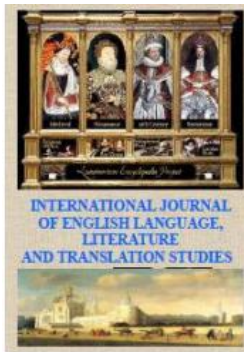**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

CHALLEENGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CONCORD IN THE USE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the concord errors in the written composition of J.S.S.III pupils in some selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State. It specifically presents the descriptive analysis of socio- demographic characteristics of respondents; investigated the types of concord errors made by J.S.S III pupils in selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State; found out the common errors the students make in their essays; and identified the various problems the pupils often encounter in the use of concord.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data collection. A simple random sampling technique was used in obtaining information from respondents. The instrument used is questionnaire. A total of seventy two (72) copies of questionnaire were administered on the respondents who were randomly drawn from the population from which sixty two (62) copies were retrieved. A total of sixty (60) scripts were analyzed to identify the problems in writing grammatically correct subject-verb agreement by the students. Secondary data were also sourced from text books, journals, research projects, Newspaper and Magazine and website publications. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical method of analysis such as tabulation and percentages.

The study revealed that majority in JSS III Pupils in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State has problems in applying the rules of concord. Most of the errors committed were under subject verb concord of number and person.

The study concluded that teachers should attempt in-service training so that students can write error free essays and students should be given an eloquent and essential English teaching curriculum.

1.1   Introduction

The root source of concord errors in Nigeria secondary schools is based on the fact that English is a borrowed language in Nigeria, Nigerian student always transmit their primary language to English language which always leads to grammatical blunder since each language has its own rule and how it applies and there is always relevance of culture in the rule of the first or primary language, the major example is the one in Yoruba culture use of plural or collective pronoun to refer to an elderly ones for example" EYIN" is always use for more than one person in Yoruba language and also to show respect for an elderly one   instead of using "IWO" which means singular. It's sadden that Nigerian student who is also Yoruba indigene always apply this

rule in English language. A student that wants to tell his fellow student that the principal is calling him or her will say "they are calling you" instead of he is calling you trying to show respect to the principal.

Good writing requires a working knowledge of grammar, a refinement of the basic or instinctive knowledge the writer has already had. It is the art of arranging words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs in such a way as to engage and sustain the reader's attention. This study intends to analysis the concord errors in the written composition of J.S.S III pupils in some selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State.

1.2   Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to analysis the concord errors in the written composition of J.S.S.III pupils in some selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1.investigate the types of concord errors made by J.S.S III pupils in selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State.;

2.find out the common errors the students make in their essays; and

1.3   Research Questions

1.What are the types of concord errors made by J.S.S III pupils in selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State.?

2.What are the common errors the students make in their essays?

1.4   Significance of the Study

The study will highlight areas of needs in other to eradicate concord errors; and would also assist with the identification of the relevant and competent educators of English.

1.5   Scope of the study

It is aimed at all Junior School Students in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State.

1.6   Limitation of the study

It is limited to only four (4) Junior Secondary Schools in Local Government area which include: Baptist Junior High School, Asarudi Grammar School, Abeokuta Girls Grammar School, Owode, Abeokuta, Saint Jobs Junior High School, Ibara, Abeokuta.

1.7   Operational Definitions of Terms

Concord: refer to the agreement between predicate and subject.

Error: An error takes place when the deviation arises as a result of the lack of knowledge. An error cannot be self-corrected.

Composition: can be defined as a piece of write up that expresses the writers mind based on a particular topics.

Inter-language: Inter-language is a temporary grammar which is systematic and composed of rules which are a product of five main cognitive processes, that is, overgeneralization, transfer of training, language transfer, and strategies of second language communication.

Fossilization: It is described as 'near-universal failure to attain full target-language competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This study presents the review under the following headings:

i. The Conceptual Frame work of concord

ii. The Sources and Causes of Concord Errors

iii. The Concept of Errors and Error analysis

v. Factor Responsible For Concord Errors

2.2 The Concept of Concord

Concord is another term used for grammatical agreement between two words in a sentence. Therefore, concord is the same as agreement. When sentences are made, the subject and the verb have to agree grammatically, situation called subject-verb concord. The verb is considered to be the heart of the

sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject. The subject and the verb are the two most important items in a sentence the authors in [2,1].

The main rule of concord is that single subjects go with single verbs and plural subject go with plural verbs.

For example, verbs have singular and plural form only in present tense:

Singular subjects use verb plus subject

E.g. He/she/it likes ice cream

Plural subject use base verb

E.g. We/you/they like ice cream

Traditionally, the item involved in the relationship were said to be in agreement in terms of common grammatical feature. In the structure of English sentences, different types of concord exist. Some of them are:

　　i.　　　Subject verb concord

　　ii.　　　Antecedent- pronoun concord

　　iii.　　　Subject- complements concord

　　iv.　　　Subject- object concord

　　v.　　　Concord involving collective nouns and co-ordinate subjects.

