

**THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS ABOUT
THE STUDY OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR: THE CASE OF
SELECTED SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
NORTHERN REGION**

**BY
AKURUGU, BRIGANDI MICHAEL**

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DECLARATION

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Akurugu, Michael Brigandi, (20034060)

Student Name & ID

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Certified by:

.....

Supervisor's Name

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Certified by:

.....

Head of Dept. Name

.....

Signature

.....

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all Senior High School students in Ghana; that they may read and respond appropriately in order to improve upon their use of English.

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ABSTRACT

The poor quality of English, both spoken and written, of Ghanaians in general, and of our students in particular, has become a source of worry to many well meaning educationists, parents and the general public. Several reasons have been given for the falling standards. Included among them are reading habits, poor teaching, inadequate library facilities, decline in the teaching of grammar and the de-emphasis of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. There are those who believe that the use of the mother tongue at the basic level of education helps the learner to relate similar grammatical concepts in the L1 to those of the English Language.

Much as the aforementioned could be said to be accountable, there is a fundamental phenomenon that acts as the underlying cause of the problem. The role that perception and attitude of the learners plays in the acquisition of skills in English has, over the years, been terribly ignored. The perception of students, teachers, policy makers, and the larger community, which includes parents, has played a considerable role in bringing about the fall in the standard of English. This study investigates the extent to which the fall in the standards of English could be attributed to attitudes and perceptions. The study has revealed that a serious disconnection exists between the needs of students and the solutions that are being used to raise the standard of English Language among learners. The study also reveals that, in most cases, parents, teachers and policymakers cannot escape blame for the problem either for their action or inaction regarding the promotion of the learning of the language. Though the study may have identified other reasons for the decline in the standards of English, the study focuses, to a large extent, on the very attitude and perception of the learner. It has suggested ways of developing positive perceptions and attitudes

towards the language. These suggestions include sound approaches to the teaching and learning of the language. The approach is carved in a manner that would make English more attractive to learners thus leading to attitudinal and perceptual change, which in turn would lead to enhanced performance of learners in English.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Title page..... | i |
| Declaration..... | ii |
| Dedication..... | iii |
| Abstract..... | iv |
| Table of Contents..... | vi |
| List of tables..... | ix |
| List of Figures..... | x |
| List of Pictures..... | xi |
| Acknowledgement..... | xii |
| Thematic Diagram..... | xiii |

INTRODUCTION

| | |
|---|----|
| i. Background to the study..... | 1 |
| iv The Research Problem..... | 6 |
| v. Hypothesis of the Study..... | 8 |
| vii Aims and Objectives of the Study..... | 8 |
| ix. Scope of the study..... | 10 |
| x. Significance of the Study..... | 11 |

CHAPTER ONE:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.0 Exploration of Basic Concepts..... | 12 |
| 1.1 Related Definitions..... | 12 |
| 1.4.0 The Concept of Perception..... | 14 |
| 1.4.2 Perception as Information process..... | 16 |
| 1.4.4 Implication on the learning of English..... | 21 |
| 1.5.0 The Concept of Attitude..... | 26 |
| 1.5.2 Theories of Attitude Formation and Change..... | 30 |

CHAPTER TWO:

| | |
|--|----|
| 2.0 Review of Related Literature & Overview of the teaching of Grammar..... | 44 |
| 2.1.0 Prescriptive and Descriptive Grammar as Methods of Teaching English..... | 51 |
| 2..3.0 Motivation..... | 73 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 2.4.0 Poor National language Policy..... | 75 |
| 2.6.0 Disparities Between Target Language and the Local Languages..... | 78 |
| 2.8.0 Nature of the Target Language (English)..... | 83 |
| 2.9.1 Nature of Tense and Aspect..... | 85 |
| 2.9.2 Tense and Aspect as a Source of Confusion..... | 88 |
| 2.9.4 Concord as Source of Confusion to learners..... | 91 |
| 2.9.5 Problems with the use of Prepositions and prepositional Phrases..... | 92 |
| 2.9.6 The Use of Auxiliaries..... | 93 |

CHAPTER THREE:

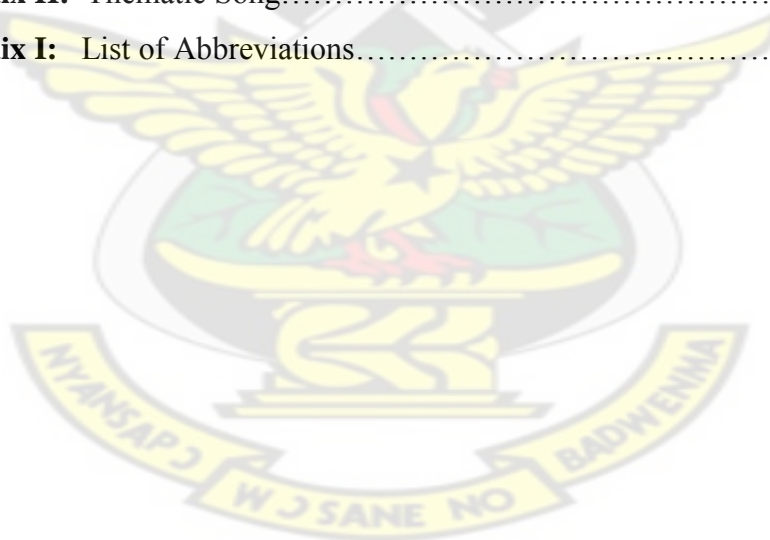
| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3.0 Research Approach & Conceptual Analysis of the Study..... | 95 |
| 3.2.0 Research Design..... | 95 |
| 3.3.0 Background study of the Selected Area (Northern Region)..... | 97 |
| 3.4.0 The Research Process..... | 99 |
| 3.4.1 Sampling..... | 99 |
| 3.6.0 Instruments for Data Collection..... | 103 |
| 3.0.1 Challenges in Data Collection..... | 116 |
| 3.9.0 Conceptual Analysis of the study..... | 117 |
| 3.9.1 Ideological Orientation of the Target Population..... | 118 |
| 3.9.7 The Home Environment..... | 129 |
| 3.10.2 Role of ICT..... | 140 |
| 3.10.4 Learning Theories and the Classroom Reality..... | 143 |
| 3.1.3.0 Common Methods Used in the Teaching of English Grammar..... | 149 |

CHAPTER FOUR:

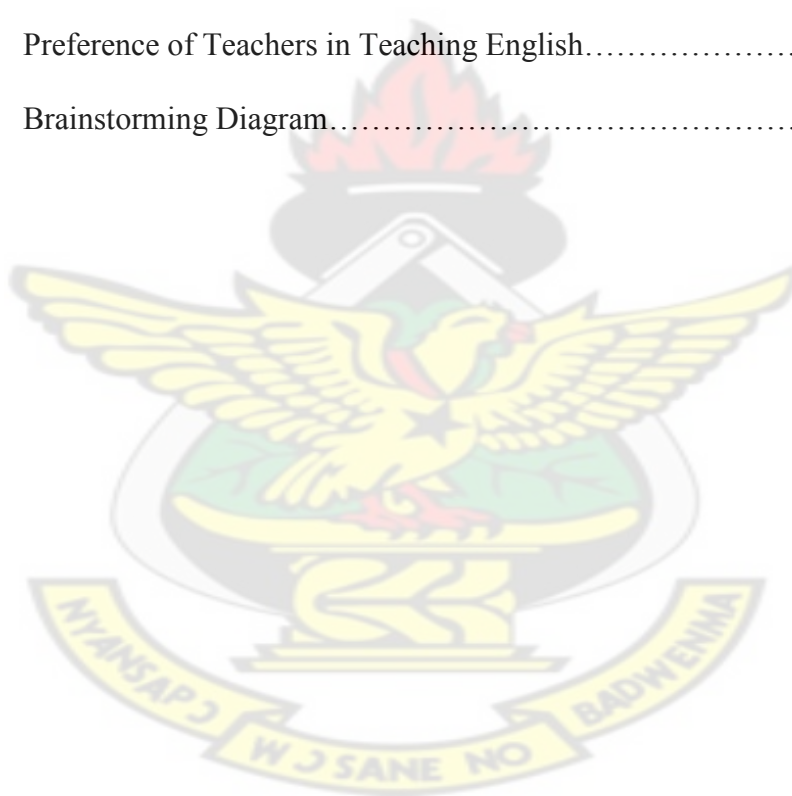
| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.0 Analyses and Interpretation of Data..... | 154 |
| 4.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents..... | 154 |
| 4.3 Perception of students of learning English Grammar..... | 162 |
| 4.3.1 Assessing Students Disposition to learning of Grammar..... | 166 |
| 4.4.0 Observations Made During Classroom Interactions..... | 170 |
| 4.5.0 The Use of Mobile Phones..... | 175 |
| 4.6 Teachers Perception of English Grammar..... | 176 |
| 4.7 Analysis of Students' Errors..... | 180 |

CHAPTER FIVE:

| | |
|--|------------|
| 5.0 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations..... | 200 |
| 5.2 Summary of major Findings..... | 200 |
| 5.3.0 Conclusions..... | 203 |
| 5.9 Recommendations..... | 209 |
| 5.1.1 Suggestions for Further Studies..... | 219 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 220 |
| APPENDICES..... | 226 |
| Appendix A: Interview With Mr. John Sumaila (Retired Educationist)..... | 226 |
| Appendix B: Students' Research Questionnaire..... | 229 |
| Appendix C: Teachers' Research Questionnaire..... | 234 |
| Appendix D: Questionnaire On Self Or Teacher Dependent Learning..... | 236 |
| Appendix E: Base – Top Explanatory Approach to Teaching Grammar..... | 238 |
| Appendix F: Framework for Teaching for Attitudinal Change..... | 241 |
| Appendix G: Letter of Invitation to Focus Group Discussion..... | 243 |
| Appendix H: Thematic Song..... | 245 |
| Appendix I: List of Abbreviations..... | 246 |



| List of Figures | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Fig.0. 1 Thematic Diagram..... | xiii |
| Fig 0.2 Colonialism and English..... | 4 |
| Fig.0. 3 The Blame Game..... | 5 |
| Fig. 1.1 Perception Information Processing Model..... | 17 |
| Fig.4.1 Literacy Status of Parents of Selected SHSs..... | 159 |
| Fig.4.2 Level of Difficulties of Aspects of English..... | 171 |
| Fig.4.3 Students' Perception of their English Teachers..... | 173 |
| Fig.4.4 Telephone Usage by Students in SHSs..... | 175 |
| Fig.15 Preference of Teachers in Teaching English..... | 178 |
| Fig.16 Brainstorming Diagram..... | 214 |



List of Pictures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Participants at English Forum..... | 64 |
| Interview with John Sumaila..... | 105 |
| FGD with Ghana SHS..... | 109 |
| FGD with Tamale Girls SHS..... | 110 |
| FGD with Tamale SHS..... | 110 |
| Developing Reading Habit in Children..... | 137 |



List of Tables

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Table 1.1 | Perceptual Index..... | 23 |
| Table 2.1 | Intersection of person and number..... | 101 |
| Table 3.1 | Selected schools for the study..... | 151 |
| Table 3.2 | Forms of Regular verbs..... | 151 |
| Table 3.3 | Forms of irregular verbs..... | 151 |
| Table 4.1 | Gender Distribution of Respondents to Questionnaire..... | 155 |
| Table 4.2 | Gender Distribution of participants (FGD)..... | 155 |
| Table 4.3 | Age Distribution of respondents..... | 156 |
| Table 4.4 | Literacy status of parents of respondents..... | 158 |
| Table 4.5 | Results of spelling tests (Dictation)..... | 161 |
| Table 4.6 | Results of questionnaire on aptitude of learners..... | 164 |
| Table 4.7 | Results of questionnaire on Self Directed Learning..... | 167 |
| Table 4.8 | Students' Dependence on Teachers..... | 168 |
| Table 4.9 | Results of class test on tenses..... | 185 |
| Table 4.10 | Scores of test on form basis..... | 185 |
| Table 4.11 | Test Scores of Ghana SHS..... | 185 |
| Table 4.12 | Test Scores of Zabzugu SHS..... | 186 |
| Table 4.13a | Results of survey questions..... | 188 |
| Table 4.13b | Results of survey questions..... | 195 |
| Table 4.13c | Results of survey questions..... | 195 |
| Table 4.13d | Results of survey questions..... | 196 |

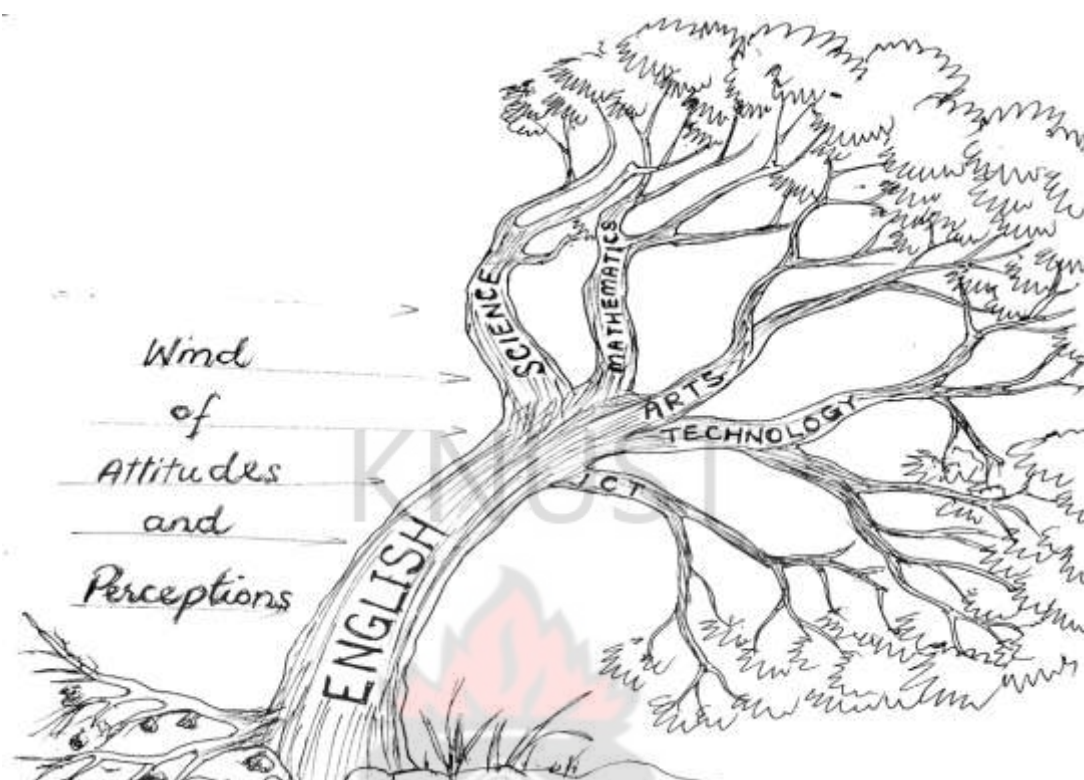
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Fig. 0.1 THEMATIC DIAGRAM



INTRODUCTION

i. Background of the Study

The English Language plays a significant role in Ghanaian society. It is the only official language of communication and, to a large extent, the official medium of school instruction. It plays a unifying role in the country by facilitating contact between Ghanaians of diverse linguistic backgrounds. Knowledge needed for the social, economic and technical advancement of the country is found in books written in English. Even warnings designed to keep us safe from danger are written in English. All competitive examinations, whether for entry into educational institutions or occupation include tests in one's competence in the use of English. In effect, English is the language of education, administration, law, communication and commerce. Consequently, it has a distinct role to play in the social life of the Ghanaian. It is the mark of elitism in the Ghanaian society. Once one chooses to educate one's self, one has no good reason not to speak English well. Moreover, one's deficiency in the use of English can easily be exposed in an interaction with another person.

ii. PRESENT DAY STANDARD OF ENGLISH IN GHANA

There are many who believe strongly that the quality of English in Ghana is falling. A close examination of the expectations of educational institutions, academics and parents, in terms of students' English Language proficiency reveals that there is indeed a problem. In Ghana, the study of English as a second language (ESL) focuses on academic skills such as reading comprehension, essay writing and oral communication. Learning ESL basically aims at improving the grammatical proficiency of students which, eventually, leads to the acquisition of the academic

English of the learner. This acquisition includes acquisition of the grammatical forms of 'standard' English. The study of grammar in this sense is therefore, a means to acquiring proficiency in academic English. To what extent then have students made use of grammar as a means of developing their academic English? A survey of the performance of students at various educational institutions in the Northern Region point to the fact that the standard of English is falling. About twenty years ago, it was generally believed by most Ghanaians that people from the northern part of Ghana spoke English that was of higher quality compared to other regions. A study of the quality of English that students produce in various levels of education reveals that the situation has changed. There are various forms of errors identified in both the written and spoken English of students. These errors culminate in the poor performance of students in the West African School Certificate Examination results of English Language examinations. The study made a close analysis of results of candidates over a period of thirty years, (1980 – 2010). The results of 9twenty schools were closely examined revealing a comparatively declining performance of students over the period. Also a close examination of the West African School Certificate Chief Examiner's report on candidates' performance in English Language over the thirty year period points to the fact that the performance of students in the English Language is progressively on the decline.

Let us consider the following scenario – an interaction between a stranger and a student dressed in school uniform.

Stranger: Good morning Gentleman

Student: Good morning Madam

Stranger: Could you please direct me to the Central Hospital?

Student: You can be took this road and after walking ask any hospital taxi.

Though the two people are meeting for the very first time, the stranger does not need any one to tell him or her that the student cannot speak good English. The student, on his part, probably might not be aware that he has exposed his deficiency in English to someone he is meeting for the first time. Even if the student were aware, he still would find it difficult avoiding the embarrassment. One option would have been to admit he could not speak English (though in school uniform), or he could have simply remained silent. However, neither of these responses would be comfortable or polite to him. In situations like this, the stranger carries away a bad impression, not only about the student, but that of the student's school as well.

Ability to speak English well is, in fact, used as a standard of measure of one's ability in the field of education by the non-literate in the Ghanaian society. The non-literate Ghanaian parent determines his or her ward's performance in school as bad if the latter cannot speak or write English well. It is quite common to hear remarks from exasperated parents such as "My children are useless; they have spent so many years in school, yet they still cannot speak or write good English!"

Considering the special place that English has in the Ghanaian society, one would have thought that proficiency in English among Ghanaians would be growing from good to better. On the contrary, English in Ghana has, over the years, taken a nose-dive. Falling standard of English has become a source of worry to many well meaning individuals and the Ghanaian society as a whole.

iii. Colonialism and the standards of English in Ghana

Since the attainment of independence in Ghana, the standard of English has been progressively on the decline such that the further Ghanaians moved from independence in its history the worse the state of English spoken in the country became. In a presentation at a forum on the Standard of English in Ghana held at the British Council Hall, Accra on the 17th of July, 2008, Naa Afarley Sakeyfiio noted that the Standard Seven/ Middle school leaver of the 1940s and 1950s had admirable command of English. “Their English was “flawless in its grammar, wide and varied

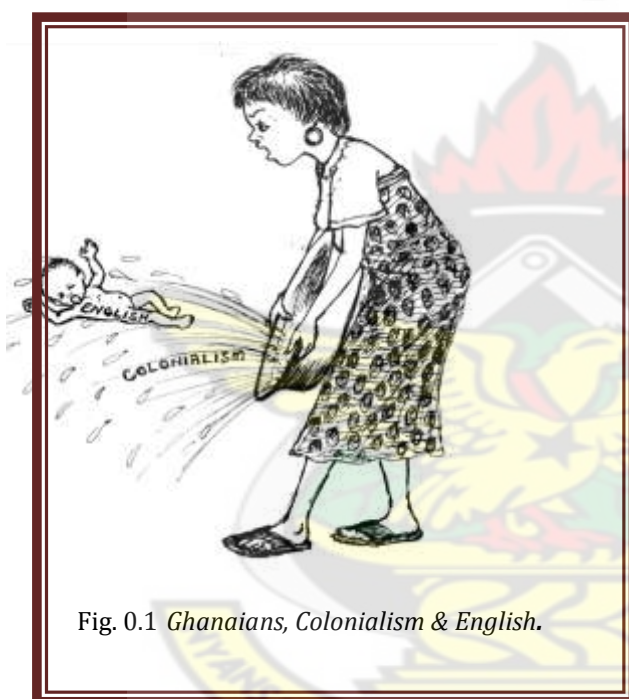


Fig. 0.1 *Ghanaians, Colonialism & English.*

in its vocabulary, dappled in its idiom range, clear and accurate in its pronunciation, and elegant in its entirety.”¹ In the same paper, Afarley Sackeyfiio described English of the 2000s as follows: “It has no grammar to talk of. Its vocabulary is sparse. The only two adjectives it has are *nice* for the things its speakers like, and *brutal*

for all shades of meaning, spanning from grand to awful.” Those of the 1960s and 1970s had a comparatively good command of English. The 1980s were comparatively better than the 1990s and 2000s’ Ghanaian speakers of the language. The problem is familiar to most Ghanaians including those who are not aware that they have been affected by the phenomenon of deteriorating competence in the use of

¹ Naa Afarley S. paper read at the Forum on Standards of English, p.3)

the English Language. A journalist who was participating in a newspaper review programme on a local radio station in Tamale once complained, “I just can’t *understood* why our students these days fail *massive* in English each year”. This speaker was not aware that he was a member of the generation that had been affected by the problem he was complaining about. Indeed, it appears this generation of Ghanaians is giving lesser attention to English Language, a situation that can be described as throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Certainly, it is not everything about colonialism that was bad. Whatever the calamities that colonialism might have visited on the nation, Ghanaians cannot run away from the fact that colonialism bequeathed to us a national language, the English Language. English has since remained our official language - the language that unites the various ethnic groups and links the country to the outside world. The poor standard of English has generated a blame game among the parties in education. The cycle of blame can be illustrated as follows:

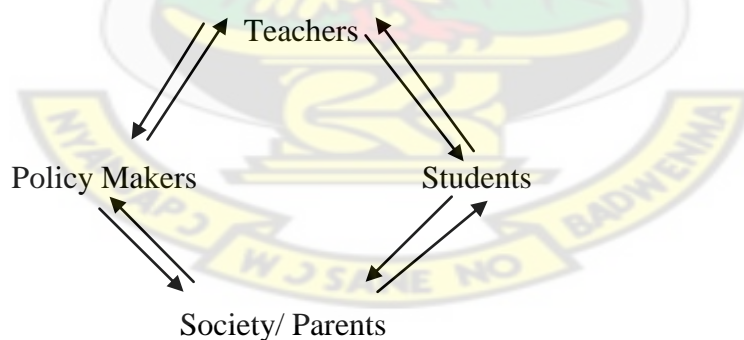


Fig. 0.2 (The Blame Game)

The illustration above shows how teachers are quick to condemn students for not learning or reading enough. Students on their part complain of teachers not teaching or living up to their task of teaching the language such as teaching according to the

syllabus and giving reasonably challenging exercises. Society, including parents, blames students for having misplaced priorities, while students point accusing fingers at parents for not showing interest in buying the requisite books for them. Society, on its part, blames policy makers for inconsistency in policies regarding the teaching of English, for the politicisation of national educational policies, and for the lack of emphasis on the proper use of the English Language in all official engagements. The policy makers blame parents for not supporting and encouraging their wards to learn the language. It is obvious from this cycle of blame that no single remedy affecting one or some of the parties involved in the above diagram can bring about the desired change. If students are not prepared to learn, no amount of teaching can help. If teachers do not teach well, students cannot perform. Similarly, if parents do not buy books or encourage their wards, there will be very little improvement. The blame game discussed above was reflected in the various presentations made at the first forum on the Standard of English Language in Ghana organised on 21st July 2008 at Accra. A number of reasons were advanced for the falling standards of English in Ghana. Among these were declining reading habits, poor teaching and inadequate library facilities. The idea therefore, is to try identify a point at which this cycle of blame can be broken, and that should be with the learners. This is because the learners are the recipients of whatever resources are put in place for the learning of English language.

iv. The Problem

So much is heard about grammar in the negative light. If one is a writing consultant, one would hear that word just about everyday:

"Can you help me with my grammar?"

