

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AND ITS ASSOCIATED
SEMANTIC EFFECTS

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BY

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This thesis submitted to the Department of Basic Education, Faculty of Educational Foundations, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Basic Education.

MARCH 2019

DECLARATION

Student Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is as a result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:

Name:.....

Supervisor's Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:

Name:

Co-Supervisor's Signature.....Date:.....

Name:.....

ABSTRACT

One of the basic grammatical rules often abused by basic school students is that regarding the use of grammatical concord. Thus, many JHS learners are challenged in the appropriate use of grammatical concord which obstructs communication. In this regard, the study explored students' use of grammatical concord and the associated semantic effects among JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The theoretical arguments of this study are grounded in the syntactic theory, the referential theory of meaning and the attribution theory. The qualitative research approach was used in the study. In all, 18 students and six teachers participated in the study. Data collection for the study was done using in-depth interviews, classroom observations and content analysis of the essays of students. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis. The students had very poor knowledge of general basic grammar, especially in the area of agreement (concord). Tenses used were particularly chaotic. The pedagogical treatment of grammatical structures by the teachers has been ineffective. The inappropriate use of grammatical concord among the students has resulted in several semantic effects including expressions that are difficult to make meaning out of. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service and the Metropolitan Director of Education are advised to frequently organise workshops, seminars and refresher courses that will help enhance the professional skills and knowledge of the teachers. Teachers are advised to use a more creative and simulative approach to the teaching of grammatical concord to build students' confidence in grammar.

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DEDICATION

To my family

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

MOE	Ministry of Education
NEA	National Education Assessment
WAEC	The West African Examinations Council
INSET	In-Service Training
ESL	English as a Second Language
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
GES	Ghana Education Service
CDA	Critical Discourse Analyses

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

History has it that early medieval England is where English Language was first spoken; however, it is now a global Lingua Franca (Wardhaugh, 2010). Several persons globally speak English since being proficient in the Language is required in most professions and occupations. Like most sub-Saharan Africa countries, Ghana is blessed with many indigenous languages; however the English language continues to play a pivotal role in the daily communications of Ghanaians. Aside the English Language being a Lingua Franca in Ghana, it is an important means of inter-ethnic communication internally and a source for communication with the international community (Afful, 2007).

In view of the linguistic imperialism in Ghana coupled with the country's colonial history, English has been adopted as Ghana's official language. As such, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the 1950s instituted a policy that the English language be taught from kindergarten to the university level. It has become the language of instruction in the teaching of many subjects from primary four, while it is also a subject on its own. It is also compulsory for students to have a credit in the Basic Education Examination Certificate (BECE) in the English language before entering either the senior high school or the university.

Yeboah (2014) argues that a student's performance in many other subjects could be closely linked to his/her command over the English language either in writing or speech. The teaching of the English language at the basic school helps students to be able to communicate effectively. Considering the position of English language in the curriculum, the teaching syllabus for the basic schools demands that teachers teach students how to speak and write English well enough for their social, economic and occupational development.

The English language is full of rules and principles. One of such rules is the use of concords where the subject and the verb have to agree grammatically. According to Woods (2010, p.125) "the verb is considered to be the heart of the sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject".

Conceptually, grammatical concord is a grammatical relationship between two syntactic constituents of a sentence where the subject must agree with the verb (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 2005). Fundamentally, the use of grammatical concord has become an important communicative concept since it provides the rules for putting words into the right order to make the meaning clear. Therefore, the pedagogy of its teaching should offer practical discussions to students. Thus, for English language to be taught and learnt properly, the basic grammatical rules should not be violated; and since concord is an aspect of English grammar, it is essential that English language teachers and students adhere to the rules governing it in order to achieve effective communication (Klu, 2014).

The use of accurate grammatical concord reflects the efficient use of semantics. In other words, contextualisation is crucial for semantic

information. Conceptually, semantics relates to meanings of words. In relating semantics to grammatical concords, Chomsky (2014) indicates that the semantic component of a sentence relates a structure generated by the syntactic component. In this regard, the use of poor grammatical concord obstructs communication and therefore meaning.

Although Ghana is blessed with many indigenous languages, a dominant linguistic imperialism exists where the English language continues to play a pivotal role in the day-to-day transactions of Ghanaians. Against this background, teaching English language from kindergarten to the university level is compulsory since the language is the medium of instruction in almost all subjects (Afful, 2007). The teaching of grammatical concord in basic schools in Ghana starts from the Upper Primary to Junior High School (JHS).

In spite of the importance of the English language locally and internationally, there has generally been poor quality of the language in Ghana among basic school pupils both in terms of speech and writing. The 2013 National Education Assessment (NEA) report notes that at least 50 percent of pupils could not pronounce a single English word correctly. The poor quality of the use of the English Language has been attributed to several factors including teachers' lack of the relevant pedagogical skills (Quagie, 2014). Nevertheless, the language is used so extensively that teachers and students ought to be appreciably competent in it.

Statement of the Problem

In accordance with the Ministry of Education, Ghana (2013), there has been improvement in enrolment indicators for 2012/2013 academic year showing that progress has been made to increase access to basic education. Current statistics from the West Africa Examination Council, WAEC (2017) shows that, a total of 468,053 students sat for the BECE this year. In 2014, there were 242,157 students while in 2013, 150,000 students sat for the exams. In 2012, there were 377,000 students while in 2011, close to 288,000 students sat for the exams. These statistics suggest an increase in enrolment of students at the basic school level in Ghana.

In spite of the tremendous increase in numbers and the recognition attached to the English language in Ghana by the Government, standards are still falling (Yeboah, 2014). The West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), the main examination body in Ghana in charge of BECE, had severally complained about the poor use of English by students. In 2016, the Chief Examiner reported that the inability of the candidates to express themselves well in the English language was evident in other subjects. Specifically, expressions of students were inconsistent with what they were describing, while there were wrong uses of sequence of tense making expressions clumsy (WAEC, 2016).

One of the basic grammatical rules often abused is that regarding the use of grammatical concord. Available statistics from the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Office shows that less than half of the students passed in the English language in 2013 (43.9%), 2014 (47.2%) and 2015 (36.8%) respectively. Specifically, observation and experience in the teaching

profession in the Metropolis shows that many Junior High School (JHS) learners are challenged in the appropriate use of grammatical concord.

Basically, students seem to have problems with subject-verb concord when they occur in different clauses, in the same clauses when the normal word order is changed, and even when there are no intervening words between the subject and the verb. These violations of the rules of concord have resulted in students communicating sentences that present different shades of meanings. In this instance, the recipient is much affected since the sentences show distinctive shades of meaning as a result of wrong tense concord. The inappropriate use of grammatical concord by students obstructs communication and therefore meaning by the recipients. Therefore, inability of the students to apply the exceptions to grammatical concord rules leads to errors in the formation of plural and the past tense pattern.

The inappropriate use of grammatical concord remains insurmountable to all stakeholders involved in the communication link. According to Quagie (2011), when teachers, students and other stakeholders are involved in the inappropriate use of grammatical concord, there is a loss of attention and concentration as well as interest from the recipients. Therefore, since grammar has become an essential communicative tool, its tutoring should give way to practical discussion on how students can use it to communicate essential information.

Johansson (2012) argues that there are several factors which could create concord-related problems for learners of English, and that such factors may be connected to inter- or intra-lingual factors. Quagie (2014) noted that generally, concord still bothers students, because some teachers do not possess the

requisite qualification to teach the concept. However, the misapplication of the rules governing the use of grammatical concord often leads to intra-lingual errors.

This study seeks to explore the inter- or intra-lingual factors associated with the wrong use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the different types of grammatical concord errors most common among the students.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the semantic problems associated with the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. assess the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis;
2. explore the types of grammatical concord errors most common among the students in the Metropolis;
3. examine the instructional and pedagogical methods English language teachers in the Metropolis use to teach grammatical concord;
4. explore the underlying factors influencing the wrong use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis;
5. examine the semantic problems associated with the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis.

Research Questions

In relation to the objectives of the study, the following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. How do JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis use grammatical concord?
2. What are the types of grammatical concord errors most common among the JHS students in the Metropolis?
3. What are the instructional and pedagogical methods English language teachers in the Metropolis use to teach grammatical concord?
4. What are the underlying factors influencing the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis?
5. What semantic problems are created when students violate the rules of grammatical concord?

Significance of the Study

Fundamentally, the findings of this study would help to determine if teachers are properly trained to teach the fundamentals of grammatical concord to meet the semantic needs of students. Specifically, through the examination of the instructional methods used in the teaching of grammatical concord among teachers, this study would suggest efficient areas of their training to positively impact on their use of syntactical rules and principles.

For policy formulation, the findings would help to identify the factors that continue to influence the wrong use of grammatical concord among JHS students. This would further help the Ministry of Education through the Ghana Education Service to come out with initiatives to address the challenges. In the

academia, this study would add to the existing literature on grammatical concords and semantics to serve as a useful guide and reference material for researchers, scholars and academicians.

Delimitation

Specifically, the English language syllabus in Ghana is split between reading, grammar, writing composition and library. For the purpose of this study, focus was placed on the grammar aspect of the syllabus. Furthermore, although there are different types of concord errors including distance concord and grammatical concord, this study focused on grammatical concord based on the assertion that the subject and the verb are the two most important items in a sentence, and that one of the basic grammatical rules often abused is that regarding grammatical concord (Estling-Vannestål, 2007).

Though grammatical concord is taught in both upper primary and JHS, this study focused on the JHS. This is based on the fact that by the time the student transits to JHS, they would have at least been introduced to the fundamentals of grammatical concord, hence should know the concord rules by now. Therefore, they could be more credible in responding to the study than those in the upper primary.

Limitations

Geographically, this study was limited to students and teachers at the JHS Level in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to all basic schools in Ghana. The implication therefore is that the study's external validity could be affected, since external validity has to do with the extent to which a study's results can be generalized from samples to a population (Nunan, 1992). This notwithstanding, the findings of the study

could provide insightful information regarding the appropriate use of grammatical concord. It could also prompt further in-depth research into the issue at stake.

Organisation of the Study

The Study is structured into five chapters. A preview of each chapter is provided as follow: Chapter one, provides the introductory information to the study including the background, problem statement, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study: Chapter two, presents the relevant literature on the use of grammatical concord and the associated semantic effects. The chapter draws on the previous work of esteemed researchers and practitioners. Chapter three, the third chapter provides an in-depth explanation of the methodology of the study. It describes the methods and techniques to be used in exploring the research questions as well as the rationale for using such methods and techniques. The chapter includes the research paradigm that involves a description of the research approach used as the methodological framework for the study. Chapter four which is the results and discussion presents the findings emanating from the data gathered and involves the possible implications as well as the interpretation of the findings using logical deduction. In discussing the findings, attempts will be made to relate them to the pertinent concepts and theories discussed in the literature review. Thus, the results of the study that are supported by the literature will be highlighted, while those that contradict the literature will also be highlighted with the possible explanations: Chapter five shows the major findings and conclusions emanating from the study will be presented in this chapter in relation to each research questions. Following

the conclusions, the relevant recommendations for policy formulation as well as further research will be presented in this section. Based on the lessons learnt from the study as well as the major conclusions, the implications of the study for population studies practitioners are also discussed in this section

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature related to the study. The chapter analyses and discusses the relevant literature on the use of grammatical concord and the associated semantic effects. In reviewing the relevant literature for the study, the chapter draws on the previous work of researchers and practitioners to help enhance a unified conceptual and theoretical framework suitable for the rightful use of grammatical concord. The literature is reviewed from the conceptual, empirical and theoretical perspectives. Based on the research questions of the study, the following themes are reviewed and discussed in this chapter:

1. Conceptualisation of grammatical concord
2. Types of Grammatical Concord
3. The Wrongful Use of Grammatical Concord among Students
4. Factors Accounting For the Inaccurate Use of Grammatical Concord
5. How the Wrong Use of Grammatical Concord Affects Semantics
6. Empirical literature: Case Studies on the Use of Grammatical Concord
7. Teacher INSET Organisation in English Language Teaching in Ghana
8. Theoretical Frameworks

9. Conceptual Framework
10. Conclusion

Conceptualisation of Grammatical Concord

Fundamentally, the use of grammatical concord has become an important communicative concept since it provides the rules for putting words into the right order to make the meaning clear. To explore grammatical concord, it is important to understand the meanings of grammar and concord.

Conceptually, grammar is the set of rules for the organisation of meaningful elements into sentences. These rules, according to Fourpence (2013) dictate how sentences should be communicated correctly. Linh (2013) further noted that abiding by the rules of grammar in sentences is what makes the language interesting and gives it 'a flow'. Therefore, it can be deduced that there are set of principles which permit orderly speaking and writing of grammar. Thus, grammar provides the rules for putting words into the right order so that their meaning is clear. However, forfeiting of such principles results in grammatical concord errors. This is explained by the fact that the wrongful use of grammar in communication takes the attention, concentration as well as the interest from the recipients.

According to Thukur (2002), one of the useful rules of English language is when the verb agrees with the subject in terms of number and person, thus, the verb agrees with the subject. Conceptually, Quirk (2010) defined concord as the relationship between two grammatical units that aligns a particular feature with a displayed feature in the other. Thus when one of the grammatical units displays a particular feature, for example, plurality, that accords with a displayed feature in the other. This simply means that a form of

one word requires a corresponding form of another. From the above definition, it can be concluded that concord is a formal relationship that exists between elements of grammar, and a form of one word requiring a corresponding form of another. Kwofie (2011) also defined concord as the way in which words are used together accurately, according to the rules of grammar.

It is therefore clear that concord is used to describe the relationship (harmony) between the inflectional forms of different elements within a sentence. It is also deduced that concord is used in grammatical theory and description to refer to formal relationships that exist between elements of grammar. This explains Dada (2000) argument that concord should be the basic idea or fundamental principle behind a sentence. In other words, concord is one of the basic rules which a user of the English language, either as a first or second language must acquire or learn as the case may be. However, Ogunsiji and Sunday, (2005) argues that its centrality to a good mastery of the English language has been underscored by scholars over the years.

Following the review of the literature on grammar and concord, a conceptual definition of grammatical concord is undertaken. Fundamentally, the use of grammatical concord has become an important communicative concept since it provides the rules for putting words into the right order to make the meaning clear. Therefore, the pedagogy of its teaching should offer practical discussions to students. This is against..... argument that one's poor knowledge of English grammar can belittle and embarrass one in the eyes of one's audience. In this regard, care must be taken by students to escape the dangers posed by the wrong use of grammatical concord in their verbal and written communications.

Consequently, grammatical concord, according to Babajide (2004) is the agreement between the subject, the verbs and other elements of the clause structure. Agreement here means that the word whose form is determined by the other is said to be concord with it, which can occur over the short or long distances in sentences. Similarly, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svavik (2005) defined grammatical concord as the grammatical relationship between two syntactic constituents of a sentence where the subject and the verb must be in agreement. However, Quagie (2010) argued that, grammatical concord should not be narrowed down to a mere subject-verb agreement by teachers and students.

This is explained by the fact that aside subject-verb agreement, there are other forms of grammatical concords such as concord within tenses, concord with the relative pronouns and concord with certain phrases, expressions or words such as: as well as, in addition to. This notwithstanding, Estling-Vannestål (2007) refutes the argument of Quagie (2010) by indicating that the subject and the verb are the two most important items in a sentence. Even though some scholars think grammatical concord should not be subject to only subject-verb agreement, from the above review, it is clear that one of the useful rules of English language is when the verb agrees with the subject in terms of the number and person.

In summary, grammar provides the rules for putting words into the right order so that the meaning is clear. Therefore, teachers, students, and other users of the language must adhere to the rules governing it in order to achieve effective communication.

Types of Grammatical Concord

There are various types of grammatical concords, and each type has rules which need to be followed to be able to accurately and effectively use them. Some of the types of concord are subject-verb concord, concord within tenses, notional concord, proximity concord, concord with relative pronouns. For the purpose of this study, focus is placed on subject-verb concord and concord within tenses. This is explained by Norlander's (2012) assertion that the most frequent concord error found among students is the verb-subject disagreement, although notional concord and proximity concord remain a great challenge to students (Quagie, 2011).

Subject-verb concord

Subject-verb concord is a basic principle of the English language grammar and a grammatical rule, which states that the subject and the verb must agree in a sentence (Lashari & Soomro, 2013). The rule demands that a singular subject must go with a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb. Thus, the first rule of subject-verb agreement is that a verb must agree with its subject in number. The rule for singular and plural verbs is just the opposite of the rule for singular and plural nouns. However, students mistakenly pair singular subjects with plural verbs or vice versa (Al Murshidi, 2014). The second rule of subject-verb agreement is that the number of the subject (singular or plural) is not changed by words that come between the subject and the verb. The subject normally refers to the noun or pronoun that tells us whom or what the sentence is about while the verb normally has a singular and plural form in the present tense. For example,

One of the eggs is broken.

“Of the eggs” is a prepositional phrase. The subject one and the verb is are both singular. In this example, mentally omit the prepositional phrase to make the subject verb-agreement easier to make.

Subject-verb concord is generally regarded as an essential part of English syntax, since the verb must agree with its primary argument (the subject) in person, number, and/or gender. As such, Klu (2014) argues that subject-verb agreement is a relevant basic skill and applicable fundamental abilities which each learner must strive to obtain. However, Tsuchida (2011) noted that there are some uncharacteristic cases in which non-concord somehow seems to be part of the norm. Identification of the subject is also influenced by the positions of both subject and verbs in a given sentence. In this respect, Oriaku (2006) agrees that concord problems are usually as a result of complex constructions in which the subjects and the verbs do not follow each other specifically in a clear way.

This occurs when there is a separation between the subject and the verb by an intervening phrase or clause culminating in the verb agreeing with the noun in the intervening phrase or clause. It is further noted by Oludare (2016) that problems with simple constructions in which the subjects and verbs follow each other are common among students. Similarly, Norlander (2012) contends that the most frequent type of concord error students make when writing essays is the type where the subjects and verbs do not agree with each other. However, for a sentence to have meaning, subjects and verbs need to concur with each other (Long, 2007).

But to Oludare (2016), errors associated with subject-verb concord is as a result of students mistakenly pairing singular subjects with plural verbs or

vice versa. The general principle however stipulates that a singular subject ought to choose a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb.

In summary, there are two major rules of subject-verb agreement. The first rule, rule 1, argues that a verb agrees with its subject in number. The rule for singular and plural verbs is just the opposite of the rule for singular and plural nouns. In rule two, the number of the subject (singular or plural) is not changed by words that come between the subject and the verb. For example, “one of the girls is nice”. “One of the girls” is a prepositional phrase. The subject one and the verb is are both singular. Mentally omit the prepositional phrase to make the subject verb-agreement easier to make.

Concord within tenses

In general, the tense of the verb in the main clause dictates the tense of the verb in the subordinate clause. According to Yuka (2012), a tense builds up the extent within which languages vary expressions of time reference. This requires that when writing a sentence, it is important to think about when the action in your statement occurred. To appropriately use concord within tenses, Cao (2014) indicates that it is important that students and teachers keep the tense uniform throughout the sentence when discussing things that happened at the same time. However, when referring to separate events, the tenses might differ, but it is important to recognize the difference.

An example of the wrongful use of concord within tense (tense disagreement) is shown below:

When I went to the Mall, I buy two cookies.

'Went' is in past tense, but 'buy' is in present tense. They do not match.

Generally, there are five basic sequences of tenses which must be adhered to in the appropriate use of concord within tenses (Bunnin & Yu, 2004):

- i. If the verb in the principal clause is in the present or the future tense, the verb in the subordinate clause may be in any tense, depending upon the sense to be expressed
- ii. If the tense in the principal clause is in the past tense, the tense in the subordinate clause will be in the corresponding past tense
- iii. If the principal clause is in the future tense, we do not use future tense in subordinating clauses beginning with when, until, before, after etc
- iv. Expressions such as as if, if only, it is time and wish that are usually followed by past tenses.

In other words, indirect speech is a typical context in which rules of sequence of tenses are applied. If in the past, a sentence was spoken by someone in a particular tense (say the present tense), and what s/he said is being reported, the tense in the reported speech may or may not be the same as the tense that was used by the original speaker (Cao, 2014). According to Anwar (2014), simple past tense indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at particular time in the past. In relation to the use of simple past tenses, Noertjahjono (2007) found out that students had continued to make errors using simple past tense. The study found that 23 items out of 50 items had an error percentage of 45%. Thus, it means that the student's mastery of English is poor since they still face difficulties with simple past tense. Similarly, in a study by Tafida and Okunade (2016), students' errors due to tenses ranked as

second among such variables as the use of nouns, pronouns and intervening variables.

The Use of Grammatical Concord among Students

According to Muhsin (2016), writing is one aspect of English that is particularly difficult for students especially as pertaining to grammar and the use of tenses. He notes that the difficulty students have with English writing stems from their inability to arrange sentences or use tenses in their writings. This then leads to the incorrect use of grammar. Muhsin (2016) states that, for English teachers to be able to arrange an effective learning strategy for their students, there is the need for the teachers to analyse the errors made by their students. According to Emmaryana (2010), grammatical errors are analysed in order to find out how well students understand grammar and how they learn the grammar. This will help to obtain information on common difficulties in grammar learning among the students, as an aid in teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

According to Ifeyinwa (2009), several students do not have adequate knowledge with regard to the use of the rules governing grammatical concord of the various types. As a result, most of them frequently use grammatical concord in the wrong manner. This is to say that, errors in the formation of plural and past tense patterns come about as a result of the students' inability to apply the exceptions to the rules. In this regard, Kwofie (2011) argued that when students commit grammatical errors, it reflects badly on their personality and shows their inter-language as 'developing grammar' that borders on illiteracy.