Subject-verb concord can be divided into subject-verb concord of number and subject-concord verb of person. According to author [2,2], subject verb concord of number is the most important concord in English. He says that the nominal group that realizes me subject and the verbal group that realizes the predicator or verb can either be singular or plural and that it operates by a simple two-part rule, which may be stated as follows:

A singular subject requires a singular verb.

A plural subject requires a plural verb.

Examples are:

The boy is good (singular S + V)

The boys are good (plural S + V)

Author [2, 3] wrote that for this rule to make sense, there will be need to understand that a singular subject is very often meant a subject realized by:

　　1.　　　A mass noun or a noun phrase with a mass noun as the headword.

　　2.　　　Examples:

Petrol burns easily

The water looks dirty

(b) A proper noun.

Example,

John visits us often

(c) A noun phrase with singular count as headword.

Example,

The Man dances well.

(d) Anyone. of the 3rdperson singular pronoun he, she, it. Example,

She dances well

Author [2,4] in Ife student in English Language Vol. 1.1, Nos 1 and 2 says that a plural subject is usually meant a subject by a nominal group consisting of either,

(i) A modified or an unmodified plural counts nouns

Examples,

　　The boys are good

　　Boys are good

(ii)　　　Two or more nominal items combined by using conjunction 'and'

Example, The boy and the girl are good

Author [2,5] states, mat the rule of number concord singular or plural between the subject and verb only applies when the verb used as predicator is in the present tense.

Example,

The boy goes there every day.

The boys go there every day

In these examples, the singular subject requires a singular verb while the plural subject also requires a plural verb. But when a past tense verb is used, the rule changes. Examples,

The boy went there everyday

The boys went there everyday

In these sentences, the verb 'went' is used for both singular and plural/subject. Also, the rule does not apply when the verbal group contains one of the modal auxiliaries.

Examples

The girl can dance

The girls can dance

Author [2,5] also talks about the verb 'To Be'. In a singular form, it occurs as j or was and in a plural form, it occurs as are or were.

Examples,

The boy i§ *good!* The boy was good

The boys are good/ The boys were good

Author [2,6] in the book titled A University Grammar of English, agree that the most type of concord in English is the subject-verb They said that two factors interfere with concord and they are notional concord and proximity. Notional concord is th agreement of verb with subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for the idea example,

The government have broken all their promises

Proximity means agreement of verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it.

Example

No one except his own supporters agree with him.

The second type of subject-verb concord is the subject-verb concord of person that involves the agreement between the verb and its subject in person. A first person singular subject must be used with a first person singular verb and second and third person singular-subject must also be used with a second and third person singular verb respectively.

Examples, - singular

I come - first person

You come - second person

He/she/it comes - Third person

### 2.3	Lack of competent teachers

Teaching requires the teacher to transform knowledge they posses into suitable task which leads to learning" they further express then-views by saying that effective teaching occurs where the   learning experience structure by the teacher matches the needs of the learners. Motivation by the teachers enhances learning on the part of the students. The interest of the teacher in the course he or she is teaching will make the student put more effort in the course. The teachers should endeavour to help the students by giving them take home assignment, which will improve their knowledge of English.

### 2.4	Lack of Teaching Materials

Teaching materials especially textbooks are really affecting the teaching of English language in secondary schools. As it is not possible for the teachers to touch all aspects of the subject in the classrooms, students are expected to be guided by textbooks designed for their level.

According to Author [2,6] the remark "Books provide most pupils with the situation in which learning takes place". The non-availability of textbooks in most secondary schools is one of the problems the students are faced with in learning English language. Also, highest of production and publication makes the prices of textbooks to be expensive and scarce. Poor quality in teaching may also arise due to lack of sufficient materials in order for the teachers to carry out their woks effectively. If the motivation is not there, there is no way the teachers will have a high morale.

2.5   Summary of literature

The significance and causes of problems discussed so far have serious implication for teaching and learning English language (grammar in particular). Errors impair the intelligibility of both the spoken and written forms of English, hence the need to eliminate or at least minimize its occurrence. For effective communication therefore. the two practical criteria of intelligibility and acceptability must be met. The language teacher has a herculean task ahead of him in the attainment of effective communication. He must, for a start, be proficient in the target language; he must possess apt content and pedagogical skills if effective teaching is desired.

Research Design

The research design employed for this study was the survey research design.

Questionnaires were also used to collect data from English teachers so as: (a) to establish their professional qualifications. (d) to find out the academic qualifications of the educators (e) to find out the types of errors found from the learners. Questionnaires were also used for students so as to: (a) establish the age, sex, grade and dwelling place. (b) establish their access to media such as newspapers, radio, journals and private reading.