" I hate grammar."

"My grammar is poor."

"I've written this.... but I'm not sure of my grammar. Can you go through it for me?"

Where do the above obsessions and loathing of grammar come from? In most cases this attitude towards grammar develops in the early stage of one's educational career. Most students in Ghana have made their position with grammar clear before they enter Senior High School. The root of this negative attitude towards grammar and what can be done about it constitute the core of this study. Many students who detest grammar were taught grammar using a systematic approach. The problem statement therefore, is, is it this systematic teaching of grammar (the emphasis on rules of the language) that creates such fear for it? It is the intention of this research to make a critique of this method of teaching and propose alternative teaching methods and other measures to arrest the fear for grammar among students

Much as the systematic method could be said to be contributory to the problem, there is a fundamental phenomenon that has eluded all solution seekers to the problem. Just as attitude and perception can determine the level of success of a person in a particular endeavour, they equally can be seen to be key to competence in the use of English as a medium of communication. Paradoxically, this has been terribly ignored. A close examination of the perceptual and attitudinal disposition of students and even teachers, particularly towards English grammar, will explain to a great extent the underlying cause of falling standard of English in Ghana. Moreover, the attitude of policy makers in general towards improving English is one that is worth examining and this would be a major step towards finding solutions to the problem that confronts most learners of English Language in Ghana.

v. Hypothesis of the Study

As the blame cycle continues, no one has paused to examine what his or her own attitude to and perception of the Language. The hypothetical question that this research has raised is: how has the attitude to and perception of the student toward learning English grammar affected his or her level of competence? Subsequently, the hypothesis that this study has drawn is: a positive attitude to and perception of learning English Grammar is key to effective learning of English. The fundamental research questions therefore are;

- i. To what extent can the poor performance of learners of English Language be attributed to the poor attitude of learners towards English Grammar?
- ii. Will a positive approach to learner English grammar enhance the competence of learners of English Language?

vi. Purpose of the Study

This study, therefore, is an attempt to investigate the extent to which the alleged falling standard of English in Ghana could be traced to negative attitudes and perceptual biases towards the learning of English. This will redirect the attention of teachers and policy makers to focus more on measures geared towards developing good and healthy attitudes in teachers of the language, students, and users in general, in addition to the provision of learning materials and the provision of qualified teachers of the language.

vii. Aim and Objectives

The general aim of the study is to investigate the influence of perception and attitude of students towards learning English grammar. The objective is to stimulate action

that will engage all parties involved and serve as a guide to them in the search for a lasting solution to the falling standard of our only lingua franca. It is hoped that the findings of this study will pave the way for changes in the individual's attitude to and perceptions of learning and usage of English is concerned. The main focus of the study, therefore, is on the attitude and perception of students in the Senior High Schools towards the learning of English grammar. The fundamental questions that are raised in the research are:

- ✓ What kind of attitude and perception do students have towards learning English?
- ✓ What has been the impact of such perceptions and attitudes on their competence in the use of the language?
- ✓ How can a positive attitude towards learning English grammar be developed to enhance effective communication, using English at all levels of the Ghanaian society?

viii. Organisation of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters excluding an appendix and a bibliography. There is a general introduction that captures the background to the study as well as the rationale of the project. Chapter One explores basic concepts, the objectives, justification of the study, hypothesis, significance of the study, limitations, and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Two, comprises a review of related literature and the examination of the teaching and learning processes of English with particular reference to grammar in the target schools, using various research methods. Chapter Three deals with the research process, collection of data through the administration of the research tools designed for the study, and detailed analysis

of the conceptual framework. Chapter Four focuses on analysis and interpretation of data. It discusses the main findings of the study, and the perceptions and attitudes of the various stakeholders are analyzed. Chapter Five summarizes the main findings, draws conclusions from the findings and ends with recommendations.

ix. Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Senior High Schools within the Northern Region of Ghana. The school drop-out rate in the northern part of Ghana is much higher than in other parts of the country. (School for Life -NGO Research Report: 2010) Many of these students drop out as a result of poor performance in class. Though some of them completed basic school, most can hardly communicate in English, whether spoken or written. Since English Language is key to education, and there exists a section of the youth who have had the opportunity of formal education yet can hardly communicate well in English, it is important that the issue is investigated. The choice of Northern Region is informed by reports by various non-governmental organisations on the high prevalence of school drop outs among students in the region. The number of subjects selected is representative enough to assess the extent of the problem that we have with English Language in the region.

Additionally, movement from one place to another to collect data was cumbersome and that compelled the researcher to limit the study to Northern Region, where the problem is more pronounced. Studies conducted by School for Life, a non-governmental organisation based in the Northern Region, revealed that Northern Region has the highest rate of school drop-out, especially among girls, in the country. A study of this nature in the area region should validate or disprove this.

x. Significance of the Study

This study is particularly important to both teachers and students as it should provide some ideas on how they can improve upon their competence in the learning and use of English. Education has become one of the major investments parents make. The education sector takes the largest portion (over 40%) of the national budget. More importantly, the study is coming at a time when falling standards of education in general, and English in particular, have captured the attention of education authorities to the extent that a national forum on “Falling Standard of English in Ghana” was organized to find solutions to the problem. Results of this study would serve as a major contribution to the work of the Committee that has been set up to investigate and come out with practical measures to arrest the falling standards of English in Ghana². The study would serve as a basis for further research, for instance, into the strategies to be developed and used to combat negative attitudes and perceptions that militate against the study and use of English Language.

² *Terms of Reference of Committee on Falling Standard of English in Ghana, p.3*

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 EXPLORATION OF BASIC CONCEPTS

1.1 Related Definitions:

A brief explanation of the various abstract concepts that the study explores as operational indicators will help make the issues raised in the study clear. There are three key concepts- grammar, attitude and perception, all of which relate to some specific observable events in the study.

1.2 What Does Grammar Mean?

Grammar is defined in several different ways. Patrick Hartwell, author of Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar, categorizes grammar into four definitions,

- i. A set of formal patterns in which the words of a language are arranged in order to convey a larger meaning
- ii. The branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description, analysis, and formulation of formal language patterns
- iii. A linguistic etiquette
- iv. Grammatical terms used in the interest of teaching prose (352-353)

These definitions appear to be rather constraining. Although the above definitions reveal a range of meanings for grammar, they presuppose that grammar does not have a universal meaning. The definition that will be used for the purpose of this study is the one created by Janice Neuleib who defines grammar as: "The internalized system that native speakers of a language share" (Neuleib, 349). This definition allows grammar to take on several forms beyond the linguistic and formal writing processes.

Grammar, for the purpose of this study, can be seen as the principles that specify and establish correlations between meaning and sound sequences of a language and its ultimate usage.

1.3 Common Methods of Teaching Grammar in Ghana

Grammarians and anti-grammarians alike have been looking for an answer to the question: "Should we teach grammar in schools?" The answer to this question seems to be yes, but the system needs to change first. Research conducted by grammarians like Dulay H.C. and Burt M. K. show that there is no benefit gained from the systematic teaching of grammar. Observation on the systematic teaching of grammar reveals that the approach interferes with writing well and creatively.

Dawkins, J. (1977) writes that there should not be a right or wrong way of practising grammar. He states; "According to the handbooks there is a right-or-wrong approach. Such instruction is negative in that it tells students what not to do and how not to do it; I assume – it is going to tell students what to do and how to do it" (534). According to Dawkins, this right or wrong approach does not encourage students to study and improve upon their writing skills. The position of Dawkins stems from the fact that the rather prescriptive approach to the teaching of grammar will leave little space for independent learning and interpretation of grammar concepts. The emphasis on rules of grammar is viewed by Dawkins as negative reinforcement as it may teach students how to use grammar rules rather than promote exploration of grammar and writing. What Dawkins is advocating is some level of flexibility in the approach to the teaching of grammar.

Ray Wallace, (1976) editor of The Place of Grammar in Writing Instruction, agrees that systematic teaching can be hindering. He writes:

There is little pragmatic justification for systematically teaching a grammar of a language, whether that grammar be traditional, structural, transformational, or whatever. On the other hand, it may be desirable or even necessary to use some grammatical concepts and terminology in helping students to become more effective language users. (124)

Notwithstanding Wallace's suggestion above, it is important to add that strategies that should be used in teaching the grammar of a language will depend on whether the target language is a first, second or foreign language to the learner.

1.4.0 Perception

Etymologically, the word "perception" originates from the Latin word, 'percipere', (to perceive). Perceiving ideas and concepts is viewed from two dimensions – first is the conscious recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli³ that serve as a basis for understanding, learning, and knowing or for motivating a particular action or reaction. The second is the result or product of the act of perceiving.

Instinctive knowledge has been used to define or explain the term perception. These include awareness, understanding, sense, impression, idea, taste, notion, recognition, observation, consciousness, conception, apprehension, discrimination. Putting the semantic connotations together, ³Fazio and Williams explains perception as:

"Those subjective experiences of objects or events that ordinarily result from stimulation of the receptor organs of the body. This stimulation is transformed or encoded into neural activity (by specialized receptor

³Fazio, R., & Williams, C. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, (p.51)

mechanisms) and is relayed to more central regions of the nervous system where further neural processing occurs”.

According to them it is the final neural processing in the brain that underlies or causes perceptual experience; and therefore perception-like experiences can sometimes occur without external stimulation of the receptor organs.

1.4.1 Perception Constancy

⁴Perceptual constancy is a term used to describe the properties of objects which remain remarkably constant despite variations in distance, slant, and retinal locus caused by movements of the observer. This fact referred to as perceptual constancy is the hallmark of perception and, more than any other, serves to characterize the field of perception. Examples of perceptual constancy are: size (except at very great distances, an object appears the same size whether seen nearby or far away, although the size of its image on the retina can be very different); shape (a circle seen from the side is perceived as a circle, although it appears as an ellipse on the retina); orientation (objects appear to keep the same orientation in space, independently of the orientation of the observer's head); and position (a fixed object remains perceived as stationary even when its image on the retina moves because of eye or head movements).

In this light the perception of students about a particular subject or aspect of a subject, and for the purpose of this study, English grammar, might remain as constant irrespective of the efforts made by others to change the perception. A central problem

⁴ Dillard Jones, Rethinking the Study of Fear and Appeals: An emotional Perspective. (p.295)

is whether the perception of properties such as form⁵ and depth is innately determined or is based on past experience. “Innate” means perception is the result of evolutionary adaptation and thus is present at birth or when the necessary neural maturation has occurred. By “past experience” perception is the end result of prior exposure to certain relevant patterns or conditions, a kind of learning process. It is clear from the above analysis that certain kinds of perceptions are innate, but equally clear that past experience also is a determining factor. Perception can also be seen as the recognition and interpretation of sensory stimuli based chiefly on memory⁶. Thus it is the mental processes by which intellectual, sensory, and emotional data are organized logically and meaningfully. In other words, it is the conscious mental registration of a sensory stimulus.

Jerald Greenberg and Robert A Baron (1999) define perception as; “The process through which we select, organise and interpret information gathered by our senses in order to understand the world around us.” (Behaviour in Organizations;72). In contemporary psychology, interest generally focuses on perception or the apprehension of objects or events rather than sensory or sensation processes.

1.4.2 Perception as Information Process

Robert Kreitner and Angelo Kinicki, both of Arizona University, have explained perception in a manner that directly relates to information processing, and which can be directly associated with the learning of English. They see perception as the

⁶ Saunders Comprehensive Veterinary Dictionary, 3 ed. 2007 Elsevier, Inc.

cognitive process that enables us to interpret and understand our surroundings. They identify a four-staged information processing underlying the perception of people:

- Selective attention/ comprehension
- Encoding and simplification
- Storage and retention
- Retrieval and response.

A close analysis of these perception processes would be helpful for a better understanding of the issues to be discussed later in this study. Krietner and Kinicki illustrate systematically how perceptual information is processed in the form of a diagrammatical presentation. Each stage is effectively linked to the other in a manner that ensures a natural progression from one stage to the other.

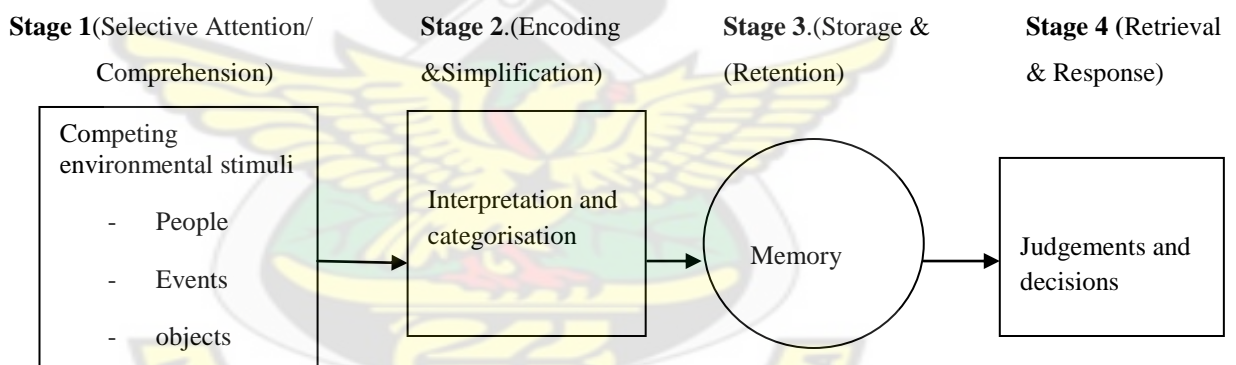


Fig. 1.1:

1.4.3 Perception Information Processing Model

(Kreitner and Kinicki Organisational Behaviour, 225)

i. Stage 1: Selective Attention/Comprehension

Kreitner and Kinicki define attention as “A process of becoming consciously aware of something or someone.” Explaining the first stage of perception, Kreitner and Kinicki observe that people are constantly bombarded by physical and social stimuli

in the environment. However, since they do not have the mental capacity to fully comprehend all the information, they selectively perceive subsets of environmental stimuli. This is where selective attention comes in. According to Kreitner and Kinicki, attention can be focused on information from either the environment or from memory.

The situation of attention being focused on memory arises, for instance, when one finds oneself reading a book while thinking about some unrelated events. In a situation of this nature, one's memory is the main focus of attention at that material moment. Wiley, J. (1987) in Introduction to Human Information Processing indicates that what attracts people's attention most is salient stimuli. An object or an idea is said to be salient if it stands out from its context. He observes further that the object or event can be salient for being novel, unusual for one's social category or people in general, extremely positive, or being dominant in the visual field. Research has shown that people have the tendency to pay more attention to negative information than positive ones. This is as a result of negativity bias among most people. Therefore, learners would naturally pay more attention to the idea that learning English grammar is more complicated, than a statement, "being proficient in English Language is an asset that all educated people must strive to achieve."

A person might be saddled with different kinds of information which can range from sports, accommodation, problems with learning English, family problems, and work related problems. D. Ramelhart, (1997: 38), in Behaviour and Perceptual Components observes that in the midst of all these problems, the person might identify his/her problem, for instance, with learning English as salient stimuli,

followed by family problems. These two pieces of information are then perceived and one then proceeds to the second stage of information processing. Meanwhile, Ramelhart notes that the other competing stimuli such as sports, accommodation, and work related problems fail to get attention and are discarded from further consideration.

ii. Stage 2: Encoding and Simplification

The second state of perception, according to Kreitner and Kinicki,(2004) has to do with encoding and simplification of information obtained from the social environment or memory. They noted that observed information was not stored in its original form. Encoding is required. Raw information is interpreted or translated into mental representations. They explained that to accomplish this, perceivers assign pieces of information to cognitive categories. Category here refers to objects that are considered equivalent. People, events, and objects are interpreted and evaluated by comparing their characteristics with information contained in the schemata. Kreitner and Kinicki, believe that schema represents a person's mental picture or summary of a particular event or type of stimulus.

1.4.3 Encoding outcomes:

According to Kreitner and Kinicki, (2004) we use the encoding process to interpret and evaluate our environment. This process can result in differing interpretations and evaluations of the same person or event. They maintain that varying interpretations of what we observe occur due to four key reasons. First, people possess different information in the schemata used for interpretation. Second, our moods and emotions influence our focus and attention and evaluation of others. Third, people tend to apply recently used cognitive categories during encoding. The fourth reason is that

individual differences influence encoding. They further observed that pessimistic or depressed individuals tend to interpret their surroundings more negatively than optimistic and happy people. It should therefore not be surprising when people interpret and evaluate the same situation or event differently. After interpreting the information, the perceiver then moves on to the next stage of the process, which is storage.

iii. Stage 3: (Storage and Retention)

Kreitner and Kinicki's third stage of the perception process involves storage and retention of information in the long-term memory. They explain that the long term memory consists of separate units connected to one another. However, the categories in this apartment are closely related though the connected categories contain different types of information. One significant aspect of the long-term memory, Kreitner and Kinicki, believe, is that it contains three different compartments, which are categories of information about events, semantic materials, and people.

The event memory is composed of categories containing information about both specific and general events. This compartment describes an appropriate sequence of events in well-known situations. The understanding here is that, for instance, going to a movie and being able to recall the movie later when with friends involves the use of the event memory. The semantic memory refers to the general knowledge about the world. It functions as a mental dictionary of concepts. Each concept contains a definition. Kreitner and Kinicki also note that just as there are schemata for general events, concepts in semantic memory are stored as schemata. There are, however, cultural differences in the type of information stored in semantic memory. The

person's memory is the compartment that contains information about a single individual; for example, one's spouse or a group of persons such as one's teachers. The various schemata are available for immediate comparison or retrieval.

iv. Stage 4. (Retrieval and Response)

The fourth and final stage of Kreitner and Kinicki's perception process is the retrieval of information from memory where it is stored. People retrieve information from memory when they make judgements and decisions. Our ultimate judgements and decisions are either based on the process of drawing on, interpreting, and integrating categorical information stored in the long-term memory or in retrieving a summary judgement that was already made.

1.4.4 Implications on the Learning of English Grammar

Kreitner and Kinicki recognise that social cognition is the basis upon which all persons observe, interpret, and prepare responses to people and events. They maintain that a lot of learning activities, be they formal, informal, or private studies, are affected by perception. Generally, it can be concluded from the position of Kreitner and Kinicki that learners make decisions based on their impression of how they perceive the subject. Inaccurate impression about a subject or an aspect of a subject, on the part of the learner can undermine the efforts of the teacher. Those invalid schemata need to be confronted through effective teaching and counselling. Faulty schemata about what constitutes easy or difficult to learn, necessary or unnecessary to learn, affect directly the disposition of the learner and therefore the general performance of that person, and this can lead to a wrong assessment of the

learner. It is therefore important that assessment procedures provide an accurate evaluation of the learner making use of his/her psychological disposition.

For teachers to accurately intervene there is need for them to understand the behavioural characteristics of their learners. This aspect is crucial to determining the standards for evaluating students' performance in certain subjects or aspects of a subject. Knowledge of the perception of the learner about a subject can lead to an objective assessment of the learner by the teacher. This is particularly useful to teachers because it would help them determine the kind of intervention measures that are needed in trying to address poor performance of learners in a given subject. Subjective indicators are prone to bias and inaccuracy. A close analysis of Kreitner and Kinicki's study of the perception process that people go through reveals that perception has important implications on the kind of communication that takes place between the learner and the teacher, in the learning environment. Teachers need to understand that social perception is a screening process that can distort both incoming and out-going communication. Messages are interpreted and categorised according to schemata developed through past experiences and are often influenced by one's age, gender, ethnic, geographic, and cultural orientations. Teachers who are aware of the perception process and its outcomes have the competitive edge over their counterparts in terms of succeeding as teachers. Insufficient knowledge of the perception process can lead to a number of perceptual errors. Some of these errors are worth mentioning since they affect teaching and learning especially in the classroom. Perceptual errors can exert some influence on the attitude of teachers towards students / learners in the classroom situation. Similarly, if students have some perceptions about their teacher and allow those perceptions to control their

conduct on the subject he teaches, it can have some effects on the learning of the subject. The table below gives specific examples of cases of perceptual errors that often occur among individuals.

