

Figure 4.1.2: A Summary of Orthographical (spelling) Errors

In a related study, Benyo (2014) examined spelling errors made by students of Dongola University. The result showed that the students committed error of letter omission, addition transportation and substitution. He concluded that the errors were due to irregularity of English spelling, ignorance and incomplete application of rules. In this study, it was revealed that the difference in the sound and spelling system of English is the main cause of students" spelling errors especially the errors that are related to sound inversion and sound omission. In most of the spelling errors, it could be realized the students spelled the words exactly as they pronounced them and in most cases they students do not know the correct pronunciations of the words. The researcher therefore supports the view that English spelling is difficult and irregular (Macline, 2001). However, spelling is important for everybody to communicate his or her idea. Correct spelling helps to convey the right meaning of a text while bad spelling on the other hand, hinders the reader from getting the actual meaning of a written language. Hence, any mistake in spelling can affect the written product and may lead to misunderstanding. This contributes to low marks students always get under mechanical accuracy in their essays.

48

4.1.3   Verb tense errors

Verb tense refers to the way a verb is formed to communicate when an action or occurrence takes place. Tense is a grammatical category that is realized morphologically in English. Verb tense errors occur when you use the wrong verb tense. These errors are common grammatical errors. English has just two tenses: the present tense and the past tense. The verb tense makes the reader aware of when the action expressed in the sentence is taking place in the past, the present or the future. There must be consistently between when the action occurred and the types of verb used. About 25 of this were identified from the data. The following sentences may explain the point:

I go to the market and I bought cassava.

Go is a present tense verb and bought is a past tense verb, bought should be buy, since these two events both occur at the same time. In a similar example, I will eat fufu for dinner and drank wine. "Will eat fufu" is a future tense verb but "drank" is a past tense verb use which makes it an error. Some of the students had difficulties with regards to the selection of the correct verb tense. This resulted to verb tense errors in their essays. Here a total of 56 errors were identified in students" essays. These were analyzed under the past tense and present tense as shown as follows:

4.1.3.1 The past tense

The past tense in English is the marked form. In terms of morphology, the vast majority of verbs in English have a distinctive past form,(danced, rang, sang) and semantically the past tense refers to a situation that is prior to the present *, for example , Last year was better*. Here 15 of such errors were recorded from the data as shown in some of the examples below;

1. My head teacher <u>give</u> me some award.

2. My friends present their homework except me.

3. My senior tell me to danced.

4. All of us present our work the following day.

5. After that we clear the rubbish.

From the sentences, all the actions have been completed and the students should have indicated this by using the past tense of the verbs. This goes to indicate that most of the students are not familiar with the rules governing the appropriate use of tense in English language.

4.1.3.2 The present tense

The present tense is not marked except in the 3rd person singular form. This expresses situations that have immediate reality. Semantically, it covers a vast range of references including reference to the future time. From the data analyzed, the students were not able to use this tense appropriately resulting to the construction of some wrong sentences. Under this 10 of such errors were identified as shown below;

1. My friends always comes to class late.

2. The English teachers calls me to the staff room.

3. Some of the town people weeds around the gutters.

4. All the students celebrates when we won.

A critical look at the errors so far, indicates that, they are mostly intralingual errors and context of learning problems. It can be seen that, students are over generalizing rules learned. In some cases of the errors that occurred, it could be realized that, there is the problem of incomplete learning or students have not fully internalized the right rules in grammar. Again, a careful look at the orthographical errors shows that, a majority of students in our senior high schools cannot spell basic and familiar words. This can be attributed to poor reading habit that is inherent in most students at the senior high level.

50

The problem with noun-pronoun is because students are unable to make out headwords and their corresponding pronouns. In some cases they were able to identify the headwords but fail to determine the number of headwords. A summary of the verb tense errors is presented in Table 4.1.3 and Figure 4.1.3 respectively.

Table 4.1.3: A Summary of Verb Tense Errors

Types Of Error	Frequency	Percentage
Past tense	15	60
present tense	10	40
Total	**25**	**100**

In language lea**r**ning, knowledge of grammar, particularly tense, is considered to be the crucial part for non-native learners to master properly (Muftah & Rafik-Galea, 2013). Verb tense refers to the way a verb is formed to communicate when an action takes place. Many verbs give the idea of doing something. For example, the words *drink*, *run*, and *read* suggest action.
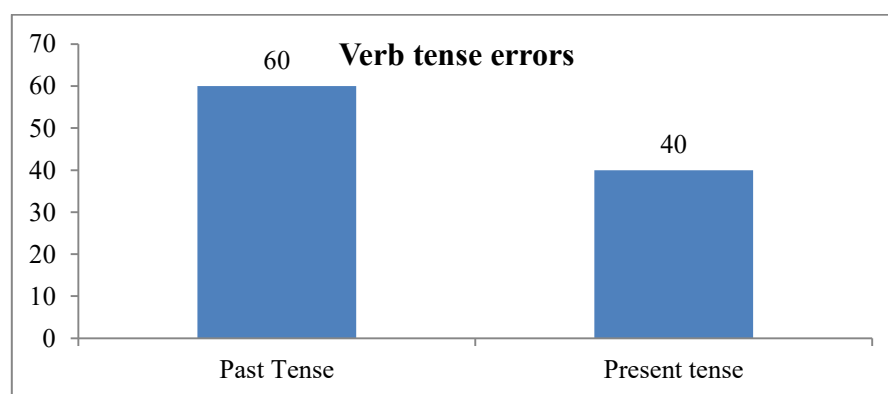