Conceptually, Norlander (2012) defines a concord error as a mismatch between two or several grammatical elements in a phrase. An error, according to Anantri (2017), occurs when a learner does not know what is correct in the language of study, i.e. even if the student has learnt the language, he/she has not understood its form. This, Oriaku (2006) explains arises as a result of complex constructions in which the subjects and the verbs do not follow each other directly in a straightforward manner.

The accurate use of grammatical concord has not been easy for many users of the English language. According to Klu (2014), it is therefore not unsurprising that for even advanced learners and speakers of English language sometimes get confused with some of the grammatical rules which govern the language. Therefore, since concord is an aspect of English grammar, it behoves teachers, students, and other users of the language to adhere to the rules governing it in order to achieve effective communication

Errors in second language users/speakers are classified into two groups by Akinbode (2006). They are interlingual and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors are caused by the influence of the mother-tongue, and occur due to the word -for -word literal translation from the mother tongue. More often than not, students tend to apply the rules of their mother tongue when they are ignorant of the rules of the second language. According to Alonso (1997), there is a correspondence between most of these deviant forms and phrases, sentences or clauses where the structures of the mother tongue are taken by the students to be a starting point and he/she applies those rules to the second language.

Interlingual errors, according to Al- Khresheh (2010) are also caused by literal translation. Upon this argument, Pratiwi (2015) classified interlingual errors into three forms namely transfer error, mother tongue interference error and literal translation error. The interference from the mother tongue is what causes interlingual transfer. A student who has not known the rules of target language will use the same rules as he/she obtained in his/her native language. On the other hand, mother tongue interference errors are produced in the learners' attempt to discover the structure of the target language, rather than transferring models of their first language. Errors of literal translation occur when there is a direct word for word translation of sentences or idiomatic expressions from the first language of the students to the target language (Pratiwi, 2015).

In this regard, one of the major factors accounting for the wrong use of grammatical concord is language transfer which results in interlingual error. Consequently, the change from the mother tongue as the means of teaching could encourage the students to use grammatical concord accurately.

On the other hand, the ineffective and inappropriate application of grammatical concord rules results in intralingual errors. They are universal learning strategies and reflect the general characteristics of rules of learning which are not related to first language transfer (Akinbode, 2009). Incidentally, Kaweera (2013) further reveals that the target language itself rather contributes to the intralingual errors. Pratiwi (2015) further classifies the intralingual errors into four categories including over generalisation, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of the rules, and false concept hypothesized or semantic errors:

- i. Overgeneralisation: this is when a learner, based on his/her experience of other structures in the target language, creates a deviant structure. Littlewood (1984) cites the example of forming plural by adding “s” to even irregular plurals, also generalizing the “-ed” past form.
- ii. Ignorance of rule restrictions: James (1998: 63) notes that ignorance is specific in the sense that one is normally said to be ignorant of structure; the learner of the second language does not obey the structure of the target language. In this type of error, existing structures are not observed by the learner.
- iii. Incomplete application of the rules: this is when a learner, due to the stimulus sentence, fails to apply the rules completely.
- iv. False concept hypothesised: Learners’ faulty understanding of distinctions of target language items leads to false conceptualisation and false concept hypothesised.

The common types of grammatical concord errors are related to the handling of past events, singular and plural subjects and simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses. As reviewed in earlier paragraphs, subject verb concord rule stipulates that a singular subject should select a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb. However, students mistakenly pair singular subjects with plural verbs or vice versa (Al Murshidi, 2014).

In general, students are not knowledgeable of the rule, which is to say that when trying to describe two past events, the correct tense to use is the past perfect (Klu. 2014). They tend to forget that the past perfect tense uses the auxiliary verb ‘had’ and the ideal type of any lexical verb. One particular

error identified to be prevalent in the writings of students is the subject-verb agreement error (Chele, 2015). Similarly, Oni (2012) notes that due to the complexity of the English language, the lack of subject-verb agreement is one of the most common grammar errors in written and spoken discourses. Subject-verb concord, according to Bakuuro (2015) contains some complexities which many students have fallen victims to in one way or another. These complexities lie in six identified sources of errors, namely: typical development errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors, memory limitation concord errors, plural inflectional concord errors and the inability to identify noun headwords.

Errors related to the use of singular and plural subjects are associated with the auxiliary verbs 'has' and 'have' (Oludare, 2016). The form 'has' is singular while 'have' is plural. The concord rule stipulates that 'has' be used with singular subjects while 'have' is used with subjects that are plural. Mostly students violate this rule. In line with Omotese (2012), a situation in which students use basic (simple) tense wrongly should be accorded critical consideration as most students are still battling with the use of the simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses. Generally, students tend to forget that the past perfect tense uses the auxiliary verb 'had' and the perfect form of any lexical verb (Klu, 2014).

However, Norlander (2012) argues that the concord of the verb in relation to the subject is the most frequent error found among students, and that students could be over generalising and overusing the third person singular. Al Murshidi (2014) further argued that the concord errors concerning determiner-head are not as numerous as the ones concerning person. In

addition, one of the most common errors in English grammar is punctuation errors, which are specific marks used to separate sentences and clauses, and to clarify meanings. Such errors could be overusing, misusing, or disusing(not using) some of these marks (Al Murshidi, 2014) Another type of grammatical concord error that usually happens, according to Oludare (2016) is when the subject is separated from the verb by an intervening phrase or clause and one mistakenly makes the verb to agree with the noun in the intervening phrase or clause.

Taking all these forms of grammatical concord errors, Corder (2008) notes that when students commit such errors, either they have major misunderstandings of the concept or they had been taught by the method of rote memorisation rather than practicing.

Factors accounting for the inaccurate use of grammatical concord

Avoiding concord errors aids in the accurate use of grammatical concord. But to be able to avoid grammatical errors, simple concord rules must be obeyed. English, like any other language is rule governed and these rules should be learned by anybody who wants to speak the language correctly and effectively. However, there has been a problem with teaching and learning of English specifically grammatical concord.

Faulty instructional materials and instructional techniques

Conceptually, a teacher's technique of teaching is faulty if he/she fails to make use of instructional materials where they are required. Akinbode (2009) states that dynamism in instructional techniques and conversance with modern trends in language teaching is required of the language teacher.

English language is governed by rules and so teachers must be able to use the right structural and pedagogical techniques to teach the subject.

Largely, the faulty use of instructional materials and instructional techniques results in making both interlingual and intralingual errors. According to Akinbode (2009), the language teacher is expected to be dynamic in his/her instructional techniques. On the other hand, it is obvious that inappropriate instructional materials and the pedagogical shortcomings of the teacher are the main factors responsible for some of the problems encountered by students in the use of grammatical concord. It is therefore necessary that efforts are made by language curriculum developers to remedy the faulty use of teaching materials and methods by teachers.

Relevant skills and competence

Teaching intensive grammar instruction refers to instruction over a sustained period of time (which could be a lesson or a series of lessons covering days or weeks) concerning a single grammatical structure or, perhaps, a pair of contrasted structures (e.g., English past continuous vs. past simple). Extensive grammar teaching refers to instruction concerning a whole range of structures within a short period of time (e.g., a lesson) so that each structure receives only minimal attention in each lesson (Ellis, 2006). When it comes to extensive or intensive grammar teaching, Ellis argues that grammar teaching needs to be conceived of in terms of both approaches. Therefore, he argues that grammar teaching needs to be changed in teacher handbooks and include the kind of extensive treatment of grammar that arises naturally through corrective feedback (Sheen, 2002).

There is also a massed or distributed grammar instruction. By massed grammar instruction, Ellis (2006) argues that the available grammar teaching time is concentrated into a short period. However, grammar instruction should take the form of separate grammar lessons of massed grammar instruction and should also be integrated into communicative activities through distributed grammar instruction.

According to Borg (1988), the lack of attention to the cognitive bases of teachers' work in grammar teaching represents a gap in the research agenda for L2 teaching.

Quagie (2014) noted that concord still bothers students, because some teachers do not possess the requisite qualification to teach the language. Some Junior High school teachers in Ghana are teacher trainees who do not have much experience and necessary qualifications to teach the subject. Klu (2006) supported this view by noting that some teachers of English Language, especially those at the Junior High Schools (JHS) and Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana, do not have the proper training to teach the language as would meet the requirements of students. The challenges in this regard are attributed to wide disparities between the target language, English, and the local languages and that accounts for the difficulties faced by teachers and learners alike (Akurugu & Brigandi, 2010).

Little interest by teachers in teaching grammar

According to Keck and Kim (2014), approaches to grammar pedagogy are informed by teachers' beliefs about why grammar is (or is not) important, how it can be learned, and in what ways it can (or should) be taught. Thus, teachers' beliefs about grammar can have an impact on how they teach it to

their students. These beliefs, from the perspective of Larsen Freeman (2003) started to form even before they were teachers; when they were actually language learners themselves.

According to Pham (2004), teachers' attitudes towards grammar are generally positive and they are in favour of teaching grammar integrated with skills in an implicit way. However, students' lack of motivation to make use of speaking and listening skills outside the classroom lead teachers to focus only linguistic competence by minimising communicative elements (Mai Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012).

Contrarily to Pham (2004), Akurugu and Brigandi (2010) argued that many teachers have a rather escapist attitude towards the teaching of English grammar, and that teaching of English is perceived by some teachers to be a tedious activity; hence, they seek out for easy ways to handle the problem. Furthermore, Klu (2014) observed that whenever it comes to teaching of grammatical concord, teachers merely 'brush off the surface' and leave other complex issues such as concord with the relative pronouns, amongst others, still insurmountable to students. This attitude could however be explained by the low levels of knowledge and competence in the teaching of grammar as argued in the preceding paragraphs. This could be disastrous, since many students need or expect their teachers to inspire, challenge, and stimulate them. Generally, effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain the interest of students. It is therefore a fact that in spite of the level of motivation students bring to the classroom, such motivation will be converted, for better or worse, by what happens in that classroom as far as teachers' interest and attitude in the teaching of the Language is concerned.

As a result, instructional decisions of teachers in grammar teaching seem to be mainly driven on their own beliefs and experiences of what works and what does not (Takala, 2016). Akurugu (2010) however suggests that it is important therefore, for the teacher of English grammar to determine the kind of motivation that will propel learners to develop the desired interest in the learning of English grammar.

There have been a number of studies on teachers' belief system about grammar and grammar teaching and learning. Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), Burgess and Etherington (2002), Baleghizadeh and Farshchi (2009) have studied teachers' perceptions regarding teachers' and learners' difficulties in grammar instruction and learning. Common to all these studies, teachers believed that grammatical errors should be corrected, even when communicative goals are attained, and that some teachers experienced more difficulty in correcting their learners' spoken, rather than written communication.

According to Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), though teachers valued the use of authentic texts, their use for presenting and practicing grammar was seen as posing problems to teachers and students. This was mainly due to the variety of structures, culture, vocabulary, form function matches, amount of time needed for using them and producing suitable tasks from them. However, Burgess and Etherington (2002) noted that teachers did not believe that grammar in authentic texts was too difficult for their learners; the existence of the specialized vocabulary seemed to be a problem for them.

Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) concluded that both written and communicative activities posed difficulties to learners in learning grammar, where writing activities were more challenging than spoken ones.

In Ghana, there has been little investigation of the difficulties faced by basic teachers and learners of grammatical concord, hence this study. However, identifying such difficulties and being consciously aware of them would help teachers find ways to overcome them and provide effective grammar instruction (Kaçani & Mangelli, 2013).

It is therefore clear that teachers' view of grammar teaching is one of the tools that help in identifying the teaching methods. This therefore means that further study of the literature on teachers' personal theories is important in providing realistic accounts of what grammar teaching really involves at the basic school level.

Poor pedagogical approaches

Practically, in the teaching of grammar, learners are taught rules of language commonly known as sentence patterns. According to Ur (1999), in the case of the learners, grammatical rules enable them to know and apply how such sentence patterns should be put together. The teaching of grammar should also ultimately centre attention on the way grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly used. In other words, teaching grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns, meaning and use. Further, grammar is thought to furnish the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In listening and speaking, grammar plays a crucial part in grasping and expressing spoken language (e.g. expressions) since learning the grammar of a language is considered necessary to acquire

the capability of producing grammatically acceptable utterances in the language (Widodo, 2004).

Broadly speaking, in teaching grammar, there are two approaches that can be applied: deductive and inductive. A deductive approach is derived from the notion that deductive reasoning works from the general to the specific. In this case, rules, principles, concepts, or theories are presented first, and then their applications are treated. The deductive approach maintains that a teacher teaches grammar by presenting grammatical rules, and then examples of sentences are presented. Once learners understand rules, they are told to apply the rules given to various examples of sentences. Giving the grammatical rules means no more than directing learners' attention to the problem discussed (Thornbury, 1999). While deductive approach to the teaching of grammar, respects the intelligence and maturity of many adult learners in particular and acknowledges the role of cognitive processes in language acquisition, beginning the lesson with a grammar presentation may be off-putting for some learners, especially younger ones (Thornbury, 1999).

In inductive approach to the teaching of grammar, a number of specific instances are observed and from them, a general principle or concept is inferred. In the case of pedagogical grammar, most experts argue that the inductive approach can also be called rule-discovery learning. It suggests that a teacher teaches grammar starting with presenting some examples of sentences. In this sense, learners understand grammatical rules from the examples (Zhou, 2008). Adopting an inductive approach to English grammar teaching can help students to rediscover their subconscious knowledge of English grammar and bring it to consciousness, as the grammar of a language

is acquired through abstracting a set of grammatical rules from language data, rather than through imitation (Zhou, 2008). Although some teachers may be convinced of the benefits of the inductive approach to the learning of English grammar, Chomsky (2002) notes that not many of them have tried it out with their students due to their lack of faith in its effectiveness and / or students' readiness. However, Chomsky (2002) suggests that an inductive approach can help students to rediscover their subconscious knowledge of English grammar and bring it to consciousness, as the grammar of a language is acquired through abstracting a set of grammatical rules from language data, rather than through imitation.

Klu (2014) argued that students' plight with the use of grammatical concord might be due to poor teaching pedagogies employed by some teachers of the subject, especially at the basic school level. This has become a problem for Ghanaian students, considering Quagie's (2014) assertion that a poor pedagogical approach to teaching the language has brought the problem of the use of grammatical concord. However, Takala (2016) notes that pedagogical systems are extremely important in making the decisions about how to teach grammar.

However, to promote the teaching of grammatical concord efficiently, the EdQual Policy (2010) suggests the following pedagogical strategies which need to be employed by the teacher to be able to teach the subject well: Explanation of concepts, giving instructions clearly and using visuals and checking of learner's comprehension. In the vein of EdQual Policy (2010), it is recommended by Quagie (2014) that exciting pedagogical methods like teaching grammar in context, using substitution tables, constant practice,

amongst others, should be employed by teachers to stimulate students' appetite in the discipline.

Therefore, the pattern and pedagogical practice of teaching grammar in basic schools, should give way to practical discussion on how students can use grammar to convey essential information. Against this background, it is essential that grammar teachers be well trained and be given regular in-service training (INSET) to keep them abreast of current improvements in the field. Klu (2014) posits that this could facilitate the teaching and learning of grammar and equip students with the knowledge needed to use grammar effectively. Similarly, Anani (2015) indicates that the expectation of teachers in the teaching of grammar should be learners' ability to accurately use grammar effectively.

Generally, most of the teachers who teach English language in Ghana are not able to use instructional and pedagogical techniques in teaching, because they do not have qualification required for the subject.

However, the various activities and methods which teachers employ during teaching and learning should be suitable to the level of students and should be geared towards developing a specific grammatical skill in students (Klu, 2014).

Figure 1 depicts a conceptual framework on how teachers' performance in English Language grammar could lead to students' performance in the use of grammatical concord appropriately.

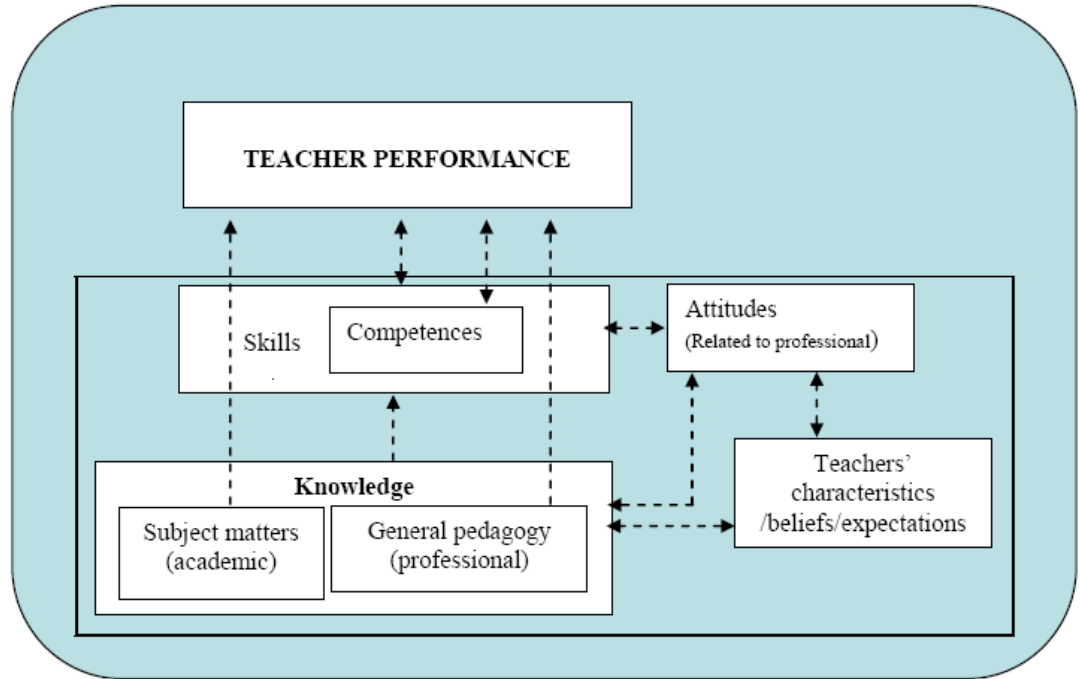


Figure 1: Teachers' performance leading to performance of students in accurate use of grammar

Source: Westera (2011)

In examining Figure 1, it is noted that a teacher's performance in the teaching of grammatical concord depends on the teachers knowledge (comprised of subject matter and general pedagogy), which is directly linked to the teacher's competences, characteristics and attitudes. These constructs also tend to influence students attitude and interest towards the study of grammatical concord. Therefore, through this conceptual framework, this study is able to identify the essential skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and goals English language teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis need.

Other important factors that result in the wrong use of grammatical concord include the following discussed below:

Students' perception

One of the most important factors that results in the wrong use of grammatical concord is students' perception and attitude towards grammar. Students' perception towards grammar is influenced by self-confidence, value, enjoyment and motivation. According to Krashen (2002), learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self - image, and a low level of anxiety are well equipped for success in second language acquisition.

Motivation

The importance of motivation in enhancing the learning of grammatical concord is undeniable, since it is one of the most importance factors that influence students' perception of the accurate use of grammatical concord (Lifrieri, 2005). Similarly, Brown (2000) states that a student with the proper motivation is most likely to be successful in English language learning than the one with the lowest level of motivation.

Conceptually and contextually, motivation is the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning grammatical concord plus favourable attitudes toward learning the English language (Gardner, 1985). It is therefore clear that attitude is a component of motivation, and that motivational factors as those that are directly associated with the content of teaching grammatical concord including the style of instruction adopted by the teacher (Slaw, 2009).

According to Morelli (2003), students perceived themselves as having a better attitude towards grammar instruction in context, while performing slightly better after having experienced the traditional grammar instruction. Learners' motivation and positive attitude during the instructional episodes is

vital in ensuring that the learners persist adequately to successfully acquire the second language (Alaga, 2016). As such, attitudes and motivation play an important role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in the language acquisition.

Lifrieri (2005) emphasises that attitudes are important, but insufficient conditions for linguistic attainment. It is clear in the literature that students who are motivated to integrate both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes of the learning experience will attain a higher degree of proficiency and more desirable attitudes towards grammar. Thus, students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels (Gardner, 2006). Palencia (2009) also

indicates that the level of instrumental motivation exhibited by students is dependent on their believe about the usefulness of the English language for job opportunities in the future.

According to Moiiinvaziri (2008), students are motivated in both instrumental and integrative orientations, regarding the study of grammar. Integrative motivation is the learning of a language because the learner wishes to identify himself with or become integrated into the society of the target language. In other words, a learner is integratively motivated when s/he learns a language because s/he wants to know more of the culture and values of the foreign language group, to make contact with the speakers of the languages...to live in the country concerned. It is believed that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used.

On the other hand, instrumental motivation is the learning of a language because of someone or less clearly perceived utility it might have for the learner. In other words, a learner is instrumentally motivated when he or she wants to learn a language in order to pass an examination, to use it in one's job, to use it in holiday in the country, as a change from watching television, because the educational system requires it (Wilkins, 1972). Instrumental motivation is generally characterised by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson, 2000).

Aside integrative and instrumental constructs of motivation, Cooper and Fishman (1977) mentioned a third type of motivation; developmental motivation. This refers to motivation relating to personal development or personal satisfaction and includes activities as watching movies and reading books in English.

However, what is unclear in the literature is whether students are motivated to learn grammatical concord more from an instrumental, integrative or developmental perspective. In this context, students are more likely to be motivated to learn the English language from a more instrumental perspective, since it forms the basis for the assessment of all other subject. This gap in literature could be explained by the fact that it is no one rule for motivating students towards the learning of grammar, due to the many factors influencing students' motivation, interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to attain, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. Also is the fact that not all students are motivated by the same values, needs, desires, or wants. According to Davis (1999), some students may be motivated by the approval of others (peer acceptance), some

by defeating challenges, while others seem naturally excited about learning grammar.