Table 1.1: The Perceptual Index⁷

| Perceptual Error | Description | Example |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Halo effect | A person forms an overall impression about an object and then uses that impression to rate that object. | Student 'A' is not bright. This means he /she is lazy. Student 'B' is smart. It means she is hard working. |
| Leniency (Similar-to-me effect). | A personal characteristic that leads an individual to consistently evaluate other people or objects in an extremely positive fashion. | Rating a learner high on all dimensions of performance in English as a result of good oral competence, and regardless of his or her actual performance in other aspects of the language. |
| Central tendency | The tendency to avoid all extreme judgements and rate people or objects as average or neutral. | A learner rating a teacher average on all dimensions of performance regardless of his actual performance in specific areas, because the learner is trying to avoid offending the teacher. |
| Recency effect | The tendency to remember recent information. If the information is negative the person or object is evaluated negatively. | A learner might remember a punishment given him/her by a teacher and evaluate him /her as a bad English teacher. |
| Contrast effects | The tendency to evaluate people or objects by comparing them with characteristics of recently observed people or objects. | Rating a learner as average because one compared his or her performance with other learners. |

⁷ Source: Robert Krietner "Organisational Behaviour" 6th Edition, (p. 233)

Since these perceptual errors often distort the evaluation of both learners by teachers and vice versa, it is necessary to put in place measures that would check these biases. Jerald Greenberg and Robert A. Baron (70) in Behaviour in Organisations intimate that in most cases, people's biased perceptions of others are not the result of any malicious intent to inflict harm. In their view, bias in social perception tends to occur because people, as perceivers, are imperfect processors of information. To minimize biases, therefore, they suggest the following:

i. Do not overlook the external causes of others' behaviour. According to Jerald Greenberg and Robert A. Baron, people might easily discount the possibility that others' poor performance might be due to conditions beyond their control. As a result, the accusers may ignore legitimate explanations for poor performance. The teacher should therefore ask him/herself if anyone else may have performed just as poorly under the same condition. The good teacher needs to make such judgements accurately so that they can decide whether to focus their efforts in developing better ways of presenting the lesson or changing classroom conditions.

ii. Identify and control one's stereotype. Each person has one form of stereotype or the other. Consequently, erroneous perceptions are bound to occur where we have stereotypes. Although most people rely on stereotypes in dealing with people they are meeting for the first time, it is important to control these stereotypes, as they can result in negative impressions of the other. It is therefore good to be aware of one's stereotypes and make conscious efforts to minimise their impact on one's assessment of other people.

iii. Evaluate people or objects based on objective factors. Jerald Greenberg and Robert A. Baron are of the view that the more objective the information one uses to judge others, the less one's judgement will be subjected to perceptual distortion. According to them, people tend to pass subjective judgements in ways that are self-serving. This often leads to people evaluating those they like positively while those they do not like are evaluated negatively.

iv. Avoid making rash judgement. It is commonplace for people to draw hasty conclusions about others even when they know very little about them. The advice is for one to get to know people better before convincing oneself that one already knows all one needs to know about the other person or object. When it comes to learning, therefore, people tend to focus more on subjects that give them fewer difficulties than those they perceive to be more difficult. The point being made here is that before a student can conclude that the study of a particular subject or aspect of a subject, example grammar in this case, is difficult, he/she should have convinced him/herself that the subject or aspect of the subject is really difficult. In English, learners can perceive certain aspects of the language, for instance, grammar, or summary writing, as difficult and incomprehensible, and therefore develop some amount of dislike for those aspects of the entire subject. Additionally, the mode of presentation of the subject or aspect to the learners plays an important role in determining how the learners will react to it. If the lesson is presented using appropriate methods that make the learning object attractive, learners will be positively inclined to learn.

1.5.0 THE CONCEPT OF ATTITUDES

Kreitner R. and Kinicki A. (2004:197) in Organisational Behaviour. (sixth edition) define attitude as, “A learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object.” (197) Attitudes affect the behaviour of the individual. It would be helpful at this point to distinguish between attitudes and values since the two concepts have, more often than not, been used interchangeably. Attitudes affect behaviour at different levels than values. While values represent global beliefs that influence behaviours across all situations, attitudes relate only to behaviour directed at specific objects, persons or situations. Attitude has three main components; affective, cognitive, and behavioural. The affective component of an attitude contains the feelings and emotions one has about a given object or situation. For example, how does one feel about people who frequently smoke in public? If one feels angry with such people, one is expressing a negative affect towards such people. The affective component becomes neutral if one is indifferent about people who smoke in public. The cognitive component of attitude has to do with what one thinks about people, situations or objects. For instance, the way one thinks about a particular kind of behaviour emanates from one's attitude. The cognitive component reflects the beliefs or ideas that one has about a particular thing. For example, does one believe that using code mixing throughout communication is a healthy practice? The answer to this question constitutes the cognitive component of one's attitude. The third component of attitude is behavioural. This refers to how the individual tends to act, or is expected, to act towards something or someone. (Kreitner R. and Kinicki A. (2004:197). For instance, how does one respond or act towards people who always use code-mixing when they are communicating, if one were the recipient? It is believed that one's

ultimate behaviour in this situation is the function of all three attitudinal components. In other words, if one does feel angry with people using code-mixing to communicate, one sees the affective component; if one believes that the use of code-mixing in communication helps people to express themselves better, (the cognitive); and if one observes that one has no intention of confronting people who use code mixing, it is behavioural.

The learning of a particular subject and, in this case English depends to some extent on the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the language. The perceived social pressure to learn or not to learn also determines the attitude one adopts towards learning a language. Thirdly, attitude controls the perceived ease or difficulty of learning a language and this has some direct link with past experiences as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles.

Attitude, according to Daniel Katz, is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event—this is often referred to as the attitude object. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the item in question. Katz also believes that attitudes are judgments. They develop on the affect, behaviour, and cognition (ABC) model. The affective response is an emotional response that expresses an individual's degree of preference for an entity. The behavioural intention is a verbal indication or typical behavioural tendency of an individual. The cognitive response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity that constitutes an individual's beliefs about the object. Most attitudes are the result of

either direct experience or observational learning from the environment. Attitudes are expected to change as a function of experience.

Tesser (1998: 129-142) argues that hereditary variables may affect attitudes, but believes that they may do so indirectly. Tesser is an advocate of the consistency theory. For example, consistency theories imply that we must be consistent in our beliefs and values. The most famous example of such a theory is the dissonance reduction theory, associated with Leon Festinger. Festinger (1978) believes that in every learning situation there is need for consistency in the learning effort that is applied to the act of learning and as well as the perception of the learner about the learning target. This according to him, enhances understanding of what is being learnt.

1.5.1 Attitude change

A major objective of this study is to witness a gradual attitudinal change for the better in students towards the learning of English. Leon Festinger believes that attitudes can be changed through persuasion and one should understand attitude change as a response to communication. He outlines a number of factors that affect the persuasiveness of a message and that can lead to attitude change. First are the target person's characteristics. According to Leon, these are characteristics that refer to the person who receives and processes a message. One such trait is intelligence - it seems that more intelligent people are less easily persuaded by one-sided messages. The mind frame and mood of the target also plays a role in this process. Message characteristics is one other factor. The nature of the message plays a role in persuasion. Sometimes, presenting both sides of a story is useful to help change

attitudes. A message can appeal to an individual's cognitive evaluation to help change his/her attitude. In the central route to persuasion the individual is presented with the data and motivated to evaluate the data and arrive at an attitude-changing conclusion. In the peripheral route to attitude change, the individual is encouraged not to look at the content but at the source.

Myers, (1980) on his part defines attitude as “a favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction towards something or someone, exhibited in one’s beliefs, feelings, or intended behaviour.” (Myers 36) In his view, it is a social orientation - an underlying inclination to respond to something either favourably or unfavourably. Myers spells out a number of attitudinal components that are worth discussing.

a. *Cognitive* – This refers to our thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about something. When a human being is the object of an attitude, the cognitive component is frequently a stereotype. An example is a statement like “People who contract HIV/ AIDs are promiscuous.”

b. *Affective* – This is the feeling or emotion that something evokes. e.g. fear, sympathy, hate. For example, one may dislike people living with HIV/AIDS.

c. *Conative, or behavioural* – This is the tendency or disposition to act in certain ways toward something. For example, one might want to keep AIDS patients out of the neighbourhood. Emphasis is on the tendency to act, not the actual acting; what we intend and what we do may be quite different.

Jung's definition of attitude is a "readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way" (Jung par. 687). According to Jung, attitudes very often come in pairs, one

conscious and the other unconscious. Within this broad definition Jung defines several attitudes. The main (but not the only) attitude dualities that Jung defines are the following;

- a. Consciousness and the unconscious: the "presence of two attitudes is extremely frequent, one conscious and the other unconscious. This means that consciousness has a constellation of contents different from that of the unconscious, a duality particularly evident in neurosis" (Jung, par. 687).
- b. Extraversion and introversion: this pair is so elementary to Jung's theory of types that he labelled them the "attitude-types".
- c. Rational and irrational attitudes: the rational attitude subdivides into the thinking and feeling psychological functions, each with its attitude. The irrational attitude subdivides into the sensing and intuition psychological functions, each with its attitude. There is thus a typical thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuitive attitude (Jung par. 691).

1.5.2 Theories of Attitude Formation and Change.

a. Functionalist theory.

Daniel Katz proposes a functionalist theory of attitudes. He is of the view that attitudes are determined by the functions they serve for us. People hold certain attitudes because these attitudes help them achieve their basic goals. Katz distinguishes four types of psychological functions that attitudes meet. These are discussed below.

- i. **Instrumental:** Katz says that people develop favourable attitudes towards things that aid or reward them. They would want to maximize rewards and minimize

penalties. According to him, we develop attitudes that help us meet our goal. For instance, we favour political parties that will advance our economic lot. If we are in business, we favour the party that will keep our taxes low; if unemployed we favour one that will increase employment and end-of- service benefits. We are more likely to change our attitudes if doing so allows us to fulfil our goals or avoid undesirable consequences.

ii. **Knowledge.:** Here, Katz discloses that attitudes provide meaningful, structured environment. In life we seek some degree of order, clarity, and stability in our personal frame of reference. Attitudes help supply us with standards of evaluation. Via such attitudes as stereotypes, we can bring order and clarity to the complexities of human life.

iii. **Value-expressive:** This focuses on our desire to express basic values, and reinforce our self-image. For example, if one views oneself as a catholic, one can reinforce that image by adopting catholic beliefs and values.

iv. **Ego-defensive:** Some attitudes serve to protect us from acknowledging basic truths about ourselves or the harsh realities of life. They serve as defence mechanisms. Those with feelings of inferiority may develop an attitude of superiority. Katz's functionalist theory also offers an explanation as to why attitudes change. According to Katz, an attitude changes when it no longer serves its function and the individual feels blocked or frustrated. That is attitude change is achieved not so much by changing a person's information or perception about an object, but rather by changing the person's underlying motivational and personality needs. This implies that in trying to change the attitude of learners towards English, one must focus on things that motivate them besides identifying the appropriate learning theory that

should be applied to enhance the teaching and learning process. A close examination of some of the leaning theories will be useful at this stage.

Learning Theories

Darwin (182) (which stresses attitude formation) explains several means by which attitudes are formed. These views are summarised below.

a. Classical conditioning: this is when the individual becomes accustomed to a particular situation as a result of repeated exposure to that situation. If a child's parents are football fans and cheer during football games in the presence of the child, the child may grow to love football without knowing why he/she does so besides the fact that he likes the parent's happy attitude towards football.

b. Instrumental, or operant conditioning: these are behaviours or attitudes that are followed by positive consequences and are occasionally reinforced. They are more likely to be repeated than behaviours and attitudes that are followed by negative consequences.

c. Observational learning: these are situations in which children watch the behaviour of people around them and imitate what they see. For instance, if a young girl sees her parents always reading and sharing what they read with each other, she may take up that habit in school. Whether she continues to repeat that behaviour depends on the responses of her classmates, teacher, and parents. That is, observations determine the responses we learn, but reinforcement determines the responses we express.

d. Cognitive dissonance theory: stresses attitude change and explains how behaviours can determine attitudes. The individual's perception or attitude, beliefs,

and behaviours can change when others make a decision favouring one alternative and which he might have not originally supported.

The prevailing view among cognitive social psychologists was that "attitude" has both affective and belief components, and that attitudes and behaviour should be consistent; i.e., people with positive attitudes should behave positively toward the attitude object. In other words students with some negative attitude towards grammar are by nature negative in their attitudes. However, many other researchers on attitudes do not agree that people's attitudes generally predict their natural behaviour, not even when such attitudes are measured under optimal conditions (Wicker, 69).

1.5.3. Fishbein and Ajzen's (Attitudes) Theory of Reasoned Action

In 1975, Fishbein and Ajzen propounded a theory of reasoned action which they claim would improve our ability to predict behaviour. The theory of reasoned action applies to the prediction of intentions, as opposed to behaviour itself. According to them "if behaviour is under volitional control, then the intention to perform an action will correlate very highly with the action itself."⁸ Attitudes toward the behaviour, by their assertion, are made up of beliefs about engaging in the behaviour and the associated evaluation of that belief. (175)

Behaviour scaling: Fishbein and Ajzen (1976:197) also address a measurement problem that makes the prediction of intentions problematic. They note that researchers, such as Guttman and Thurstone, spent great effort to develop attitude

⁸ Fishbein and Ajzen published *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behaviour: An Introduction to Theory and Research*.

scales that are reliable, valid, and satisfy certain measurement criteria. Other than the researcher's intuition, there is no way to scale how positive or negative a particular behaviour might be. Consider someone who has a positive attitude toward abortion rights. One may find that the person does not sport a bumper sticker advocating abortion rights. Fishbein will not find this puzzling because, according to him, we don't know anything about how the behaviour, displaying the bumper sticker, scales. Is it an extremely positive behaviour or it is slightly positive?

Moderators: Although Fishbein and Ajzen believe that any other variable affecting the attitude-intention (behaviour) link exert its effect on one of the terms in the model, Ajzen's own research proves that this is erroneous. Moderation comes about as a result of self monitoring. Self-monitoring, according to Ajzen, refers to a stable individual difference in the tendency to vary one's behaviour in different situations. High self-monitors are sensitive to situation cues and tailor their behaviour, dress, and speech to the situation. Low self-monitors are indifferent to situational cues and act on the basis of their principles. Ajzen, Timko and White (1982) found that the attitude/intention model was more predictive of the behaviour of low self-monitors than high self-monitors. High self-monitors' intentions did not correlate with their behaviour. Low self-monitors apparently tend to act on their attitudes no matter what the situation is. High self-monitors may not express an attitude in behaviour if they feel the behaviour is inappropriate for the situation. (White 82)

Private self-consciousness: This is a second individual difference moderator. Private self-consciousness is the dispositional tendency to be aware of one's own internal thoughts and feelings. Miller & Grush found higher attitude/behaviour

consistency for people high in private self-consciousness, “presumably because they were more aware of their own attitudes”. (321)

1.5. 4. Fazio's Attitude Accessibility Theory

Fazio defines attitude as “a learned association between a concept and an evaluation.” (39) According to him, like any construct based on associative learning, attitude strength varies. Fazio indexes strength using a reaction time paradigm. The more rapidly an attitude can be expressed, the greater its strength. The stronger the attitude, the more accessible it is. To guide behaviour, attitudes must be accessible. He is of the view that attitudes that are highly accessible from memory are much more likely to guide behaviour than less accessible attitudes. Fazio further demonstrates that accessible attitudes are activated spontaneously upon presentation of the attitude issue. His emphasis on the automatic activation of attitudes differs markedly from Fishbein's view that attitudes result from a controlled effortful process of attribute, consideration and evaluation. For example, when people are suddenly rewarded for doing something they did before just because they liked it, they could come to like it less. Myers gives an example as follows: A child was reading 6-8 books a week. A Library then started a reading club which promised a party to those who read 10 books in three months. The child started borrowing only one or two books a week. Simply because, she only needed to read ten books.

1.5.5 Emotion and Attitude Change

Attitudes and attitude objects are functions of cognitive, affective and conative components. Attitudes are part of the brain's associative networks, the spider-like structures residing in long term memory that consist of affective and cognitive nodes.

(Moorhead G.2001) According to her, by activating an affective or emotion node, attitude change may be possible, though affective and cognitive components tend to be intertwined. In primarily affective networks, it is more difficult to produce cognitive counterarguments in the resistance to persuasion and attitude change

Affective forecasting, otherwise known as intuition or the prediction of emotion, also impacts attitude change. Research suggests that predicting emotions is an important component of decision making, in addition to the cognitive processes. How we feel about an outcome may override purely cognitive rationales.

Robert N. Bostrom of Western Illinois University conducted a related study on the topic “Grades As Reinforcers In The Production of Attitude Change.”⁹ The research sought to establish that grades are important sources of motivation and result in significant changes in one’s behaviour. Bostrom’s study was designed to examine the effect differential assignment of grades might have on attitudes when the grades are assigned to essays that express attitudes. His hypothesis is that a good grade should produce a repetition of the response which it follows, while a poor grade should reduce the frequency of the preceding responses. Also, a good grade should positively change a person’s attitude towards the subject being learned whilst a bad grade may lead to some negative attitude towards the subject.

The method Bostrom used was as follows. A 40-item questionnaire containing four item attitude scales was administered to 228 students enrolled in Communication

⁹This study was published in Human Learning in the School. (p.129) by John P. De Cecco

Skills classes at the State University of Iowa. The subjects responded to each item on a five-point continuum; ranging from strongly agree, to strongly disagree. The issue on which their opinions were sought was Legalising Gambling. The views were first expressed verbally through interviews. The students were asked to write essays on the same topic on the opposing views. On a random basis, grades were assigned to the students' essays. One third of the subjects were graded 'A', one third received grade 'D' and the last third were given no grade at all. The reason given for the no grade category was that there was not sufficient time to mark all the essays. At the end of the experiment Bostrom observed that some students who were initially opposed to the view but got grade 'A' had attitudinal change about legalising gambling. Similarly, those who supported the view but obtained grade 'D' had remarkable change of attitude towards the issue of legalising gambling. Bostrom's findings indicate that good grades serve as motivation to the student to learn the item further, whilst bad grade can negatively affect the attitude that the candidate has about the subject. However, this assessment of attitudinal change might not be permanent as the effect of the grade can fade off from the mind of the student. Much as some students might change their opinion on certain issues because they know them well, or they perform well in them, they may still maintain their original positions or views about the issue days later.

The essence of this deep exploration of the concepts of attitude and perception lies in the very nature of their relatedness to the development of behaviour patterns of learners with negative attitudes and perception of English. Festinger's belief that attitude is a response to communication and that attitude can be changed through persuasion, poses a great deal of challenge to both teachers and parents as

communicators for attitudinal change. The readiness of learners to act or react, as contained in Jung's definition of attitude is dependent on the kind of communication that goes on between teachers and learners on the one hand and learners and parents on the other. Whether the resultant action or reaction on the part of learners is favourable or unfavourable depends on Daniel Katz's assertion that people develop favourable attitudes towards things that aid or reward them. This is closely related to Darwin's observational learning theory which says that children learn from adults through observation.

In the same vein, Robert Bostrom's research on the effect of grading on learners' performance is crucial to the English teacher in his or her assessment of learner's performance. The grades that his learners obtain would provide vital information about the likely behaviour and resultant attitude of learners. The teacher would thus be able to make use of Fishbein and Ajzen's reasoned theory on ability to predict the behaviour of learners.

In sum, it is important to note that all the various theories and ideas about attitude formation and perceptual orientations help in the understanding of the mental and psychological disposition of the students that serve as the target population of this study. A clear understanding of how the sort of attitude that we observe in them comes about is important to the search for ways of building positive attitude in learners. The ideas of the above theorists are useful to not only the teacher, but also to parents and policy makers. A good knowledge of how attitudes are formed is necessary in addressing issues relating to the behaviour and conduct of learners.

1.6.0 Concept of Ability

Numerous notions have been used to describe learners' ability in the target language. The first such influential concept was the Competence-Performance Distinction introduced by Chomsky. According to Chomsky (1965), “a grammar is not a description of the performance of a speaker but rather of his linguistic competence. (35)¹⁰ He sees language as an extremely rich and complex system that is more than a mere series of associations between words that are linearly ordered. In this light, Chomsky sees language to “consist of hierarchical structure with at least two levels of representation; a deep and underlying structure (D-structure) that is mapped by transformation onto a surface structure, (S-structure). The deep structure of language is what is referred to as the Universal Grammar- a set of universal principles of language which serve to restrict what can be a possible grammar of any given language. Chomsky believes that these Universal Principles are innate and are part of the genetic programme of the child.

Consequently, Chomsky distinguishes competence – a person's idealized knowledge of language rules from performance, the realization of these rules. Thus, a person may be interrupted and not finish a sentence, but will still know how to make a complete sentence. Although this distinction has become fundamental to most works in linguistics today, it has not been proven to be adequate to describe the complex nature of learners' developing ability. The notion of Communicative Competence was first raised by Dell Hymes (1967) in reacting against the perceived inadequacy of Chomsky's distinction between linguistic competence, and performance.

¹⁰ “Aspects of the Theory of Syntax”

Whereas Chomsky treats competence as primarily grammatical, Hymes' Communicative Competence embraces all of the forms of knowledge that learners must have in order to communicate effectively, thus emphasising the surface structure of language exclusively. The emphasis on surface structure only of language is inadequate in the sense that whatever the learner produces in the course of learning a second language is influenced to a large extent by the internalised knowledge about language.

A closely related concept is proficiency. Proficiency is usually distinguished from competence, which refers to knowledge: "proficiency refers to the learner's ability to use this knowledge effectively in different tasks" (Ellis, 1994, 720). Because any test of competence is a task of some sort, it may be argued that all measures of competence are, in effect, measuring some degrees of proficiency. Both proficiency and competence are internally complex. They do not reflect a single attribute, but many different types of knowledge in a complex interrelationship. For example, Kasper and Rose (2002) reviewed numerous studies of the complex relationship between grammatical and pragmatic proficiency. They see the relationship as one that is intricately interwoven, with the effect of one naturally leading to the learning of the other. They argue that the learning of first language is greatly influenced by grammatical elements, whilst proficiency has much bearing on the acquisition of a second language.

The measurement of language ability, although necessary for both research and teaching, is inevitably problematic especially where one cannot easily determine the internal factors in the individual. The point that is being made here is that the very

nature of English grammar with regard to transformational grammar, which constitute the greater aspect of spoken and written language, are themselves sources of confusion to learners.

In all these arguments, there is one fundamental truth which all three scholars have failed to take note of. English is a foreign language used by Ghanaians as a *lingua franca*. It came with its rules and must be used within the context of those rules. Again, the issue of attitude is manifested here. The fact that it is not a Ghanaian language does not mean it should be subjected to any form of corruption. One wonders how tolerable it would be to corrupt a Ghanaian language in the name of the dynamism of language. It is important at this stage to assess the kinds of attitudes that are exhibited even by the scholars who are to help make the learning of the language agreeable to our students.

To a very large extent therefore, it would not be far-fetched for this study to conclude that some of the frustrations that learners face with learning English are attributable to the perceptions of authorities of the language. It is important to disclose that the views of even grammarians about English grammar are, to a large extent, determined by their perceptions. This, to some extent, serves as an excuse for learners to be sceptical about the language. The use of concord, tense, and aspect, as well as punctuations largely govern English usage and these, unfortunately, are the major areas where there is remarkable controversy. Indeed, it is undeniable that most aberrations in the use of English occur in the use of grammar. Both spoken and written English are controlled by grammar. The researcher therefore found it appropriate to closely examine, in detail, the disposition of learners towards

grammar. The researcher undertook a close observation of the teaching of grammar in a typical classroom situation, and the responses and reactions of students formed key points for observation and analysis in the course of the study. The analysis of the teaching and learning of grammar in the classroom took into consideration the learning needs of the students, and the native language effect as against what was pertaining in the classroom. Native language effect is a feature identified by Brown as a one that produces interference. According to him, the target and native language exist in the same sphere creating bidialecticism- a situation described by Craig as a continuum in which “many speakers can shift their speech from one point to another on the continuum, without necessarily being able to take in the whole range” (1987:21).