Figure 4.1.3: A Summary Of verb Tense Errors

It tells one what to do at a particular moment. However, some verbs do not give the idea of action; they express the idea of existence or state of being. For example, verbs like be, being, seem and exist convey state. In simple terms therefore, we can say

51

that verbs are words that tell us what a subject does or is. They describe action and state of being. Tense errors in sentences are one of the common errors committed by learners of English and those in this study are not excluded. Verb tense errors occur when one uses the wrong verb tense. Tense errors in this study has been categorized into misuse of verb tense (e.g. my mother **visit the salon yesterday** instead of **visited the salon yesterday**) and subject-verb agreement (**he play** instead of **he plays**). From the table above it can be seen that some of the students still have problems with the use of the present tense and the past tense. This account for about 15 errors under the usage of the past tense of verbs and about 10 errors recorded under the usage of the present tense.

4.1.4   Article Errors

There are some basic rules in the use of the articles in English language; a singular common noun (e.g. boy, tree, teacher, village etc.) takes an article. In addition, a plural common noun can be used with or without an article. Also, the definite article (the   ) is used with the superlative adjectives and a proper noun does not normally take an article.   However, these basic rules regarding the use of articles were overlooked or posed a challenge to most students in the data used for the study. In all a total of 45 errors were identified and analyzed under this category. In this study the article errors are:

4.1.4.1 Missing article

In this category, the students left some articles preceding their respective nouns. This was the most frequently committed in this category. A total of 19 errors were identified here. Some examples as captured in the data under analysis are as follows:

The community was made to clear ^ area very well.

1. Most people live in ^ dirty environment.

2. In our community we have ^ big gutter where people defecate.

3. Our school has ^ best teachers in the whole northern region.

4. Being ^ prefect in our school is ^ best thing you can have.

4.1.4.2 Wrong article use

In this category the students used an article, but it was not the appropriate article, rendering the sentence ungrammatical. This is second most frequently committed error under this category. A total of 15 errors were identified here. The following are some instances as captured from the data under analysis.

1. She will be a English teacher. (**an English teacher**)

2. My mother buy some the tomatoes. (**some tomatoes**)

3. The Madam Esther is my best teacher. (**Madam Esther**)

4. On the Christmas day, we cooked rice a tomato stew. (**and tomato stew**)

4.1.4.3 Redundant article use

In this category of errors, the students used an article when it was not necessary. This implies that, an article was not to be used. The number of errors committed under this category is 11. The following are examples from the data

1. We are an happy family. (**a happy family**)

2. She is a intelligent girl. (**an very beautiful girl**)

3. He is understanding person. (**an understanding person**)

4. We have a English teacher who is intelligent (**an English**)

5. My school is a best school (**the best school**)

The number of errors committed by students is shown in Table 4.1.4 and illustrated in

Table 4.1.4: A Summary of Article Errors

Type of Article Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage
Missing article	19	42.2
Wrong use of article	15	33.3
Redundant article use	11	24.5
Total	**45**	**100**

Some of the students misuse or omitted articles in sentences where articles were needed, this resulted to loss of meaning in those sentences. As Raehan, Chodorow and Leacock (2006) observe that mastering the English articles is one of the most difficult tasks facing the non-native speakers, especially when the L1 does not have articles. In Dagbani, there are articles but the rule governing their use is different from that of English. In Dagbani, nouns are not preceded by an article but this is not the case in English Language where nouns are preceded by articles. It was realized in students" essays that, most of them did not know where to use articles and where not to use.
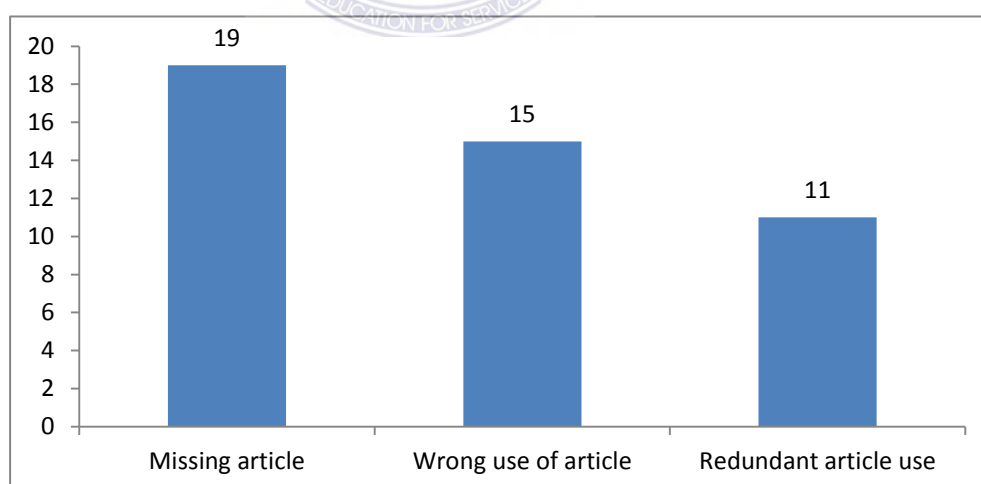
Figure 4.1.4: A Summary of Article Errors

4.1.5   Prepositional errors

A preposition tells a reader when and where something occurred as well as how it occurred. A preposition introduces a prepositional phrase in a sentence. In most cases, it co-occurs with a noun phrase. It should be noted that, some constructions require prepositions while others do not. A total of about 25 errors were committed by students under this category.