Dailey (2009) also identified parental influenced as a major factor affecting students motivated to accurately use grammatical concord. Parents have the power to instil in their children a positive future self-image, set examples for their children to have a positive attitude towards English language. However, this is not always the case for parents with low or no formal educational background. According to Drbseh (2015), such parents might not be able to help the student with his or her homework. This could result in a lack of involvement in the language by the parent, and may lead to low motivation from the students. Against this background, Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) advised that at any rate, teachers must be in charge of the second key factor in encouraging enjoyment in learning grammar.

In summary, students' motivation plays an important role to their perception towards the learning of grammar. In other words, if a student is motivated, he or she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort towards learning grammar, and attends to the tasks.

Self-confidence

Self-confidence relates to students' confidence and self-concept of their performance in the appropriate use of grammatical concord. According to Lihua (2013), due to the culture of losing face if mistakes are made during communication, many students shied away from communicating in the English language. In this regard, Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) notes that students' favoured explicit grammar teaching because of their expectations and feelings of insecurity. In Ghana, the Ministry of Education

(2010) has tried to promote students' confidence and competence in communicating in the English language by constantly strategising and coming out with the right syllabus as well as making English the sole language for instructions in the classroom (Akurugu, 2010). However, this seems to be quite the challenging feat, as students seem not to be responding where the learning of English is concerned due to their inability to ditch their local intonation when speaking. According to Kwarteng and Ahia (2013), oral English fluency is not synonymous with speaking with a Ghanaian intonation. Rather it is to be equated with having the confidence to articulate and flow in the language at any specific moment. However, in Ghana, Allen (2016) notes that, the lack of focus in Ghanaian education on developing oral communication proficiencies, but rather, a heavy focus on reading comprehension, spelling, grammar, and writing skills, leads to students' further lack of confidence in speaking English.

Value

Conceptually, Akurugu (2010) defines values as beliefs that influence behaviours across all situations. Unlike values which are global beliefs, attitudes are behaviour directed towards specific objects, persons or situations. Thus, we can say that, our educational system shares a global belief that English language is important. But do our students place the same value on the language? . English language is very essential in schools since most textbooks and instructional materials have been written in English, depicting the high value placed on the language by the educational system (Azasu, 2014). Thus, the mastery of the English language is very important to students in Ghana, because, it is one of the core subjects taught in both the junior and senior high

school levels. Anani (2017), therefore expands on Azasu (2014) argument by indicating that educational success in Ghana depends largely on proficiency in English.

In relation to the value students placed on grammatical concord, Akurugu (2010) argues that for students to understand and be able to use grammatical concord, there is the need for them to attach great value and importance to its learning. This is what triggers their interest and makes the subject easy for them to grasp. It makes them see the need to strive for competence in the subject even in the face of seeming difficulties. In other words, the value attached to grammar deals with the students' beliefs on the usefulness, relevance and worth of grammatical concord in their everyday life now and in the future. As stated by Akurugu and Brigandi (2010), the decisions made by students depend on their impression of how they view the subject. This clearly explains that students' perception of grammatical concord depends on the value they attached to it. In other words, the desire by students to learn grammatical concord is based on their incentive for engaging in the learning of the English language, which according to Akurugu (2010) stems from the motivation driving the student. Baleghizadeh and Farshchi (2009) however observed that students have difficulty in internalizing grammar rules, though they valued positively both the use of English language and natural exposure to language.

In Ghana, Allen (2016) explored the values Ghanaian students attach to the learning of grammatical concord and the English language in general. The study found out that students in Ghana are encouraged, as much as possible, to grow in confidence in their use of and speaking of grammar. This

is enforced in most schools by their “no vernacular” policies and sanctions for offenders. However, lack of confidence and the fear of being laughed at when they make mistakes deter many of the students from practicing what they learn and from speaking up in class. This then tend to be a very big obstacle to their learning of grammatical concord and their performance in general.

It is therefore clear from the literature that it is the motivation of students to learn grammatical concord that informs the value they placed on grammatical concord, which ultimately affects their desire to learn it.

Students’ anxiety

As with all other endeavours of life, anxiety is capable of creating fear in a person and therefore limiting their perception of themselves to do something. All types of second language anxiety, as stated by Lui and Huang (2010), have been evidenced to be correlated to confidence and self-esteem, attitude, motivation. In determining how anxiety affects the learning of grammatical concord by students, Akurugu (2010) posits that much of the errors related to the use of the English Language among students, including the inaccurate use of grammatical concord stems from the fact that students view the language as confusing. Akurugu (2010) further notes that some students are overwhelmed by the numerous rules and exceptions that exist in the use of the English tense, particularly grammatical concord. These negative perceptions affect their ability to grasp the necessary skills in dealing with grammar in particular and English as a whole. In agreement, Lui and Huang (2010) indicate that it is necessary for language teachers as well as learners to take measures to alleviate anxiety levels, since anxiety has turned out to be the most powerful and negative predictor for the students’ performance in

English. This issue can be combated if students would acquire competence and the right attitudes in the learning and use of the English language.

Enjoyment

The degree to which students enjoy working on grammatical concord and attending grammatical concord classes gives an indication of their enjoyment to the study of grammatical concord while motivation is the interest in English and desire to pursue studies in English Language by the students. Elkilic and Akca (2008) reported generally positive attitudes of students studying English grammar at a private primary EFL classroom towards studying grammar. In particular, however, a little over 50% of their subjects claimed to enjoy grammar very much and only about 10% reported finding some difficulty in learning and remembering grammar.

Some difficulty faced by students in learning grammatical concord is considered in relation to comprehension and production. DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) argue that some grammar structures are easy to comprehend but difficult to produce, while others are easy to produce, but difficult to comprehend. Another difficulty experienced by students in learning grammatical concord is the complexity of the grammatical feature. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) observes that some linguistic forms (such as English articles) are structurally simple, but functionally very complex. This is explained by the fact that they perform a number of different functions (relating to type of the noun they determine, the situational context and the discourse context). In such cases, the complex feature, according to Ellis et al. (2009) will require a complex explanation, using even technical metalanguage (as generic/specific reference or countable/uncountable nouns).

The linguistic form (the accurate use of a grammatical feature), semantic meaning (understanding the message encoded by a lexical item or a lexico-grammatical feature) and pragmatic use (using a lexico-grammatical feature appropriately in a context), also influenced students difficulty in their learning of grammatical concord. According to Larsen-Freeman (2003), a grammar feature can be easy relating to one aspect, but difficult to another. For example, the form of the English passive is easy to learn, but its use is more difficult. Thus, it is challenging for first learners to learn to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately in a certain communicative context.

Ellis (2006) also distinguishes two senses of grammatical learning difficulty' the difficulty learners have in understanding a grammatical feature, and the difficulty in internalizing a grammatical feature. Thus, grammatical feature may be difficult to learn as explicit knowledge, but easy as implicit knowledge, and vice versa (Ellis et al. 2009). Grammatical difficulty has also been discussed with reference to other factors, including: complexity of rules, salience of a grammar form in the input, communicative force of a grammar form, learner's developmental stage (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Nonetheless, a student's inaccurate impression of a subject or an aspect of a subject could be undermining to the teacher's efforts. For teachers to intervene accurately there is need for them to understand the behavioural characteristics of their learners. This is critical to enable them determine which standards to set in evaluating the performance of the students in grammatical concord. Knowledge of the perception of the learner can lead to an objective assessment of the learner by the teacher (Akurugu, 2010).

In summary, there are several factors accounting for students' failure in the use of grammatical concord appropriately. The major factors resulting in the wrongful use of grammatical concord are language transfer, faulty application of rules and faulty instructional materials and instructional techniques. Thus, some of the errors made by students in the use of grammatical concord are related to language transfer while others are more of the wrong pedagogical methodologies teachers use.

The Concept of Semantics

The sound patterns of language are studied at the level of phonology and the organisation of words and sentences is studied at the level of morphology and syntax (Bagha, 2011). These are in turn organised in such a way that we can convey meaningful messages or receive and understand messages. In order to sufficiently communicate in any language, there is the need for a great capacity to transmit messages and to reason out the meaning of what a text is trying to convey or what someone is telling. This process, according to Garza (2015), results in the concept of semantics. Conceptually, Filip (2008) defined semantics as the study of the relation between form and meaning. Similarly, from a linguistic perspective, semantics is the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions. In other words, semantics is the study of meaning in language. Garza (2015) also defined semantics as the historical and psychological study of classification of changes in the signification of words or forms viewed as factors in linguistic development with more simple words. In other words, semantics is the study of the meaning of the words and phrases existing in a language. There are various types of semantics, among them are; Linguistic semantics, Lexical semantics, sentential semantics

and compositional semantics. Linguistic semantics explicates how linguistic meaning is related to the world. Thus, it deals with the truth conditions of a sentence's encoded proposition. Lexical semantics explicates the relationship between words and the conceptual representation of entities in the world (including abstract ones like happiness), while sentential semantics explicates the relationship between sentences and the propositions they encode (Garza, 2015). Compositional semantics deals with phrasal and sentence meaning. However, Garza (2015) argued that non-idiomatic meanings are compositional, since they combine the meanings of smaller units.

Syntactically correct but semantically wrong expressions among basic students

According to Parr (2012), syntax refers to grammatical structure whereas semantics refers to the meaning of the vocabulary symbols arranged with that structure. To put it differently, it can be said that syntax is the symbology and grammar of a language, which tells the rules for constructing well-formed sentences of the language, whilst semantics concerns what those statements mean. Thus, syntax is structure and semantics is meaning. Therefore, any written text that follows the grammar perfectly, is syntactically correct, but may or may not be semantically correct, or semantically meaningful. Sentences can be syntactically correct but semantically incorrect when they do not make any meaning, even though they may correctly follow the language structure. Parr (2012) also notes that to make a grammatically correct or syntactically valid sentence, does not imply that the sentence is sensible or semantically valid. A very common example is Chomsky's statement "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously", which follows the grammar

of the English language, but is semantically incorrect because it contains several contradictions -- colorless things cannot be green, for instance. Another example is "cows flow supremely", which is grammatically ok in English, but makes no meaning. However, generally, a statement has to be syntactically correct before it even has a chance of being semantically correct.

How the Use of Grammatical Concord Affects Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics which handles meaning, while the devices which grammar uses to limit meanings are the operating principles of semantics (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2002). For an utterance to make meaning, an individual must select the right linguistic variable; be it phonological, morphological, lexical or syntactic variables especially in a second language. Conversely, it is argued by Okyere (2013) that the semanticity of an item or the ability with which it gives meaning to a sentence goes beyond the lexical or the denotative.

As stated by Aloysius et al. (1997), reasons to meaning in English Language can be impeded, and that when one considers students' violation of the rule of concord within tenses, there is no doubt that the sentence can show distinctive shades of significance or meaning as a result of wrong tense concord. This indicates that when concord is used wrongly in a sentence, the meaning of the sentence may be affected. In other words, meaning in English language can be impeded when grammatical rules which govern how the language is spoken and written are not adhered to.

When students violate the concord rules in English language, some semantic effects are created. In relating semantics to grammatical concords, Chomsky (2014) indicates that the semantic component of a sentence relates a

structure generated by the syntactic component. In this regard, the use of poor grammatical concord obstructs communication and therefore meaning. In general, poor grammar influences meaning and, in effect, obstructs communication. Therefore, it is important to understand that all semantic components when applied accurately, can improve the ability to communicate meaning and the understanding of the different combinations that can be made with the elements of the English Language.

Empirical literature: Case Studies on the Use of Grammatical Concord

This section of the chapter explores the contextual studies in relation to the use of grammatical concord and semantics. To ensure a wide coverage of the empirical literature, this review was explored from various countries.

Borg (1998) presents an interpretive study that explored teachers' personal pedagogical belief systems and grammar teaching, methods they have decided to use in their lessons and the factors behind these decisions. The study was conducted in an English language institute in Malta, a Mediterranean centre for teaching English as a foreign language. The participant was a teacher who spoke English as his native language while data was collected using classroom observation and a semi-structured interview. The students in the observed lesson were intermediate-level English foreign language (EFL) learners. The study revealed that the teacher used student errors as the basis of his grammar teaching. The major reason for using students' error, according to the study is that it convinces the students of the need of focusing on form which encourages them to do so. In other words, by actually showing them what type of errors they had made, they themselves might realize that they need more practice.

An analysis on subject verb agreement error, a case study at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan in Malaysia was also undertaken by Ismail (2003) to identify the subject verb agreement errors in the students' descriptive writing. A total of 34 samples of the students writing were collected. The frequency of errors was identified through the analysis of students' descriptive writing. The findings of the study showed that the students produced error in subject verb agreement in their descriptive writing, and that the errors produced by the students were due to LI (first language) interference whereby the students transferred and translated their L1 into L2. Other reason for the error production was slips whereby the students could not apply the rule of subject-verb agreement appropriately in their writing. In Indonesia, Arinacky (2007) studied the error of subject – verb agreement at the English Department of the Widya Mandala University by students. The study sought to find out the types of subject-verb agreement error made by the students and the causes of such error. The study used the narrative essay of the students as the main source of data. Thus, the research was a non-experimental study which was emphasized on descriptive study. The subjects of the study were the first semester students. The study found out that the error of subject-verb agreement frequently exists. The students could not determine the verbs for the subjects, whether they were singular or plural, and whether the subjects were first, second, or third person. They could also not use the correct verbs according to their time signal, and did not know how to build the correct verb phrase.

Oluwole (2008) also investigated the impact of mother tongue on students' achievement in the English Language in Junior Secondary Certificate Examination in western Nigeria. The study brought to light that

language background, lack of professional growth and development of teachers and lack of motivation caused students to fail in their examinations.

In Ghana, Paaku (2008) studied the poor academic performance in the BECE in some selected schools in the Ajumako-Enyan-Essian district in the Central Region of Ghana. The study revealed that poor methods of teaching, negative attitude of students towards learning and non-availability of relevant text books were some of the causes of poor academic performance of J.H.S. students.

Al-Badawi (2012) analysed the phonetic, morphological and syntactic errors in English of some Saudi Bachelor of Arts (B.A). students. The results showed that a lack of knowledge about the second language is what contributed to most syntactic errors committed by the students. Subject-verb agreement in noun phrases was violated by 42.5 percent of the sample just because they lacked knowledge of the plural system of English nouns.

Sokeng (2014) analysed the grammatical errors made by first Francophone learners of English from the University of Yaounde, Cameroon. Data for the study was extracted from the essays of 250 students. The essays were scored manually with the errors being classified and tabulated according to their frequency in the students' essays. The analysis revealed that the respondents had evidential shortfalls in English grammar. The main grammatical errors found included: verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, word order, plurality, articles, passive voice, auxiliaries and double negation. These results showed that the teaching and learning of English writing skills in Cameroonian primary and secondary schools need critical attention and development.

Klu (2014) examined how students of the Ghana Technology University College, use grammatical concord. This was done by examining the examination scripts of the English students of the University. The study concluded that generally, the students use grammatical concord wrongly largely due to the manner in which the subject is taught.

Sanmuganathan (2014) examined the impact of first language on the ESL (English as a Second Language) writings of the undergraduates of the University of Jaffna. The study revealed the most frequent errors from this data to be on the morphosyntactic and lexical levels with inadequate lexical and morphosyntactic knowledge leading to the errors, which have been ranked according to the level of difficulty. The error categories identified by the researcher based on the greatest number of errors that occurred are as follows: (i) Tense and subject-verb agreement (ii) Preposition (iii) Word order (iv) Articles (v) Adverbs (vi) Adjectives.

Abdullahi and Bichi (2015) studied gender issues in students' academic achievement in English language in Kano-Nigeria and found out that, females had a higher mean score compared to males. This is explained by Walczak and Geranpayeh (2015) that girls tend to engage better in communication and social interaction, hence progress more quickly in language learning. Moreover, Eze (2004) states that girls develop better attitude to language and communication especially in essay writing, and as a result, perform better than boys.

Performance of Basic Students in English Language in Ghana

The fact that English is the language that learners use in communicating their thoughts to the examination bodies in almost all subjects portrays that one's excellent performance in many other subjects is closely linked to one's command of the English language either in writing or speech (Chief Examiner's Report, 2014). WAEC, the main examination body in Ghana in charge of BECE, had severally complained about the poor use of English by students. Reporting on the performance of candidates who wrote the BECE in 2008, the chief examiner stressed among other things that few candidates were able to produce work of exceptional performance at their level but general performance showed no spectacular improvement over the previous years (Chief Examiner's Report, 2014). It was therefore suggested that the teaching and learning of spelling and basic rules of grammar should be intensified.

In 2014, the chief examiner reported that the inability of the candidates to express themselves well in the English language was evident in other subjects. The analysis based on gender difference revealed that the females had a higher mean score compared to males in their academic achievement in English. This gives an indication that the females performed better than males in English Language. Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2012) found out that girls performed better than boys in their academic achievement in English. The findings are also in agreement with Ching (2011) whose study revealed that gender difference exist and that females performed better than males students in English and reading ability.

The low performance of students in government schools in the area of English Language during the Basic Education Certificate Examination has been a source of worry to all educational stakeholders (Abdullahi, & Bichi, 2015). Various researchers had investigated and found a number of factors that contribute to poor performance of students in the English language at the basic level in several places. For instance, Etsey et al. (2004), in their study of some private and public schools in Ghana, revealed that academic performance was better in private schools due to effective supervision of work. These results are evident of the need for policy makers to address the problem of the abysmal performance in English language. Yet, students' performances continued to fall.

Teacher INSET Organisation in English Language Teaching in Ghana

There is a general opinion that no educational reforms can succeed without any credible programme to train and re-train teachers generally and the English teacher particularly, to equip him/her with academic and professional competence, skills and attitude towards grammatical concord.

In Ghana, in-service training (INSET) in English language teaching is provided by numerous organisations, mostly local. Funding for INSET according to Adu-Yeboah (2013) is mostly obtained from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ghana Education Service (GES) and Philanthropists/visionary individuals.

Manu (1993) observes that most INSETs organised in Ghana by educational authorities in time past concentrated on helping participants to pass promotion examinations and to implement new programmes. The Ghana Education Service (GES) has developed a framework for the INSET policy for

basic education teachers including English teachers. The aim is to establish an institutionalised structure for basic school teachers' continuous professional development. The GES has, since December 2005, been developing an INSET programme which focuses on the teaching of English Language in the basic school. In the process, support materials for institutionalisation of INSET in the education system have been developed by the programme.

In 2012, the GES developed a source book to assist key stakeholders of the INSET at the district and school levels. The aim of the sourcebook is to serve as reference material for the various personnel involved in INSET. It is recommended for district level personnel involved in INSET to provide INSET at the school level on the use of pedagogy in English teaching.

Theoretical Framework

This section disrobed the theory that supports the structure of the study. The theoretical framework, as stated by Swanson (2013) introduces and describes the theory that explains the existence of the research problem under study. It also links the ideas of the researcher with existing knowledge. In this regard, Luthans (1995) argues that a good theory is more practical than everything else. Precisely, a theory identifies important variables and links them to form 'tentative propositions' (or hypotheses) that can be tested through research (Newstrom, 2007, p. 6).

In order to address the research objectives of this study, the relevant theoretical frameworks and philosophical underpinnings on grammatical concords and semantics are examined in this section. Though a number of different theoretical positions can contribute to an understanding of grammatical concords and semantics, the syntactic theory, the referential

theory of meaning and the attribution theory are important theories on which the arguments of this study are grounded.

Syntactic theory

Fundamentally, syntax is the theory of the structure of sentences in a language. Conceptually, syntax is the study of sentences and their structure, and the constructions within sentences. According to Matiku (2013), a basic feature of a language's syntax is the sequence in which the subject, verb and object usually appear in sentences. The syntactic theory was formulated in the late 1960s to early 1970s by Chomsky, and uses set of rules that deduce syntactic structures.

The theory aims at explaining the regularity of syntactic structures by defining a finite grammar to some extent (Miyao, 2006). Its application is relevant in defining a system of rules that explain complicated correspondence among sentences and meaning representatives. Deductively, the syntactic theory deals with the ordering of words and discusses the acceptability of sentences and constraints necessary to eliminate ungrammatical sentences (Miyao, 2006). The theory basically assumes that for each sentence, the syntactic component of a grammar must specify a deep structure that determines its semantic interpretations. Thus the syntactic component of a sentence specifies an infinite set of abstract formal objects, each of which incorporates all information relevant to a single interpretation of a particular sentence (Chomsky, 2014).

Generally, grammatical concord has rules and structures which ought to be adhered to in order to make a good speech. This is to say that, a system of rules that can generate a large number of structures are involved in

grammatical concord. One of such rules which form the foundation of the use of grammatical concord is that subjects and verbs must agree in number.

The importance of the theory for this study could be explained by Butler's (2014) argument that in recent times, the syntactic functions typified by the traditional categories of subject and object, have taken on a significant role in linguistic theorising. Also is the argument of Alex (2013) that English grammar is mostly made of syntax.

The syntactic theory was employed in this study based on the assertion by Farrel (2001) that the theory is a clear, thorough and up-to-date introduction to a formal theory of grammar. In other words, its application in this study is on the basis that grammatical concords are designed to deduce all grammatical syntactic structures whose applications often require only the most plausible syntactic structures. The application of the theory would help to examine how English language teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis apply the syntactic component of grammatical concord in their teaching as well as the challenges JHS students in the Metropolis encounter in adhering to syntactical rules and principles.