In addition, the sociolinguistic factor of the native language of the students has the potential to hinder effective learning of English grammar. Amongst the language needs of the Ghanaian student is the need to know the distinction between Standard English and the non- standard version. Focus on grammar is needed to highlight to students the differences between the target and native language. Nero (1978) identifies several language needs of English Language learners. Amongst the needs is a focus on all aspects of the target language – speaking, writing, listening and reading. He further observes that there needs to be a comparative study of the writing and speech of the native language and the target language.

The grammar syllabus for the Senior High School English Language was also closely examined. Though the topics appeared comprehensive and adequate in terms of achieving the objectives of learning, the possibility of covering all the topics within

the period allocated for studies was seriously in doubt. Developing a syllabus should take some factors into consideration.

Richards (1987: 145)) listed six dimensions of syllabus development, and opined that at each stage the Grammar Translation Method would guide the direction of planning. The dimensions he identifies are: developing a course rationale, describing entry and exit levels, choosing course content, sequencing course content, planning the course content and preparing the scope and sequence plan. His main aim is to enable learners;

- i. determine which sentence constructions are grammatically correct in Standard English.
- ii. understand the differences between the grammar of Standard English and what constitutes substandard English.
- iii. produce grammatically acceptable sentences in Standard English.

From this proposed rationale it is clear that Richard's focus is on the learning of the grammar rules of the target language. In addition, the native language of the learners is utilised as a point of reference in instruction. The Grammar Translation Method places emphasis on the study of classic texts, extensive analysis and memorisation of grammar. It also views language learning as an intellectual exercise. A number of theories that have been proposed for the learning of language is discussed in detail in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND OVERVIEW OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF GRAMMAR.

This section delves into concepts and theories that are relevant to this study. Arguments are made on key concepts and theories that provide the framework for the study. There are many who hold the view that the standard of English in Ghana is falling. English is the medium of communication in schools in Ghana. A close examination of the characteristics of classroom communication in our schools reveal what goes on in the teaching and learning of English Language. One constant dilemma for teachers over the years is how to select teaching strategies which enable students to learn well and teachers to cover their syllabuses. Embedded in this dilemma are a number of questions that border on the use of language (communication). These are:

- How effective is teaching by telling in the learning of English grammar?
- How much grammar can students learn the language by speaking to one another?
- Talking is important, but how do we know if it is the right kind of talk?
- How can we make classroom discussion work better for effective learning?

Language learning is fundamental in human activity. With the advent of formal schooling, a pedagogical approach was applied, although initially with little linguistic knowledge. In the latter half of the twentieth century, this changed with the field of linguistics becoming an integral academic base for language learning theories. As with all academic fields, advances in linguistic knowledge resulted in

changes in language teaching methods. These methods had ideological bases as well, that in some cases complemented the relevant linguistic theory.

In addition, a particular theory is utilised as the best possible way to teach the language to the particular student population. Stern divided language learning history into two periods: 1940-1960 and 1965-1970 (131). The Grammar Translation and Direct Method were of the first period and Audio-lingual Habit Formation of the latter. In the early stages of language learning theory, the focus was on language learning as an intellectual exercise, the study of classical literature in the target language and the study of grammatical rules and translation exercises. This was called the Grammar Translation method. It involved the teaching of a grammatical rule followed by its application to a translation exercise.

Grammar was considered part of the mental discipline required for language. The focus on grammar showed that language was viewed as a rule-governed system. As such, focus was put on elaborate grammatical explanations, grammatical terms, rule exceptions and rule memorisation. Translation formulae and vocabulary lists were used. The focus was on reading and writing as opposed to listening and speaking. The target was explained in comparison to the native language of the learners. Though it was an early theory it possessed some advanced linguistic principles. Amongst them was the comparison of the target and native language. Cross lingual techniques and the use of the native language as a reference resulted in students understanding the grammatical system of the target language. (Stern, 455). However, the students were never truly free from the native language hampering expression.

Linguistic theory came into conflict with the Grammar Translation method as language is primarily speech not writing. The method's focus on translation resulted in accuracy, but accuracy did not result in creativity. As language is creative, according to Hockett, students were not able to create novel sentences and risk taking. One of the twelve principles proposed by Douglas Brown in language learning is risk –taking (13). Students must attempt to produce language with the knowledge that errors are inevitable. This belief is undermined when the fixation is on correct grammatical forms.. Another grammatical principle is meaningful learning. This requires the content to have some relevance in usage by the learner. This relevance was not attained with the Grammar Translation method's use of translation exercises that lacked cultural awareness of the target language and usability in everyday situations.

Another divergence with linguistic theory that the Grammar Translation method, and later the Audio-lingual Habit Formation method had was that repetition does not necessitate learning. The focus on translations, vocabulary lists and drills meant that students could recall isolated aspects of the language readily and not produce lengthy coherent structures. The students' "apparent high level of accuracy, based on the use of memorised chunks, suddenly drops and rises again as they come to create novel sentences" (Lightbrown, 1987:444). The focus on isolated aspects of the target language meant that corrections were given without consideration for changing language behaviour. The primacy of speech in language learning is a key principle of the Direct Method of teaching. This was difficult for teachers to do as some form of translation was needed to explain concepts to students.

With advances in linguistic theories, phonetics was introduced to language learning. With the direct association there was no need for the use of the native language. The method moved from speaking about the language to speaking the language. It diverged from the Grammar Translation method in using the native language in instruction, as it was viewed as a hindrance to speaking. This method addressed the need for meaningful learning with the inclusion of common situations and classroom objects. In addition, lessons depicted life in a geographic area where the target is spoken. To assist with language creativity, students are exposed from the onset to complete and meaningful sentences. This helped with genuine communication compared to the abstract sentences and formulae memorised in the Grammar Translation method..

The method promotes Brown's principle of second language acquisition, automaticity. This is a "timely movement of the control of a few language forms into the automatic processing of a relatively unlimited number of language forms" Automaticity was seen in the graded approach in which the easy and then more difficult lessons were taught. This graded approach to language teaching is articulated in the Second Language Generalisations by Light Brown. The principle is that "there are predictable sequences in L2 acquisition such that certain structures have to be acquired before others can be integrated" (442). This meant that the students' production of the target language was the only way to assess language acquisition.

There was no explicit teaching of grammar as it was believed that they would be learnt through practice. Knowing a language rule does not mean that it can be used in

a communicative interaction. However, the Direct Method's focus on learner generated sentences has its critics. Rivers (1981) warns that the result may be "clothing native-language structures in foreign-language vocabulary." Despite this the recognition that errors are inevitable is a result of advances in linguistic theory. Brown lists a generalisation of second language learning as "the learner creates a systematic inter-language which is often characterised by the same systematic errors as the child learning the same language as the first language, as well as others which appear to be based on the learner's own native language" (441). This method placed heavy emphasis on teacher training and knowledge.

Bowen et. al. state that the Direct Method rejected the Natural Methodologist's belief that language learning was not affected by age (25). This meant that the language teacher would have to modify teaching approaches for young and adult learners. Stern also poses an important question as "how to apply the Direct Method beyond the elementary stages of language learning" (460). As more complex language tasks are required by the students, such as the production of large and coherent amounts of the target speech and writing, the method would not be suitable.

Another theory that championed language as primarily an oral system was the Audio-lingual Habit Formation or Audio-lingual Method. The main linguistic knowledge incorporated in this method was the study of recurring language patterns. The sub-fields involved in this were morphology and phonology. Audio-lingual theory had much grounding in structural linguistics. Bloomfield advocated that language learning was a conscious effort. That was why drills and the use of graded material formulated by trained linguists were important. In addition, the division

of the aspects of language into listening, speaking, reading and writing; became utilised. The focus on communication was as a result of Bloomfield's 1942 criticism that students would have years of foreign language instruction and yet not be able to use the language being studied. This was viewed as the natural progression of language.

Lado (1976) on his part formulated what he called laws to guide the Audio-lingual Method. These laws were based on behaviourist psychology and contrastive linguistics. The laws were characterised by contiguity or the recall of one experience when another occurs, exercise or practise, intensive language study, assimilation or the same response with similar conditions and effect or the reinforcement of satisfying responses. The focus on intensive study was as a result of the realisation that the target language requires time. Audiolingualism paid attention to sequence. Sequence, promoted by Krashen and Seliger (Stern, 1996:488) was a feature of language teaching based on the idea that language teaching should be graded.

Linguists such as Halliday, McIntish and Strevens disagreed with the lack of contextual meaning that structural linguistics had. In addition, the universality of language meant that some structures would be present in different languages. On one hand the native language could produce interference. However, the concept of inter-language meant that between the native language and target language lay a stage where the native language was used by the learner to understand the target language structures.

Linguists such as Di Pietro called for the comparison of the native and target languages in contrastive analysis. In addition, psychologists such as Rivers found flaws in the psychological assumptions in the method. For example, the insistence on spoken language was found to be too rigid and the drills sacrificed the socio-cultural contexts in which language must be spoken. The focus on drills was also seen as teachers not offering intellectual activity to students. Stern describes this as “habituation and conditioning without the intervention of any intellectual analysis” (1984: 464). The lack of emphasis on intellectual activity at the same time made language learning unavailable to a wide range of students of varying ages and abilities.

Rivers (1978) concluded that an eclectic approach to language teaching was needed. Though different language theories competed with one another for use in the classroom, there was a benefit to the field of linguistics. First, linguistics became useful as an important base for language teaching pedagogy and classroom instruction began to describe the target language. Also this focus on linguistics gave rise to the field of educational linguistics. Before any syllabus or course of study is planned or implemented a needs analysis of the students must be done.

Relating the above exposition on the teaching – learning of a second language in Ghana, teachers of English have traditionally placed great faith in the direct benefits of separate grammar instruction. Specifically, they often teach grammar in isolation from writing. Griffith, Klesius, and Zielonka (1993) observe that this skills approach to literacy has its foundation in behaviourist theory, which assumes that literacy is acquired through direct separate skills instruction. These skills would then become

integrated through practice (91). These ideas about how to effectively teach grammar attracted much greater criticism from grammarians who have over the years argued on two main approaches to the teaching of grammar, prescriptive and descriptive grammar.

2.10 Prescriptive and Descriptive Grammar as Methods of Teaching English.

Atwell, & Meyer disclose that some teacher-researchers found that grammar instruction can be far more effective if it is incorporated into students' writing instruction. "We see here a turning away from teaching prescriptive grammar and towards the acknowledgment that there are certain conventions of written language that are learned best within the context of composition studies, not isolated drill in those conventions or rules." (321). Holdaway (1989) maintains that there are two types of knowledge- productive knowledge, which involves the knowledge of how to do something, and abstract knowledge which is the knowledge about something. When one relates these ideas to the learning of grammar, one might come to the conclusion that Holdaway is stressing the point that, "It is far more important that learners know how to use language effectively than know the analytical terms that relate to language and syntax".(87) He adds that educators have made the mistake of thinking that learners need to know about how the language operates in order to use it successfully. He adds that the purpose of language arts instruction should be reading and writing fluency. He is of the view that, that cannot happen successfully if teachers take up class time to drill learners on unintelligible rules (38). This view by Holdaway is more or less the position that most parents and users of the language have adopted and which has unfortunately led to much complacency in the learning

of English. The position of Holdaway regarding the learning of English is debatable because one wonders how the second language learner knows how to use the language effectively without learning how it operates. It is the rules and systems that serve as guidelines to the language that will enable the learner to judge his /her performance in the learning process.

Clearly, prescriptive grammar and the cult of correctness that accompanies it were seen by many researchers such as Holdaway as problematic. They loudly questioned whether the isolated instruction in the rules of language use and the names of the parts of language somehow transferred into an ability to write clearly and fluently. Martha Kolln, on her part, stresses that, “students need to be consciously aware of their own grammatical knowledge, and that can be done through studying structures and labelling them.” (64)

Rei Noguchi (1994) is another voice that is asking teachers to think critically about the role of grammar in the classroom. His book: Grammar and the Teaching of Writing suggests that “teachers limit the use of grammatical terminology to those elements or features that are necessary in helping students create fewer errors in their writing and to write more effective sentences” (99). Noguchi is one of the grammarians who believe that students must formulate their own operational descriptions of how language functions. This is a move away from the popular fashion of correctness and a recognition that students already have a vast knowledge of grammar, even though they may not be able to articulate it. Noguchi is attempting to lead teachers towards more descriptive grammars that recognize the linguistic abilities of students. He, however, acknowledges that power structures within the culture demand a level of “correctness” in writers and suggests that teachers focus on

the most common “errors” in their student’s writing and those errors that seem to most concern those who wield power in corporate, academic, and political arenas.

Any emphasis on specific points of errors instead of holistic development of proficiency in the use of the language as suggested by Noguchi, will lead to a partial address of the issue of the falling standard of the language. It will mean constantly reviewing the topics or areas of errors as many as the number of power structures exists. It should also be noted that these power structures may have their own biases regarding how the language should be taught.

Susan Hunter and Ray Wallace call for teachers to rethink the role of grammar in the English classroom. They admit that too great a focus on School or Traditional Grammar is not the answer, but they add that this is not the only approach to grammar. Wallace believes the issue has been skirted for too long, especially among English composition teachers, and that these teachers need to find ways in which to reconnect grammar and writing.

This takes us to the idea of descriptive grammars, those grammars that describe language in use. Noguchi suggests that teachers work with students at the sentence level with lessons involving subject-verb-modifier. He believes that if grammar lessons limited the amount of terminology to these three concepts, many more students might have a chance at gaining a conscious insight into the structures of the language and a sense of power to manipulate those structures. He observes that too many prescriptive grammar lessons were reduced to learning terms and labelling words. However, there is little indication, that a conscious knowledge of language structures will impact students’ language use. He concludes that, “if this were the

case, then linguists would be our best writers. But certainly, we cannot say that linguists are the best writers in our society”. (54)

Patrick Hartwell, more or less in sympathy with learners of English, points out that the rules we use are too complex to define easily. He argues that, “if we give students opportunities to describe their language in use, will they be able to do so, and will this affect their abilities to use that language more effectively?” (45).

Hartwell notes that mistakes in such things as punctuation are not so much conceptual failures but performance errors. He adds that often these performance errors occur because of instruction. He therefore calls for teachers to shuck off their hyper-literate perception of the value of formal rules, and to regain the confidence in the tacit power of unconscious knowledge that our theory of language gives us. He adds that most students, when reading their own writing aloud, hear and correct them, often without noticing that they have *written* something other than what they wrote. This, according to him, tells us that knowledge of that grammar is firmly in place. He goes on to argue that the usage problems teachers often see in student writings are linguistically unnatural and a departure from the grammar in our heads, which he describes as grammar 1. The answer then seems to be one of placing students in a position where they can see the differences between their Grammar 1 and what they have written (grammar 2). I have seen this work year after year with Senior High School students. They may not be able to hypothesize the rules of grammar based on their Grammar 1, but they can often see the “unnatural” structures they have written.

Certainly, there is a growing body of theory that such activities help students think more deliberately about their use of language and the construction of meaning. Hartwell points to studies that reinforce the theory that meta-linguistic awareness is a component of print literacy. He adds that the ability to manipulate language through such techniques as sentence combining can certainly help students build meta-linguistic awareness so that they are consciously involved in language and attend to both meaning and surface form. Hartwell, however, is of the opinion that any kind of activity involving language can contribute to students' increased awareness of the language.

In the view of the researcher, there is still no evidence that Descriptive Grammars can significantly improve the performance of learners in the use of English. Moreover, the researcher's over ten years' work with senior high school students has not given him reason to believe that opportunities to describe language in use is the whole answer to proficiency in that language. What about the learner's own disposition towards the target subject or language? Perhaps if students began their earliest school literacy acquisition in situations where they had to use meta-linguistic skills to describe their language in use, the story would be somewhat different. Whether the method is descriptive or prescriptive, what the student thinks and/or feels about English and grammar, for that matter, (i.e. attitude and perception) are factors that these theorists should consider seriously.

Furthermore, the researcher has difficulty accepting Plus Kolln's premise that if students focus on the noun phrase and build from there, they would develop the metalinguistic awareness to produce fluid prose. Kolln maintains that there is a vocabulary of style that students must master. This, then, places students in a

position where they are still learning *about* language rather than learning to manipulate language in a meaningful context.

To understand the complexity of the grammar issue, teachers need to have some understanding of the language acquisition process. They need to understand that children enter the classroom with a thorough grounding in the internalized system of rules of the language they already know – (Grammar 1). Teachers should also understand that, barring some cognitive impairment, native speakers use “good” grammar, even though the language they speak may not be Standard English.

Bell Hooks points out a few problems with the notion of teaching grammar. In essence, she asks, “Whose grammar are we teaching?” (24) She pushes her argument further by asking pertinent questions;

If the goal of grammar teaching (whether within the context of writing or not) is to help students speak and write the language of power, we must ask ourselves if this is a noble goal. And by assuming that there is a language of power, and that those who master it have a better chance of being successful, what are we saying about those who do not, or will not, speak that language? (236)

Both Hartwell and Bell Hooks believe that teachers need to understand the power issues involved in the teaching of grammar, as Hartwell also holds the view that there is a power issue in the teaching of grammar. He writes:

“...that the thrust of current research and theory is to take power from the teacher and give that power to the learner. At no point in the English curriculum is the question of power more blatantly posed than in the issue of formal grammar

instruction. It is time that we, as teachers, formulate theories of language and literacy and let those theories guide our teaching...” (127)

According to him, students acquire language and literacy in much the same way, through social interaction, (through dialogue). Over the course of the literacy acquisition years, which is probably an entire lifetime, language users grow in their abilities to use that language. We as teachers can foster that growth through meaningful language-rich classroom activities that place students in situations where they build upon their knowledge of ‘Grammar 1’. Hartwell concludes with a suggestion that more research needs to be conducted especially in the area of descriptive grammar and its impact on learners’ writing. The further research that Hartwell is proposing is based on the fact that there are still problems with the two theories of teaching the language.

Whatever gap that still exists is as a result of the fact that the human element (attitude and perception) has been ignored in the teaching and learning of English. Since communication involves people, it requires social skills as well. In a classroom situation teachers and pupils will act as both speakers and listeners. Hence, if classroom communication and learning are to be assured, all the participants need to have knowledge, skills and attitudes which are appropriate to both speaking and listening in schools. When one examines classroom interaction closely, as well as the nature and quality of the teaching-learning process a number of characteristics can be expressed:

a. Who speaks and how much?

Classrooms are busy places in which typically individual teachers work with relatively large groups of learners. In their desire to maximise learning opportunities

and at the same time maintain order and organise the classroom, it is not surprising that teachers do most of the talking in the classroom. Bannett and Galton carried out a research in America which revealed that in the teaching sessions observed, two-thirds of the time was spent in talk, and two thirds of that talk was done by the teacher. Since then investigations in British primary schools have shown similar figures. Galton et al. (1999) and Bannett et al. (1984) are of the view that the situation in which the teacher does most of the talking deprives learners of the opportunity to develop their language ability; and that what they learn in the language class is foreign vocabulary from the teacher. The students only hear what the teacher says but can hardly say what they hear.

Bannett describes this method as “transmission model”, a situation in which the teacher does most of the speaking and the role of the pupils is to listen and answer teacher-directed questions. This method runs counter to a socially constructed view of learning. Exponents of the socially constructed view of learning argue that legitimisation of the teacher-directed whole class talk is seriously detrimental to learning in the classroom, especially language. The resulting learning, according to Bannett,

is the school knowledge where what is known is useful for answering teacher’s questions but it may be quickly forgotten and may have little or no impact on the learners’ personal understanding and life outside school. On the other hand, if the teacher takes a social constructive view and sees knowledge as existing in the learner’s ability to interpret, then communication will be interactive, and there will be negotiation between the teacher’s knowledge and the learner’s knowledge.

(Bannett, (271-273)

Bennett, again, maintains that going by the latter method, talking and writing will be collaborative and exploratory and will support the struggle to understand as new knowledge is related to the learner's 'action knowledge'. Thus Bennett is of the view that the teaching of English should be a form of transmission fundamentally designed to allow learners to negotiate their own way into new knowledge and understanding.

The disposition of Bennett regarding the teaching of English is a laudable one. However, successful implementation of such an idea will depend largely on the ability of the learner to play an active role in the teaching and learning process. The social constructive view that Bennett proposes survives on negotiation with the learner, and the learner, can only engage in fruitful negotiation when he/she has the desire, and with positive attitude towards the learning of the language. Moreover, allowing the learners own knowledge into the learning process should be approached with caution since such knowledge can be varied and disruptive to the subject to be learnt.

In a related argument, Moyles et al.(2003) stress that even in situations that the teacher allows learner interaction in the classroom with tight controls, the performance is rather emphasized instead of depth of understanding, and this does not lead to the mastering of language. Thus, more often than not, teachers who do most of the talking in the classroom do not actually help their learners in the learning process.

One can agree with Moyles et al. that there is need to exercise control over classroom interaction among learners. However, if such control is tight as suggested, it might

lead to an artificial interaction which might not auger well for effective learning of the language.

Another phenomenon that Barnes and Douglas (1997) observe is that silence is not golden in the language class. Traditionally, in most Ghanaian schools, silence in classrooms has been regarded as being synonymous with well-controlled classrooms in which learners are thought to be working hard and focusing on the learning task at hand. However, studies have revealed that quiet, no complaint-behaviour does not equate with a commitment to learning. Young (1984:12) observes that quiet learners might be playing truant in mind whilst present in body. Thus although they may complete the bare minimum of work, they appear to have little interest or investment in the outcome.

Young(1994) describes such learners as “people who only conform and even play the systems but do not allow the knowledge presented to them to make any deep impact upon their view of reality” (p.12). This kind of behaviour is, to a great extent, attitudinal and could be emanating from the kind of perception that the learner has about the topic, subject or the teacher. When learners do not talk in class learning becomes difficult because spoken language is central to children’s cognitive and emotional development. It is by talking that children develop their perceptions of themselves and their world. It is by talking with children and listening to what they have to say, that teachers can support the learning of their pupils.

Therefore, when students do not take part in a lesson, it is an indication of a lack of active participation on the part of the learners. For this reason Young proposes some

measures that can be taken by the teacher to ensure that learners have high interest in the learning of language. Young believes that in order to develop the required attitude in learners towards English and for that matter English grammar, the teacher should:

- emphasize the value of talk, making it the medium for learning rather than the precursor to the 'real' work of writing;
- reject whole class teacher- director talk in favour of small-group learner- centred talk,
- identify the rules of discussions and make them explicit to the learners;
- increase feelings of security and confidence by establishing friendship groups or talk partners and using them as the basis for all initial discussions;
- provide activities which encourage collaboration;
- allow learners the opportunities to consider what they want to say before calling on them to speak in front of large groups;
- work with the learners to devise ways of assessing talk and providing opportunities for pupils to reflect on what makes for effective talk.