4.1.5.1 Missing preposition

This means the students fail to use preposition when in actual sense it was necessary. About 15 of the total errors under prepositional errors came from missing prepositions. Examples from the data include the following:

1. In advising us, the headmaster said we should not boast ^ our success.

2. My friend didn‟t listen ^ the advice.

3. One benefit ^ offering general science is job opportunity.

4. My teacher narrated^ us the whole story.

5. The chief praised him ^ being good.

This could be as a result of the fact that the students were not aware of the existence of prepositions in those structures.

4.1.5.2 Redundant use of preposition

This implies that a preposition was used when it was not required. A majority of the students could not tell when a preposition was not required. This rendered most of their sentences ungrammatical. About 4 of such cases were identified from some essays of the students. Extracts from some essays by students are illustrated as follows:

1. The exercise we did has benefited to us

2. The school prefect said he will inform to the headmaster about our attitude.

55

3. My father told me to come into the house.

4. We were made to sign on the bond of good behaviour.

5. We were asked not to violate against the rules again.

4.1.5.3 Wrong use of preposition

This implies that a preposition was required in the sentence but the wrong one was used. This means that most of the students did not understand the concept of prepositions and how they are used in sentences. This situation occurred in some of the essays. About 6 of these were recorded from some essays of some of the students as follows:

i. Our students were over confident of win the race

ii. Our teachers were concerned on the dirty compound

iii. In addition, let me chip **into** this. (In addition, let me chip **in** this).

iv. The reason **of** studying English is….(The reason **for** studying English is….).

v. The communal labour occurred during 2 pm and 4 pm.

vi. Do not let anyone discourage you about your future career.

A summary of this category of error is illustrated in Table 4.1.5 and Figure 4.1.5 respectively.

Table 4.1.5: A Summary of Prepositional Errors

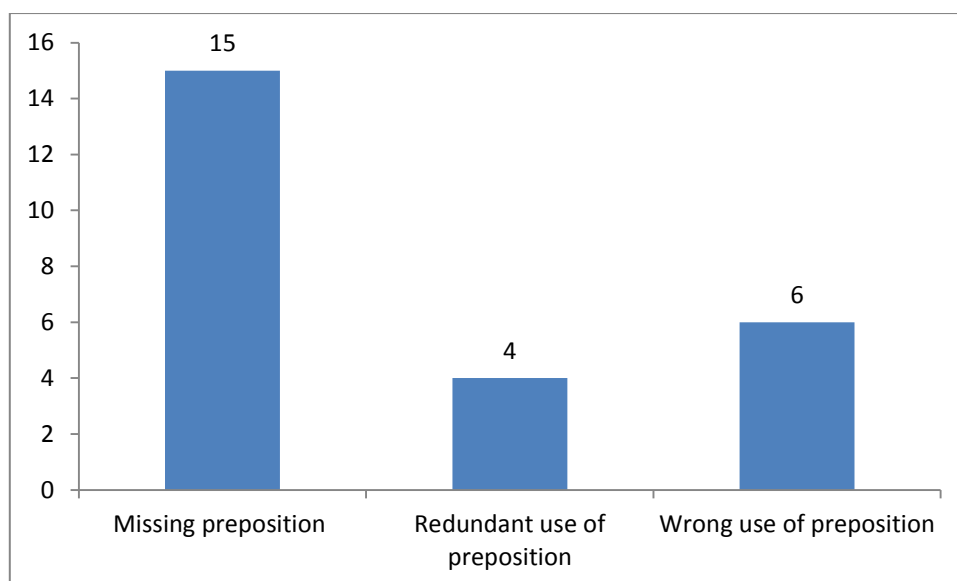| Type of Prepositional Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage
Missing preposition	15	60
Redundant use of preposition	04	16
Wrong use of preposition	06	24
Total	**25**	**100**

56

Figure 4.1.5: A Summary of Prepositional Errors

Prepositions are grammatical morphemes which connect nouns or pronouns with other words within a sentence. They can also be described as words which are used to „show a relationship or connection between a noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence" (Quagie, 2010). Prepositions, therefore, have relational functions and they often refer to location (under the table), direction (to the south), or time (at midnight). They can also be used to convey other relationships: agency (by); possession (of); purpose (for); source (from, out of). A sentence doesn"t show such relations when prepositions are omitted or misused within a sentence. A total of 25 prepositional errors were identified in students" essays. This category of error could be attributed to the context of learning.