Referential theory of meaning

Largely, meaningful expressions are meaningful because, they refer to, designate, signify, or denote something. Mill (1870) propounded the referential theory. The theory assumes that the meaning of a word is the object it denotes, while the meaning of a sentence is the proposition it expresses (Bunnin & Yu, 2004). This theory assumes that meaning occurs when thought and expression meet; with meaning being defined in terms of lexical words

and the symbols they signify. To put it differently, the theory states that the parts of the sentence are what give meaning to it.

In the referential theory of meaning, specific words are seen to point to the articles they are assigned to in terms of significance. This means that all rules in a grammatical concord must give meaning for what they represent. According to Hough (2013), to produce a sentence that represents a particular state of affairs, one ought to put individual components of the sentence together. This is important since all meaningful expressions ought to refer to, designate, signify or denote symbols other than themselves.

So it is very important that one gets grammatical concord right in order to argue exactly the particular meaning the person wishes to voice out or write. Also is the fact that in conversation, people are able to understand the sentences we make via understanding the various parts of the sentences that we utter. So virtually, it is very imperative that one gets the grammatical concord right in order to convey the particular meaning that one wishes to put across in the conversation (Ramadan & Ababneh, 2013).

This study employed the theory because it is the most influential in the modern discussion of meaning (semantics) and reference (Bunnin & Yu, 2004). It is used in this study because of the denotative nature of the use of grammatical concord. In other words, the appropriate use of grammatical concord must result in meaningful expression with regards to what it denotes or signifies. It is relevant to this study since the study seeks to examine the wrong use of grammatical concords (parts of sentence) that have great effect on semantics (meaning).

In other words, the theory aligns meanings of expressions with what they refer to. Its application on the accurate use of grammatical concord is that English teachers must make sure that they denote every meaning to expressions they say or write in grammar, since all rules in a grammatical concord must give meaning to what they represent. Therefore, the wrongful use of grammatical concord will have a great effect on the meaning of a sentence, since people just make meanings of sentences from what they think ought to be, which may not be so.

Notwithstanding the relevance and importance of the referential theory of meaning to the study of grammatical concord and semantics, several limitations have been raised by scholars and academicians like Muehlhauser (2010). Although the theory is able to account for the denotation or extension of words, it fails to describe other semantic characteristics, generally known as connotation or intension.

According to Hough (2013), the theory provides a parsimonious and straightforward model of meaning in a sentence, but it is incapable of capturing all facets of meaning. For example, a deeper understanding of the theory suggests it could not actually bring out the semantics of two proposed sentences. Furthermore, the theory is challenged because of its metaphysical requirement that there is something or other to which a word refers.

In summary, this section concluded by indicating that the meaning of a sentence is understood by understanding the meanings of its parts (Batty, 2008). This makes the use of the referential theory of meaning relevant for this study, despite its weaknesses.

Attribution theory

Attribution theory according to Weiner (2000) is probably the most influential contemporary theory with implications for academic motivation. Attribution theory is the study of how individuals explain events that they experience. It incorporates behaviour modification in the sense that it emphasises the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. It incorporates cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory in the sense that it emphasises that learners' current self-perceptions will strongly influence the ways in which they will interpret the success or failure of their current efforts and, hence their future tendency to perform these same behaviours.

According to the theory, the explanations that people tend to make about success or failure can be analysed in terms of three sets of characteristics: First, the cause of the success or failure may be internal or external. That is, students may succeed or fail in English Language because of factors that they believe have their origin within them or because of factors that originate in their environment. Second, the cause of the success or failure may be either stable or unstable. If students believe the cause is stable, then the outcome is likely to be the same if they perform the same behaviour on another occasion. If it is unstable, the outcome is likely to be different on another occasion. Third, the cause of the success or failure may be either controllable or uncontrollable. A controllable factor is one which students believe they themselves can alter if they wish to do so. An uncontrollable factor is one that students do not believe they can easily alter (Reeve, 2009).

The basic principle of Attribution Theory as it applies to the use of grammatical concord is that students own perceptions or attributions for success or failure in the appropriate use of grammatical concord determine the amount of effort they will expend on the study of concord in the future. On the basis of this theory, the study assumes that pupils' academic performance in the use of grammatical concord is determined by their perception of their ability to perform difficult task in the use of grammatical concord as well as the level of efforts they exert in the English Language.

This study employs the attribution theory because the theory deals with the reasons or attributions students give for succeeding or failing a task. This means that the application of the theory in the study would help determine the factors that influence the attitude of students' towards the study of grammatical concord and the use of semantics. Thus with this theory, the students' perceptions of why they succeeded or failed in the use of grammatical concord would be brought to bear. Also, the theory helps to determine the extent to which students' prior academic self-concept influence their subsequent academic achievement in the English Language.

Summarising the arguments of the three theoretical frameworks, it is deduced that the typology of sentences, their structure as well as the constructions within the sentences are essential for the appropriate use of grammatical concord. In other words, the orders in which the subject, verb and object usually appear in sentences are important to giving meanings (semantic) to sentences, since the meaning of a sentence should clearly show the proposition it expresses. However, in order to convey the particular meaning of a sentence, Ramadan and Ababneh (2013) argues that grammatical concord

should be appropriately used. Thus, the appropriate use of grammatical concord must result in meaningful expression.

Specifically, the syntactic theory is used in this study to examine how English language teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis apply the syntactic component of grammatical concord in their teaching. The referential theory of meaning is used to examine how the wrong use of the parts of sentences (grammatical concord) affects the meanings of such sentences (semantics), since the meaning of a sentence is understood by understanding the meanings of its parts (Batty, 2008). The appropriate application of grammatical concord to give proper semantic implications is largely influenced by the environment to the teaching of concord as well as the students' perception of the concept which is explained in the attribution theory.

Chapter Summary

Conceptually, concord is a formal relationship that exists between elements of grammar. The major types of grammatical concord include subject-verb concord, concord within tenses, notional concord, proximity concord, and concord with relative pronouns. However, it is clear from the review that the subject-verb concord is one of the useful rules of English language since the subject and the verb are the two most important items in a sentence.

Conclusively, several students at the basic school level lack adequate knowledge on the rules governing grammatical concord resulting in the wrongs use of the concept. Grammatical concord errors are either caused by the influence of the mother-tongue, due to the word -for -word literal translation from the mother tongue (interlingual) or the ineffective and

inappropriate application of grammatical concord rules (intralingual errors). Intralingual errors are not related to first language transfer.

Generally, students understanding of grammatical concord could be influenced by the pedagogical approaches use to teach the language, qualification among teachers to teach concord, interest by teachers in teaching grammar, and students' perception of grammatical concord. While the issue of errors in language learning is important, research in this area in Ghana is still inconclusive.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods that were used to explore the research questions. The major components of this chapter are the research design, study population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, procedure for data collection and ethical considerations. The methods used for analysing the data from the field are also discussed in this chapter as well as a profile of the study area.

Research Design

A research design, as stated by Malhotra and Birks (2003) acts as a blueprint or framework of a research project that guides the collection and analysis of data. In general, it ensures that the required data which lines up with the research questions are accurately and economically collected.

To answer the formulated research questions and objectives, this study employed the qualitative research design. According to Shuttleworth (2008), qualitative research paradigms are particularly useful when the complexity of a subject demands an answer that cannot be covered by a simple yes or no hypothesis. The qualitative research design was applied in this study because it is rich and deep in terms of explorations and descriptions.

The design allows for more diversity in responses as well as the capacity to adapt to new developments or issues during the research process itself (Tannor, 2014). Thus, the qualitative design was used in this study to

gain rich information and deeper understanding of the concepts under study (grammatical concords and semantics), since it has the ability to uncover complex understanding, opinions, attitudes and often hidden beliefs and perceptions on the subject under study as required in this study.

Study Area

The Cape Coast Metropolis is one of the 17 districts of the Central Region of Ghana. The capital is Cape Coast, which is also the capital of the Central Region. The Metropolis is bounded to the South by the Gulf of Guinea, the West by the Komenda -Edina -Eguafo -Abrem Municipality (at Iture bridge), the East by the Abura Asebu Kwamankese District, and to the North by the Twifu Heman Lower Denkyira District. It is located on longitude 1° 15' W and latitude 5°06' N. It occupies an area of approximately 122 square kilometres, with the farthest point at Brabedze located about 17 kilometres from Cape Coast (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Figure 2 illustrates the district map of the Cape Coast metropolis.

The population of the Cape Coast Metropolis, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, is 169,894 representing 7.7 percent of the region's total population (GSS, 2010). Of the population 11 years and above, about 90.0 percent are literate (have the ability to read and write in any language) and 10.0 percent are non-literate. The proportion of literate males is higher (94.1 %) than that of females (85.6%). According to GSS (2010), about 67.2 percent of the population are capable of speaking and writing both English and Ghanaian languages.

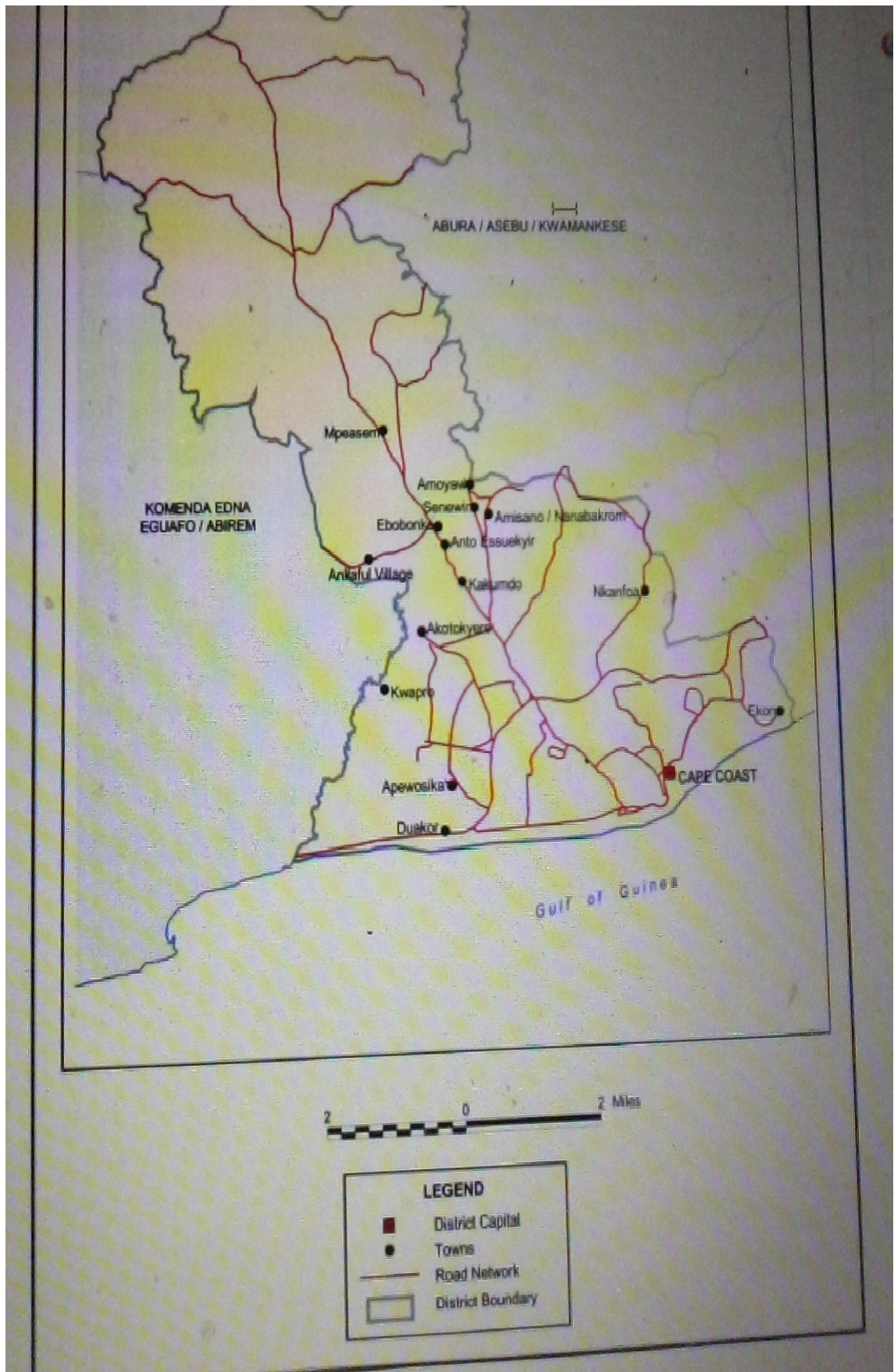


Figure 2: District map of Cape Coast

Source: Adopted from the Ghana Statistical Service (2010)

Population

Target population refers to the entire group of individuals or objects which are of interest to the researcher in the generalisation of the conclusions (Castillo, 2009). According to the Ghana Demographic Profile (2012), basic school children form a significant proportion of the population of Ghana (36.5%). Therefore, focusing on such a segment of the population in the educational sector in this study is important. The unit of analysis for this study was limited to students and English language teachers in Junior High Schools in the Cape Coast metropolis.

Available statistics from the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Office (2016) indicates that there are 78 public schools in the Metropolis across the six educational circuits. Table 1 shows the distribution of the schools across the circuits.

Table 1: Distribution of schools across six circuits in the Cape Coast

Metropolis	
Name of Circuit	Number of Schools
Efutu	13
Ola	10
Cape Coast	12
Pedu/Abura	13
Bakaano	14
Aboom	16
Total	78

Source: Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Office (2016)

The Annual District Performance Review report of the Metro Education Directorate (2015) further shows that there are 10,580 students and 843 teachers at the JHS level across the six educational circuits in the Metropolis. The pupil-teacher ratio is computed to stand at 12.6 at the JHS

level. This implies that the pupil-teacher ratio is still high which has implications on the quality of teaching the English language, most especially with regards to the teaching of grammatical concord.

Sampling Procedure

Sampling is considered an important element in every research based on Maxim's (1999) assertion that regardless of the process used for collecting data, some strategy is required for deciding which units ought to be measured and included in a study and which ones ought to be excluded from the research population. However, Tannor (2014) argues that in deciding on this, the sample must be representative of the population from which it was drawn. Hence, it is imperative that electing the manner of obtaining data and from whom the data will be acquired, be done with sound judgment, since no amount of analysis can make up for improperly collected data. A multi-stage sampling technique was used in the sampling of the units of analysis. Below is a sampling frame showing a sample of the population used in the data collection procedure.

Table 2: Sampling Frame

Name of Schools	Number of teachers in the school	Number sampled	Number of Students in the Class	Number sampled
Mensah Sarbah Basic	17	1	45	3
Ghana National Basic	15	1	51	3
Amanfrom Boys	19	1	48	3
St.Micheal Basic	16	1	54	3
Cape Coast Presby Basic	17	1	55	3
Ekon Basic School	20	1	47	3
Total	104	6	300	18

Source: Field Data, 2017

For the purpose of this study, focus was placed on the 12 schools in the Cape Coast circuit, since it shows to be one of the circuits with abysmal performance according to the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Office (2013). Six schools out of the 12 in the Cape Coast circuit were randomly selected. The names of the 12 schools in the Circuit were written on pieces of paper and put into a box. The box was then shaken after which a piece of paper was drawn and set aside. The box was shaken again, and another paper drawn and set aside until the researcher had selected six schools. This was done to give each of the 12 schools in the Circuit an equal chance of being part of the sample.

The next stage of the sampling process was the sampling of students and teachers from the selected schools. To have a representative sample, the quota sampling technique was employed in the sampling of the respondents. This was based on Castillo's (2009) assertion that even if it is possible, it is unnecessary to collect data from everyone in the target population in order to get valid findings (Castillo, 2009).

Quota sampling is defined as a non-probability sampling in which units are selected into a sample on the basis of pre-specified characteristics (Tannor, 2014). According to Ashley (2014), the difficulty in quota sampling is that the researcher has to decide in advance the specific characteristics on which to base the quota. For this study, students from each form (Form One, Two and Three) formed the basis of the quota sampling. This was to ensure that the study covers a range of grammatical concords issues peculiar to each form. Also, the method was applied because it has these advantages, it is much quicker and easier to carry out since it does not require a sampling frame and

the strict use of random sampling techniques, it is cost effective, and the quota sample improves the representation of particular strata (groups) within the population, as well as ensuring that these strata are not over-represented. For example, it would ensure that we have sufficient male students taking part in the research (60% of our sample size of 100; hence, 60 male students). It would also make sure we did not have more than 60 male students, which would result in an over-representation of male students in our research.

However, quota sampling has the following weaknesses: The sample is not chosen using random selection, which makes it impossible to determine the possible sampling error. It is also impossible to make statistical inferences from the sample to the population. This could lead to problems of generalisation

After quota sampling had been used to select teachers and students from the selected schools, convenient sampling was then used to sample respondents from each group. Thus, the selection of the teachers and students was because they could be conveniently accessed. By ease of access, it means those who were willing to grant interview readily and sincerely.

A sample size of 18 students, three from each selected school and six teachers, one from each school participated in the study. This is based on Crouch's (2006) suggestion that, the validity of fine-grained and in-depth inquiry in qualitative research is enhanced by small samples of less than 20. The following critical points were considered in the determination of the sample size:

- a. Diminishing return (in data collection, more data does not necessarily lead to more information)

- b. Larger sample would result in data becoming repetitive and, eventually, superfluous

Data Collection Instruments

Data gathering is crucial in research, as it is meant to contribute to a better understanding of a theoretical framework (Bernard, 2002). Data collection in this study was done through interviews with students and teachers, observation of instructional methods as well as the assessment of an essay written by the students.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

Unstructured interview is a data collection method that is usually conducted face to face between the interviewer and the participants allowing the researcher to control the process, and allowing freedom for respondents to express their thoughts (O'Leary, 2004). In this study, the interview guide was designed using open-ended items to allow for further probing and discussions. Thus, opened-ended interviews were conducted with students and teachers as part of exploring research question four. Specifically, the interview guide sought to explore the underlying factors influencing the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis.

In-depth interviews were used in this study based on Guion, Diehl, and McDonald's (2013) assertion that qualitative interviews are excellent tools to use in planning and evaluating programmes, since they use an open-ended, discovery-oriented method, which allows the interviewer to deeply explore the respondent's perspectives on a subject (In this case, grammatical concord and semantics). The application of the in-depth interviews granted the researcher

the opportunity to deeply explore how the students feel about the use of grammatical concord and how it affects their semantics.

The questions used in the interviews were unstructured (began with “why” or “how”) which gave the respondents the freedom to respond using their own words. This choice was based on Guion et al.’s (2013) assertion that interview questions should be framed in ways that demand more than just a “yes” or “no” answer.” Each interview lasted between 15-20 minutes. This was necessary to eliminate the boredom often associated with long interviews including interviewer fatigue. The responses from the interviews were audio-recorded and complemented with written notes (i.e., field notes) by the researcher with the permission of the participants. In establishing the rapport and confidence of the respondents, they were made aware that recordings were only for academic purposes. Data was collected in the last term of the academic year, this was to make sure that students had already treated grammatical concord and could give proper responses.

Observation

A major factor which contributes to the challenges students encounter in their use of grammatical concord is the teaching methodologies used by teachers. In this regard, classroom observation of the instructional and pedagogical methods used by teachers was conducted. This helped to assess how teachers conceptualise and integrate the principles of grammatical concords into their teaching methodology in answering research question three. The observation also determined the specific ways teachers apply the syntactic component of grammatical concord in their teaching process.

The data obtained through the observation served as a check against that through the interviews and content analysis of the examination scripts/essays/assignments of the students. In undertaking the observation in the classrooms, an observational guide was developed. But it is important to state that none of the elements in the classroom including the teacher was made aware of the reasons behind the presence of the researcher. For the teacher, the researcher presented herself as a student in the school to observe and learn some teaching methodologies (no mention of grammatical concords). This was relevant as teachers are more likely not to show the true character if they were made aware that they are being observed with regard to grammatical concords and semantic in particular.

Content analysis

Data was collected from the students' essays and assignments in determining the accuracy of the grammatical concord used by the students as part of exploring research question one, two and five. This was to ascertain the semantic effects or implications these grammatical concord issues create for both teachers and students. In other words, the narrative writings of the students were used to determine the types of grammatical errors committed. Narrative writings have to do with writing skills and narrative text that tells a story usually of a sequence of events that happen over a period of time (Anantri, 2017), while writing skills consists of constructing meaningful ideas using written work (Ginanjar, 2015). In this study, students were given a narrative text on the food they like best. Therefore, analysing the writings of the students is the best way to ascertain their ability to express themselves in terms of their favourite foods.

The key grammatical concord challenges examined include:

- i. Concord within tenses
- ii. Subject-verb concord or agreement
- iii. Concord with the relative pronouns
- iv. Concord with certain phrases, expressions or words such as: as well as, in addition to, together with, including, along with, amongst others

Table 3 shows the data collection methods across the research questions.

Table 3: Data Collection Methods across Research Questions

Research Questions	Interviews	Content Analysis	Observation
How do JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis use grammatical concord?		√	
What are the types of grammatical concord errors most common among the JHS students in the Metropolis?		√	
What are the instructional and pedagogical methods English language teachers in the Metropolis use to teach grammatical concord			√
What are the underlying factors influencing the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis?	√		
What semantic problems are created when students violate the rules of grammatical concord?	√	√	

Source: Author Construct (2017)

Reliability and Validity of Instruments

Generally, validity of data is defined as whether the data is plausible, credible and reliable, and can be defended when challenged. These principles were addressed when designing the interview guide and observation guide through pre-testing. Four types of validity were addressed in this study:

Descriptive validity: The accuracy of the behaviours, events, objects, settings and others reported by the researcher. For example, that which is reported is actually what happened or what was heard or observed.