Population of the Study

The population for this study consisted of all junior secondary school students and teachers in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State. The population of seventy two (72) which consisted of sixty(60) students from the four junior secondary schools selected and twelve (12) teachers, (three from each school). Both students and teachers had to fill in questionnaires so as to give their views on the analysis of concord errors in the written composition. According to Author [2,7] the population encompasses the total collection of all units of analysis.

Research Instruments

The basic research instruments for collecting data were questionnaires and observation method. The questionnaire comprises of two main parts. The first part aimed at eliciting the demographic information of the respondents, while the second part contained questions that would provide answers to the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the simple percentage and frequency distribution percentages.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, majority in JSS III Pupils in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State have problems in applying the rules of cord. It could be inferred from the data analysis that the pupils made concord errors of different types and few of them were able to write error free essays. Most of the errors committed were under subject verb concord of number and person.

The findings based on the essay written by JSS III pupils revealed that all pupils committed the following errors: the use of subject- verb concord of number, subject- verb concord of person, pronoun - antecedent concord, concord involving indefinite pronouns, subject- complement concord, subject- object concord, subject- object concord, concord involving the use of auxiliaries and concord involving the use of past tense and infinitive.

With regard to the use of auxiliaries, all pupils had the tendency of either omitting or over generalising the rule in the use of auxiliaries. Concerning the tense formation the findings revealed that pupils were not sure about tense formation. This was seen when they mixed tenses in their essays. With regard to the subject- complement concord, subject- object concord and subject- object concord revealed that they had problems with the subject, object and the verb agreement. Findings also revealed a lot of mother tongue interference. Some sentences showed direct translation from mother tongue. Again all pupils had a tendency of using the infinitives and the auxiliaries with the past tense. They again tended to use both the noun and the pronoun simultaneously in their sentences.

RECOMMENDATION

Considerable time should be devoted to concord errors by the writers of grammar books for the use of in our secondary schools. After the pupils' writing, teachers should identify and record

errors and discuss them with pupils. Teachers should pay more attention to writing to help pupils to develop skills in producing standard language . Teachers should expose pupils to English through newspapers, magazines, and school radio programmes. Teachers should upgrade their qualifications in English . Teachers should introduce competitions in both writing and reading among different grades so as to improve writing and reading skills.

Finally, Pupils should put more effort into their study. The pupils should study their textbooks at their leisure time and also try to speak English at home and in School. If the students were taught a subject they do not understand, they should go to their teachers for further explanation. The pupils should try and buy the necessary textbooks needed to improve their English.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data presentation, analysis and interpretation are an important means to deduce statistical inferences and information in a survey for decision making, with a view to achieving the stated objectives. It presents the descriptive analysis of socio- demographic characteristics of respondents; investigated the types of concord errors made by J.S.S III pupils in selected secondary schools in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State; it also found out the common errors the students make in their essays; as well as identified the various problems the pupils often encounter in the use of concord. Data were collected from students and teachers from various schools. It presents statistical responses from questionnaires from both students and teachers as well as analysis of the errors made by the pupils in the written composition will be discussed. It again presents the various types of errors as they appear in the essays given. A total of seventy two (72) questionnaires were distributed to the selected teachers and the students of Abeokuta Central Local Government and sixty two (62) representing (86.1%) of the questionnaire that were duly completed and returned. It was discovered by the researchers that (10) representing (13.9%).of the questionnaire were not returned. Also sixty (60) scripts were analyzed and many concord errors were noted in the essays. The analysis of these errors is the major concern of this chapter. The result were analyzed and interpreted in the order in which they are enlisted in the research questions.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Distribution in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State.

S/N	VARIABLE	NO OF QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED	NO OF QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNED	PERCENTAGE
1.	Teachers	12	10	16.0
2.	Students	60	52	84.0
	Total	72	62	100.0

Source: Field Work, June, 2014

Table 4.2: Distribution of the Teachers by teaching experience

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1 - 5 years	3	30.0	30.0
6 - 10 years	2	20.0	50.0
11 - 15 years	4	40.0	90.0
15 years and above	1	10.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	

Source: Field Work, June, 2014

Table 4.2 above presents a percentage distribution of the number of years the respondents had spent in teaching. 3(30.0%) of the respondents had spent between 1 - 5 years, 4(40.0%) had put in 6 - 10 years, also 2(20.0%)respondents spent between 11 - 15 years, while the remaining 1(10.0%) had spent between 15 years and above. This means that the teachers in Abeokuta Central Local Government, Ogun State are quite experienced. Since virtually all the respondents have spent up to 10 - 15 years and above on the teaching job.

Table 4.3: Distribution according to training in the structure of English

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	8	80.0	80.0
No	2	20.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	

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Source: Field Work, June, 2014

Table 4.3 tries to establish if teachers received training in the structure of English. According to this table 6 teachers received training in this aspect and four did not. This could mean that they did not qualify professionally as English teachers, in which case they are under qualified as English teachers.

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