4.1.6   Lexical errors

According to Hernandez (2011), lexical errors are errors at word level and they include; choosing the wrong word for the meaning the writer wants to express. For example, *I made my assignment. Instead of I did my assignment. When inappropriate lexical choices are made (lexical errors) this can lead directly to misunderstanding of the message, or at least an increase in the burden of interpreting the text. In the analysis there was the problem of whether some of the errors were as a result of spelling errors

57

or because the students did not know the meaning of the word and how to use them appropriately. In this study, I will therefore concentrate on the semantic aspect in this category because spelling errors have been treated already. I have observed from students" essays that, some of the lexical errors are as a result of homophone problems. I will therefore break the lexical errors into two: those caused by homophone problems and those caused by inappropriate use of words. In all a total of 350 of these errors were identified and analyzed. The 350 errors under this category were analyzed under the two sub headings as lexical errors due to homophone problem and semantic lexical errors.

4.1.6.1 Lexical errors due to homophone problem

These are words that have different spellings but the same pronunciation. These errors might have come about as a result of poor pronunciation. Students cannot pronounce such words to bring about the difference. It is also possible to state that some students do not know when and where the words should be used. This was as a result of the difficulty in differentiating between the meanings of these words. Out of the 350 errors under the lexical category, 220 came from lexical errors due to homophone problem. Examples from the data are as follows:

1. Every youth should promote piece and harmony

2. My school tend sixty years

3. The whole village turned into morning when there was cholera outbreak.

4. As a boarder you has the rite to enjoy the boarding facilities

5. My school won a price for the national science and mathematics quiz

4.1.6.2 Semantic lexical errors

This category of lexical errors occurs as a result of confusion in the mind of the student on the appropriate lexical item (word) to use. In this case, the words are not

homophones; they have different pronunciation and different meaning or form. About 130 of such cases were identified and analyzed. The following are some extracts from the data:

1. The programme they have <u>pursued</u> you

2. You have the opportunity <u>to do</u> a programme

3. I have been able to <u>determined</u> many countries

4. <u>All</u> the rest of the members are my friends

5. During the clean-up exercise, one boy <u>loss</u> his hoe.

Table 4.1.6 and Figure 4.1.6 illustrate the frequency of these errors.

Table 4.1.6: A Summary of Lexical Errors

Type Lexical Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage
Lexical error due to homophone problem	220	62.9
Semantic lexical error	130	37.1
Total	**350**	**99.9**

From the discussion on lexical errors, it can be seen that most of the students had problems differentiating between homophones and choosing the right lexical item in a particular situation. In a related study, Owu-Ewie and Williams (2017) observed that the lexical errors committed frequently were homophone induced followed by semantic lexical errors. An effective and appropriate writing is teachable and learnable, but before this can be achieved, both teachers and students have a major role to play in improving the students" writing skills in relation to grammatical and lexical errors.
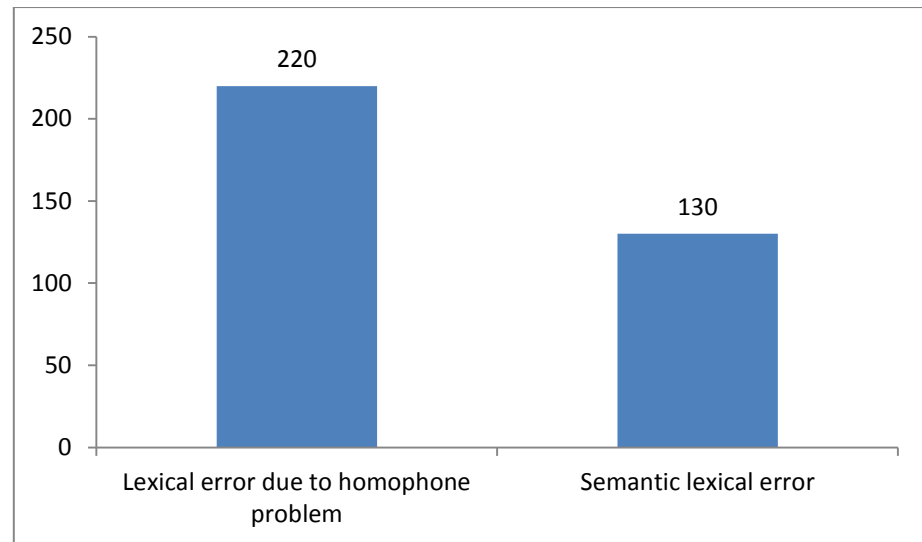
Figure 4.1.6: A Summary of Lexical Errors

4.1.7   Punctuation error

Punctuation, according to Richard Schmidt (2010) is the use of graphic marks such as commas, full stops, semi-colons and dashes to clarify meaning in written sentences or to represent spoken sentences in writing. Punctuation, according to Sekyi-Baidoo (2013), constitutes a set of symbols and marks which are used to clarify meaning in text by separating strings of words into clauses, phrases and sentences. They communicate the author‟s intensions and show how a sentence is constructed and should be read. For Christensen, Gotoh, and Renals (2001), punctuation marks include comma, colon, exclamation mark, question mark, semicolon, quotation marks, apostrophe, and full stop. Punctuation errors occur when any of these marks is omitted (McCuen & Winkler, 2000. Punctuation error analysis in this study involves the wrong use of full stop and problems with commas. There are about 139 of such cases in some of the essays of the students. This number is derived from the two sub headings; wrong use of full stop and problems with the use of commas. The following are some extracts from the data:

4.1.7.1 Wrong use of period/full stop

The following are wrong use of full stop or their absence or use of other punctuation marks instead of the period. Here, about 80 of such cases were identified in some essays of the students as captured:

1. Most of the prefects had two tables and I was very jealous and I wish I were a prefect.

2. The day came at last, all the people gathered at the place

3. Jerome, my friend. He was a hardworking class prefect.

4. I am very happy to write you this letter by the way how are you?

5. Teachers are good when it comes to teaching there is discipline in the school.

4.1.7.2 Comma (,)

The following are wrong use of commas or their absence or use of other punctuation marks instead of commas as captured from the data. Here about 59 of such instances were found in some essays of the students.