Interpretive validity: The accuracy of interpretation as to what happened in the minds of subjects and the extent to which the researcher understands exactly the opinions, thinking, feelings, intentions and experiences of subjects.

Theoretical validity: The extent to which the theoretical explanations developed are congruent with the data and is reliable and can be defended.

Construct validity: The extent to which a test measures what it purports to be measuring.

Pretesting of the instruments helped to identify potential challenges to be encountered during the main study.

Research Ethics

Ethical matters or considerations are very important for every research adventure or study. This, according to McNamara (1994) is most important for studies that involve the use of human subjects. Participants have a right to know what the research is about, how it will affect them, the risks and benefits of participation and the fact that they have the right to decline to participate if they choose to do so. Therefore, the policy of voluntary participation was

strictly adhered to during the data collection phase for the purpose of ensuring the privacy as well as the safety of the participants.

The significant ethical issues considered in this research process include respondents' consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntary participation. To secure the consent of the selected participants, the researcher relayed all important details of the study, including its aims and purpose. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, both teachers and students were also asked by the researcher not to mention their names during the interview. Rather, the study assigned index numbers to them throughout the process to ensure that they felt comfortable about taking part in the study. The schools of the participants were also not reported in the study since this could lead to easy identification of the people who took part in the study.

Only participants who were willing to participate in the study, after being fully informed of the aim of the study and methodology, were included in the target sample of the study. All participants had the right not to participate in the study or to withdraw from the interview before completion.

In summary, the key ethical issues considered in this study were grounded in the following: Voluntary participation as respondents understood the purpose and procedures of the study, the potential benefits of the study were provided to the respondents and that their privacy was greatly respected by not disclosing their names, the respondents had the right to withdraw at any stage or not to respond to particular items.

Gaining access to research sites involves obtaining permission to sites and individuals, and negotiating approval with these individuals at a site which can facilitate the collection of research data (Creswell, 2005). To gain access

into the schools, a letter of introduction was obtained from the University to the management of the schools, explaining to them that the researcher is a student who is on academic research assignment and should be accorded the needed assistance.

Data Processing and Analysis

Literary analysis was done on the essays of the students using critical discourse analyses (CDA). Critical discourse analysis is an approach used to analyse written, spoken, or any significant semiotic event (Stubbs, 1983). Specifically, written discourse analysis was performed on the written texts from students' essays and assignments.

According to Ahadzi, Ameka and Essegbey (2015), there are several types of CDA including argumentative, narrative, descriptive, and exposition. For the purpose of this study, narrative discourse was employed. This is used in writing or speaking when the composer is attempting to narrate to an audience his or her opinions, experiences and encounters, typically by using logic and appealing to the audience's sense of reason. For this study, the narrative discourse is used because in essays/assignments, students are required to scrutinize each part of their ideas.

On the other hand, inductive thematic analysis was performed on the interview data. In inductive thematic analysis, coding and theme development are directed by the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, the following steps were taken in analysing the qualitative data:

- a. Reading through the interview responses and looking for patterns or themes among the participants. Where a variety of themes were

found, the researcher tried to group them in any meaningful way, such as by type of grammatical concord error,

- b. Identifying the responses that seem to have been given with enthusiasm, as opposed to those that the participants answered in only a few words
- c. Checking whether or not there are deviations from the patterns and common themes that emerged
- d. Interpretation of the data by attaching significance to the themes and patterns observed

Figure 4 shows a summary of the methodology of the study.

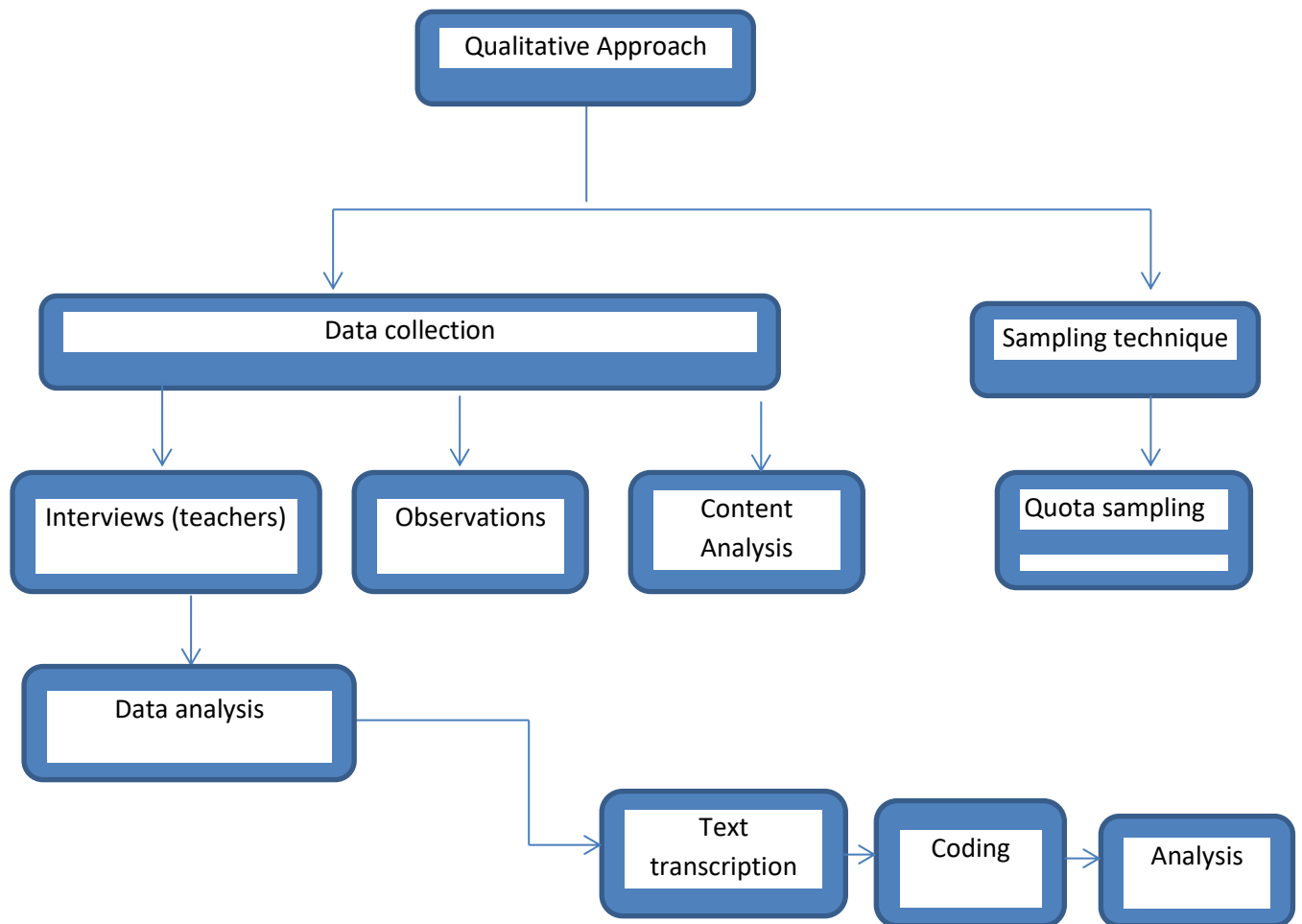


Figure 3: Topology of the methodology

Source: Researcher Construct (2016)

Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at the methods used to gather data and analyse such data. The qualitative research design was used for the study. A total of 18 students and 6 teachers were selected through a multi-stage sampling technique from six basic schools in the Cape Coast Circuit. Interviews observations and content analysis were used to gather data for the study. The instruments were pilot tested to ensure its validity and reliability. The next chapter presents the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis of the data from the students and English Language teachers of the Selected Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study explored students' use of grammatical concord and the associated semantic effects. The analysis involved the categorisation of the data into common themes and presentation of the results in sections based on the research questions of the study. The first section explores the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The other sections focus on the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the metropolis, the types of grammatical concord errors most common among the students, the factors influencing the use of grammatical concord among the students, the instructional and pedagogical methods used by teachers, and the semantic problems associated with the wrong use of grammatical concord among the students. All examples cited in this work are just as they appear in the essays of the students. None has been edited. All spelling mistakes are just as the students made them.

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers and Students

In all, 18 students, six students from each level and six teachers participated in the study. The major demographic variables analysed for the students included age, gender and the occupation of parents. Similarly, for the teachers; gender, educational background and number of years of teaching the English language were studied.

Of the 18 students, 10 were males while eight were females. The study of sampled males was based on the assertion of the Ministry of Education, Ghana (2015) that boys performed better than girls in all core subjects except English, where the reverse is true. Of the six English teachers, there were three males and three females.

According to the structure of basic education in Ghana, Junior High School starts from 12 to 15 years. In this regard, the age distributions of the students were studied with the results presented in Table 3.

Table 4: Age (Years) of Students

Age	Number
11-13	2
14-16	13
17-19	2
20 and above	1
Total	18

Source: Survey data (2017)

Relating this result to the structure of basic education in Ghana, it suggests that majority of the students could have started primary school beyond age six. Based on Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) assertion that a strong foundation for English learning begins in early childhood, it is important that parents are encouraged to send their children to school a bit earlier to help in their cognitive, linguistic, physical and socio-emotional development.

According to Fischbacher and Ursprung (2012), a student must have the cooperation of a responsive home environment that will facilitate progress towards the achievement of learning. The Michigan Department of Education

(2002) has also indicated that children spend 70 percent of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside the school. Therefore, the environment in which a student lives could have an effect on their attitude and performance in English Language. This variable was analysed as part of determining the impact of the family factor in influencing the attitude of students towards the study of grammatical concord. Of the 18 students, 14 were staying with their parents, while the other four were with their guardians such as adopted parents, grandparents and relatives, among other.

The study also examined the occupation of the parents and guardians of the students. Of the 18 students, 11 had parents and guardians employed in the informal sector. The other seven students had parents and guardians employed in the formal sector. Petty trading was the most common occupation among parents and guardians employed in the informal sector. It can be deduced that majority of the parents/guardians were likely to be illiterate, or have lower educational backgrounds. This has several implications for the attitude of the students towards English language based on Usher (2009) assertion that a parent's interest and perceived ability to express his or her self in the English influences a student's confidence and interest in the subject.

The appropriate teaching of grammatical concords according to Quagie (2014) requires that teachers possess the relevant skills and competences. On this basis, the educational backgrounds of the teachers were studied. All the six teachers that participated in the study had a bachelors' degree. However, of the six teachers, only two specialised in English language at the University. This gives the implication that there could be teachers without the professional qualifications, teaching English at the basic school levels. Using the number

of years of teaching as a proxy for experience, averagely, the teachers have had six years of teaching English Language. This suggests that the teachers were in the position to provide relevant information regarding the use of grammatical concord among basic school students.

Student's Performance

This section examines the class of the students as well as their performance in the English language ever since they joined JHS. Of the 18 students that participated in the study, six were taken from each of the three forms (form one, form two and form three).

In determining the performance of the students, the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC)'s grading system was used. The system is presented in Table 4.

Table 5: WAEC Grading Systems

Grade	Marks (%)
A1: Excellent	75-100
B2: Very good	70-74
B3: Good	65-69
C4: Credit	60-64
C5: Credit	55-59
C6: Credit	50-54
D7: Pass	45-49
E8: Pass	40-44
F9: Fail	0-43

Source: WAEC (2017)

Table 5 shows the performance of the students in the English language.

Table 6: Highest mark scored in English Essays

Grade	English
65-69	1
60-64	2
55-59	2
50-54	5
45-49	4
40-44	2
0-43	2

Source: Survey data (2017)

The commonest grade among the 18 students was grade ‘C6’ and grade ‘D7’ in exams. None had either grade ‘A1’ or ‘B2’. Aggregating the results means that only three of the 18 students have had highest scores of at least 60 marks in English language at the JHS level. Interviews with the teachers also showed that the performance of the students in English Language is below average.

One of the teachers indicated:

“The performance of students in English is unsatisfactory.

General performance shows that only about 10 percent of the students are good in English. The rest lie below average”

This suggests that the students exhibit poor understanding of English language concepts and are unable to form the appropriate constructions which could be tackled with the requisite skills. This, according to the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) has affected the students’ ability to express themselves appropriately in other subjects like Social Studies and Religious and Moral Education.

The performance as presented in Table 5 supports the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Office's assertion that the performance of students in the English language is abysmal. This means that in spite of the provision of inputs such as textbooks, stationery, teacher orientation and other measures taken to improve the teaching and learning process in the metropolis, achievement in English Language remains low.

Regarding the performance of students across gender, the female students seemed to perform better than the males. All the three students that had marks in the range of 60-69 were females, while none had marks in the range of 0-44. This finding is consistent with Abdullahi and Bichi's (2015) empirical study in Kano-Nigeria which found females to have a higher mean score in English as compared to males. This result is expected considering Walczak and Geranpayeh (2015) observation that girls tend to engage better in communication and social interaction than males, hence progress more quickly in language learning.

The performance of the students across the forms is depicted in Table 6.

Table 7: Performance of students in English across form

Grade	Form One	Form Two	Form Three
65-69	0	0	1
60-64	0	1	1
55-59	0	1	1
50-54	1	2	2
45-49	2	1	1
40-44	1	1	0
0-43	2	0	0

Source: Survey data (2017)

None of the 18 students across the three forms as presented in Table 6 had either grade A1 or B2. While only one student in form three had scores below 50 marks, none in form one had scores above 55 marks. Although the study is qualitative, limiting the generalisation of the findings, it is clear that performance in the English Language seems to be better as one progress to the higher levels than at the lower levels. This gives the indication that the foundations of the students in the Language have not been very encouraging. There is the need to develop a positive attitude towards the study of English from the lower levels.

Research Question 1: How do JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis use grammatical concord?

This section assessed the appropriate use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This was done by reviewing the subject, verbs and other elements of clause structures constructed by the students in an essay describing their favourite food. Students' adherence to the rules and structures surrounding the use of grammatical concord as well as their understanding of the concept is the main focus of this section. Norlander's (2012) conceptual definition of a concord error as a mismatch between two or several grammatical elements in a phrase formed the guiding framework for determining the grammatical appropriateness of the constructions of the students.

A review of the essays of the students shows gross violations of grammatical rules and principles. One of the essays had the construction below:

“I go to the market and I bought fish”

In this sentence, the rule of concord within tenses is violated. 'Go' is a present tense verb, while 'bought' is a past tense verb. Therefore, 'bought' should be 'buy', since the two events take place at the same time. Thus the student is unable to apply the rule of past and present tenses.

Another student's essay demonstrated the construction below

"I will go to the market tomorrow after school and
bought tomatoes".

In this sentence, 'will go' is a future tense verb, but 'bought' is a past tense verb. Since going to the market will happen in the future, it is impossible that the tomatoes had been bought already.

Another essay contains the sentence below:

"My sisters helps me to cook the food"

In this sentence, the rule of subject/verb agreement is violated since 'sisters' is plural, and 'helps' is singular. This means that the students are ignorant of the fact that in grammatical concord, the verb must take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject. According to Woods (2010), the verb is the heart of the sentence. However, in most of the essay reviews, the verbs are in disagreement with their subjects.

The inappropriate sentences in the essays of the students could be explained by their lack of a conceptual understanding of grammatical concord. None of the 18 students had a clear understanding of what a grammatical concord is. According to one of the students:

"Grammatical concords are idioms and preposition used
in sentences"

Views from the teachers also affirmed that the students' understanding of the meaning of grammar and concord is abysmal. One of the teachers indicated:

“For grammar, the understanding is poor among the students. If they do not even understand what it is, how do you expect them to use it accurately?”

The lack of understanding of what constitutes grammatical concord among the students is worrisome since it provides the rules for putting words into the right order to make the meaning clear. In this regard, the students were asked to describe the use of grammatical concord. Of the 18 students, 10 were unable to tell if they use grammar accurately. This is evident in one of the narrations of a Form One student:

“Madam, sometimes I didn't know if am spoken the good English.”

Another student indicated:

“To me, my major challenge is mixing now and the future.”

Considering the inability of the students to use grammatical concord accurately, the confidence level of the students in the English language was also assessed. That is the extent to which the students believe they are capable of using grammatical concord accurately. Most of the students demonstrated a low confidence in their use of grammatical concord. One of the students confirmed:

“I felt shy to speak English language because my grammar is poor. Some of my friends laugh at me anytime I spoke, so I keep quiet in the class”

However, the analysis of the essays showed that the female students seem to be more confident in their use of grammatical concord than the males. One of the English teachers affirmed:

“The female students have proven to have more confidence and courage in the use of grammatical concord as compared to the males. Generally, the males have low self confidence in the use of grammar.”

The low self-confidence explains Azar’s (2010) view that self-confidence is one of the factors inhibiting students from getting interest in the English Language.

According to Klu (2014), for English language to be taught and learnt properly, the basic grammatical rules should not be violated. Considering the performance of the students in the use of grammatical concord, the study examined their awareness level regarding the rules and structures governing the use of grammatical concord. As identified from the content analysis, the students confirmed in the interviews that they have inadequate knowledge of the rules governing the use of grammatical concord. One of male students in form 2 indicated:

“I don’t know much about the rules on grammatical concord.”

In other words, although there are countless grammar rules in the English language, from rules on misplaced modifiers and subject/verb agreement to rules on past and present tenses, the students were unable to mention any of such rules. This result is consistent with Ifeyinwa’s (2009) that several students do not have adequate knowledge with regards to the use of the rules

governing grammatical concord of the various types. This could explain why most of the students inaccurately use grammatical concord in their essays and conversations.

Interviews with the teachers also confirmed that the students do not have much knowledge of the rules governing grammatical concord. One of the English teachers lamented:

“The students generally have very little knowledge concerning grammar rules. You teach them but instead of them practicalising it to improve their confidence, they tend to be silent. I think there are more rooms for improvement.”

In concluding this section, it is deduced that generally, the students are unable to accurately use grammatical concord, largely due to their ignorance of the rules governing grammar.

Considering the inappropriate use of grammatical concord among the students, further analysis was done to determine the specific types of grammatical concord errors the students commit.

Research Question 2: What are the types of grammatical concord errors most common among the JHS students in the Metropolis?

Considering the above findings that the students are unable to accurately use grammatical concord, it was essential to explore the specific types of grammatical concord errors most common among the students. This section was largely explored using the reviews of the essays of the students. This was complemented with the interviews conducted with the students and teachers.

Several grammatical concord errors were committed by the students. The two major types identified in the essays of the students were subject-verb disagreement and inappropriate tenses. This result was not surprising considering the assertion of Quagie (2011) that subject-verb disagreement and inaccurate tenses are the most frequent concord errors found among students. However, for most of the students, they are unable to tell if the error committed in the use of grammatical concord is related to subject-verb concord or concord within tenses or both.

Aside from the normal spelling mistakes, use of wrong prepositions and punctuations, a major grammatical concord error noted was the subject-verb concord error. This is in agreement with Norlander (2012) that the most frequent kind of concord error found in essays written by students is of the type where the verb is in disagreement with the subject. Nonetheless for a sentence to have meaning, subjects and verbs need to concur with each other (Long, 2007).

Subject-verb disagreement

Generally, the syntactic theory according to Chomsky (1960) requires that subjects and verbs agree in number, thus as singular or plural. Therefore, a subject-verb agreement error occurs when the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree in number. The content analysis performed on the essays of the students highlights the following subject –verb disagreement constructions among the students.

A form one male student wrote:

“It is give me energy”.

With this sentence, the subject and verb follow each other closely but the interjection of 'is' causes the student to use a plural verb instead of a singular. Therefore, there is disagreement in number. The correct sentence would then read, "*It gives me energy.*"

Another form one female student wrote:

"Ingredient use for the stew are: pam oil, onion,
koobi, pepper, tomato, magi,"

In this sentence, the word 'ingredient' connotes one ingredient which disagrees with the verb 'are' that has been used because 'are' connotes plurality. At a second glance, the list of ingredients at the end of the sentence gives substance to the use of 'are', making 'ingredient' misplaced. For there to be an agreement between the subject and the verb, a plural subject ought to be used. The use of 'use' is also wrong because the idea being portrayed here is one that is a usual occurrence in all similar situations, therefore 'used' should be employed. The correct sentence should read, "*Ingredients used for the stew are...*" This is also a violation of the subject-verb agreement rule.

A male student from form one wrote:

"Put water and salt in the pot and put it on fire for
some minute... and you will use rubber to cover it,
for some minute."

In this sentence, 'some' which connotes an unknown amount has been used with 'minute' which is connotative of 'one minute'. Since there must always be agreement in number, the correct sentence should be, "*Ingredients used for the stew are; oil, onion... Put water and salt in the pot and put it on fire for some minutes*". The same applies to the latter part of the sentence.

A female student from form two wrote:

“My dog always eat the food I don’t finish.”

This construction has a singular subject which is dog. In agreement with the rules of subject/verb agreement, a singular subject demands a singular verb.

The error here is therefore in the singular subject being matched with a plural verb which is ‘eat’. The singular verb is ‘eats’. Therefore, the correct sentence should be, “*My dog always eats the food I don’t finish.*”

Another in form three wrote:

“In my house, Sister Grace and Efia cooks good food very well.”

Here, there is a plural subject, ‘Grace and Efia’. This calls for a plural verb.