Feldman (1978) explains, to a large extent, the kind of attitude that hinders effective learning process. In his book titled; Power Learning; Strategies for Success in College and Life, Feldman expresses the view that the speed at which a learner can learn a language depends, to a great extent, on his personal disposition about the subject of study. This, according to Feldman, determines the perception of the learner about, not only the subject, but the teacher of the subject as well. He further notes that a positive attitude towards learning English and for that matter any other subject makes a significant contribution to the development of expertise. He sees learning as

a value-led activity in which the personal commitment of the learner becomes entwined with the ability and aptitude of what is to be learnt. Good learning habit, according to Feldman, enables the learner to have the confidence to respond constructively to change, disagreement and debate; and this, in turn, promotes the understanding of what is learnt. In all these arguments about learning and attitude, Feldman does not mention how these desired positive attitudes for development could be attained. Identifying the problem is in fact the beginning of the identification of the solution. The issue of poor standard of English, though it has gained much currency especially in the Ghanaian media, has received little response from policy makers towards finding a solution to the problem.

Darko K Angsontinge and Denkabe (2005:73),¹¹ commenting on linguistic proficiency, observe that, “Linguistic proficiency in any given language presupposes a familiarity with and mastery of several registers” and that choice of register is a decision we make anytime we use language”. The emphasis placed on register is, indeed, key to the learning of a language. The use of inappropriate register in a conversation can invoke some level of displeasure in the audience. Their position, however, calls for the learning of vocabulary in various disciplines to be able to communicate effectively. Also, the mastery of the register should go along with a mastery of the principles that govern the use of the language, and in this case the grammar of the language.

In his book Pedagogic English Grammar for Teachers and Students, Kwame Owusu-Akyaw emphasises the need for teachers to be thoroughly equipped with the

¹¹ An Introduction to Language and the Language of Literature, Chapter. 6: “The English Language”.

technical details (grammatical rules) of the language in order to effectively perform their role as teachers of English. He pre-occupies himself with grammatical rules for students and teachers.

There is no doubt that the book is a good aid towards improving one's use of the language. However, Pedagogic English Grammar will not be useful to the majority of our Ghanaian populace who believe that English grammar is too difficult and has too many rules, with each rule characterised with many exceptions. Some also consider English as not a subject to be purposely studied, that English has no rules to be learnt off by rote and applied. The attitude towards learning grammar is most especially poor. There are children in Ghana who are born into families who speak English at home. They begin with the English Language as the medium of communication without learning anything about the rules. More often than not, such children perceive the English Language as a skill that is acquired naturally and therefore need not be learnt or studied. To this group of learners, grammar books would simply be boring and not worth reading. It is, therefore, not surprising that many students in second cycle institutions resort to pidgin as an alternative medium of communication. It is therefore necessary to institute measures that will make the learning of English language more pleasant to such learners.

However, the use of Pidgin does not solve the problem because it is not a variety of the English Language and therefore cannot adequately substitute the English Language. Boadi LKA in "Linguistic Barriers to Communication in the Modern World" (1994) recognises the important role that pidgin plays in the Ghanaian society.

According to him “Pidgin bridges the linguistic communication gap between the



educated elite and the ordinary person.” He further emphasised that “It serves a function which none of the standard educated European languages does” (P.57). Though one does not dispute the potential of Pidgin to serve as a vital link between certain groups of people, it

Picture 2.1: Forum on the Standards of English

is not an option to students who have one problem or the other in the use of the language.

One other source that revealed significant information on the subject under investigation, was a forum on the “Standard of English in Ghana” organised on the 21st of July 2008. Policy makers and opinion leaders presented papers at the said forum all of which point to the fact that all was not well with the use of English by Ghanaians. At the said forum various speakers expressed similar views about the causes of the problem. The then Hon. Minister of State for Tertiary Education, traced the problem to the laissez-fair attitude towards English, to the extent that people who speak and write impeccable English are referred to as “Booklong.” Parents, and even the Press, according to the minister, have all contributed to the fall in the standard of English in the country by not encouraging the use of standard English in their publications.

At the same forum, Professor Naa Afarley Sackeyfio¹² observed that the main cause of the problem of falling standard of English was the introduction of the direct method of teaching the subject. “That transformation should not have been effected in our English classroom because we are in a second-language situation, not the first - language condition of America and Great Britain,” she emphasized. She further criticised the direct method of teaching English as having contributed to the low standard of English in Ghanaian schools.

The Direct Method, according to Sackeyfio;

made students and teachers alike to concentrate on fluency in reading to the detriment of grammar and vocabulary. The beneficiaries of the new methods took their chances in the English-learning circumstances. Not only would they not subject themselves to the rigours of grammar, but they also kicked against the learning of new words, grumbling darkly at any occasion that required them to use their dictionaries. (17)

The Professor further identified wrong perception about English, especially grammar, as a major contributory factor to the problem. She described it in her presentation as a new attitude that worsened the situation of English. According to Sackeyfio, both students and teachers believe that:

- (i) “English was not a subject to be purposely studied, but a pastime to be wallowed through.”
- (ii) That English, unlike French or Latin, has no rules or parsing processes to be learnt off by rote or applied.
- (iii) That somehow, like the rain that falls free on everybody’s head, English just descended into a child’s brain upon his reading a few comics” (19).

¹² Paper read at the Director General’s Programme on Improving English Language in Public Schools, inaugurated on 17th July 2008 at the British Council Hall, Accra.

The Professor noted that the negative attitude is, to a large extent, responsible for the poor standard of English that Ghana is faced with. “It is this free and easy happy-go lucky, lax, laissez-faire attitude to English that is the pivot of all the other reasons why English standards have “dipped”. (19) Indeed, Naa Afarley’s comments could not have been more appropriate at the time that the standard of English in Ghana is a major issue. The comments by Naa Afarley, more or less, serve as foreground for this study. The views of Naa Afarley are in consonance with what propelled the researcher to undertake the study. It emphasises the point made by the researcher’s hypothesis that the poor standard of English spoken is largely as a result of the negative attitude towards the learning of English, especially grammar. At the time Ghana’s educational standard was deemed high, and when English was considered as a subject to be studied, the attitude of learners was the operative concept and the moving spirit of the comparatively good performance in the language.

There is, yet, another school of thought that holds a contrary view about the standard of spoken English in Ghana. Forson Ben, (1996:135), in “An Investigation Into The Argot (Pidgin) As A Means of Communication Among Ghanaian Senior School Students” (Diss) ... University of Ghana, 1996, argues that:

The general situation about the standard of English Language is one of idealization by its users, or condemnation, especially by the older generation representing a purist attitude that seems to preclude the implication of variability in language use.

Forson’s idea had a backing by Darko (2003:3) who believes that “The flood gates be open to allow English to find its own mode in Ghana”.

Sey (1994) is one other scholar who sympathizes with the kind of English that is spoken in Ghana .He describes the kind of English in Ghana in a book, titled Ghanaian English, An Exploratory Survey. He contends that:

Those common forms of English threatened to alter ideas of correct English in Ghana and so have been denounced by most Ghanaian educators who enforced the British standard as the only appropriate standard for written English in Ghana and who denounce all linguistic deviations from British Standard English as pidginisation. (Sey, 3).

Language scholars have propounded a number of theories on learning a second language. Since English is a second language to Ghanaians it would be useful to examine some of these theories and analyse their effectiveness in the face of negative perceptions and attitudes about English. One such school of thought is Long's principle of interaction. Long's interaction hypothesis proposes that learning a language is strongly facilitated by the use of the target language in interaction. In particular, the negotiation of meaning has been shown to contribute greatly to the acquisition of vocabulary . In a review of the substantial literature on this topic, Nation (1997) relates the value of negotiation to the generative use of words – the use of words in new contexts which stimulate a deeper understanding of their meaning. However, in a situation where people simply choose to interact in either a different language or in a corrupted form of the target language, there is very little that one can do to enhance one's competence in the target language. Interaction here is dependent on the attitudinal and perceptual disposition of the learner in question.

Over the years, governments and financiers of education have blamed the falling standard of English and education in general on the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of teachers. In other words, effective teaching alone is capable of raising the

standard of English of our students, thus emphasising the effectiveness of explicit teaching. The question that readily arises is; can language teaching have a constructive effect beyond providing learners with enhanced input? The important issue that is often ignored is the learner's internal factor. This is primarily concerned with the question: How do learners gain competence in the target language? In other words, given effective input and instruction, with what internal resources do learners process this input to produce rule-governed English?

One other argument that is worth examining is Eric Lenneberg's Critical Period theory in learning a language. This is a notion that children learn L2s easily and older learners rarely achieve fluency. Although evidence for L2 learning ability declining with age is controversial, it was popularised in 1967 for L1 acquisition. There are apparent differences in language aptitudes of children and adults. Recent studies (Mayberry and Lock, 2003) have recognised that certain aspects of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) may be affected by age, though others remain intact. They assert that language competence occurs primarily, possibly exclusively, during childhood as the brain loses plasticity after a certain age. It then becomes rigid and fixed, and loses the ability for adaptation and reorganisation, rendering language learning difficult. The question that remains unanswered is how do other learnings take place? It is the same brain that absorbs and retains whatever new learning takes place in the day to day activities of the individual. What is important here is the disposition of the individual to the subject to be learnt but not the inability of the brain due to age advancement.

This reductionist theory therefore is largely not applicable to the situation that our students find themselves in. Language transfer refers to learners trying to apply rules

and forms of the first language into the second language. Transfer is an important factor in language learning at all levels. Typically, learners begin by transferring sounds (phonetic transfer) and meanings (semantic transfer), as well as various rules including word order and pragmatics. As learners progress and gain more experience with the target language, the role of transfer typically diminishes. Thus a lot of the direct translations that we have in Ghanaians speaking English are as a result of language transfer.

Another aspect that this study considers is the individual learner's aptitude. Research on variation between individual learners seeks to address the question: Why do some learners do better than others? However, considerable controversy remains about whether language aptitude is properly regarded as a unitary concept, an organic property of the brain, or as a complex of factors including motivation and short-term memory.

Language aptitude research is often criticized for being irrelevant to the problems of language learners who must attempt to learn a language regardless of whether they are gifted for the task or not. This explains why the general belief of some respondents that females are more gifted in learning English than males, is rather axiomatic. The main focus of this study is on the affective factors in the learning of the language. Affective factors relate to the learner's emotional state and attitude toward the target language. Research on affect in language learning is still strongly influenced by Bloom's taxonomy, which describes the affective levels of receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and self-characterization through one's value system.

2.2.0 Affective Filter

Furthermore, researchers believe that language all learners possess an affective filter, which affects language acquisition. If students possess high filter they are less likely to engage in language learning because of shyness, concern for grammar or other factors. Students possessing a lower affective filter will be more likely to engage in learning because they are less likely to be impeded by other factors. The affective filter is an important component of second language learning. Although some continue to propose that a low level of anxiety may be helpful, studies have almost unanimously shown that anxiety damages students' prospects for successful learning. Anxiety is often related to a sense of threat to the learner's self-concept in the learning situation. For example, if a learner fears being ridiculed for a mistake, he is likely to remain silent throughout the learning session. This is one of the common factors that many students from non- literate homes face.

Second language acquisition may be more difficult for some people due to certain social factors. One highly studied social factor impeding language development is the issue of extroverts versus introverts. Studies have shown that extroverts (or unreserved and outgoing people) acquire a second language better than introverts (or shy people). One particular study done by Naiman reflects this point. The subjects were 72 Canadian high school students from grades 8, 10 and 12 who were studying French as a second language. Extroverts were willing to try to communicate even if they were not sure they would succeed. It is worth closely analysing the following response from a student who was interviewed by the researcher. In response to the question: “How do you find your English lessons in school?”

I like Mr. Razak's English class – it is fun and interesting. He makes us do our homework and everything well. He always make us work in groups and sometimes we converse as if we are at home or on the play ground yet we end up understanding what he wants us to learn. I am always eager to meet Mr. Razak because of the way he makes me laugh and learn at the same time.

Student's affective and emotional perceptions about learning, as indicated in the above response from the student, influence how learners construct meaning and how they act and interact during classroom lessons. Recent literacy research has focussed on students motivation to learn and their engagement in various activities. As noted by prominent researchers such as Guthrie and Wigfield, (1997) in the area of reading engagement, an engagement perspective takes into account both the cognitive and motivational aspects of literacy and provides a more comprehensive description of how students read and become more involved in literacy activities. Motivation theorists such as Pintrich and Schunk (1996) propose that an individual's beliefs, values, and goals for achievement are critical influences in their achievement-related behaviour. Building on these ideas, Wigfield (1997) presents the following constructs as questions. These constructs relate to motivation in general and literacy in particular.

- Can I succeed and be a good reader?
- Do I want to succeed and be a good reader and why?
- What do I need to do to succeed as a good reader?

To answer the question, "Can I succeed to be a good reader?" assumes that students can assess their ability and beliefs or evaluate their competence in various areas. For example, if students believe that grammar rules are easy to comprehend and that they can easily apply these rules in both written and spoken language, then this often

relates and predicts their success in the learning process or in accomplishing the task. Students' expectancy or sense of how well they will perform on the task as against how good they are at the task also predicts their success.

Finally, students' self efficacy – the beliefs a person has about his or her capabilities to learn or perform at designated levels is a major determinant, when choosing activities or being willing to expand effort and being persistent in completing the task. In other words, when students believe that they are competent enough to apply the rules of grammar in their communication, they are more likely to find the learning of grammar useful and interesting. Wigfield maintains that if we hope to motivate students to read, then they (students) must answer the question, “Do I want to be a good reader?”, with an affirmative “yes” Wigfield's observation is particularly relevant to the assessment of students' attitude and perception when it comes to learning certain subjects. This is an important question when we consider the fact that there are situations in which students have the ability to read but simply lack the desire.

Desiring to learn, according to Wigfield, is based on the subjective task value or a student's incentive for engaging in an activity. Furthering the argument, Wigfield points out that the answer to the same question can be determined by either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, which involves completing a task either because you are interested in the task, (intrinsic motivation) or you are being driven by external factors, (extrinsic motivation). In the same vein, answering the question “Why do I want to be good in English grammar?” relates to two other constructs, first of which is achievement goals or the purpose students have for learning a particular subject.

This includes the goal to learn an activity and the desire to outperform others. Answering the question, “What do I need to do to be a good reader” is, according to Wigfield grounded in the construct of strategy use, or whether students believe strategies are useful to their learning volition. Learners’ belief (self efficacy), expectation that they will do well, interest in task, involvement, and use of strategies to help themselves succeed play a crucial role in their individual motivation to achieve.

2.3.0 Motivation

The role of motivation in second language acquisition (SLA) has been the subject of extensive scholarship, closely influenced by work in motivational psychology. Motivation is internally complex, and Dörnyei (2001a:1) begins his work by stating that, "Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as motivation." There are many different kinds of motivation. These are often divided into types such as intrinsic, integrative, instrumental, and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to do something for an internal reward. Most studies have shown it to be substantially more effective in long-term language learning than extrinsic motivation, for an external reward such as high grades or praise. This kind of motivation is often short lived and often forgotten of and the driving force for action missing.

Integrative and instrumental orientations refer to the degree that a language is learned for its own sake (integrative) or for instrumental purposes. Studies have not consistently shown either form of motivation to be more effective than the other, and the role of each is probably conditioned by various personality, perceptual, attitudinal as well as cultural factors. Some research has shown that motivation correlates

strongly with proficiency, indicating that successful learners are motivated and that success improves motivation. Thus motivation is not fixed, but is strongly affected by feedback from the environment. Accordingly, the study of motivation in SLA has also examined many of the external factors discussed above, such as the effect of instructional techniques on motivation. In their research on Willingness to Communicate, Mac Intyre et al. (1998) revealed that motivation is not the final construct before learners engage in communication. According to them, learners may be highly motivated yet remain unwilling to communicate.

It is important therefore for the teacher of English grammar to determine the kind of motivation that will propel her learners to develop the desired interest in the learning of English grammar. With the prevailing poor attitude towards the learning of grammar, it is imperative that students are motivated enough to appreciate and understand that the learning of grammar is the sure way of improving upon one's English Language competence. Mac Intyre et al.'s assertion that learners could be highly motivated but refuse to communicate stems from the issue of attitude of the learners. If the attitude is negative then such a situation can arise. Besides, since individual differences exist among learners the teacher of grammar should be able to explore the various types of motivation in order to determine which type suits which learner.

It is often said that the greatest investment one can make for the future generation is education, be it at the individual, family, community or national level. It is therefore not surprising that the standard of education in Ghana has been the concern of parents and policy makers in the education sector. To appreciate the magnitude of

the problem, it is necessary to examine the kind of teachers trained to man the classrooms. This study gives considerable space for the role of the teacher because the teacher has an important role to play in shaping the attitude of learners. Wachob (2004) in commenting on the role of the teacher, declares that teachers are seen as “paternalistic, knowledgeable and keepers of knowledge,” (48). For this reason, the researcher sought the views of teachers, scholars and renowned educationists through interviews and questionnaire to find out what problems teachers of the language face in the teaching of English Language in general and grammar particular in the northern part of the country. Renowned educationists, principals of colleges of education in the Northern Region, teachers of English, as well as students, were all interviewed. The opinions of these people are particularly useful to this study because they constitute the stakeholders and drivers of education in the country. A summary of the opinions gathered will give an insight into the main issue that this study seeks to address.

2.4.0 Poor National Language Policy

A good number of works consulted, and educationists interviewed, attribute the problem to the lack of a definite comprehensive national language policy. Although several experiments have demonstrated the value of the mother tongue and the first language as medium of instruction in primary schools, there is very little support to promote the policy of instruction in the mother tongue. (Awedoba 2002:75). Consequently, each education administration that felt that a particular policy was good simply proposed it and got it implemented. There is therefore the problem of inconsistency on English language policy. At various points in time, Ghana moved from a policy of the use of Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction for the

first three years. Later, there was a shift to English starting from the fourth year to the use of English from the first day in school. Added to this is the flexible definition of a 'Ghanaian language' within the policy. While some people interpret Ghanaian language to mean the common language used in the community, others understand it to mean the mother tongue of the learner. Either definition does not make it easy for teachers to pin down the language to be used as a medium of instruction, especially in the urban and semi-urban settlements. This lack of proper definition led to not only the misapplication of the policy but also to its widespread abuse. It is common to find teachers using a local language while teaching English or vice versa. The inconsistency and flexible definition of Ghanaian language in the policy left teachers with no option but to use their own discretion to determine what language to use (as the medium of instruction). In fact, the questionnaire that sought to know what language is used in class for English lessons confirms the widespread use of language alternation (code switching) at all levels of basic education irrespective of whether the teachers are trained or not trained. This state of affairs, no wonder, might have compelled the Minister of Education in the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government to propose a review of the policy in April 2001 and its subsequent revision in 2002 from the use of a local language for the first three years to the use of English from the first day of school. This notwithstanding, observations on lessons by selected teachers of English in the senior high schools point to the fact that teachers have not changed their pattern of classroom language use. Classroom language is still predominantly one of alternation.

Coupled with the above is the issue of poor supervision of policy implementation. Andoh-Kumi (1997) argues that the Ministry of Education has never monitored the

implementation of the language policy, as there is no institutional framework to effectively monitor the implementation of the language policy (Kumi:115). Education authorities at national, regional and district levels seem to have total disregard for the policy. At a time when the policy advocated the use of Ghanaian language for the first three years before a changeover in the fourth year, many District Directors of education directed that English should be used throughout all lessons at all levels. Interviews with educationists revealed that most respondents admitted that the teaching of Ghanaian language and its use as a medium of instruction received more support and impetus in the colonial era than after independence. Apart from the heavy investment to support the teaching of English no effort has ever been made in recent history to support teaching through in-service training and workshops in the use of Ghanaian languages as a medium of instruction or in how to use the Ghanaian language to support the teaching of English. Besides, many Ghanaians generally have a sneering attitude towards Ghanaian languages. They do not regard those who go to the university to specialise in Ghanaian language as a course of study.

Closely related to the issue of poor implementation is the mass promotion policy. In the past, promotion from one class to the other was by means of a rigorous examination, so that only the good candidates got through to the next class. It is commonplace to find students at the junior high school level who can hardly read anything in English, despite the fact that they have gone through the entire primary school system. In most cases, a majority of students are promoted even when they cannot construct or read a single correct sentence in English. It is no exaggeration to note that even at the senior high and colleges of education levels, it is possible to find

students who cannot read and understand fully what they read and this problem can be traced to mass promotion. Mass promotion, indeed has hampered not only the learning of English Language, but all subjects learnt in school.

2. 5.0 Existence of other Forms of English Language in Ghana

A number of respondents to the research questionnaire expressed the view that the existence of other forms of English such as Pidgin and Nigerian (Broken) English, constitutes another threat to the learning of English for official use. Education authorities contend that the widespread use of substandard English and Pidgin among many Ghanaians, especially journalists, traders, radio and television commentators, and some teachers themselves in one way or the other make pupils take up these substandard form of English as models of Standard English. This phenomenon was disclosed in the interview with parents about the performance of their children in English Language.

2.6.0 Disparities between Target Language and the Local Languages

Some respondents opine that there are some disparities between the target language, English, and the local languages and that accounts for the difficulties both teachers and learners encounter. This view tends to corroborate the views of Tsadidey et al. and Seidu, Y (1997) who outline the differences between Ghanaian languages and English. Ghanaian languages differ from English in two main ways: (i), spelling in English is not a clear guide to pronunciation; (ii) there are more vowel sounds in English than in any Ghanaian language. While there are twenty vowel sounds written with five letters or a combination of letters in English, most Ghanaian languages have seven and not more than nine vowels. Consequently, it is not feasible to

pronounce English simply by using the sounds of the Ghanaian languages and vice versa. (Tsadidey et al, 1986:23; Seidu 1995:34-54) This explains why any time some students attempt to speak English through direct translation from a Ghanaian language they commit blunders in the use pronunciation and vocabulary.

2.7.0 Dominance of the Mother Tongue.

There is yet another problem that confronts the learning of English especially in the teaching of pronunciation in Ghana. This has to do with the dominance of the mother tongue. Some respondents who were interviewed were of the view that the pronunciation of a second language could pose problems of a different kind from those that they face when learning the first language. It is argued that in the case of the first language, we are daily immersed in the sound of the language and should therefore face lesser difficulties. The learner of the second language therefore tends to hear all speech sounds in his own system. Therefore, it has been argued that when one embarks on the learning of a second language, the first requirement is for one to overcome the first language pronunciation prejudices. Before teaching sounds that are new to the learner, it is important to appreciate the differences that exist between the sounds of the second language and those of the first. (Gimson, 1975;1). According to Gimson, this will ensure learning the new language with minimum confusion or translation from language one to language two. This however, depends on the attitudinal disposition of the learner. The extent to which the learner can consciously distinguish the two languages in the course of the learning exercise will depend on the learning attitude of the learning.