1. The clean-up exercise in my village was scheduled; Saturday April 4, 2018.

2. Unlike Nura Miriam was neat.

3. In the middle of his speech the senior prefect paused suddenly focused his attention on the boys, and warned them on the evils of drug abuse.

4. Again. It helps us to be good.

5. Why I choose Ghanasco:

The frequencies of these errors are captured in Table 4.1.7.

Table 4.1.7: A Summary of Punctuation Errors

Type of punctuation error	Frequency	Percentage
Wrong use of full stop	80	58
Wrong use of commas	59	42
Total	**139**	**100**

The information in Table 4.1.7 is illustrated in Figure 4.1.7.
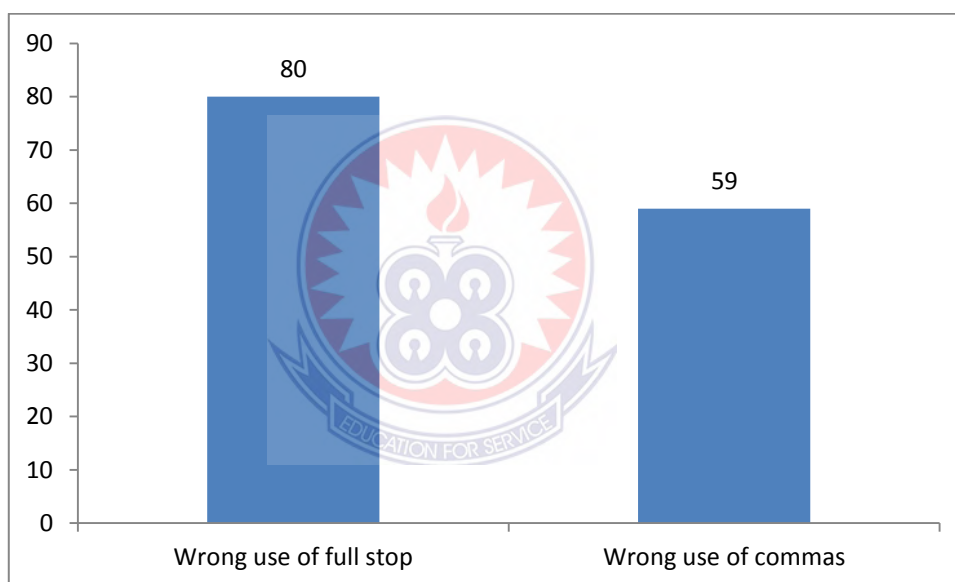
Figure 4.1.7: A Summary of Punctuation Errors

In a related study, Avomah & Apam (2014) examined the level of punctuation errors among students in Ghanaian Polytechnics. Data were collected using test results on an unpunctuated passage and a written speech. Results of the study revealed that students of the Polytechnics have great challenges in identifying punctuation marks in written text. Awad (2012) also investigated the most common punctuation errors which the English and the TEFL students at An-Najah National University make in their writing. He found that the participants used punctuation marks inappropriately, using commas in

62

place of full stops. These findings indicate that students really have difficulty in the use of punctuation as seen in the current study. To help reduce errors of punctuation, the researcher agrees with Stevenson (2005) that students should be encouraged to use punctuation since it is very necessary in language production. Many students do not know how to place the right mark in the appropriate place. Teachers should provide their students with short pieces of unpunctuated texts to help them apply punctuation marks correctly.

4.1.8 *Errors in students' writings*

This section looks at which errors were frequently committed by the students under study. As a reminder, the errors collated from the data are subject-verb concord errors, orthographical errors, concord errors, prepositional errors, verb tense errors and punctuation errors. In all 2,128 errors were identified and collated from fifty students on two different essay questions as part of the end of first semester examinations. It can be inferred from the total number of errors collated that, averagely, there are 20.32 errors in each essay from the different categories identified. From the data, it was observed that, a total of 941 concord errors were collated from the 100 essays written by the students. The number of orthographical or spelling errors was 603. Under the lexical errors category, a total of 350 were collated from the hundred essays. Under the punctuation errors, a total of 139 errors were recorded from the essays used for the study. Computing the figures into percentages, the following have been observed; the 941 concord errors translate to 44%, the 603 orthographical or spelling errors translate to 28% and the 139 punctuation errors translate to 7%.The 350 lexical errors translate to16%.From the analysis above, it can be observed that, the most frequently committed errors are grammatical errors, followed by orthographical errors, lexical errors and finally punctuation error, article error 2%and the least preposition and tense which

63

summed to 3%. The following is a table representing the frequency of the types of errors committed.