However, a singular verb has been used. This results in the subject and verb disagreeing in number. The correct sentence should then read, “*In my house, Sister Grace and Efia cook good food very well.*”

Another student from form two wrote:

“The ingredient used to prepare the food is onion, pepper, tomatoes, rice, fish”

Although the sentence is illustrating a number of ingredients, it is introduced as if it is just one ingredient. Even though the demonstrated sentence above has the subject and the verb following each other, this form of error was common among the students. This is consistent with Oludare’s (2016) assertion that students also have problems with simple constructions in which the subjects and the verbs follow each other.

Another student wrote:

“With this meal, you obtain nutrient like carbohydrate and this nutrient prevent you from certain disease...”

A student in form one wrote:

“I like fufu with groundnut soup because it has the entire nutrient. And first of all, whenever I see someone cooking that food, it give me the nutrient that the body need.”

In this sentence, ‘nutrient’ which is singular, does not fit with ‘all’ which connotes plurality. The plural form ‘nutrients’ should rather be used to correspond with the ‘all’. Secondly, ‘it’ being a singular subject and ‘give’ which is a plural or an infinitive verb do not mix well. The singular verb ‘gives’ which corresponds to ‘it’ should be employed. The same applied to the ‘body’ and ‘need’ at the end of the sentence; ‘body’ is singular, while ‘need’ is plural or infinitive. The constructions then become, “I like fufu with groundnut soup because it has all the nutrients. And first of all, whenever I see someone cooking that food, it gives me the nutrient that the body needs.”

Another student in form three wrote:

“The proteins make me grow faster. The vegetable in the stew give me vitamin, which are very necessary for our bodies.”

This construction also embodies a situation of subject-verb disagreement. A plural subject does not under any condition agree with a singular verb, the same is true for singular subjects and plural verbs. The correct sentence should

be, “The protein helps me grow faster. The vegetables in the stew give me vitamins, which are very necessary for our bodies.”

A female student in form one wrote

“The okro also Provide the body with materials that fight against diseases and keep the body healthy. Banku with okro soup is Cook with many Negetabel such as: peper, onion, Tomatoes, Solt, pam oil, Okro, Garden egg, lettuce, Corn dol and Cassavadol etc.”

The same issue with singular subjects needing singular verbs and plural subjects needing plural verbs has been violated in this narrative. ‘Okro’ which is singular demands a singular verb ‘provides’ and not the plural form given above. However, the issue with the second construction is that ‘cook’ as a present tense verb does not fit with the narration above. This is because, in the usual occurrences, this is how it is usually done and therefore, a reference is made as if the activity has already taken place. So we say ‘it is cooked with’ not ‘it is cook with’. The correct descriptive should then be, “The okro provides the body with materials that fight against diseases and keep the body healthy. Banku with okro soup is cooked with many vegetables such as: pepper, onion, tomatoes, salt, palm oil, okro, garden eggs, lettuce, corn dough and cassava dough, etc.”

Another female student in form three wrote,

“Because it provide nutrient for the body, and the soup is cook with many Vegetable such as garden eggs, tomatos, ginger, peper, onion and some fishes. And the fufu is make with cassava and plantain...”

In this sentence, ‘it’ which is a singular subject does not agree with ‘provide’ which is a plural verb. Also, ‘is’ as mentioned above always takes on a past verb when indicating a usual occurrence. The correct construction will then be, “Because it provides nutrients for the body, and the soup is cooked with many vegetables such as garden eggs, tomatoes, ginger, pepper, onion, and some fishes. And the fufu is made from cassava and plantain...”

In these sentences, the subject and verb do not agree in number, resulting in a subject-verb agreement error. In the essays, there were several instances where the students used singular subject to select a plural verb, or using plural subjects to select a singular verb. Thus most of the students do not know that the identification of the subject is influenced by the positions of both the subject and verbs in a given sentence. This reaffirms the students’ position that they do not know the rules of grammatical concord, supporting Oludare’s (2016) argument that errors associated with subject-verb concord are as a result of students mistakenly pairing singular subjects with plural verbs or vice versa.

Several forms of subject-verb concord errors were found in the essays of the students. Major among them include:

- a. Words separating the subject and verb

Largely, the students had challenges when the subject and the verb were separated by an intervening word or phrase. When certain words or phrases come between the subject and the verb, they are called intervening words or phrases. An intervening phrase is defined by Kiesz (2014) as a word or phrase between the subject and the verb that does not affect their agreement to each other. Thus, verbs must agree with their subjects regardless of intervening phrases. In most of such cases, the student mistakenly makes the verb to agree with the noun in the intervening phrase or clause, instead of the verb agreeing with the subject regardless of the intervening phrases. One of such examples identified from the essays is illustrated:

“One of my friends like to cook with me”

In this sentence, because of the presence of the intervening word ‘friends’, the student matched a singular subject ‘one’ to a plural verb ‘like’. Thus the student was unaware that the intervening word ‘friends’ can be dropped so that the subject-verb relationship is clear.

Since a singular subject must agree with a singular verb, the correct sentence should be structured as..... “One of my friends likes to cook with me”

A male student in form three wrote:

“One of my favourite foods are donuts because
they are round and easy to eat.”

Here, the misunderstanding is in the intervening phrase ‘of my favourite foods’ especially the ‘foods’ that appears just before the noun. This ought not to be so as the real subject is the ‘one’ mentioned at the beginning of the construction. The student is talking about just one of the foods she likes but got carried away by the presence of ‘s’ at the end of ‘foods’ to choose a plural

verb for the subject which is singular. It therefore calls for a singular verb. In accordance with the suggestion on how to overcome this problem, the intervening phrase should be ignored. It then becomes “One ... is donuts because...” Thus, the correct sentence should be, “One of my favourite foods is donuts because they are round and easy to eat.”

Another male student in form three indicated

“My dog always eat the food I don’t finish.”

This construction has a singular subject which is ‘dog’. And in agreement with the rules of subject/verb agreement, a singular subject demands a singular verb. However, there is an error in the sentence emanating from the intervening word ‘always’ which gave the student the impression that he should use a plural verb eat because of the ‘s’ at the end of ‘always’. Clearly, this student has not mastered the identification of a subject in a simple sentence. Adhering to the suggestion above, ‘always’ should be ignored so it becomes “My dog...eats the food...” because the singular of eat is ‘eats’. Therefore, the correct sentence should be, “My dog always eats the food I don’t finish.”

A male student in form one indicated,

“Some foods like banku, fufu, gari and kooko has
some sort of starch in it.”

The subject of this construction is ‘foods’. This is a plural subject and requires a plural verb. However, because of the examples given, the student got confused and chose a noun to match the nearest word which is kooko, forgetting that the midsentence phrase, ‘like banku, fufu, gari and kooko’ are just describing the ‘foods’. The correct sentence should be, “Some foods like banku, fufu, gari and kooko have some sort of starch in them.”

Another in form three wrote:

“My favorite food are rice and egg stew.

Here, though rice and egg stew are connected by ‘and’, they refer to a single idea or a single dish. This is therefore considered as a singular subject and requires a singular verb. The correct sentence is, “My favourite food is rice and egg stew.”

A female student in form one wrote,

“There is nine clean plates in the cupboard.”

This construction has a plural subject which is plates; its plurality is even indicated by the number ‘nine’. It therefore requires a plural verb. The correct construction should be, “There are nine clean plates in the cupboard.”

These examples show that the students have a major lack of understanding of the rule that a singular subject requires a singular verb form regardless of all plural forms in intervening prepositional phrases, appositives and participle phrases. This is consistent with David (2015) that these words or phrases often than not confuse students as they tend to match the verb with the word closest to it. Specifically, the students were unable to locate the real subject, thereby not ignoring the intervening word or phrase resulting in making the verb to disagree with the subject.

- b. The verb in the adjective clause does not match the noun it is referring to

Another instance where the students largely commit subject-verb concord error is where the verb in the adjective clause does not match the noun it is referring to. One of such examples identified from the essays is illustrated:

“The people in my house comes to ask me
for pepper”

In this sentence, the student mixed up ‘people’, a plural subject with ‘comes’, a singular verb. However since a plural subject must agree with a plural verb, the correct sentence should be structured as.....”The people in my house come to ask me for pepper”

A male student in form three wrote,

“It is a very good for Ghanaian especially Akans.
After it bolls you will put a palm nut inside the
water.”

Although the first sentence is referring to a collection of people, a singular subject is used. We know this because a plural noun ‘Akans’ cannot be derived from the singular ‘Ghanaian’. Therefore, a plural noun should be used which is “Ghanaians”. The second sentence makes a similar mistake, in that, palm nut soup is not made from just one palm nut. However, sentence indicates that it is just one palm nut by the use of ‘a’ and the absence of ‘s’ at the end of the ‘nut’. The correct sentence should be, “It is a very good food for Ghanaians especially the Akans. After it boils, you will put the palm nuts inside the water.”

A female student in form three indicated:

“When the noodles starts to seperate from each
other...”

With this construction, ‘noodles’ which is a plural subject and requires plural verb has been matched with the singular verb ‘starts’ creating a disagreement

between the subject and the verb. The correct sentence should then be, “When the noodles start to separate from each other...”

c. The verb comes before the subject

When dealing with sentences in which the verb comes before the subject, it is always important, as with all other sentence forms, to first identify the subject in the sentence. This will guide you in the use of the appropriate verb. Even though the verb precedes the subject, the rule of subject-verb agreement must always apply. The subject and the verb must always agree in number. The syntax of the sentences was also noted to largely contribute to the subject verb errors made by the students, particularly if the verb comes before the subject. One of such examples identified from the essays is illustrated:

“There is many reasons I did not go to the market”

In the above sentence, the student used a plural subject ‘reasons’ with a singular verb ‘is’. However, since a plural subject must match with a plural verb, the correct sentence should have been.....”There are many reasons I did not go to the market”

Another in form one wrote:

“I like it when my rice are very hot.”

The subject in the sentence is singular, ‘rice’ and therefore requires a singular verb. The disagreement stems from ‘rice’ being matched with ‘are’. Though the rice is made up of many single grains, it is counted as a whole meal and not counted per grain. That would have meant saying rice grains but as a dish, it is a single plate. Therefore, the correct sentence is, “I like it when my rice is very hot.”

d. The subject is a list of two or more nouns

A particular type of error identified in the essays of the students is the mismatch of a singular subject with a plural verb especially when the subject is a list of two or more nouns. This is referred to a compound subject. A compound subject is usually joined by 'and' making the compound subject plural in nature.

One of such examples identified from the essays is illustrated:

“Eben, Jonas and Mark takes the food from the kitchen”

In this sentences, the plural subject (Eben, Jonas and Mark) is matched with a singular verb 'takes'. However, since a plural subject must match with a plural verb, the correct sentence is structured as..... “Eben, Jonas and Mark take the food from the kitchen”

Another in form three wrote :

“Peter and Emma likes vegetables in their food.”

Peter and Emma represent a plural subject and therefore require a plural verb. Likes, however is singular and therein lies the disagreement. A plural subject must always agree with the verb that follows it. Therefore, the correct construction is, “Peter and Emma like vegetables in their food.”

A female student in form one wrote:

“In my house, Sister Grace and Efia cooks good food very well.”

Here, there is a plural subject, 'Grace and Efia'. This calls for a plural verb. However, a singular verb has been used. This results in the subject and verb

disagreeing in number. The correct sentence should then read, “In my house, Sister Grace and Efiya cook good food very well.”

Another female student in form one indicated,

“My favorite food are rice and egg stew.”

Here, though rice and egg stew are connected by ‘and’, they refer to a single idea or a single dish. This is therefore considered as a singular subject and requires a singular verb. The correct sentence is, “My favourite food is rice and egg stew.”

A male student in form two wrote:

“Sugar and flour is used for pancake.”

This construction has a compound subject which does not necessarily express the same idea and is therefore plural. Compound subjects are two subjects in the same sentence and they usually take a plural verb. The exception is when the combination is treated as singular in popular usage or the two subjects refer to the same thing or person. Since the subjects above are not treated as singular, they require a plural verb. The use of a singular verb results in disagreements. The correct sentence is “Sugar and flour are used for pancakes.”

A male student in form two wrote,

“Cassava and plantain is used for fufu.

Like the construction above, cassava and plantain are also a compound subject, indicative of their connection by ‘and’ and since they do not represent a composite item, they are considered plural and require a plural verb. Since the plural of ‘is’ is ‘are’, ‘are’ would better fit the construction. The correct sentence should then be, “Cassava and plantain are used for fufu.”

These examples show that the student have a major lack of understanding of the rules governing subject-verb agreement in sentences in which the subject is a list of two or more nouns. Thus, sentences pertaining to compound subjects or subjects that list two or more nouns.

However, when compound subjects are joined by ‘or’, the verbs must agree with the closer element. If one of the two parts of the subject is plural and the other is singular, the verb must agree with the one that is closer to it. However, the students violated this rule in several ways include:

“My mom or sister usually cook the food we eat (Form two)

The confusion with the above statement lies in the use of ‘or’. This does not in any way make the subject plural. The subjects are both singular and the verbs is referring to either one or the other. As mentioned earlier, a singular noun requires a singular subject. The correct sentence then is “My mom or sister usually cooks the food we eat.”

- e. Concord with certain phrases, expressions or words such as: as well as, in addition to, together with, including, along with, amongst others

Certain intervening words that students use to confuse themselves are along with, as well as, in addition to, together with, etc. Wilber (n.d) calls them ‘asides’. He indicates that an aside has no bearing on the subject and therefore should not affect it. However, the students have not understood this rule and thus therefore tend to commit errors in such cases.

An example from the essays is illustrated:

“The onion as well as the tomatoes are cut into pieces”

In this sentence, the student is unaware of the rule that phrases introduced by ‘as well as’ that come between the subject and the verb do not change the number of the verb. This error could be explained by the fact that when ‘as well as’ functions as a conjunction, it often leads to errors of agreement in number between subject and verb. The correct construction should read..... “The onion as well as the tomatoes is cut into pieces.”

In conclusion, although Klu (2014) argued that the subject-verb agreement is an important skill every student must possess, it is evident that most of the students are not obtaining such skills from the pedagogical process. This problem could be explained by the fact that concord problems usually arise as a result of complex constructions in which the subjects and the verbs do not follow each other specifically in a clear way.

Concord within Tenses Error

Another kind of error found in the essays written was the concord within tenses error. The students were not abreast of the rule that when constructing a sentence, it is important to think about when the action in the statement occurred. Most of them were unaware that the tense of a verb in the subordinate clause changes in accordance with the tense of the verb in the main clause. Several forms of concord within tenses errors were identified from the essays:

a. Present events

The present tense describes an action that is taking place at the moment. A few examples that violate this rule are given below

A student in form one wrote:

“As the oil is in the pot, poured your onions into it.”

This is an example of a simple present tense with a mix of the simple past tense. The beginning of the sentence indicates an activity in motion and therefore requires the use of present tense, however, poured is indicative of a past action and therefore does not harmonise with the rest of the construction. The correct sentence should be, “As the oil is in the pot, pour your onions into it.”

Another student in form one indicated:

“Before I begin to cooked, I chopped my onions.”

This is quite a tricky construction as it could either be in the simple present tense or the simple past tense. The obviously wrong verb is ‘cooked’ which will remain ‘cook’ no matter the tense employed. As mentioned earlier, the sentence could go in two ways. The correct sentence can be either “Before I begin to cook, I chop my onions” or “Before I begun to cook, I chopped my onions.”

Another student in form two wrote:

“Banku is my best food in this world because that food is provide energy in my life. That food is also provide nitient, carbohydrates into my life.”

This first construction gives the impression that the narrative is in the simple present tense. However, the student’s attempt to convey this results in her committing a concord blunder. This affirms the students’ position that they are unaware of the grammatical rules. It is evident in the latter statement as well where though the subject is clearly identifiable, the verb that follows it does not agree with it in number. The correct sentence would then be “Banku is my

best food in this world because that food provides energy in my life. That food also provides nutrients like carbohydrates...”

Another student indicated:

“When the water has boil for a while, you can add the rice.”

This construction describes an action that is constant and can happen at any given time. There is therefore the need for it to be expressed in the present perfect tense and not a simple present tense. The present perfect tense is most commonly used to describe actions or situations which started in the past, have continued to the present, and may still be continuing. The presence of ‘has’ indicates that the construction should be in the present perfect tense because it shows that the action has already started. The correct sentence should then be, “When the water has boiled for a while, you can add the rice.”

Another student in form three wrote,

“After you pound the cassava, then the plantain is add to it.”

‘After’ is indicative of an action that has already happened, while ‘add’ is a present tense verb. The two mix very well but not in the presence of ‘is’. The ‘is’ shows a condition that is constant, something that is the norm or the usual occurrence. Therefore, the sentence should be, “After you pound the cassava, then the plantain is added to it.”

A similar error is made by another student in form two

“After eating I wash my hands and mouth before I came to school to learn about something.”

In this construction, ‘came’ does not fit into the sentence because it is a past tense verb though the narrator employs the present tense or everyday tense. The correct sentence would read, “After eating I wash my hands and mouth before I come to school...”

Another girl wrote,

“After that you wash the cassavia with water. and
you will put it insiedi a silver with cover and you
will adding water to it.”

The latter part of this sentence employs a tense that conflicts with the beginning of the sentence. Since future tense has been used from the beginning, the flow of thought should also be in the future tense. Using a present continuous tense throws the whole sentence off balance. The ‘ing’ at the end of ‘adding’ should be done away with for it to be ‘add’. The correct sentence then is, “After you wash the cassava with water, you will put it inside a silver with cover and you will add water to it.” ‘Silver’ in the sentence is a direct use or translation from the mother tongue. Most Ghanaians say ‘silver’ to mean ‘saucepan’ or ‘cooking pot’.

These examples give substance to the assertion that students have great difficulties in using simple present tenses.

b. Past events

The past tense is generally used of actions or events which took place, and were completed in the past. In some of the essays, the students mixed past tenses in the main clauses with present tenses in the subordinate clause. A typical concord within tenses error identified from the essays of the students is:

“When I went to the market, I buy cassava and yam”

'Went' is in past tense, but 'buy' is in present tense. They do not match.

Another student in form one indicated:

“I go to the market yesterday”

Here, the time expression ‘yesterday’ clearly indicates that the action took place in the past, hence the need to use a past tense.

Another student in form one indicated:

“Last week, my banku fall from my bowl and
roll across the floor.”

This is a construction that very obviously happened in the past. We know this because of the opening of the sentence which states ‘last week’ as the time period the event being described took place. It is therefore an error to use verbs like ‘fall’ and ‘roll’ which describe the present. The correct sentence should read, “Last week, my banku fell from my bowl and rolled across the floor.”

Another student in the same class, thus form one indicated:

“When I was young, my mum teach me that salt
dissolve in water.”

This is also an example of an event that happened in the past but is being narrated with a present tense. We know this because she uses ‘when I was young’ which indicates a past time. To fix this error, there is the need to use a past tense verb. The correct sentence should be “When I was young, my mum taught me that salt dissolves in water.”

Another student wrote:

“This morning, when I cook rice, the fire burn it.”

From the use of ‘this morning’, we realise that the construction to follow happened in the past. The tense to employ then is the past tense. Therefore the correct sentence should be, “This morning, when I cooked rice, the fire burnt it.”

Another student in form two wrote:

“During the vacation, I learn everything about cooking jollof.”

Like most of the sentences before this, it begins in one tense and ends in another. The first part of the construction propels you to expect to hear of a deed already done or an activity already completed. However, the ending of the sentence is talking about an action that may as well take place every day (which is the simple present). The correct sentence should contain simple past tense as the vacation has been over for some time. It should read, “During the vacation, I learnt everything about cooking jollof.”

A female student from form 1 wrote:

“Banku and okro stew is my favourite food, because my mothers said when I was a child, and if my mother prepare banku and okro, she givem me some to eat, that’s why I like banku.”

Considering that the student is narrating an issue from the past, with her use of “when I was a child”, the sentence should use the past tense. The word ‘if’ in the sentence is totally misplaced because ‘if’ is a conditional word and it cannot be used here since the issue being narrated happened in the past. The correct sentence would then read, “...when I was a child, and my mother prepared banku and okro, she gave me ...” ‘Mothers’ in “...because my

mothers said” is left untouched because the student may be referring to more than one mother figure. Also, the entire construction is a direct translation from the mother tongue to English.

Another student in form two wrote:

“When I was five years my mother take me to my
grandma to cook, I stay with my grandma for four
years.”

This is also a very typical example of tense mix ups in sentences, termed as concord within tenses error. Although the narrative is in the past, the narrator employs only present tenses. We know the issue happened in the past because of the use of “when I was five years”. It is impossible for a form one student to still be five years old. Therefore, past tenses should be employed. Which will make the correct sentence: “When I was five years, my mother took me to my grandma; I stayed with my grandma for four years.”

A male student in form one indicated

“I like the food because it make me fell well when I
enjoy it”

Another male student in form two indicated:

“It was prepare with cassava, fish, plantain...”

A female student in form two indicated:

“When I came back from the market, I open the bag and start cooking”

A review of the sentences above gives the indication that the students are unaware of the rule that when the tense in the main clause is in the past, one would probably need a past tense in the subordinate clause as well. Thus, the students were unable to use the accurate tense when discussing things that

happened at the same time, causing the tenses not to correspond to the situations. In other words, the students use tenses that refer to the present even when speaking about things that happened in the past. This supports the argument put forth by Omotese (2012) that majority of students' battle with the use of the simple past tenses. However, the errors in this regard could be explained by the fact that the students have not treated clauses, particularly those in form one as at the time of data collection.

c. Future tense

The future tense describes an event that is yet to take place. Typical expressions where this rule was violated by the students are presented as follows:

A student in form one wrote:

“When I close from school today, I have eaten rice
and beans stew.”