On the teaching of grammar, there is some controversy over the gains in using one approach or the other. On the one hand there are scholars who claim that learners of a English as a second language will learn faster if there is no formal grammar instructions. This implies that grammar should be taught alongside the teaching of other aspects of the language. This view suggests that students will naturally learn the rules and patterns of the language as they are constantly exposed to comprehensible input. (Duley & Burt, 1973). In some situations error corrections are avoided as they are deemed to be interfering with the acquisition process by making learners conscious. (Krashen ,1982:74) The proponents of this approach believe that learners acquire grammar in a set order that cannot be altered by instruction. (Duley & Burt, 1973) The question then is how long will it take the learner to correct the errors that he is committing at the initial stages of learning. Should such errors that should not be corrected be acceptable in assessing the learner?

In an attempt to expatiate the view, Krashen distinguished between acquisition and learning. He sees acquisition as “spontaneous and subconscious imbibe of knowledge whilst learning is the conscious knowledge of the rules of the language which can be derived from formal instructions in grammar.” (1982)The question that should be raised from the above perspective on the learning of grammar is whether learning which can be described as explicit knowledge; can contribute to acquisition which leads to implicit knowledge?

Krashen (1982) argues that explicit knowledge does not add to implicit knowledge, therefore, formal grammar teaching is unnecessary, and that all teaching should be purely communicative. Krashen’s view is supported by Prabhu (1987) who also

maintains that grammar teaching does not help much as grammatical rules are highly complex, making conscious knowledge of them difficult to attain.

Notwithstanding the positions of Krashen and Prabhu, there are sources that see some benefit from the direct teaching of grammar to students. Ellis (1994) sees the teaching of grammar rules as aiding the learning of grammar but does not see it as a necessity to acquisition of the language. He considers it as purely facilitative. He argues that formal teaching of grammar has a positive influence on the careful style of the learner. Krashen however, does not elaborate, precisely, what form this positive influence is. This would have given credence to the position taken.

Fotos, 1993 is of the view that formal teaching of grammar draws the learner's attention to particular features of the language and this eventually leads to acquisition of the language. According to him, "formal grammar instructions raise the learner's consciousness of the structure of the target language; making him notice the structure in future communicative input" (Fotos, 1993:397). Fotos, however, is silent as to what the student does after "noticing" the structure of the language? Does noticing it lead to some changes in the attitude or perception of the student in learning the grammar?

Thompson 1996:11) maintains that there should be "explicit" examination of the grammatical forms used to realise a particular function and meaning only, after the learner has experienced the structure communicatively". What one wonders with this position is whether it would be easy to determine the level of experience of the learner.

One other area is that of pronunciation. The views of most respondents about English were not limited to the grammar aspect only. For instance, if English were consistently phonetic, one could simply teach learners the letters of the alphabet corresponding to the sound, and give learners a little practice in analyzing words into sound elements; and the learners would have reading vocabulary as large as their speaking vocabulary. In that case, the learner could spell out each speech sound, recognize the result as one of his familiar speech forms, and understand the written version as he understands its spoken equivalent. In fact English Language is not so easy to deal with by simple rules. An example is with the letter 'A'. The name of that letter is 'ai'. This is sometimes the sound of the letter in an actual word as in 'aid' [eid] and 'ape' [eip]. But the same letter is more often pronounced (as it is in 'at' or [and']) as a short vowel. So which of these phonetic values should one teach? Even if one teaches both, there are still challenges that one would encounter when the learner finds 'a' in the word "boat" "peak" and "beauty".

The same situation arises with the letter 'b' [bee]. This letter is associated with words that bear no resemblance to the sound, e.g. "doubt", [dàũt] "debt". Similarly, the sound of the letter 'h' is contained in the word "he" but the sound, [aitch] is not contained in the name given to the letter. Indeed, for many words there are more than one sound value. In dealing with the grammatical aspect of English, tense and aspect, concord, as well as pronunciation, pose much greater complexities to the learner. A close analysis of how some grammarians have handled these aspects of the language reveals that English indeed does not easily lend itself to any simple straightforward learning and comprehension.

2.8.0 The Nature of the Target Language, (English)

There are people who complain of the very nature of English as a language. English, according to this group of people, is not only complex but irregular and illogical. Its study, especially grammar, does not lend itself to rules. For, very often there are many exceptions to the rules and most rules are only convenient arrangements to suit a particular group or level of learners; but as one progresses in its study, one finds that there are many contradictions to the rules.

One major feature which affects nouns only is the fact that they make a distinction between a noun which is singular and one which is plural. A critical look at how the plural forms of nouns should be formed in English effectively buttresses the assertion that English language is complex, irregular, and illogical and thereby moving us to sympathise with the learner. There are numerous and inconsistent rules that govern the formation of plurals in English. For instance, we are told English language normally forms the plural by adding an (-s) to the singular noun. Thus we have the following examples;

game - games

This is the normal process in English. But there are some nouns which do not neatly follow this rule. Rather, we note that in changing their singular to the plural, certain changes occur such as changing the letters towards the end of the word. Example:

| | |
|------|--------|
| lady | ladies |
| leaf | leaves |

Also, there are some nouns in English, which do not have plural forms. They are used only in the singular form. Examples of these nouns are:

- i. Non-count concrete nouns: *flour, salt, pepper, corn,*
- ii. Non-count abstract nouns: *gentility, honesty, weather,*

- iii. Proper nouns: *Michael, Ghana, Kumasi*
- iv. Names of some subjects and diseases: *Economics, Mathematics, tuberculosis*

There are yet, nouns in English which are never used in the singular form. They always occur in the plural form, Examples of such nouns are:

- i. Nouns which refer to tools or dresses. These items consist of two equal parts which are joined together. They normally occur with the phrase: ‘a pair of’, e.g. pliers, scissors, trousers, spectacles.

- ii. Nouns which have no plural (-s) but are used only in the plural sense.

Examples are:

police, cattle, clergy, folk.

- iii. Nouns that have both singular and plural forms. However, when the nouns are used in the plural, their meaning is completely different from when they are used in the singular.

The grammatical rule which changes the singular noun “lady” to “ladies” provides that if the ‘y’ in the singular form follows a consonant, the ‘y’ should be replaced with ‘ies’ to form the plural. But if the final ‘y’ in the singular follows a vowel, then the normal plural formation applies.

Another rule stipulates that when a noun ends in (ch,sh,s,z,or x,) we form the plural by adding (-es) to the singular form. So we have the following:

| | |
|---------|----------|
| church, | churches |
| pass | passes |

Furthermore, there is a group of nouns that simply refused to change their plural form from the old English version. While most English nouns have gone through modern English changes, this group of nouns maintain their old fashion of the plural formation. Examples are:

foot - feet

Also, there are nouns borrowed from other languages such as Latin and Greek and these words maintain their original forms

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| curriculum | - | curricula |
| memorandum | - | memoranda |
| album | - | albums |

Yet, with other words both words take the plural (-s). Examples are as shown below:

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|----------------|
| father-in-law | fathers in-law |
| man-servant | men-servants |
| woman-friend | women-friends |

The point being made from the above examples is that the rules governing grammar are generally not consistent and this makes learning English grammar more challenging than it should have been.

2. 9.1 The Nature of Tense and Aspect

Mark (2001:35) writes that tense is inflection on a verb that may or may not express its time reference. The English verb is inflected for two tense; present tense (bakes) and past tense (baked). That means tense is realized through morphological markings. For instance, *kick (s)* for the regular present tense and *kick(ed)* for the regular past tense. Though verbs are inflected to form tenses to express their time reference, we need to distinguish tense from time reference.

Mark (2001:35) identifies three time relations: *past*, *present*, and *future*. These are defined with reference to the time at which one speaks or writes; present time is simultaneous or concurrent with one speaking or writing; and future time is after one speaks or writes. Mark (2001) then gives a very brief discussion on the aspectual form of the verb. He says verbs also take two aspect suffixes: '-ing' and '-en'.

The '-en' according to him

is reliable in that the bases to which it attaches are verbs and it attaches only to main verbs. Verbs that take these suffixes are non-finite verb forms. There are also non-finite verbs that take no inflection; these are called infinitives. (21- 32)

Yule (1998) has given an in-depth discussion on aspect. He says because aspect has to do with a kind of situation perceived or experienced, it can be expressed lexically and grammatically. The grammatical aspect is accomplished via the perfect and progressive forms of the verb. Examples,

He has eaten the food.
He is eating the food.

In dealing with the lexical aspect, Yule (1998) focuses on only verb meaning. He says the broadest conceptual distinction needed is between situations that can be treated as stative. Stative meaning applies to situations that are relatively constant over time and describe cognitive (i.e. mental) states such as knowledge, emotion or relations and others that can be treated as dynamic (action that can be durative or punctual). Examples of stative verbs that indicate cognition are *believe*, *hate*, *know*, *like*, *understand*, and *want*. Those that indicate relations are *be*, *belong*, *contain*, *have*, *own* and *resemble*.

Dynamic verbs that denote punctual acts are *hit, jump, kick, stab, strike, and throw* among others. Dynamic verbs that indicate durative activities are *eat, run, swim, walk, work, write*,. Those that indicate durative processes are *become, change, flow, grow, harden, learn*, and so on. (Yule: 1998). Again, those verbs that are typically used with punctual aspect, describing momentary acts (*kick, cough*) take on a slightly different meaning when used in the progressive form.

Sentences such as:

He's kicking the box,
or
She's coughing,

do not mean repeated action but single acts.

English has two grammatically marked aspects. These are the progressive aspect (be + ing) and the perfective aspect (have + past participle). The conceptual distinction between the two forms involves two different perspectives. With the progressive, a situation is viewed from the inside as potentially ongoing at that point (in progress), relative to some other situation. With the perfect, a situation is viewed from outside, typically in retrospect, relative to some other situation. The understanding of 'some other situation' in each case will depend on the tense assigned to *be* and *have*. Dynamic verbs used in the progressive aspect indicate ongoing activity. For example,

I am walking.

The perfective aspect used with stative verbs indicates pre-existing states (that may continue):

He has believed God all his life.
I have been sick

The perfective aspect used with dynamic verbs on the other hand often indicates completed actions. For example,

We have read the book.

2.9.2 Tense and Aspect as a Source of Confusion

The researcher observed, in the course of the study, that much of the errors related to the use of the English Language among most students had to do with tense and aspect, for that was the area where most users faltered. Students have often considered the learning of the various aspects of grammar, particularly tense and aspect, as confusing. Some are overwhelmed by the numerous rules and exceptions that exist in the use of the English tense. What is of relevance in this regard is how the negative perception about grammar, in general, and tense and aspect in particular, has affected the ability of the learner to grasp the necessary skill in dealing with grammar in particular and English as a whole. The attitude of learners towards the learning of the English tense and aspect reflects their general attitude toward learning grammar in general. The researcher believes that much of the problem would be resolved if students in particular and the Ghanaian user of English in general, acquire competence and the right attitudes in the learning and use of tense and aspect.

2.9.3 The Meaning of Tense and Aspect

Jackson (1990: 16-17) briefly defines tense as “The representation in grammar of the distinction that we make between past, present and future in our view of time”. To him, we encode the distinction between present and past tense in different forms of verbs in English.

For example,

This machine works well (present tense),
and
He worked until 8:0'clock (past tense).

He asserts that every verb has two present forms (work, works) and one past form (worked). The present tense forms are distinguished from each other by invoking the

grammatical categories of person and number. “Person” relates to the person or thing doing an action (e.g. working) or undergoing an event or being in a state. If the speaker or writer makes reference to himself, we refer to it as the first person. The first person is associated with the pronouns “*I*” and “*we*”. If it is the one being addressed, we refer to it as the second person which is associated with the pronoun *you*. The third person is the one talked about, and it is associated with the pronouns *he, she, it, they*. He said *he, she, it* and *I* have singular reference, *we* and *they* have plural reference, whilst *you* may refer to singular or plural. A summary of the intersection of person and number is then given in respect of the pronouns by means of the following table:

Table 2. Intersection of Person and Number.

| PERSON | SINGULAR | PLURAL |
|-----------------|-------------|--------|
| 1 st | I | We |
| 2 nd | you | you |
| 3 rd | he, she, it | they |

In sum, Jackson [1990] said *works* is associated with a third person singular pronoun, whilst *work* is associated with the rest of the persons. He defines tense with reference to time but has failed to explain how tense relates to time. What we know is that, tense is not directly related to what time the event represented by the verb takes place. For instance, we can use the present tense to express events that happen regularly:

We go to church on Sundays.

We can also express timeless truths such as:

The sun rises in the East.

It could also be used to express future events:

The plane leaves Accra for London tomorrow.

Also, we can use the present tense to narrate events that happened in the past especially in literary works (referred to as the narrative present): e.g.

He runs away from the giant, picks a stone and throws it at him.

Besides, Jackson has not explained why the first person singular pronoun takes a plural verb, ‘work’.

It is very common to hear students use ‘I’ with singular verbs such as: *If I was you, I will do well.* Explaining that the subjunctive is part of the tense system would help reduce learners’ difficulties in the use of ‘I’ on one hand with singular verbs; *I was there* and the other with plural verbs: “*If I were you...*”) i.e. *were* is subjunctive.

Chalker and Weiner (1994) define tense as “a form taken by a verb to indicate the time at which the action or state is viewed as occurring; the quality of a verb expressed by this”, [i.e. the action or state viewed as occurring]. They observe that tense is traditionally defined in terms of time. But labels such as past, present and future tense are misleading, since the relationship between tense and time is more complicated than the labels suggest. Past and present tenses can be used in some circumstances to refer to future time. e.g. *If he came tomorrow...If he comes tomorrow...*), present tenses can refer to past (as in newspaper headlines), e.g. *Minister resigns*, and in colloquial narrative, e.g.

So she comes up to me and says....)

2.9.4 Concord as a source of confusion to learners

The study also revealed that most learners of the English language tend to have limited knowledge about concord, which basically deals with subject - verb agreement. Besides knowing the verb agreement required of ordinary verbs in the singular or plural forms, many learners have difficulties associating the appropriate verb forms with grammatical structures that have other verb forms. Areas that learners often encounter difficulties in dealing with concord are outlined below:

i. Problem nominal groups

This error occurs when learners conceive of the structure;

The + number + of + Noun phrase (NP) as constituting a grammatical plural. Hence, we may have such constructions as;

The number of market women who have been relocated are less than 30.

This situation arises when the learner is unable to identify the head noun (*number*) in the sentence.

ii. The complex noun phrase.

Students often get mixed-up with structures that have complex noun phrases (a noun headword with multiple pre-modification or a headword with multiple post-modification. The student loses track of the headword and uses a verb that does not correspond to the headword.

iii. The verb *have*.

‘Have’ presents learners with concord problems, perhaps by simple analogy by learners. ‘Have’ is a verb that collocates with both singular and the plural nouns. E.g.

I have a book (singular noun)

We have a book. (plural noun)

Therefore, by analogical transfer, learners produce structures such as

The farmer have plenty food this year.

I don't like people who has no respect for themselves.

iv. One other source of concord error is the influence of mother tongue or Ghanaian languages. In most Ghanaian languages the verb is not often marked for singular or plural. as a result students tend to transfer this knowledge to English. For instance in the Grune (Frafra) language we have:

i. Mam ditime (I am eating)

ii Ti ditime (We are eating)

Thus in the local languages there is scarcely the plural inflection of the verb.

2.9.5 Problems with the Use of Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

Many learners have a limited understanding of propositions. Many know just a few of the prepositions in the English Language and therefore limits their use to those few commonly used ones. The common ones that learners are familiar with are: to, in, under, on, between, with, at, above after. However, there are many other words that are used as prepositions. These include the following:

| | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|------------|---------|
| aboard | behind | inside | till | without |
| about | beyond | near | throughout | within |

Besides the above prepositions that are not often used by students, there are a number of prepositions that pose difficulties to learners. They are often used interchangeably suggesting that they convey the same meaning when in actual sense they have different meanings. Some of these are as follows:

beside

besides

beside denotes a position 'next to' something, 'besides means in addition to' or 'other than'

eg. i. The boy laid beside the mother.

ii. The boy paid ten Cedis besides the twenty Cedis he paid yesterday.

in and into

'in' refers to position and means 'inside' or 'within'

'into' means moving from outside to inside or from 'without' to 'within'

He was in the room

He walked into the room

There are also situations that students combine these propositions in usage. e.g.

at and about

I will see you at about 5:30 p.m. today.

instead of

I will see you about 5:30 p.m today. or

I will see you at 5:30 pm.

2.9.6 The Use of Auxiliaries

The use of auxiliaries and linking verbs is one other area that learners often encounter problems. There are learners who are unable to identify when a verb is functioning as a linking verb or an auxiliary verb. The most common auxiliaries in English language are:

am was been has had did could would should shall might

does may were do can is are be must will do been

Linking verbs include almost all of the above auxiliary verbs in addition, but not limited to the following:

taste smell sound seem look stay

grow feel become appear remain turn

Again, some of the linking words could also be used as action words depending on the context in which they appear. Example:

- i. The coach grew angry at the players (linking verb)
- ii. The farmer grew yam on his farm. (action verb)
- iii. I felt the mango and realized it was ripe. (action verb)
- iv. I felt disappointed by his conduct. (linking verb)

2.9.6. Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing analysis it is sufficient to conclude without doubt that there are differences in opinion of experts of English as well as users of the language as to what English should be as regards grammar. This revelation is remarkably significant to the researcher's examination of attitude and perception of students in learning English. For instance, how do these controversies over the nature of tense and aspect, concord and pronunciation affect the perception that English has no rules? These are issues that would be addressed in this study as they constitute the main concerns of the researcher. It is hardly surprising that there appears to be endless search for solution to the poor standard of English in particular and education in general in Ghana. The answer lies in a close examination of the nature of the complexities of the language as viewed by grammarians and the corresponding perception it has created in learners. Clearly, an important step to eliminating the perceptual biases learners have about English and grammar in particular is identification of the specific areas that learners have difficulties most.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH APPROACH AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology is an important component of any study. “It provides the framework upon which the process is conducted” (Brown 1996). It is therefore important that the methodology used in this study is sound and thorough enough to efficiently produce accurate data in order that the stated research goals and objectives will be achieved. This section of the study therefore provides the framework upon which the research goals and objectives were realised. It comprises an in-depth explanation of the research approach and process, methods of data collection, sampling procedure, sample size, data analysis, and scope. In this study, the choice of the research method was informed by the theoretical concerns of the study, goals and objectives, as well as the very nature of the research problem. Research methods were selected based on such factors as ease of data analysis and interpretation, practicability, validity, and available financial resources.

3.2.0. The Research Design.

In order to ensure the success of the investigation, an appropriate research design was selected in a manner that would facilitate the researcher’s arrival at valid findings. The researcher took into consideration a number of views about research design and what is expected of a design. Kerlinger’s view about a research design is that “A research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. The plan is the complete scheme or programme of the research. It includes an outline of what the investigator will do from the writing of the hypothesis to the operational implications and then to

the final analysis of data. (Kerlinger; 1986; 279) Thyer (1993) refers to a traditional research design as a blueprint or a detailed plan for how a research study is to be completed operationalising variables so they can be measured, selecting a sample to study, collecting data to be used, as a basis for testing hypothesis.

In this study, the research design used both descriptive and non-descriptive methods. These were deemed appropriate, considering the fact that the study depended on a systematic collection and presentation of data. Four main survey research instruments (questionnaire, interview, observation, and focus group discussion) were used. Questionnaires were administered to students and teachers in selected senior high schools to elicit the extent to which the perception of students about grammar and the methods teachers often used to teach it. The questions focused on issues relating to the teaching and learning of grammar as well as the perception of students about English, and their impact on the individual in particular and standards of education in general. Similarly, in-depth interviews that sought to find out the opinions of students, teachers and selected parents were conducted. The questions focused on their perceptions and views about the standard and quality of English Language in general and grammar in particular, in Ghanaian schools and the society as a whole. The concealment observation technique was also used in the course of gathering of data. This was used during the questionnaire and interview sessions with students and teachers who were randomly selected. The aim was to collect information that otherwise could not be captured by the questionnaire and interviews. Details of these methods have been outlined under methods of data collection.

3.3.0 Background Study of the Selected Area (Northern Region)

Since the entire study was limited to the Northern Region of Ghana it would be useful to provide a description of the region in terms of its geographical, physical, human, educational and economic endowments. This will give an insight into the trend of people's opinions and dispositions about learning English Language.

According to 2010 Population Census figures, the Northern Region is the largest region in Ghana, occupying 70,384 square kilometres and accounting for approximately 30% of the total land area of Ghana. The Region has twenty districts. It has a total population size of 1,820,806 and a population growth rate of 2.8%. The population density of the region is about twenty-six (26) persons per square kilometre. The region is sparsely populated and has a youthful population of about 46.3%. (Chief Mohammed, 2009). The Region has four key traditional zones which dictate the pace of cultural identification and social life. The socio-cultural orientation of the people, to some extent, has some influence on their attitude towards education in general and English in particular. In terms of education, it has been revealed that less than one-quarter (22.6) percent of adults (15 years and older) in the region are literate, compared to the national average of 53.4%. The adult literacy rate of males (32.3%) is about two and half times that of female (12.9%). Available information from Ghana Statistical Service reveals that 86% of females and 66% of males cannot read and write in English. (Ghana Statistical Service, 2003). The Region has forty-five (45) senior high schools, and two hundred and ten (210) junior high schools that are either purely private or government assisted. The complete list of schools that were used for the study can be found on page 93.

Due to the fact that polygamy is widely practised in the region, there is a relatively high population of youth and children. School drop-out rate is generally high, as more often than not, poor polygamous parents are not able to cater for the number of children they produce. The four key traditional zones of the region are: Dagbon, occupied by Dagombas; Gonjaland, occupied by Gonjas, Nanung, occupied by Nanumbas and finally Mamprugu, which is the home of the Mamprusis. Other ethnic groups are significantly distributed across the region, especially the Akan, and the Guan. More than half of the population in the region (56.2%) are Christian. Muslims make up 29.3% whilst other religious groups account for 14.5%.

Considering the vast nature of the region and the large number of schools, twenty schools were selected in a manner will include each of the major ethnic groups in the region. This presupposes that the social context of learning English is crucial. It suggests the existence of a constant interplay of social forces and the individual's personal disposition which is controlled by his/her perception about a language other than one's mother tongue, and for that matter English.

The individual has a unique sense of self, derived from his /her personal history. It is also a fact that individuals have the free will to act and respond or react to issues. With that in mind it was deemed appropriate to carefully consider four aspects of the social context which are particularly significant to the learning of English by students. Though the study is limited to the Northern Region, the influence of each of these social forces can be felt in the other two regions of the north. It is important to note that such forces, though sometimes seemingly distant, affect children and teachers in class rooms in very real ways that affect their attitudes about what they should learn.