Table 4.1.8: Summary of Errors in the Data

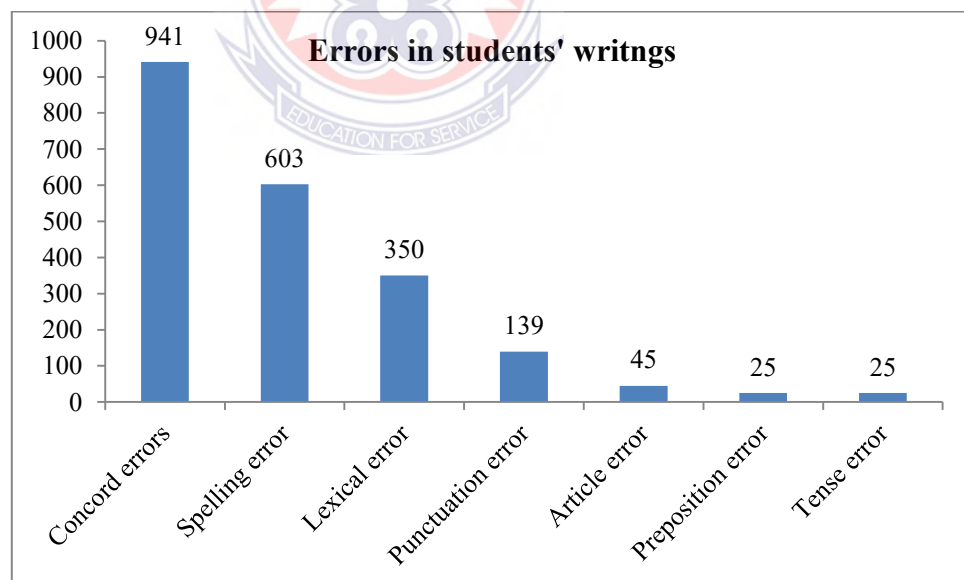| Type of error	Frequency	Percentage
Concord errors	941	44%
Spelling error	603	28%
Lexical error	350	16%
Punctuation error	139	7%
Article error	45	2%
Preposition error	25	1.5%
Tense error	25	1.5%
Total	**2128**	**100**

Figure 4.1.8: Summary of Errors in the Data

From the chart above it can be seen that concord errors (agreement errors) which, for the purpose of this work comprises of subject verb agreement errors, noun-pronoun agreement errors, singular- plural errors, relative pronoun (subject) with

64

singular verb errors, and demonstrative pronoun (subject) verb agreement errors constitute the highest error could be found in the students essays. This has a percentage of 46.8 with 941 frequency of occurrence in the study. It can be said that most of the agreement (concord) errors may be due to overgeneralization of English rules. Some errors like *The chief themselves…* Instead of *The chief himself* and one like The environmental protection Agency are…instead of *The environmental protection Agency is...*might have resulted from inadequate competence in the target language. The chart again reveals that orthographical errors constitute 29.6 percent occurrence with a total error of 603.This may be due to context of learning problems. Teachers may not have taken serious attention to spelling of words in class.L1 influence of the students could also be a factor.

The next category of error with a high occurrence is the lexical error with a total of 350 errors and a percentage of 17.2.The lexical errors due to homophone problem could be attributed to context of learning problem where teachers may not have paid attention to the pronunciation and the contextual meaning of lexical items taught in the classroom. From the data under analysis the error with the least number of occurrences is the punctuation errors with 139 frequency of occurrence which translates into 6.83 percent of the total number of errors recorded under this study. Despite the fact that punctuation errors were the least recorded ,there is still the need for teachers of the language to pay special attention to the use of punctuations in their teaching and learning in the classroom to reduce this to the least minimum if not totally eliminated in students" essays and writings.

To identify learning deficiencies in English writing, Nganbam (2016) examined 60 native Arabic speaking students. In all, 15 categories of errors were classified to find out the cause of syntactic errors, which type of errors are more frequent, areas of

weaknesses and the problems that tend to occur in writing compositions. The findings show that errors made by the learners were due to mother-tongue interference, misuse of sentence fragments, and lack of grammatical knowledge, formation and development errors. The findings of a similar study conducted by Neda (2012) revealed that Malaysian ESL students have problems in writing tasks, especially in language use and punctuation. The first language interference also contributed to errors in their writings. In relation to this, the findings of the present study have revealed that form two students of Ghana Senior High School have difficulties in the use of articles, concord, punctuation, and vocabulary register. Others were wrong organization of ideas, orthographic and semantic errors. These errors as said earlier, hinder the meaning of ideas in pupils" essays, however, their identification, through Error Analysis helped the researcher to realize the causes of such errors and helped to rectify the problem through constant practice in class.

4.2   Causes of the Errors

From the various errors identified in the study, it can be seen that, the causes of the errors are multiple in nature. Interlingual error (L1 interference), intralingual errors, context of learning and communication strategies were causes of the errors as proposed by Brown (2000).

4.2.1   Interlingual transfer

Interlingual transfer, that is, transfer from the mother tongue or any previously acquired language in second learning acquisition is a strategy that learners fall back on when their linguistic vocabulary in the target language falls short. In this, the learner tries to formulate hypothesis in the target language based on the rules of L1 which has been acquired already. The learner therefore uses the interlingual transfer strategy to

compensate for the limited vocabulary in the target language. Deviations resulting from interlingual transfer have been recorded at all levels of linguistic, Gass and Selinker (1994).Some examples of this as captured in the data are seen as follows:

1. <u>My friend give</u> me an award each day.