This construction is a narrative of an event that has not happened yet. It is yet to happen and requires a future tense. Therefore, putting it as if it has happened creates confusion for the listener because the student has not yet closed school and therefore has not eaten the food. The correct sentence should be, “When I close from school today, I will eat rice and beans stew.”

A female student in form two wrote:

“My mother said that we will cooked banku and
okro soup this Christmas.”

This is also an example of a future tense mixed with the past tense. ‘Will’ is used for the future and indicates something that is yet to happen. And also, seeing as Christmas is yet to come, it is not possible that the banku and okro

soup has been cooked already. Therefore to match it with cooked is a total grammatical disaster. To make meaning, it should be followed by a simple present tense. The correct sentence should then be, “My mother said that we will cook banku and okro soup this Christmas.”

Another student in form three indicated,

“And with the fufu you will need cassava and plantain and when it is cook after that you will pound it.”

This sentence has the same issue as the constructions just before it. Change the ‘cook’ to ‘cooked’ and the sentence is good. Thus, it will read, “And with the fufu, you will need cassava and plantain and when it is cooked...you will pound it.”

A male student in form three indicated

“When you fienshed, you will washed the maet or fish, and put it in to the stew, and added a small magic cube init.”

Like the sentence just before this one, the tenses here are all mixed up as well. Though it is obvious that the descriptive is about a daily or usual occurrence, past tenses have been employed throughout. The narrative is to show how to do something therefore; the tenses to use are the future tense mixed with present tense. The correct sentence will then be, “When you finish, you will wash the meat or fish and put it into the stew and add...”

Another in form one indicated

“By the time you will came it is ready.”

This construction is a very good example of a conflict with tenses in a sentence, termed as concord within tenses error. ‘By the time you will’ is indicative of something that is yet to happen; therefore the future tense should be employed. The correct sentence should read, “By the time you come, it will be ready.”

Like the present and past tense, the use of the future tense among the students is also abysmal.

d. Simple past tense and the past perfect tenses

The past perfect tense, even though it is used for actions that happened in the past, it talks about actions that happened before another action took place. For example, “I had already ordered for the meal before he showed up.” Another form of concord within tenses errors common among the students was the use of simple past tense and the past perfect tenses.

This supports Omotese’s (2012) argument that majority of students are still battling with the use of the simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses. The students tend to not know that the past perfect tense uses the auxiliary verb ‘had’ and the ideal type of any lexical verb.

e. Singular and plural subjects

Errors related to the use of singular and plural subjects associated with the auxiliary verbs ‘has’ and ‘have’ were also common in the essays of the students. Specifically, it was clear that the students did not know what a subject is, be it singular or plural resulting in the interchangeable use of the words ‘has’ and ‘have’. A typical simple past tense and the past perfect tenses’ error identified from the essays of the students is:

“When I went to the market, the woman have left”

Another indicated:

“My mother have the ingredients so I did not buy them”

An assessment of all the sentences above implies that the students seem not to know that the form ‘has; is singular while ‘have’ is plural. It is also clear that the students were unable to correctly identify the subject of the sentence and to determine if the subject is singular or plural. However, concord rules demand that when dealing with singular subjects, ‘has’ should be selected, while ‘have’ is used for plural subjects. This could be explained by Rodrigue (2015) argument that the use of singular versus, plural verbs and correct subject-verb agreement are more abstract concepts and require more detailed explanations.

f. Possibility of two tenses

From the essays, there were certain sentences that had a mix up of tenses and could have been put in either of two ways and still make sense. Some examples are provided below:

A student in form three wrote:

“When my grandma visit, she brought plenty foodstuffs.”

The main clause indicates a usual occurrence but the subordinate clause is indicative of a past occurrence. Considering the fact that the grandma has already brought the foodstuffs, we cannot say that it is an action that is yet to happen. This is a typically ambiguous sentence as it can be in the simple present tense or the simple past tense and make meaning on both counts. Therefore the conclusion is that it can be in both tenses. The correct sentence should be, “When my grandma visits, she brings plenty foodstuffs.” Or “When my grandma visited, she brought plenty foodstuffs.” The first sentence shows

what happens anytime the grandmother is around for a visit and the second shows what happened when the grandmother was around for a visit.

Another student in form two indicated:

“When my sister cooked, I stay in the kitchen to watch her.”

Like the sentences before this, this construction can make sense either in the simple past tense or the simple perfect tense. It does not however make any sense in the mix-up tense it has been constructed in. Meaning can be derived from it reading, “When my sister cooked, I stayed in the kitchen to watch her” or “When my sister cooks, I stay in the kitchen to watch her.” The first construction shows what happened the time the sister cooked, while the second sentence shows what happens any time the sister cooks.

Another girl student in form two indicated,

“If one day I din’t get fufu to eat I will be sick.”

This sentence is in direct violation of the concord within tenses rule. There is no harmony in the tenses. Past tense and future tense are all mixed up in one. The sentence is clearly a conditional one. The latter part depends on the beginning and therefore there is the need for uniformity in tenses. Also, the ‘one day’ is an indication of a usual occurrence. Therefore, the correct sentence should be, “If I don’t get fufu to eat, I will be sick.” Or “If I didn’t get fufu to eat, I got sick.”

Another example from a form one student is presented:

“Banku is my favourite food when I ate banku in the morining is good for me that why I like banku and stew.”

This sentence also exemplifies a mix-up of tenses, in this case, the past and present. The past tense verb 'are' cannot be followed by the present verb 'is'. Therefore, the correct sentence can either be, "...when I ate banku in the morning, it was good for me..." or "...when I eat banku in the morning, it is good for me..." The tenses must always correspond with one another.

g. Conditional/ constant situations

These examples contain sentences that express a condition or a constant issue or occurrence (something that is known to happen in a given situation). In relation to the above, a girl from form one wrote,

“If I don’t eat banku and okro soup one day and I eat different type of food I don’t feel that I have even eating.”

With this sentence, the student is trying to indicate what usually happens to her anytime she does not eat banku and okro soup. The tense to employ then is the everyday tense or present tense and not the present continuous as indicated in the latter part of the construction. The correct sentence should be, “If I don’t eat banku and okro soup even for a day and I eat a different type of food, I don’t feel that I have even eaten.” ‘Eaten’ at the end of the sentence is a past participle but fits because it is the end result of the action, which is eating or to eat.

A male student in form one indicated.

“The food is been prepared with rice, oil and egg.
And this is how it is been prepared. After that pour water in it and pour a salt in it.”

The tense employed in this narrative is not appropriate because, as mentioned earlier, the narrator is describing how to go about preparing the food. The food has not already been prepared. Therefore, the use of 'been' which is indicative of the past does not fit. The correct sentence should read, "The food is prepared with rice, oil and egg. And this is how it is prepared. After that, pour water into it and add salt to it."

Another student but in form three wrote:

"...and the stew you will grand tomatoes and peper
and you will replace it on the rice, the food is serve
for me."

Like the construction above, in describing or narrating issues that occur on a regular basis, the verb 'is' is usually followed by a past tense verb and not a present tense verb. This creates disharmony between the tenses. The correct sentence should be, "...and since there is no stew, you will grind tomatoes and pepper and put on the rice. The food is served for me."

Another example from a form two student:

"The okro stew is been prepared withi okro, onion,
Salt, pepper, water, red oil, onga."

This is also an example of an error of concord within tenses. The error made by the student is the same as the ones in the constructions just before this one. Therefore, tackling it the same way, the correct sentence should read like, "The okro stew prepared with okro, onion, salt, pepper, water, red oil, and onga."

Another example,

“The Banku is prepare this way. The okro is also prepare in this way. After the thirty minutes your okro stew is prepare.

Clearly, the constructions above have a tense problem, in this case; past tense problem. The student is unable to convert the verb in the sentence to the past. A past tense is needed in this scene though the narrative is one of a usual occurrence. Hence, all the ‘prepare’ should be ‘prepared’. The sentence would then be, “The banku is prepared this way. The okro is also prepared in this way. After the thirty minutes, your okro stew is prepared.”

Another student indicated,

“Every day, I will eat banku and okro stew. When I do not eat banku than I havent eat.”

This construction is intended to narrate an everyday occurrence. However, the future tense and a distortion of the present tense have been employed. The correct tense to use is the everyday tense. The correct sentence should then be, “Every day, I eat banku and okro stew. When I do not eat banku, then I have not eaten.”

Another example from a from a form one student is presented:

after you have added onion you will add you Beef
and you will live it to paparad it for sometime.

The word ‘paparad’ in the construction above is ‘prepared’ misspelt. Prepared is a past tense and does not fit with the future tense employed in the descriptive connoted by the word ‘will’. The correct sentence should then be, “...after you have added onion, you will add your beef and you will leave it to

cook for some time.” The use of prepare in the narrative is totally incorrect anyway.

According to Bakuuro (2015), when a number of verbs (two or more) are found in a construction, they should agree in terms of tense (present or past). He indicates that where there is tense disagreement, the reader or listener is confused about time in an expression. This type of error was prevalent in the essays of the students and results in not knowing whether the actions being conveyed are in the present or past. Though a point of time past element (e.g. yesterday, in those days, that morning, etc.) must always take on past tense verbs only, from the analysis of the students’ essays, this was largely violated.

Research Question 3: What are the instructional and pedagogical methods English language teachers in the Metropolis use to teach grammatical concord?

This section examined the teachers’ methods of teaching grammatical rules and principles in their teaching process and the use of instructional materials and techniques in the pedagogical process. This section was largely explored using classroom observations. The following major issues were observed:

a. The non-availability of teaching and learning materials (TLMs)

For all the schools studied, none of the teachers used TLMs in the teaching of grammar. This was expected since there are no specific TLMs as noted. However, in some few classes, there were flash cards or word cards. These cards, however, were unable to provide greater focus and allow students to understand the structural forms used to convey grammatical constructions.

b. Inappropriate presentations of grammatical structures

The teachers did not point out clearly the different sentence structures and patterns in their pedagogical process. The pedagogical process did not depict grammar as a product, process, and a skill. In other words, the teachers were unable to use a teaching approach that helps the students to notice and structure their knowledge of the language system. Also, in most cases, they did not engage the students by allowing them to formulate their own sentences in contexts over which they have considerable control.

c. Pedagogical treatment of grammatical structures

The study observed full grammar lessons from the start to the end during the classroom observation. Two main methods were noted to be used by teachers in the teaching of grammatical concord, that is the inductive approach and the deductive approach. A deductive approach to teaching language starts by giving learners rules, then examples, then practice. It is a teacher-centred approach to presenting new content. This is compared with an inductive approach, which starts with examples and asks learners to find rules, and hence is more learner-centred. The deductive approach may be suitable with lower level learners who need a clear base from which to begin with a new language item, or with learners who are accustomed to a more traditional approach and so who lack the training to find rules themselves. Some teachers used the deductive approach, in this approach, the discovery process is a more memorable one and motivates the students better than the inductive approach does. In this method, the teachers gave the students the grammatical rules first and followed by the examples. Thus students receive knowledge of grammatical rules without it being explicitly presented.

Other teachers also used the inductive approach by asking students to find out the grammatical rules themselves. In this case, teachers gave the examples first and asked students to find out the rules that have been violated.

Norris and Ortega (2000) found explicit teaching to be slightly better than implicit teaching, but it appears that combining both an explicit and an implicit focus may achieve the best results. This is explained by Andrews (2007) argument that in explicit instruction, a proactively selected form is intensely taught- -either by the presentation of the rules and then the giving of examples (deductive reasoning) or by giving examples and then eliciting the rules (inductive reasoning) from the students

Aside the inductive and the deductive methods used, the teachers also encouraged the students to refer to their L1 during the lessons because, once again through experience, they believe it can speed up the learning process. In addition, a few use grammatical terminology because it gave explicit instructions in points where they thought it would not confuse the students.

The pedagogical treatment of grammatical structures by the teachers has not been too effective due to their inability to employ different techniques derived from various teaching models rather than the use of a single fixed method. However, Akinbode (2009) posits that the English teacher is expected to be dynamic in his/her instructional techniques.

d. Use of typically invented examples

In instances where the teachers tried to engage the students, they used simple and unrealistic examples. This explains why the students were unable to relate to real linguistic settings and almost impossible to apply to their own language production in the essays produced. This supports Quagie's (2014)

assertion that a poor pedagogical approach to teaching the language has brought the problem of the use of grammatical concord.

It is therefore obvious that some of the problems encountered by students in the use of grammatical concord arise mainly from faulty instructional materials and the pedagogical shortcomings of the teacher. This supports Klu (2014) that students' plight with the use of grammatical concord might be due to poor teaching pedagogies employed by some teachers.

Regarding the students, it was observed during classroom instructions that they participated less by hardly speaking in the classroom. This was as a result of the low confidence level which further explains the lack of fluency among the students

Research Question 4: What are the underlying factors influencing the use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Metropolis?

This section explores the underlying factors influencing the wrong use of grammatical concord among the students in the Metropolis. Data for this section was gathered using interviews with teachers and students as well as content analysis of essays and assignments written by students. Three intervening factors were identified (parental factors, teacher factors and student factors)

Teacher factors

It seems that although English language is governed by rules, It was observed during the study that teachers have inadequately used the appropriate structural and pedagogical techniques to teach the subject. One of the major factors identified from the teachers was their low knowledge level regarding

grammatical concord. The teachers attributed this to limited capacity building programmes organized for them. One of the teachers explained:

“Since we left college, I have not had any training in English language not to even talk about grammatical concord”

In responding to the competence level of the teachers, one of the students complained:

“My teacher sometimes get me confuse. I try to study some of the laws in terms of when to use the past and present tense, but she sometimes mix them up, I think. I like Sir John, he is able to explain the rules to me very well.”

This supports Klu’s (2014) assertion that some English language teachers are not abreast with the rules, hence teaching them accurately to the students is a challenge. It is therefore clear that the pedagogical skills and techniques used to teach grammatical concords are inadequate and inefficient. This explains why the students are unable to accurately integrate the rules into their writings. It also supports Quagie’s (2014) argument that grammatical concord still bothers students because some teachers do not possess the requisite qualification to teach the language. The findings are also consistent with Klu (2006) that some teachers of the English subject, especially those at the Junior High Schools (JHS) do not have the proper training to teach the language as would meet the requirements of students.

Unlike other areas of English language, it was discovered that many teachers have a rather escapist attitude towards the teaching of English

grammar since some perceive it as a difficult subject to teach. One of the teachers affirmed:

“Teaching grammar, I think is one of the most difficult topics to handle in an English class. Some of the concepts are just too complex to comprehend to the level of the students”

This attitude is expected and explained by the little knowledge and competence in the teaching of grammar as argued in the preceding paragraphs.

There are limited opportunities like English Clubs in the schools to motivate students towards the use of grammatical concord. In other words, students are not motivated to improve their speaking.

Student factors

This section explores the student factors that influence their inability to accurately use grammatical concord. The major factors from the perspective of the students which was observed during the study are low confidence level, poor attitude towards the subject, lack of motivation to speak the English language regularly and little value attached to the language.

The lack of self-confidence on the part of the students has an effect on their attitude towards the use of concord. One of them affirmed:

“I does not want to speak English because I am not 100 percent. I think I always makes mistakes”

Similar responses were noted from the teachers regarding the confidence level of the students. One of the Teachers indicated:

“I know that my students need to speak more English in their classes. But the problem is that they just haven’t got the confidence to speak in English.

I think the problem with them is because they are not confident in what they say since they make many mistakes”

The result above concurs with Lihua (2013) that due to the culture of losing face if mistakes are made during communication, many students shied away from communicating in the English language. This translates to a loss of interest in the use of concord.

It was also discovered that students do not place much value on the English language because they do not see an immediate profession attached to it.

Parental factors

Another major factor identified as influencing the wrongful use of grammatical concord is parental involvement in students’ use of the English language. Students with parents of higher educational backgrounds, seem to perform somehow better than those with parents with lower or no educational backgrounds. One of the students whose father is a teacher affirmed:

“My father always speaks English with me at home. So am forced to reply him. Though am not confident, he correct me when am wrong”

However, largely, parents do not seem to have much attention for their students in doing English assignments.

Another major parental factor that influences the wrongful use of grammatical concord is the Mother tongue. Several students complained of getting confused between the mother tongue and the English language in most cases. This is expected considering Akinbode’s (2006) observation that when

students do not know the rules of the second language, they tend to apply the rules of their mother tongue. As a result, they engage in literal translations due to their lack of knowledge on the rules of the grammatical concord.

Research Question 5: What semantic problems are created when students violate the rules of grammatical concord?

This section examines the semantic problems associated with the use of grammatical concord among the students. Specifically, the section examined the meaningfulness of the expressions made by the students in the essays and their conversations during the interviews, and the semantic effects created by violating the rules of grammatical concord in English language.

Several semantic effects were identified from the essays of the students and their conversation in the interviews. The major of such effects is the making of meaningless expressions. In most of the essays with grammatical concords, it was difficult to determine the meanings. For some, although the sentences were syntactically correct, they were semantically wrong; while for some, they were both syntactically and semantically incorrect. However, the syntactic theory requires that the syntactic component of a grammar specifies for each sentence, a deep structure that determines its semantic interpretations (Miyao, 2006).

Extracts From Essays Indicating Semantic/Syntactic Accuracies and Inaccuracies

In English, a construction like "I no like!" is syntactically or grammatically incorrect but is not semantically incorrect, because it does imbue some meaning. Some typical examples of syntactically wrong but semantically correct expressions extracted from the essays are as follows:

Extract one is from a boy in form one: “It is give me energy.”

This sentence is syntactically wrong but semantically correct. It is syntactically wrong because it violates grammatical rules but the reader can make meaning out of it. When the ‘is’ is removed and the verb ‘give’ is made to agree with the subject ‘it’, then the syntactical aspect of the sentence is sorted. The correct sentence would then read, “*It gives me energy.*”

Extract two is from a boy in form one: “I like it when my rice are very hot.”

Like the sentence above, this one is also syntactically wrong due to its violation of grammatical rules. ‘Rice’ though it contains many individual grains is considered as representing a single dish and therefore is singular in nature and does not agree with the verb ‘are’. However, meaning can still be made out of the sentence and therefore, it is semantically correct. For the construction to be both syntactically and semantically correct, it needs to be, “*I like it when my rice is very hot.*”

Extract three is from a girl in form two: “Peter and Emma likes vegetables in their food.”

In this construction, Peter and Emma represent a plural subject and therefore require a plural verb. Likes, however is singular and therein lies the disagreement. A plural subject must always agree with the verb that follows it. By matching the plural subject with a singular verb, the student is violating the grammatical rules, causing the sentence to be syntactically incorrect even though meaning can be made out of it. Thus, the sentence is syntactically wrong but semantically correct. Therefore, the correct construction is, “*Peter and Emma like vegetables in their food.*”

Extract four is from a boy in form three: “I is going to the market yesterday”

In this sentence, although the student has used incorrect grammar, the meaning can still be deduced but with some level of challenge.

Extract five is from a student in form three: ‘I would go to the market and bye fish;

Here the error is committed because ‘buy’ has the same pronunciation with ‘bye’, but different meanings.

Syntactically Correct But Semantically Wrong Expressions

Some typical examples of syntactically correct but semantically wrong expressions extracted from the essays of the students are as follows:

Extract six is from a student in form two: And one day my mother said we should cook rice and I said I will eat the rice and my mother said if I will eat the rice I should go to prepare my own food to eat.”

This sentence is syntactically correct or correct grammatically but is semantically wrong. This is because no clear meaning can be made out of the construction. Because if the mother of the students wanted them to cook rice, why would she ask the student to go and prepare her own food when she has clearly indicated that she would eat the rice. Meaning can be made out of this sentence if we consider that there must have been a negation somewhere that was omitted from the writing. For example, if the student told her mother that she would not eat rice, then her mother telling her to go and cook her own food would make more sense. In that light, a meaningful sentence would be, “*And one day, my mother said we should cook rice but I said I will not eat*

rice. Then my mother said that if I will not eat the rice, I should go and prepare my own food to eat.”

Syntactically and Semantically Incorrect Expressions

Some typical examples of syntactically and semantically incorrect expressions were also extracted from the essays of the students. In this case, there were sentences that are neither grammatically correct nor make any meaning to the reader.

A girl in form two wrote:

“You put your silvar into a fire and you take banku into silvar. After a put my silvar in a fire, I take it down. So, I will end my Essay here so that the is up.”

With the first sentence, the wrong proposition has been used giving a totally different meaning to the sentence. ‘Into a fire’ is connotative of smelting while ‘onto a fire’ is more to do with cooking. Since the descriptive is on food, ‘into’ is ruled out. The same goes for the second sentence. The correct form would now read, “*You put your saucepan on the fire... After I put my saucepan on the fire...*” With the last construction, one cannot even begin to guess what the student is hinting at to be able to correct the sentence.

Another in form three wrote,

“You will set a fire and put it on it and stir it well and make sure there is no anything inside.”

The omissions in this sentence make it difficult to understand. This is compounded by the fact that the stream of thought does not follow or flow sequentially. For example, one cannot ‘put it’ on a fire when there is nothing

to put on the fire. And even if ‘it’ refers to a saucepan, nobody stirs an empty saucepan, and especially just to ensure that it has nothing in it. The correct sentence may read something like, “*Light a fire and put your saucepan on it, and make sure there is nothing inside it.*” This may not even be what the student is hinting at but it is the best that can be gotten from the construction above.

Another student in form two wrote,

“... and miss with tomato the groundnut after that you will put it on fire and when oil comes on it, you will race it down and put the pot on the fire... and live it on the fire for some minute.”

“...and mix the tomato and the groundnut. After that, you will put it on fire and when oil appears on the surface, you will...and put the pot on the fire...and leave it on the fire for some minutes.” I have no idea what ‘you will race it down’ means that is why I did not attempt to correct it.