3.4.0. Research Process

The researcher adopted a systematic approach to the study in a manner that ensured that the relevant data needed in order to make logical conclusions was obtained.

3.4.1 Sampling

In order to make generalizations and draw appropriate inferences, there was the need to conduct sampling in the research process. This underscores the assertion by Miller (1991) that a study based on representative sample is often better than a larger sample or a whole population, for there is no need interviewing large numbers of people saying the same thing. “The researcher needs to select only a few interviewees from the universe for study.” (Miller: 48)

The research covered twenty (20) selected senior high schools in the Northern Region of Ghana. The majority of the respondents were students from the selected senior high schools. Parents and educationists interviewed were either natives of the region or have lived there for at least the past ten (10) years. The view of Miller is corroborated by Karma (1990) who is explicit on the size of a sample and maintains that the use of a sample should neither be too large nor too small. It should be optimal and should be at the discretion of the researcher.

The researcher considered the optimal sample that fulfilled the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility. (Saunders et al, 1997)

Factors such as the following were considered in the choice of samples:

- the population of students in the senior high schools in the region;
- the type of schools in the area in terms of male/female ratio;

- the cost of research in relation to mobility, initial arrangements required and the support of research assistants;
- the geographical location of the school.

Since it is often impossible to do strict probability sampling in the field (Bernard, 1990), the non-probability technique was also effectively used to allow the researcher to particularly choose certain schools to ensure a balance across the entire region. Consequently, two main sampling techniques were applied to the study: the probability sampling and the non-probability sampling. (Twumasi, 2001)

3.4.2 The Sample Size

This refers to the actual number of members, individuals or cases selected from the target population. Due to constraints of time, effort and resources it became virtually impossible for one to undertake a much larger scale. Therefore a sample size of one thousand (1,000) students were selected from the twenty (20) schools (50 students and ten 10 teachers) from each of the twenty selected schools. The schools selected comprised eighteen (18) mixed sex schools and two single-sex schools (one boys' and one girls' schools). In addition, ten parents and ten individual educationists were interviewed in the course of the research. The students were selected from different programmes in each of the schools. Similarly, the teachers included those who teach other subjects but not necessarily English.

Table: 3.1: Table showing the schools that were selected for the study.

| District | School | No. of Stud Used | No. of Trs. Used | Total |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Tamale Metropolis | | | | |
| | Tamale Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | Ghana Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | Northern School of Business | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | Business Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | St Charles Senior High School (boys) | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | Tamale Girls Senior High (girls) | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | SDA Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | Islamic Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| | Presbyterian Senior High Sch. | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Saveligu/ Nanton | Saveligu Senior High | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Walewale | Walewale Senior High | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Gushegu | Gushegu Senior High | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Yendi | Yendi Senior High | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Salaga | Salaga Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Damongo | Damongo Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Bole | Bole Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Bimbila | Bimbila Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Tolon/ Kumbungu | Kumbungu Senior High Sch. | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Gambaga | Gambaga Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| Zabzugu/ Tatale | Zabzugu Senior High School | 50 | 10 | 60 |
| TOTAL | 20 | 1000 | 200 | 1,200 |

3.5 Method of Selection

The selection of the above schools for the research was done through the use of the probability method. The Simple Random Sampling Technique was used in selecting the nine (9) public schools within the Tamale Metropolis for the study. Also, factors such as the population and sex, (mix or single sex schools) were considered in the selection of the schools. In order to ensure that each of the fifteen (15) schools within the metropolis stood the chance of being selected for the study, names of all schools in the Metropolis were written on pieces of paper, and folded. The researcher then picked the required number - twenty (20) schools - from the lot. The students were also selected using the same method. 'Yes' and 'No' were written on pieces of paper

and folded up for the students to pick. Students who picked “Yes” were those used for the research. There were at least forty-five (45) students from each group.

3.7.0 Stages of Data Collection

The collection of data for the research was accomplished in three phases; the recognizance survey, the main survey and the in-depth survey, (Miller, 1996). Collection of information on how people feel about the standard of English in Ghana was done with the involvement of both government and private institutional support. Brief chats with heads of some selected institutions provided valuable information as regards the problem of poor standard of English.

3.7.1 Recognizance Survey:

Recognizance survey was carried out to build trust and confidence in the researcher. The researcher embarked on preparatory meetings with authorities of the selected schools. He also listened to radio talk shows with special attention to errors in the use of English. Throughout this phase, the researcher was able to address the interests and concerns of students who wished to remain anonymous in their response to the questionnaire and interviews. Also, those respondents who had little time to spare were able to fix much more convenient time for the researcher to meet them for much more structured interactions. The practical interactions during this stage made the people see the need for such an investigation. They also pledged to co-operate, in whatever way, that might be required to carry out such a survey. The teachers and heads of the schools also affirmed their commitment to practicalise some of the findings which fell within their ambit as teachers.

3.7.2 Main Survey Phase

Various categories of senior high schools were identified to form the basis of the main survey. Data gathering, analysis and interpretation were carried out with the assistance of a research assistant. The research assistant actively participated in all the interactions with the students and teachers of the selected schools. The collection of data was done in such a participatory manner that respondents were made to feel they were part of the entire process. Indeed, the participatory nature of the research was very much in line with the views of Reason (1998) and Marshall (1994) who maintain that participatory research should be done “with the respondents but not on them or about them”.

3.6.0. Instruments for Collecting Data

As language knowledge is dynamic and contextualized, Spolsky is distrustful of using questionnaires as the sole method to collect data on such studies, and he stresses how important it is to supplement them with observation, interviews, and focused conversations to obtain "hard sociolinguistic data and personal statements of second language learners" (Spolsky 2000, 157). Accordingly, the researcher employed a variety of research methods comprising questionnaire, observation, interviews, meeting with individuals and focus group discussion. The researcher undertook the exercise in three major stages. The first was at the schools (where students and teachers were engaged in focus group discussions) This was then followed by meetings with educationists and parents. The researcher also interviewed policy makers and undertook observations of teaching and learning in some selected schools within the region.

The data collection approach included primary and secondary sources. Primary sources from which data was collected included detailed library reading, interviews, questionnaire, observation, and focus group discussion. The specific tools used varied according to the time available and the category of respondents. It is important to note that secondary sources also formed a significant component of the study. The secondary sources included newspaper reviews, book reviews, and the Internet. Other related materials were also sourced from stakeholders and related agencies of education.

3.6.1. Interviews

An interview consists of a face-to-face or other interaction (radio, or telephone), or contact between the researcher and the respondent conducted verbally. (Karma 1996) defines interview as any person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind. Interviews are grouped into two - structured and unstructured. The two classifications were used in the study. Even though the researcher used an interview schedule, the questions had no rigid or fixed pattern.

In using the unstructured interview approach, also known as the in-depth interview, a framework was developed to guide the interview process. The rationale for using this approach was to ensure a collective engagement with the group of respondents. Questions were formulated and asked spontaneously as the interview progressed. This approach also allowed the respondents to freely express their opinion. The approach therefore supports Yin's (1993) view that a good interview is one in which the interviewee takes control over the interview to solicit in-depth information on the



Fig. 3.1: Interview with a retired educationist

Mr. John Smaila

questions posed in the interview were as follows:

- ✓ How would you rate the standard of English in Ghana?
- ✓ What, in your opinion, could be done to enhance the standards of English used by our students?
- ✓ In your view, is English a difficult subject to learn?
- ✓ What aspect of English, in your view, is more difficult to learn?
- ✓ Who is to blame for the falling standard of English in Ghana?

The researcher had interviews with students, teachers, parents, retired educationists as well as specialists of English, (lecturers in the language, both literature and language) in some public universities in Ghana.

The interview method was particularly useful to the researcher because some literate respondents simply could not find time to complete the questionnaire given to them. In all cases, the researcher gave prior notice to the interviewees about his intention to have the interview with them.

3.6.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a written list of questions, with answers recorded by respondents. Saunders et al, (1997) argue that the choice of using a questionnaire is influenced by a variety of factors such as;

- Characteristics of respondents from which you wish to collect the data;
- Importance of reaching a particular person as a respondent;
- Importance of respondents' answers not being contaminated or distorted;
- Size of sample you require for your analysis, taking into account the likely response rate;
- Type of questions you need to ask to collect your data;
- Number of questions you need to ask to collect your data.

Consequently, the questionnaire used was based on the fact that the target respondents were mostly literate and scattered over a wide geographical area. Hence, self-administered questionnaires were used to elicit information from students, teachers and parents. The respondents that were selected, therefore, read the questions, interpreted and wrote down the answers. On the other hand, the interviewer-administered questionnaire was sent to non-literate respondents and parents. This was to ensure that respondents were not purposely sampled for questioning. The questions were made of two categories; teachers and students questionnaires. The teachers had twenty (20) questions while the students had thirty (30) items to respond to. The questions were designed in a manner that would elicit information about what respondents know, believe, expect, feel, or what they intend to do or have done about the problem of low standards of English, as well as their

explanations or reasons for their position. The questions were both factual and to some extent opinionated. Some questions were close- ended whilst others were open-ended. Similarly, there were questions that had ranking responses. The second group of questionnaire administered on course basis sought to reveal the following aspects of their learning English:

- Students confidence in learning grammar;
- Their belief in self directed learning of grammar;
- Belief in teacher directed learning.

3.6.3. Observation

By observation, we mean the systematic selection, recording, and encoding of a set of behaviours and settings concerning organisms and objects, which are consistent with empirical data. Karl Weick (1998) In the course of gathering data, the researcher employed observation as one of the primary sources of data collection. The researcher undertook a systematic observation of students, events on school compound as well as students and teachers' behaviour on the school premises. The researcher spent a day in each of the schools visited for the purpose of data collection. The purpose was for the researcher to have a practical teaching session with students in order to have a deeper understanding of the issues relating to the learning of English. The findings helped in crosschecking responses considered to be inconsistent with what was given during interview. Students and teachers in their normal learning environment were observed closely. The observation was done in a number of different measures of behaviour in a variety of settings. Students were observed as classroom lessons were taking place.

Also, the method the teacher used in presenting the lesson, the attitude and nature of questions students asked and the exercises given by the teacher at the end of the lesson were all observed. Outside the class room environment, the researcher observed students' way of interacting on the play ground, in the hall and in the dormitory. In all these observations the researcher employed the concealed approach method of observation. This was to enable the researcher have first-hand information about the language in which students communicate in their own free time.

3.6.4 Focus Group Discussion:

This was carried out with both students and teachers of some of the selected schools. Letters of request to the heads of the institutions were sent well in advance. Discussions in this session focused on students and teachers as people facilitating learning. The discussion explored the qualities of the teacher as a unique individual, his strength and weaknesses, and the values and commitments that teachers hold in their profession. It is important to add that teachers of other subjects took part in the discussion. It was to assess whether or not teachers teaching other subjects pay attention to English whilst assessing the work of their students in their respective subjects.

The focus group discussion took place in five (5) of the selected schools, namely Tamale Senior High School, Ghana Senior High, Tamale Girls Senior High, Kalpohin Senior High and Zabzugu Senior High School. In each case the head of the Languages Department made the necessary arrangements for the discussion with students and teachers. Each discussion session lasted for about an hour. There were

between fifteen and twenty students in each group discussion with students and between five and seven members in the discussion with teachers.

In each of the discussions, panel members' expressed their views based on their personal experiences as learners on the following aspects of English.



- The standard of English in the northern part of the country presently;
- Problems those students within the area encounter in the use of English;
- How students feel about the

Picture 3.2: FG in Ghana SHS students

teaching or learning of English;

- What can be done to improve upon the teaching and learning of English?
- What in their opinion is the reason for others preferring to speak Pidgin?
- What aspect of English is more difficult to learn or to teach by their own experiences in learning the language?

Prior to the discussion, the researcher introduced the ground rules that should govern the discussion. Each participant was given the opportunity to speak for some two minutes. No one was allowed to interrupt the other. Questions were evenly

distributed to participants and each participant had the option to answer or pass the question on to any other person.



Picture 3.3: (Focus group discussion with Tamale Girls SHS).



Picture 3.4: Students of Tamale SHS)

Members were at liberty to answer the whole question or provide a partial response, or even offer responses that were opposed to others' opinions. Care was taken so that no single person hijacked the discussion. The researcher made appropriate interventions in the course of the discussion to control time and allow all to express their views on the issues raised. Members of the group were assured of confidentiality of any information that they would offer in relation to the topic. Whilst the discussion went on the researcher took down notes. These were later compiled for detailed analysis. Such joint discussions promoted cross fertilisation of ideas; and issues debated were looked at from different perspectives by the group members. This encouraged participation and generated further untapped information on people's perception about English.

3.6.5. Class Exercises

To assess the level of students' knowledge about grammar, a class exercise was conducted for a group of randomly selected students. The exercise covered three

main areas of agreement; namely, subject-verb agreement, pronoun/antecedent agreement, and shifts in construction, (sudden change from one number, person, tense, or voice to another).

Exercise 1:

Choose the correct form of the verb in parentheses in each of the sentences below.

Make sure the verb agrees with the subject headword according to the rules of concord.

1. The influence of female votes in the 2008 elections (were/was) keenly felt.
2. The killing of pigs for meat (is/are) common among Christian communities.
3. A knowledge of economics (have/has) to be considered in the appointment of a Finance Minister.
4. Many beliefs hitherto held by many communities in the country (has/have) been abandoned for Christian ones.
5. The doctor, together with three nurses, (have/has) successfully undertaken the operation on the pregnant woman.
6. It is love and affection which (bring/brings) about the tragedy in the play.
7. Teaching and learning (becomes/become) difficult when there is shortage of basic textbooks.
8. All the students, but Kofi refuse/refuses to understand the explanation given by the teacher on the topic.
9. The carpenter, as well as the masons (have/has) no idea as to how much the project will cost.
10. There (has/have) been many uprisings in the church.

Exercise 2 Please write down Your Form Only

Answer the Following Questions.

Tick where appropriate.

Choose the correct alternative that best completes the sentence

1. Having rice and 'banku', I slept
a. eating b. ate. c. eaten d. to eat
2. I look forward to you in the bank
a. met b. meet c. meeting d. be meeting
3. I insist that the boy the room
a. left b. leave c. leaves d. to leave
4. We made him the gutter
a. cross b. crossing c. to cross d. crossed
5. Yesterday, the man heard the girl beautifully in the room.
a. sing b. sung c. sang d. singed
6. Joe knows whose boat..... yesterday.
a. sank b. sink. c. sunk d. sinked
7. He wondered which car Tom to sell.
a. want b. wants c. wanted d. will want.
8. He doesto school regularly.
a. comes b. come c. came d. comed
9. He did him yesterday.
a. see b. saw c. seen d. sees
10. If she met him she run away.
a. will b. would c. will have d. would have
11. Not one of the boys well.

- a. sing b. sung c. sings d. singing
12. Does he late?
- a. comes b. came c. come d. coming
- 13 I did..... this morning
- a. eat b. ate c. eats d. eaten
14. When he was young, he could..... trees
- a. climb b. climbed c. climbs d. climbing
15. The man who..... people is my father
- a. disturb b. disturbs c. disturbing d. to disturb
16. John's dinner was by Joe
- a. eating b. ate c. eaten d. Eaten
17. Joe has..... his food home.
- a. taking b. took c. taken d. to taking
18. I 'd rather he the room immediately.
- a. leave b. left c. leaving d. leaves
19. The child has sick for sometimes now.
- a. being b. be c. been d. to be
20. If she had come late, the teacher.....her.
- a. will punish
- b. would have punish
- c. will have punished

3.8.2 Exercise 3 (Dictation)

A short dictation was conducted by the researcher in a class of thirty (30) students in the course of visits to one of the schools used. The exercise revealed that most

students do not make any effort to learn the spellings of the words they already know. The exercise was conducted in the following manner. The researcher asked students to write down words that he was going to mention. He further instructed that if there was any word mentioned that was unfamiliar to them they should draw his attention to it so he would withdraw the word and replace it with a familiar one. The researcher then called out the following words:

- i. blackboard,
- ii. ceiling fan,
- iii. concrete floor,
- iv. dining hall,
- v. dormitory,
- vi. wardrobe,
- vii. Fluorescent tube ,
- viii. intestines,
- ix. mattress,
- x. corn dough,

Each word was called out three (3) times, allowing adequate time for students to write it down. The papers were counted to make sure each student participated in the exercise. The results of the various exercises are analysed in chapter four.

Secondary Sources

Saunders et al, (1997) argue that in using secondary data you are at an advantage compared to another data because the data already exists and could be evaluated prior to use. He further argues that the time one spends evaluating potential secondary data is time well spent as rejecting unsuitable data earlier can save (much wasted) time later. Accordingly, earlier works done such as newspaper articles, radio and television discussions that provided the required information on the subject matter were analysed in addition to the literature review.

One-on-one conversational interviewing as opposed to rigid formal questions and answers was held with key informants and educationists purposefully identified. That was to enable the researcher capture the perspectives of distinguished respondents who, for one reason or the other, might not like to grant formal interview on the subject being investigated. The researcher also listened to a panel discussion on television and radio on various issues and noted the manner in which English was used as a medium of communication.

Data Analysis

Karma (1996) defines data analysis as the compilation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationships that exist among data groups. In a related study, Yin (1993) stipulates that a number of closely related operations are performed with the purpose of summarizing the data collected and organising them in such a manner that they answer the research questions. From the above, data analysis may be defined as the breaking down and ordering of data into meaningful groups while searching for patterns of relationship among the data groups.

Subsequent to this assertion, both quantitative (non-descriptive) and qualitative (descriptive) methods were used in the analysis of data in the course of the study. In conducting the research, the researcher ensured that notes were carefully recorded in detail in a notebook after every interaction with any individual or group of respondents. The carefully planned interview was extended to other organizations such as staff of the Ghana Library Board, Ghana Post Company Ltd. and Northern Regional Directorate of Ghana Education Service. The essence was to broaden the scope of the information being obtained. This is in conformity with Bernard's (1990)

view that the essence of analyzing data is to look for consistencies and inconsistencies between knowledgeable informants and find out why information agrees or disagrees on important issues on the subject matter. Assistance was sought from data analysts to conduct the quantitative operations arising out of the questionnaire administered. The exercise involved the use of graphs, charts, frequencies, and averages that attracted statistical considerations, using the SPSS. (Leeds et al. 2005) After the tabulation, the researcher then painstakingly analysed the outcomes obtained.

The analysis and interpretation of data which constitutes the next chapter, involved the following:

- ✓ organizing the data gathered into meaningful groups. For instance, the data was organized according to schools and course groups of respondents.
- ✓ putting the data into tables.
- ✓ arriving at generalizations by making inferences or deductions.

3.8.1 Challenges

The initial challenge faced was obtaining the consent of heads of institutions to allow the researcher to use their students and teachers for the study. Some of the heads were skeptical and thought that some possible bad performance of their students and teachers would be revealed to an outsider. Others read politics into the exercise, thinking that the researcher was out to criticize a particular government. Teachers in particular were skeptical about the motives of the researcher, and felt reluctant in responding to certain questions. A number of students also initially expressed fear of speaking about the performance of their teachers for fear of being victimized should they speak adversely about their teachers' performance in class.

Secondly, the timing for data collection was initially inappropriate as it coincided with the examination period of the schools. This compelled the researcher to reschedule the data collection activity to the beginning of the following school term. Also, expectations from respondents were rather high. Some of the respondents, especially students, were expecting some form of refreshment after the interaction. Similarly, members of the panel group discussions were expecting travel and transport allowance though snack was provided for the forty-minute discussion. Much as the researcher explained that the exercise was just an academic one, respondents still felt there could have been some budgetary allocation for such expenses. Nevertheless, they became satisfied with the assurance that copies of the completed work would be donated to their school libraries. Travelling on the rough roads to the districts was cumbersome. Cost of transportation was unbearably high. Also, the explanations given to teachers at the preparatory visits yielded fruitful results as it enabled the researcher to interact freely with both teachers and students in the schools selected.

3.9.0 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

One factor that the researcher took into consideration during the study was the people involved in the teaching / learning process. The analysis of the human factor as regards the use of English would be looked at from three main perspective; namely the teacher, the student, and the home environment's influence. In considering ourselves as teachers and users of the English Language, the first step is to consider the person we are. We could do this on the basis of our social, cultural and educational background experiences, as well as our personal interests. Such

factors constitute the individual's biography and this could be seen as contributing to the enhancement or deterioration of the English Language.

Few teachers, however committed, can hope to fulfil their aims as teachers of the language, if they themselves are not conversant with the language. This underscores the need for this study to extend the investigation to what pertains in the teacher training colleges in relation to the learning of English. It is most likely that teachers who are not well-equipped with the nature of the English Language might shy away from commenting on language when assessing their students' work.

3.9.1. Ideological Orientation of the Target Population.

The study paid attention to the concept of ideology which can briefly be explained as a way of thinking. However, particular sets of ideas are often used consciously or unconsciously in dealing with specific situations. Indeed, if a particular way of thinking about a subject is dominant at a point in time, it is likely to be an important influence on the learning of that subject and the teacher's actions as well. Interviews and observations with teachers, guardians and the general public have revealed a remarkable ideological orientation of people about learning English in general and grammar in particular.

3.9.3 The Learner of English

In the same way, students (learners) see themselves as gradually moving towards their areas of specialisation as they climb the academic ladder. Science, Agriculture, Visual Arts, Vocational and Technical students tend to see themselves as being liberated from the "troublesome" English Language once they succeed in selecting

their courses. Though they would still be required to pass an English examination in most cases, they see the language as a subject that is a non-requirement of whatever course they are pursuing and therefore, pay very little attention to it. Some students do not even see the relevance of a good pass in English to the courses they have chosen to pursue. This situation naturally leads to a rather lackadaisical attitude towards learning English. Attitude and perception are developed as a result of the interplay of a number of factors within the individual's social and academic environment. These factors are not limited to one's learning disposition. The learner's disposition to the English Language is paramount. His attitude is crucial to his proficiency in the use of the language. The learner must discard the notion that English is not learnt and that it comes naturally with constant exposure. The learner should not be closed to acquiring skills for proficiency in the use of English.

Classroom life can be created by teachers and students as they respond to the situations in which they find themselves. Sikes Measor and Woods (1994) believe that "each student is unique with particular cultural and material experiences making up his/her 'biography'". This, from the view point of Meads, provides the seedbed for their sense of 'self', and influences their personality and perspectives. (Mead, 1994) He observes that the development of each person continues throughout life, but early formative experiences remain important to the perceptions that the learner has about the subject that he/she is learning.

For instance, children from literate homes where English is the medium of communication tend to have a positive attitude towards learning the subject, especially speaking. However, that cannot be said of the learning of grammar.