2. After the games we *changed ourselves*

3. I *collected* a lot of insults from the seniors

4. She asked me *to remove my mouth* from the discussion

5. My father said his salary *had not come*.

In the examples above the subjects do not agree with their corresponding verbs. This can be described as interlingual. This occurs when an element from one language (L1) is used when speaking a second language. Most of my students speak Dagbani where verbs are not inflected in the third person singular form in the present tense. Verbs maintain their forms in relation to person in Dagbani. Based on this knowledge the students constructed their sentences, resulting to ungrammatical constructions.

4.2.2 *Intralingual transfer*

This cause of error extends beyond interlingual transfer in L2 learning. Interlingual transfer is one within the target language itself. This occurs when learners begin to acquire new structures in the target language. As learners progress in the target language, their previous experiences begin to include structures in the target language. This causes negative intralingual transfer or overgeneralization. In English it is only count nouns which take an –s to form the plural. When a verb takes an –s, it is in the third person singular in the present tense. The fact that plural nouns take –s does not mean that a verb that takes an –s is equally plural. Types of intralingual errors include:

a. False analogy: It is a situation where learners incorrectly think the new the new item learned behaves like another item already known. For example learners

67

have learnt that the plural form of dog is dogs, so they think that sheeps is the plural form of sheep.

b. Misanalysis: This is the learner has formed a wrong hypothesis or rule in the L2 and is practicing with it. James (1980) gives an example as where the learner thinks its can be the plural of it.

c. Incomplete rule application: It is the situation where the learner does not apply all the rules necessary to apply in a particular situation.

d. Avoidance redundancy: The language learner tries to avoid items he finds redundant to make his learning or communication easier but ends up making errors. For example, I have pen instead of I have a pen.

e. Over-elaboration: In this situation the language learner over looks co-occurrence restrictions because he or she does not know that certain words go together with certain complements (counterparts), prepositions. An example by James (1998) is when the learner ignores that the verb to enjoy is followed by gerund and not the infinitive; I enjoy eating and not I enjoy to eat.

f. Hypercorrection: This result from the learner's over- monitoring their L2 output. Overgeneralization means that the learner uses one member of the set of forms also in a situation when the other member must be used. These errors can be termed developmental errors Haydari (2012). Developmental errors occur when the learner tries to build up hypothesis about the target language base on limited exposure.

4.2.3   The context of learning

Teaching methods and learning materials within the classroom can also be a cause of errors. Faulty presentation of structures or words in textbooks, improper understanding of patterns and teachers" ignorance may lead to errors. According to

Richards (2015), teachers" attempt to communicate in the target language without completely acquiring the grammatical form can cause errors. When it happens like this the teacher automatically transfers these errors into his subject. This can be true in this study because about four teachers who studied Dagani at the university teach English at Ghana senior high school.

4.3 Conclusion

The chapter discusses the analysis of data on students" errors in their essays. The result indicates that students commit different categories of errors in their essays. Notably among these errors are concord errors, orthographical errors, punctuation errors and lexical errors prepositional errors and article errors. The study reveals that students" errors could be traced to interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer and context of learning. In conclusion, it is important for English language teachers to let their students identify the sort of errors that they constantly make and anonymously share these faulty structures with their mates in the class. The whole class analyzing these faulty structures raises awareness of their mistakes. Teachers should assist students to systematically correct their grammatical and lexical errors while the teacher provides appropriate and reassuring feedback. The pattern of errors and their density have shown the low level of proficiency of Senior High School students as far as the English language is concerned. It is therefore essential for teachers of English to identify students" errors in order to work in unison towards achieving a high level of proficiency among students. There must be a collective and concerted approach at all the levels of education geared towards improving the standard of English, especially, at the basic levels since they form the foundation for the Senior High School education.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study, conclusion and suggestions. The purpose of the study was to identify the common errors learners commit in their writings. This study is a qualitative analysis conducted in Ghana Senior High school in Tamale. It revealed errors which students commit in their essays and categorized them under spelling errors, tense errors, article errors, concord errors, prepositional errors and punctuation errors. Under the concord errors, students commit various kinds, some of which include pronoun and antecedent errors, relative pronoun errors and subject verb agreement errors. The chapter also discusses the role of errors in students writing. The chapter finally discusses the pedagogical implications of errors and also proposes some suggestions for future research.

5.1   Summary of Findings

After careful analysis of the data collected, it came to light that grammatical (concord) errors were the most frequent errors committed by the students in their essays. About 941 errors were committed in this category with a percent rate of 44. From the data it was clear that the students had problems with basic concepts under concord. It also came to light that wrong spelling was the second most frequent errors committed by students in their writing. From the corpus, evidence gathered showed that students could not spell simple mono and disyllabic words such as "incur" "occasion" "received" "discipline" "disappoint" and such errors greatly affected mechanical accuracy in their essays. About 603 of such cases were recorded from the essays.

The next category of errors with a high frequency is the lexical errors with a frequency of occurrence of 350, representing 16 percent. This is indicated in table 5.