Another girl wrote,

“When it is ready you will tear it. You will take your pot on the fire after that you will take your pam oil in the pot after that you will take your onion in the pam oil and you will add meat in it.”

The first sentence is a typical example of a direct translation from the mother tongue. ‘Tear it’ refers to how the banku is dished out. A whole lot of other things are wrong with the rest of the sentences too. The constructions could best be put as, “When it is ready, you dish it out. You will then put your pot on

the fire after which you will put your palm oil into the pot. After that, you will put your onion in the palm oil and you will add meat to it.”

Another student in form one wrote,

“The salt in the food give me my mind grow.”

This sentence makes no direct meaning until one has had time to think through it. The guess is that the student is trying to say that, “The salt in the food helps my mind to grow”.

Another student wrote:

“It is my best favourit I love It. We Sell It has
Companying food.”

In this sentence, very little meaning can be derived. The best attempt would be to say that the student is trying to indicate, “It is my favourite and I love it. We sell it at the company.”

Again, another student but in form one wrote:

“I like rics and beans it gives energy and grow.”

With this construction, one cannot tell whether the narrator is saying that the food gives energy to her and helps her grow or whether the food gives energy and grows. An attempt to save the sentence may be to make it, “*I like rice and beans; it gives me energy to grow.*”

Another wrote,

“...so my mother told me that I will miss the tomato
paste with the groundnut and add water to it afte
that I put it on fire boil for some minute, I will some
oil on its face. I stew the fishs with the onion and

with water after that you live it on the fire. You with
pile your cassava.”

Incorrect words have been used in certain places, obstructing the meaning the student is trying to pass across. The lack of punctuations has also added to this problem. An attempt to save the sentence may result in, “...so my mother told me that I should mix the tomato paste with the groundnut paste and add water to it. After that, I should put it on fire to boil for some minutes; I will see oil on the surface after a while. I steam the fish with onion and water and after that leave it on the fire. You will then peel your cassava.”

Another student wrote:

“The reason why I like fufu is that it is sweet but is not bad
for me I and my sister like fufu so much. But my mother
Dont like fufu but me die I like eating fufu every Day.
When I am Cooking I make sure the food is taste and I
make sure that it is sweet and It means that I like fufu with
light soup is because is not a bad food us for me I like
eating fufu ever present day. Afternoon and evening”

Though the narrative above is talking about food, it talks about so many other things which are not directly related to food preparation and the mix-ups make understanding it quite a challenge. The best we can get from it may be, “The reason why I like fufu is that it is sweet and not bad for me. My sister and I like fufu very much but my mother doesn’t like fufu. I like to eat fufu every day. When I cook, I make sure that the food is tasty. I like fufu with light soup because it is not a bad food and I can eat it at any time of the day; afternoon and evening.”

Another student, but in form one wrote:

“You wuold set Fire on your cool pot or a stove.”

The essay was to write about their favourite foods and not how to set fire to anything so it can only be deduced that this student is trying to indicate the first stage of setting a fire before cooking. The correct sentence should then read, “You could use coal pot or a stove to provide the fire you will need for cooking.”

Another example from a form two student:

“The food I Like best Rice and stem. Prepare first you put water on firewood and a short Salt in it. Prepare second you put oil on the firewood and cut the tomatoe put in stere it. The sent is very Good.”

Considering the fact that rice and stew is not a typical meal in Ghana, the ‘stem’ may just be ‘stew’ misspelt. There are also issues with punctuation which totally jumbles the stream of thoughts. In attempting to save the narrative, the sentence takes the form “The food I like best is rice and stew. To prepare it, firstly put water on fire and add a little salt to it. Secondly, put oil on fire and cut the tomatoes into it and stir. The aroma is very good.”

Another student wrote ,

“On my birthday, my mother bakes cake for me and add icing to it and writing my name nicely on it. But this years, she didn’t baked a cake for my birthday. It has make me sad.”

Making meaning out of this sentence is a bit difficult due to the fact that all kinds of tenses have been thrown together into it. Taking the first sentence, its

beginning gives the impression that it may be a usual occurrence. This is compounded with a jumble of subject verb disagreements. The second sentence is also a bit of the same but with mixed up tenses which are neither here nor there. And the last sentence seems to complete the confusion started by the previous constructions. The best to be done here is to move all the constructions to one tense that will make meaning clear. A good attempt would be, “On my birthdays, my mother bakes cake for me and adds icing to it and writes my name nicely on it. But this year, she didn’t bake a cake for my birthday. It has made me sad.”

Other examples with semantic problems:

“When I come to start the banku I put water in the selver in I put the water in the fair and maize doe cassava doe and you mix it if you finsih the banku be Come kenya this if you finsih than you take your rubber to cover the banku.” (form two)

“And it is perpare us one you set your gasfire imingerate I freshed seting my gasfire, I put my pot on the gas, and fiesh water into the pot and cover it to heated, for a minete. For a mintes time it allready.” (form two)

“You will put the casaave and plantain on fire than you will palm it you have filish.” (form one)

“My Favour food is rice and egg stew. It is deliciovs food and it has Prctein in it Prepare in it. When you want to prcePare it you will read your

rice and ingredient use for the stew are oil onen, PePer, tomatones, onga,.” (form two)

“Firstly, you will set on your fire and after that you will wash your pot that you are going to use it.”

“Banku is a good food, it gives me strong and energy.”

“The reason where I like this food is that it give my strenght and energy and heat To provide promotes growth pratects and regulats body processes. and growth repair of wom-out tissues.”

“When I come to start the banku I put water in the selver in I put the water in the fair and maize doe cassava doe and you mix it if you finsih the banku be Come kenya this if you finsih than you take your rubber to cover the banku.”

These trends were also confirmed by the teachers who participated in the interviews. All of them affirmed that the expressions made by the students are sometimes difficult to make meaning out of. One of the teachers narrated her experience:

“I remember one time because of the lack of meaning in a students ‘expression and the difficulty in getting the meaning, I had to show the expression to other teachers. Ten teachers read it and could not make the meaning out. I had to invite the student to tell me what he was trying to say.”

These deductions are consistent with Aloysius et al. (1997) that reasons to meaning in English Language can be impeded when students violate the rule of concord within tenses.

It was further noted that for some of the students, the inaccurate use of grammatical concord results in a withdrawal behaviour where students do not want to have conversations with such students.

In responding to the specific ways in which the inaccurate use of grammatical concord affects the meaning students try to communicate, it was noted that the inaccurate use of grammatical concord drastically affects the meanings passed across in the conversations of the students. One respondent indicated:

“It does not encourage others to have conversation
with me”

However, it was discovered from the study that homophones, homonyms and homographs also account for the inaccurate use of grammatical concord.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the results of the qualitative analysis. The analysis were guided by the research questions formulated for the study. From the study several semantic effects were identified from the essays and were discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings from the study as well as the conclusions, recommendations, and directions for future research. The chapter focuses on the implications of the findings from the study for policy making.

Summary

The study explored students' use of grammatical concord and the associated semantic effects. In all, 18 students and six teachers participated in the study. Data collection for the study was done using interviews, observations and content analysis of the essays of students. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis.

The use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the metropolis was the focus of the first research question. The following key findings emerged:

- a. The general performance of students in the English language has been abysmal.
- b. There were gross violations of the rules governing the use of grammatical concord.
- c. The students had poor understanding of grammatical concord and demonstrated low confidence in the appropriate use of concord.

d. The female students seem to have better performance in the use of grammar than the males.

Research question two investigated the types of grammatical concord errors most common among the students. The findings include:

a. Subject-verb concord error and concord within tenses error were the major types of grammatical concord errors committed by the students.

b. Subject-verb concord error was the commonest error among the students as they mistakenly paired singular subjects with plural verbs and vice versa.

c. The students had much challenges in constructing sentences where the subject and verb are separated by an intervening word, or where the verb comes before the subject.

d. Errors related to the use of singular and plural subjects associated with the auxiliary verbs 'has' and 'have' were also common in the essays of the students. e. Major concord within tenses errors that the students committed were related to past tenses, past perfect tenses and simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses.

The factors influencing the wrongful use of grammatical concord among the students were evaluated in the third research question with the following findings:

a. Three intervening factors; parental, teacher and student causal factors were the major factors influencing the wrong use of grammatical concord among the students.

b. Major among the teacher factors were limited pedagogical knowledge in grammatical concord, and poor attitude towards grammar.

c. The major student casual factors were low confidence level, poor attitude towards grammar, lack of motivation to regularly speak English and little value attached to the English language.

d. The mother tongue was the most influential parental casual factor affecting the appropriate use of grammatical concord.

Instructional and pedagogical methods used by English teachers to teach grammatical concord was the focus of research question four. The major findings are:

a. The pedagogical treatment of grammatical structures by the teachers has been ineffective.

b. There were no relevant teaching and learning materials (TLMs) for the teaching of grammatical concord among the teachers.

c. There was limited use of simulations of real-life situations or scales by the teachers in the teaching of grammatical concord.

d. The teachers used inappropriate structural and pedagogical techniques to teach grammar.

The semantic problems associated with the wrongful use of grammatical concord among the students were studied in the last research question. The findings are:

a. Several semantic effects were identified from the essays and conversations of the students.

b. In some cases, although the sentences of the students were syntactically correct, they were semantically wrong while in some

cases, the sentences were both syntactically and semantically incorrect.

- c. The inappropriate use of grammatical concord has resulted in the students making expressions that are difficult to make meanings out of.

Conclusions

Based on the findings the following conclusions were made

1. Several violations of the rules of grammatical concord were committed by the students, resulting in their inability to accurately use concord in their communications.
2. Students had very poor knowledge of general basic grammar, especially in the area of agreement (concord). Thus, they did not have a good grasp of basic grammar such as tenses and concord, making most of the scripts were quite not readable.
3. Tenses used were particularly chaotic. Subject-verb error and concord within tenses error were the major grammatical concord errors committed by the students. Thus, the habit of employing the past in the main clause and the present in the subordinate clause runs through the essays of most of the students.
4. It is also clear that the students were unable to correctly identify the subject of the sentence and to determine if the subject is singular or plural.
5. There was also a mismatch of a singular subject with a plural verb especially when the subject is a list of two or more nouns. In other words, the student had a major lack of understanding of the rules

governing subject-verb agreement in sentences in which the subject is a list of two or more nouns, particularly those pertaining to compound subjects.

6. The appropriate use of grammatical concord was found to be contingent on a myriad of factors, and the teaching of grammatical concord cannot rely on incidental learning, but a concerted effort on the part of the teacher, students and their parents. The teacher causal factor seems to be the most significant factor affecting the attitude of the students towards the study of grammatical concord. The students had a relatively negative attitude towards the study of grammar; they lacked self-confidence and had low interest and desire in grammar.
7. The study also concluded that the pedagogical treatment of grammatical structures by the teachers has been ineffective. There was a limited use of scales and simulations of real-life situations during grammar lessons due to the absence of appropriate TLMs. Hence, in order to prevent grammar mistakes, different grammatical pedagogies are recommended.
8. The inappropriate use of grammatical concord among the students has resulted in several semantic effects including expressions that are difficult to make meaning out of. Thus, students' expressions were generally very poor; in fact, some of the scripts were incomprehensible. Most of the students simply lacked the ability to construct simple readable sentences. Those who managed to write somewhat readable sentences had grammatical and expressional errors to contend with.

Recommendations

Based on the key findings emerging from the study, the following recommendations are made for policy formulation and direction for further research.

Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, Metropolitan Director of Education Capacity building programmes for English Language teachers on grammar

To enhance the teaching capacity and competence of English Language teachers in the metropolis, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service and the Metropolitan Director of Education are advised to frequently organise workshops, seminars and refresher courses that will help enhance the professional skills and knowledge of the teachers.

The content of such training programmes should focus on the use of proper grammatical pedagogical techniques for teaching grammar and the use of simulation or scales in grammar lesson preparations. This is essential to enhance the competence and effectiveness of the teachers in influencing a positive attitude towards the study of grammar.

Review of grammar instruction and assessment methodology

There is the need for the Curriculum Division of the Ghana Education Service to enhance pupils' syntactic and semantic capabilities by teachers' teaching from a hands-on perspective. In this regard, the Curriculum Division of GES should perform a comprehensive review and assessment of the curriculum delivery standards in grammar. This would help identify the gaps

that need to be addressed to make the delivering of grammar in schools much more interesting to students.

Incentive schemes for English Language teachers

The Ministry of Education together with the Ghana Education Service should design effective motivational schemes that could motivate teachers who have helped in enhancing the grammatical performance of students. The release of the BECE results could be used as the basis for determining qualified teachers for such motivational schemes. However, it is important that an equitable selection methodology is used in this regard to ensure that the selection process is devoid of any favouritism and procedural injustice.

Review of professional qualifications of English Language Teachers

As noted from the study, there are indications that there could be non-professional teachers (teachers without specialisation in the English Language from college or university) teaching English Language at the basic school level. The Metropolitan Director of Education should, as a matter of agency, send out a circular to the heads of basic schools in the metropolis, instructing them to ensure that only English Language Specialists are made to teach the English Language.

Provision of TLMS

Largely, the teaching of grammar was done in the abstract. The Ghana Education Service is encouraged to procure flashcards, posters or graphic organisers for schools. This would help teachers to provide something students can lean on during grammar lessons, since they could feel more confident if they have pictures they can follow along.

English Language Teachers and Ghana Association of English Teachers Building students' confidence in English Language

It is important that teachers make students understand that confidence is not about accuracy, but rather, attitude that helps them to get their point across, no matter the mistakes they make. To enhance students' confidence level in grammar, teachers should not correct them as much in free-speaking activities. Though it is essential to correct students' mistakes, teachers should not interrupt them during performance activities, as this reduces their confidence level.

Teachers should also praise students for constructing good sentences and should try to teach in context, since it gives students a background to lean on.

Transformation of instructional approach to the teaching of grammatical concord

Teachers are advised to use a more creative and simulation approach to the teaching of grammatical concord. This can be done by using grammatical concord teaching aid such as scales and simulations. However, the Ghana Education Service must provide adequate teaching/learning materials and equipment to ensure that grammar is not taught in the abstract.

Teachers are also encouraged to use the deductive approach to the teaching of grammar more than the inductive approach. With the deductive approach, teachers should get their students involved with new grammar topics by using leading questions and thereafter, introducing the topic of the day.

Networking of English Teachers

The Ghana Association of English Teachers is also encouraged to form a strong network of its members. This network could be used to exchange new instructional and grammatical pedagogical methodologies and ideas among members. Such exchange of information could be done using social media. This is essential in updating its members on new trends and effective ways of teaching grammar.

Parents

Parental involvement

Parents have the wonderful opportunity and responsibility for nurturing their children. This nurturing process takes place in several areas of development: physical, emotional, and intellectual. In this regard, parents are encouraged to become more involved in the academic activities of their children by becoming more involved in their children's grammatical assignments. This can be done by taking them to community libraries and also helping them with their English assignments. They can also purchase good novels for them to read; especially those with questions that challenge their ability to construct good sentences.

Engaging children in the English Language

Parents are also encouraged to supervise the communication of their children at home regarding the appropriateness of the grammar they use. This can be done by developing the habit of encouraging them to speak English with their peers and also with them at home if they are fluent in the English language. This will constantly help develop a positive attitude towards learning of the language.

Students

Constant practice

The mastering of grammar requires constant practice, hence students should be able to constantly practice lessons taught in class. This can be done by engaging in conversations with their friends. However, students should refrain from making fun of their colleagues when they make grammatical concord errors during conversations. This will eliminate their fears of errors and increase their confidence level.

Suggestions for Further Research

A further research should be conducted with parents of JHS students to explore their perspectives regarding the support services provided at home to promote the performance of the students in English language, particularly grammar.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore the semantic problems associated with the wrong use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. You are kindly requested to volunteer information by responding to this interview. You are however assured that information provided to complete this interview would be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender of respondent a. Male b. Female
2. Form . a. Form One b. Form Two c. Form Three
3. Age of student?
4. What was your highest scored mark in English exams taken at the JHS level?
.....

PART B: USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AMONG JHS STUDENTS IN THE METROPOLIS

5. What is your understanding of grammatical concord?
.....

6. How would you rate your confidence level in the use of grammatical concord?
.....

7. How would you describe your accurate use of grammatical concord?
.....

8. How would you describe your level of awareness of the rules and structures governing the use of grammatical concord?
.....

SECTION C: TYPES OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD ERRORS MOST COMMON AMONG THE STUDENTS

9. How often do you commit grammatical concord errors?
.....

10. What type (s) of grammatical concord errors do you usually commit?
.....
.....

11. What specific grammatical concord errors do you make with regards to:
a. Describing past events?.....
b. The use of singular and plural subjects?.....
c. The use of simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses

PART D: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WRONG USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AMONG JHS STUDENTS IN THE METROPOLIS

12. What factors influence your inability to accurately use grammatical concord?
.....

13. In what specific ways can the factors affecting your inaccurate use of grammatical concord be addressed?

PART E: SEMANTIC PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WRONG USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AMONG JHS STUDENTS IN THE METROPOLIS

14. Generally, how meaningful are your expressions?.....

15. In what specific ways has the inaccurate use of grammatical concord affected the meaning you put across in your conversations?.....

PART F: INSTRUCTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL METHODS USED BY TEACHERS TO INTEGRATE THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD

16. How does your teacher teach grammatical concord to you?.....

17. Does your teacher use any instructional materials when teaching grammatical concord to you?.....

18. Does your teacher make it interesting to learn about grammatical concord, sentence structures and patterns?.....

19. Are you able to understand what your teacher teaches you about grammatical concord in class?.....

APPENDIX B
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

Introduction

This study seeks to explore the semantic problems associated with the wrong use of grammatical concord among JHS students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. You are kindly requested to volunteer information by responding to this interview. You are however assured that information provided to complete this interview would be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. Gender of respondent a. Male b. Female
6. Educational background. a. Cert A b. Diploma c. Degree
- d. Mrs d.
- Others.....
7. How long have you been a teacher in this school?.....
8. How long have you been teaching the English Language in this school?.....

PART B: USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AMONG JHS STUDENTS IN THE METROPOLIS

- 9. Generally, how will you describe the use of grammatical concord among your JHS students?.....
- 10. To what extent do students adhere to the rules and structures surrounding the use of grammatical concord?.....
- 11. In what specific ways do you apply the syntactic component of grammatical concord in your teaching process?
.....
.....
- 12. What is your students' understanding of the meanings of grammar and concord?
.....
.....

SECTION C: TYPES OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD ERRORS MOST COMMON AMONG THE STUDENTS

- 13. How will you describe the knowledge of JHS students with regard to the use of the rules governing grammatical concord of the various types?
.....
- 14. What are the common grammatical concord errors among your JHS students?
.....

15. In what specific ways do JHS students use grammatical concord wrongly?.....

16. How will you describe the grammatical concord errors make by students with regard to:

- d. Describing past events?.....
- e. The use of singular and plural subjects?.....
- f. The use of simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses?.....

PART D: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WRONG USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AMONG JHS STUDENTS IN THE METROPOLIS

17. What key challenges do you encounter in adhering to the accurate teaching of grammatical concord?

18. What are the reasons for the wrong use of grammatical concord among:

- a. English teachers?.....
- b. JHS students?.....

19. How would you relate the following factors in influencing the wrong use of grammatical concord both among:

Teachers:

- a. Application of grammatical rules and principles?.....
- b. Use of instructional materials and techniques?.....

- c. Skills and competence in the teaching of grammatical concord?.....
- d. Interest by teachers in teaching grammar?.....

Students

- a. Language transfer (Mother tongue's influence)?.....
- b. Students' perception
- 20. What are the key interventions that can be instituted to promote the accurate use of grammatical concord among students?.....

PART E: SEMANTIC PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WRONG USE OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD AMONG JHS STUDENTS IN THE METROPOLIS

- 21. How meaningful are the expressions generally made by JHS students?.....
- 22. What semantic effects are created when students violate the rules of grammatical concord in English language?.....
- 23. In what specific ways has the inaccurate use of grammatical concord affected the meaning students wished to put across in their conversations?.....
- 24. What semantic effects are created when students violate the rules of grammatical concord in English language?.....

PART F: SPECIFIC WAYS TEACHERS APPLY THE SYNTACTIC COMPONENT OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD IN THEIR TEACHING PROCESS

25. What do you understand by the syntactic component of grammatical concord?.....
26. In teaching grammatical concord, do you point out different sentence structures and patterns?.....
27. What are some of the methods you use in teaching the syntactic component of grammatical concord?
28. How effective would you say your methods are in teaching the syntactic component of grammatical concord?.....

PART G: INSTRUCTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL METHODS USED BY TEACHERS TO INTEGRATE THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAMMATICAL CONCORD

25. What instructional materials do you use in the teaching of grammatical concord?.....
26. Are these instructional materials helpful in the teaching of grammatical concord?.....
27. What pedagogical techniques do you use in the teaching of grammatical concord?.....
28. How efficient would you say your teaching methods are in the teaching of grammatical concord?.

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

OBSERVATION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

- i. How accurate are students able to express themselves well in the English language?
- ii. Are students' expressions consistent with what they are describing?
- iii. How do students express subject-verb concord when they occur in :
 - a. Different clauses
 - b. In the same clauses
 - c. when the normal word order is changed
- iv. What instructional materials are used in the teaching of grammatical concord?
- v. Are these instructional materials used accurately?
- vi. How confident are teachers in the teaching of grammatical concord?
- vii. What pedagogical techniques do teachers use in the teaching of grammatical concord?