70

From the data it was realized that most the students had difficulties in differentiating between homophones. Most of them misplaced words in some sentences resulting in errors in some cases. The next category of errors is those related to the use of punctuation marks, specifically the use of full stop and commas. This category of error has a frequency of occurrence of 139 representing 7%. It was realized that most of the students either failed to use either a full stop or comma or they misused these punctuation marks. From the study it was observed that most of the students had a problem with grammatical rules and their applications. The level of written expression of our students clearly indicates a lack of formal understanding of grammatical instructions. Tenses break down frequently thereby affecting reading and comprehension. In addition, the study revealed a low level of proficiency in English language based on the written essays of Senior High School students. It was observed that many of the students could not write a single error-free sentence, let alone writing an error free essay.

5.2 The Role of Errors in English language Teaching and Learning

The findings of the study have shown that learners‟ errors help teachers identify the problems learners face in the language class. Frequent exercises on the investigations of learners‟ errors and the frequency with which they occur will enable the teachers devise appropriate alternative strategies to organize remedial lessons on those errors to help reduce them. This is necessary because, errors provide adequate feedback that informs the teacher on the effectiveness of teaching techniques. For instance, Presada and Badea (2014) analyzed the errors made by students in their transition classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problem. They confirmed that Error Analysis (EA) could lessen the number of errors in their students‟ work. Karra (2006), Mohammed (2013) and Jabeen, Kazemian and

Shahbaz (2015) have also identified the following as the importance of errors in language teaching and learning: They help the teacher to know a student‟s progress, provide feedback; they make the researcher aware of the effectiveness of one‟s teaching techniques, and show one what parts of the syllabus has been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

Errors enable the teacher to decide whether he must devote more time to the item he has been teaching and provide information for designing a remedial syllabus or a programme of re-teaching. Lastly, errors show how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner uses and help the learner to learn from these errors. According to Richards (2002), errors enable the teacher to discover, identify and analyze learners‟ mistakes as well as designing the appropriate methods for solving them. Again, errors are very important to the learner. This to Richards (2002) serves as a tool through which the learner discovers the rules of the target language which could not be understood earlier and with time, these learners will be able to identify and correct their errors. Furthermore, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) suggest three significance of learner errors.

1. They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not mastered;

2. They serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned

3. They serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors.

The implication to the above scenario is that students may not be able to do well in other subjects since English is an enabling subject to study other subjects Geography, Government, Economics, History and so on since all these subjects are written in

English Language. The students need to understand what is written in English Language before they can answer any questions on these subjects. The ability of the students to communicate effectively in English language is also hampered. Further implication of the findings is that, many students in Senior High Schools will not be able to communicate effectively with other users of English either intra or internationally because of poor grasp of the English language and this can also hinder their interaction with other Anglophone students and friends.

5.3   Pedagogical Implications

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

73

A conducive language learning environment if created will enable even the timid child in the class to use the language freely. The researcher believes that with consistent practice through dramatization and peer interaction, the students will master the rules of the language to help curb the error occurrences in their writing. Again, language lessons should be learner-centered so that the learners will be actively involved in the learning process. Teachers should facilitate the learning process with all activities centered on the learners" interest. The learning process should be made fun and interesting. To achieve this, the teacher should be innovative in order to devise effective learning activities for learners to practice. Most importantly, the teacher must be abreast with knowledge of the subject matter as well as the techniques to make him/her proficient and a good model of the target language since learners so that he/she will be able to teach the learners the phonological, morphological, syntactic and the semantic rules pertaining to the language. Also, through in-service training, language teachers will learn new ideas and teaching strategies from one another.

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

74

Finally, there should be a cordial relationship between parents and teachers to enable them work hand-in-hand towards their wards learning development.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This study looked at the errors form two students of Ghana Senior High School make in their writing. Researchers may also look at other categories of errors other than those found in this study. Future research may focus on the effect of phonological deficiency on pupils" reading. Again, researchers may investigate how errors in the writing of L2 learners are corrected by both teachers and learners in the classroom. The researcher also suggests that this study be extended to other schools in the Northern Region with an increase in the number of participants.

5.5 Conclusion

This study has given us a picture of the error patterns in the written essays of Senior High School Students. The density of errors and their percentages of occurrence confirmed the general perception that the standard of English in the country has indeed fallen considerably. From the study, it has been observed that the percentage of errors in the written essays of SHS students has shown a tilt towards concord errors, wrong spelling and wrong use of words and expressions in the essays of students. It is for these reasons that, majority of the students perform abysmally poor, usually scoring zero mark under mechanical accuracy in their essays, either internal or external examinations. The study has also attempts to trace the causes of errors in the writings of SHS students to interlingual, intraligual and context of learning. The researcher has recommended some suggestions which when fully implemented would considerably improve the teaching and learning of English in our schools.

In spite of all these laudable recommendations, it must be stated categorically that no educational policy will achieve the desire objectives, if the human factor, in this case the teacher, who is behind the implementation is dissatisfied. It is for this reason that I share the view strongly expressed by Owusu-Mensah (2013, p. 7) that, "no educational reform will succeed in the hands of teachers, the final implementers, who are not enthusiastic about their work as a result of either low motivation for the teacher or lack of interest in the profession by teachers". I therefore suggest that teachers should be well motivated to deliver the desired outcomes.

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