Obviously, the learner, who has not had such previous experiences, would find a petty school rule that speaking vernacular should be banned in school a disturbing development. In dealing with students as far as the learning of English is concerned, the researcher focused on the fact that students, in their daily work in school, acquire long-term life experiences through regular interaction. Their competence in English, especially in the use of acceptable grammatical expressions, forms the basis for their performance in whatever occupation they find themselves in the future. In effect, the student's biography has a considerable influence on his/her ability to acquire and properly use English Language as a medium of communication.

According to John P. De Cecco,¹³ the experiences of learners are influenced by what can be described as manipulable conditions of learning in which the child finds himself. Among the conditions of training situations which influence learning are the motivational or preparatory conditions that make the trainee ready for learning. The psychologist calls this readiness factors. These include factors ranging from the general level of motivation to very specific sets to associate particular responses with particular stimuli. Also there are a number of stimulus conditions to determine which specific associations are formed, and how strong these associations are relative to competing associations. These are called associative factors. Various degrees of importance are assigned by different writers to motivational and associative factors. But studies have shown that both are important and are therefore worth considering in their own merit as far as the learning of grammar in our schools is concerned.

¹³ "Human Learning in the School (Readings in Educational Psychology).

The extent to which learners can understand a particular discipline depends, to a large extent, on the learner's readiness to learn. Therefore, if our learners are to grasp the rules of grammar they must be physically, mentally and psychologically ready for the grammar lessons. In learning to perform a task, the individual must actively seek some goal or incentive. The individual must be intrinsically motivated (that is he must try) to attain some desirable consequence of his performance. The present day crop of learners neither have that internal motivation to achieve a goal nor any identifiable learning goals. Another important readiness factor in the learning situation is what the learning subject is doing or trying to do. This factor is generally called the subject *task set*. In general it can be said that the learner will do better if he knows what he is supposed to do.

Associative factors constitute the second broad class of variables which are the stimulus conditions that enter into the learning situation because they are the ones with which specific responses are to be associated. Psychologists believe that the problem of controlling behaviour consists simply in strengthening associations between some stimulus and the desired response to the point where the response will automatically occur whenever the stimulus is presented. By this assumption it is expected that any grammatical rule that the teacher teaches the learner should be enough for the learner to be able to solve any related grammatical problem. Paradoxically, the situation that we have with our students is one of an attitude that virtually abhors anything grammar. This is because of the way grammar is taught in schools. A case that illustrates this fear for grammar is when grammatical functions were introduced in the West African Examination Council English Language paper. There was a general outcry by both students and parents against the inclusion of

grammatical functions in comprehension questions. Till date most students consider grammatical function aspect of the examination as difficult and some maintain that it is the most difficult part of the entire paper.

3.9.3 The Teacher

The study paid special attention to teachers for good reasons teachers, as individuals, have opinions, perspectives, attitudes, values, and beliefs. These human attributes are features that teachers exhibit in the course of their work, especially when it comes to liking or disliking particular subjects, or students. The key role of the teacher is not limited to teaching but also mentoring. Mentoring, according to Edwards and Collinson, (1996) is a means of providing support, challenge and extension of the learning of one person through guidance of another who is more skilled, knowledgeable and experienced, particularly in relation to the context in which the learning is taking place. (Edwards and Collinson: 23) If the teacher of English is to mentor the learner therefore, he /she must be better off and more knowledgeable in the use of English. Thus the responsibility of the teacher goes beyond teaching to include the exhibition of wholesome attitudes towards what he advocates as a teacher. Situations in which teachers speak pidgin and vernacular to students during official hours are therefore a complete deviation from what is expected of him/her as a mentor. Consequently, the questionnaires that the researcher designed sought to tease out the perception of the teacher of English as well as that of the non-English teacher.

Inadequate Preparation of Teachers

Over 80% of the sources and individuals contacted mentioned the poor and inadequate level of preparation on the part of trainee teacher at the training college level. Interaction with both trainees and tutors in the three training colleges in the Northern Region (Bagabaga, Tamale and Bimbila Training colleges) revealed that a good number of trainees come to the college without adequate knowledge of English. The study also confirmed that the Access Course that was introduced in 2001 to enhance enrolment into the colleges failed to equip such students with adequate knowledge of English to effectively pursue the three-year post secondary Diploma Teacher Training programme. Many of those interviewed observed that the conversion of the teacher training colleges from post secondary institutions into Diploma awarding institutions without any upgrading of the qualifications of the tutors was an unviable proposition. According to the sources contacted, the difficulties of the tutors were compounded by the withdrawal of syllabi and the introduction of curriculum guides. The trainee teachers wondered, for instance, how the teacher who is used to teaching through well defined syllabi, and without further training effectively adapts to teaching using undefined curriculum guides. Some teacher trainees also complained of the nature of the external examination system. They observed that the new system does not give emphasis to the teaching of English though the curriculum is overloaded. For instance, there was not a single English textbook recommended for the new system. Consequently, many teacher trainees would complete the programme without the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to use and teach English as a language of learning.

3.9.4 Over-dependence on Limited Textbooks.

Another problem the study disclosed in relation to the teaching and learning of English is the over-dependence on a few textbook in most of the schools. Most teachers have either no professional training or are ill-equipped to teach the language. Majority of the trainee teachers still rely heavily on a few textbooks. The training that they received failed to equip them with skills that should enable them to produce language learning materials to supplement the inadequacies. The techniques of teaching children without textbooks are not exposed to the students in the training colleges. It is a common phenomenon to hear newly trained teachers complain that there are no textbooks and there is nothing they can do. To appreciate the problem further, one can imagine that if basic learning materials such as textbooks are not available, then one can see as luxury the use of facilities as libraries, matching cards, flash cards, and a host of other teaching aids that help in the learning of the language in schools.

3.9.5 The Art of Teaching

Most teaching activities involve verbal discourse between the teacher and the learner. Without language nothing can be taught or learnt about the past, nor about things removed from immediate observation or even the future. According to Smith, (1983) it is a game of thinking in which the rules (that is logic) are never taught often because the teachers do not know them. A close examination of the kind of teaching that goes on in most of our educational institutions, especially at the basic level cannot easily lead to the desired success that stakeholders look out for. The learner may succeed in passing his /her examination by simply memorising and revising sample (past) questions and answers. This may only lead to satisfaction but not real

success. Success means finding a satisfying way out of a difficulty. But a mere state of psychological satisfaction offers no guarantee that we are not mistaken, nor that the way we solved the present problem may not lead to unsatisfactory consequences the next time we try it. There is very little logic applied to the teaching and learning of English grammar in the teaching and learning process. Suppose that one who has learnt to speak his native language goes to school to study grammar. He is taught to classify words and to see relations among them in sentences. This gives him/her a set of words and rules for talking about language through which act he/she learns the language. He can then examine his own discourse and that of others to find and correct points where they fail to satisfy grammatical rules. But just as he/she can use rules of grammar to guide his/her use of language, so can the individual learn to govern his/her own thinking and experimental investigations by using the rules of reasoning and enquiry. Psychologists believe that the one who is able to make deliberate use of rules when judgements about his/her own thinking or that of someone else are called for is more able to catch defects than one who has no command of logic. This calls for the need for this study to closely examine the role of logic in teaching grammar and the English language as a whole.

3.9.6 Logic and Teaching:

The way the teacher teaches affects the way of thinking of the learner which in turn affects the perception of the learner towards what is being taught. In order to teach for effective thinking at the higher level of operation, the teacher must possess a working knowledge of logic in an amount far in excess of that picked up through his own incidental learning. This presupposes that the teacher trainee must be trained in

logic in order to be in the right position to develop the student's ability to think critically.

The learner must be given the experience in controlling his own thinking under the guidance of the teacher through learner-centred approach. Logic is not only necessary in teaching the student how to control his/her thinking, but it is also an integral part of teaching. Two lines of reasoning suggest this conclusion. In the first place, instruction in knowledge starts with the intent to arrive somewhere, to reach a conclusion. In other words, it is a studied discourse which aims not only at conclusion, but also shows the steps and reasons leading to the conclusions. The second is that observation bears out the fact that instruction in knowledge involves logic, though to a large extent, some language structures defy logic. A cursory observation of a typical teaching process reveals that the teacher performs certain logical operations. The teacher defines, interprets, explains, justifies, proves, and evaluates. Each of these activities is an operation done with words, sentences, and statements using linguistic instruments.

Paradoxically, the kind of teaching that goes on in most of the schools observed was either exclusively instructor – centred, or student centred. The type of approach adopted in the classroom directly affects the attitudes that the learner develops or assumes towards what is taught. A brief examination of the dimensions of teaching observed in the course of the study would clarify some of the issues that would be raised later in this report. The study revealed that the instructor-centred teacher believes that he is ultimately responsible for determining goals. This thinking was based on the belief that if the teacher merits the responsibility placed in his hands, he

knows more than do the students about the subject, about the world in which they live, and about the ways in which the knowledge he imparts can enrich the learner. The student-centred teacher on the other hand believes that it should be the entire group, including himself that should determine the goals of the group. The student-centred instructor usually has greater emphasis on the students in goal-setting and usually has certain implicit goals which he hopes would be achieved by the students. With this method the degree of student participation is higher in terms of what goes on in the classroom. One other phenomenon that was observed with teachers who adopted the instructor-centred approach was the degree of instructor tolerance or acceptance of erroneous or irrelevant student contributions. Whilst the instructor-centred teacher virtually condemned any contribution that he deemed irrelevant, the few teachers who were student-oriented accepted contributions without negative evaluation.

Apart from the method of teaching there is the professional competence of the teacher himself in the knowledge of what to teach. Studies in the educational sector have revealed that the kind of training that trainee teachers undergo is grossly inadequate. They come out of the training college without the wherewithal to influence their learners in any positive manner. Reports of Educational Committees identified, among other things, the inadequate acquisition of teaching skills by some of the teachers from the colleges of education. Unfortunately, these teachers do not have the courage to admit that there are topics in English that they cannot handle and which they should learn before they can teach effectively. More often than not, the teacher dismisses English books that are recommended as supplementary readers, with the assertion that such books are too difficult for the students. When it is time

for the English lesson, all the teacher does is to decide for him/herself which aspect of the language to teach. If he/she decides on reading, all he/she does is to decide on which page to open to for children to read from the recommended text book. This is followed by the answering of the comprehension questions that follow. The grammar aspect is often left out. This direct method of teaching the language makes students grow to believe that the most important aspect of English for them to learn is essay writing or reading comprehension. When it comes to teaching grammar, merely copying lexical and structural items on the chalkboard for students to identify without prior treatment of the aspects is as bad as not teaching grammar at all.

Family and Community

Family background has been identified as a determining factor in one's competence in the use of the English language and learning as a whole. In the homes of the elite, English is introduced to the child at the very time the child begins learning to speak. Majority of this group of children tends to be fluent in spoken English. As the children begin to speak fluently they make very little effort to learn how to write. Their parents often become complacent in the knowledge that their children speak "good English".

The English that is spoken in the community also goes a long way to influence perceptions and attitudes of children towards the learning of the language. The general perception that the English language is not our language and that errors in its usage are understandable and pardonable discourages learners from making efforts to learn it well. This perception has grown and matured to such a level that sometimes

people who speak impeccable English are a rare category in the Ghanaian society and are revered because they are rare.

3.9.7 The Home Environment

The researcher interacted with families of students to elicit their views and opinions on the use of English in contemporary society. This is because the foundation of children's learning disposition and perception about a particular subject, or education in general is, to some extent, determined by the experiences they go through in their environment. The home environment can either enable or constrain learning. It affords different opportunities for particular individuals and groups. It should be noted that the child develops in response to particular conditions, many of which they are unlikely to have control over. One crucial factor is the availability and nature of resources. A home that has a special place for reading materials, such as a library or reading room, is most likely to promote a good reading habit in children. Similarly, if the learner always sees his/her parents and elder siblings reading, the tendency to take reading as a habit will be greater. In the same vein, if parents develop the habit of buying reading books for their wards instead of limiting themselves to the texts prescribed by the school, students may gradually develop the habit of reading. Children who read improve not only on their reading skills, but they also improve on their speaking and writing skills. The material that the child reads is written in acceptable grammar. Also the child's vocabulary gradually improves with a good reading habit. On the contrary, most parents prefer to buy video CDs for their wards and biscuits for the younger ones than buy story books. In situations like this, the child sees reading as purely academic work instead of another form of entertainment, just like watching films. Even when children are made to read story

books that parents have given them, the questions that parents would ask are centred more often than not only on the subject matter of the story. Such questions as “*What is the story about*,” are questions parents would simply ask the learner. If the child is able to recall what he or she has read, then the parent is satisfied and the learning from that book ends there. Scarcely would parents or guardians go further to ask the learner to identify some grammatical aspects of the text.

In addition to the above point is the problem of overburdening the learner with household chores to the detriment of his learning time. This phenomenon affects all aspects of learning, but more so when it comes to learning a subject that requires the understanding and application of many rules such as grammar. It is also a common phenomenon that parents who buy books for their wards at home often buy story books or essay writing books. Scarcely do parents and guardians buy grammar books for their wards. This attitude of attaching less importance to grammar by parents gradually gets transferred to their wards. The child grows and gradually tends to believe that grammar is either not learnt or, at a certain stage of competence in English grammar, would come by itself.

Observations Made at a Book Fair:

In February 2008, there was a Book Fair at the Ghana Trade Fair Centre in Accra. At the fair, there were books on various subjects. Most patrons filed past the English tables with either a casual glance at the title of a book or two or at best enquired about the price, and simply proceeded to other stands where they spent much more time looking at and purchasing books on other subjects. The researcher decided to interview one of the patrons about his choice of books and what informed it. Of the

thirteen books the patron bought there was not a single English book. Below is the conversation that the researcher had with the patron;

Researcher: I can see you have bought quite a number of books including children's books.
But it appears you have not included English books.

Patron: I have run out of money, besides English is not my priority as I am an engineer and would like my child to also become an engineer. Besides I did not consciously learn English. It just came.

Researcher: But English is taught in schools and is one of the most important requirements for advancing into other institutions of higher learning.

Patron: My child learns all his subjects in English and therefore might not need special English books to know it. Moreover, he already speaks English without much difficulty. The mother and I have been speaking English to our children right from the time they were born.

Researcher: What about the rules of grammar which govern the use of English and which the learner must know at his/her finger tips?

Patron: The rules of grammar, I have been told, are endless and full of exceptions that makes it virtually impossible to learn. As such one only needs to know a few of the common ones and make do with that. It is also possible that the rules are learned as and when one makes mistakes and is corrected. It would be tomfoolery to try to learn the rules of grammar before speaking good English.
Then all Ghanaians would have been speaking bad English.

If a guardian dismisses the learning of grammar as "tomfoolery" one should understand straight away why his ward will view the learning of grammar as such.

3.9.9 Interview with McMillan Books Company Limited. (Tamale Sales Office)

The researcher had a structured interview with the McMillan Books Regional Sales Officer for the Northern Region. The interaction revealed a number of salient issues that go to confirm the view that perception is crucial to the falling standard of English in Ghana. Below was the interaction that ensued.

Researcher : What kinds of books do you supply to schools?

McMillan : We have books covering virtually most of the subjects that the senior high schools pursue.

Researcher : What books are commonly purchased by schools and students?

McMillan : Most headmasters order for Mathematics and Science text books for their libraries, and a few books on comprehension and summary. More often than not the teachers ask the students to buy their own reading books.

Researcher : Do the students or parents buy the English books as suggested by the teachers?

McMillan : Most of the students and parents prefer to buy English pamphlets that contain grammar exercises and answers as well as sample essays on past examination questions than to buy novels to read and learn them themselves. They maintain that their wards would simply not have time to read the books.

It is obvious from the above that learners have a lazy attitude towards learning English, hence they look for the easiest way to pass English examinations. Relying on sample answers to past questions for essay and grammar alone will not enable the learner to understand and use the language the way they should. The learner, by using only sample essays, does not bother him/herself to know why the answer is as appears. All that the learner is interested in is the answer. How the answer is arrived at is not often known to the learner. The following example throws more light on the above discussion. Example:

- i. Either your brakes or your eyesight (is/are) faulty.
- ii. Each boy and each girl (has/have) to work hard.

In multiple choice answers, the candidate would learn that the answer to (i) is 'is' However, the learner will not take the pain to learn that the principle of proximity in concord stipulates that the noun that precedes the verb immediately is the noun that

governs the verb that follows. For this reason, since eyesight is singular and immediately precedes the verb, the verb must correspond with the noun. Similarly, in example (ii) the candidate may learn that the answer is '*has*' without necessarily understanding that any time the expression '*each*' precedes a singular subject, joined by '*and*', the singular verb is used.

Policy Makers

Policy makers have also, in a way contributed to the negative perception of the learning of English. The researcher's interaction with some heads of second cycle institutions revealed that policy makers have contributed to the problem. A head teacher of a school recounted an incident in which the Ministry of Education warned that he should not purchase English books for students as parents have to pay for the school's anniversary cloth. The Ministry also further directed that no school should buy any books other than those recommended by the Ministry. He disclosed that many headmasters had to protect their daily bread by not buying books for their students to read because the ministry was breathing down their necks as were the parents and guardians of students. According to the headmaster, the directive specifically stated that no school should purchase any additional book for students to read besides the government-supplied textbooks. The idea behind this directive, apparently, was to cut down cost to parents and guardians, and it was also based on the assumption that government-supplied textbooks alone are sufficient to cater for the learning of English. Consequently, if officialdom commands that students should not be made to purchase books that would enhance their learning and use of English just for the sake of cutting down school fees for parents, then the poor level of competence in the use of the language is bound to occur.

Interview with Specialists of the Language:

The researcher interviewed two specialists in English, who are lecturers in two of the public universities. The first was a Professor in the Department of English, of the University of Ghana. A summary of the interaction between the researcher and the language professor is as follows:

In response to the question; How would you describe the standard of English in our modern day society, The Professor expressed worry at the poor level of English (spoken and written) among users of the language, especially students even in the tertiary institutions. In response to the question what could have accounted for the poor performance, she mentioned lack of reading among parents, and therefore the poor habit of not buying books. In addition, she recalled with admiration the high standard of English that was spoken in the colonial days by standard seven graduates during the colonial era and the period shortly after independence. She however, intimated that the lack of emphasis on the acquisition of competence in the mother tongue (L1) in Ghana is largely contributory to the poor standard of English in the country. She noted that countries that have used L1 as medium of acquiring a second language (L2) have achieved great success in the acquisition of the second language (L2). According to her, “---a firm basis of the first language of the child or the society’s first language (L1) is needed for a good grasp of the second language.” In her view, therefore, there is the urgent need for Ghana to have a national local language in which all Ghanaians can acquire literacy. The Professor further observed that questionnaires used for the 2010 population census do not make provision for languages spoken; and that, according to her, points to the little attention given to language in Ghana.

As to whether teachers can be blamed for the low standard of English in Ghana, the Professor noted, with great concern, that there was a wrong perception that “anyone who can speak English can teach it.” She cited an example in which a lady teacher who had specialized in Home Science and was posted to a junior high school was asked to teach English because the school already had a home science teacher. When the lady explained that English was not her area and therefore she would not be able to teach it, the head of the school asked the Home Science teacher, who equally was not into English, to teach English so the new comer could take the Home Science Class. What this incident suggests is that one does not need a specific qualification or special skills in order to teach English. The professor also noted, with disgust, the phenomenon that Ghanaians appear to have some sneering attitude towards people who speak good English. What is mostly acceptable is either code-mixing or pidgin and emphasized that there was the need for Ghana to keep to the international standards of the language.

A Senior Lecturer at the University of Education, was the second person the researcher interviewed. He specialized in methodology and literature and had also done considerable work on Children’s Literature and Reading. In response to the question on his opinion on the standard of English used in the present day Ghanaian society, he noted that language use would not be enough if the user was not able to use it to address problems. He was of the view that literacy should be viewed beyond the ability to read and write in English. He identified other forms of literacies such as; the computer and the internet, both of which demand some amount of literacy. In other words, there are more facilities for language use than there was in the past. Based on that, he noted, one could say that the present generation of children are

more literate. The Lecturer added that there was a traditional definition of literacy which was limited to ability to read and write in L2 (English). At the same time, he admitted that the present-day learner faces more challenges in his environment than his counterpart in the past. That, according to him, was a challenge that both parents and teachers must appreciate and help the learner to cope with. The Lecturer also admitted that some of the other kinds of literacies have not helped the learner to improve upon his/her ability to write. He cited the use of mobile phone, television and the internet, as literacies that have not helped much.

Responding to a question on the role of policy makers in bringing about low standards of English, the Lecturer lamented that the assessment procedure recommended and adopted for schools has, largely, been more of methodology than context sensitive. He was of the view that lack of materials was no longer the issue but that the actual contact with the language was very much determinant of the level of competence. “Even, natives of the language grapple with the grammar of the language if they have not had the appropriate contact with it”. He added that in a highly literate environment, the child could be highly literate and vice versa. He was also of the view that English is by its nature complex, and that it is more complex than most European languages. He also disclosed that knowledge or literacy in one’s L1 is helpful in the acquisition of English and any other L2 for that matter. This is particularly true in learning the syntax and phonetics of the language. Despite the fact that L1 is helpful to the learning of L2, parents give more priority to the speaking of English than the child’s L1. According to him, a key factor in the learning of a language is confidence. He was of the view that most learners do not approach the learning of English with confidence and that was because the learners

could not read and/or write in their L1 confidently. He said the policy of L1 being used as a start for education did not work because the learners could not grasp firmly the L1 and that was due to the lack of competence on the part of the teachers of L1. Also, he added that the use of L1 was challenged by the fact that there are many indigenous languages in Ghana and all could not be easily developed for literacy purposes. As to the way forward the



Picture.3.5: Developing reading habit in your baby

Lecturer suggested that both parents and teachers must engage in what he termed differentiated teaching where learners enter into learning the language at different levels. He also advocated for

early childhood literacy development promotion as this has been ignored over

the years. He noted that the failure to develop early childhood interest in reading has led to the poor attitude of learners towards reading and English as a whole. He was of the view that a good reading habit by parents can easily be imitated by a child, even while the baby is still in the womb. “Reading to your baby is as important as breastfeeding it,” he concluded.

3.1.1 Culture

Culture is the whole set of beliefs, attitudes, values and ways of doing things of a reasonably homogenous set of people. The culture of a people depicts their perspectives which often develop from collective activity. Furthermore, cultures endure over time and thus represent sets of ideas, perspectives, values, and practices

by which individuals are socialized. In our schools, for instance, the playground enables children to develop unique and particular ways of perceiving school in general and specific subjects in particular. The community within the school provides a different cultural context. This influences the perspectives of students, parents as well as teachers. Culture has indeed a huge impact on learning and behaviour. Wertsch (1991) argues that the thinking of all learners is dependent upon cultural tools that are available to them. This means that culture has a direct influence on school learning.

The attitude of learners of English and grammar in particular is no exception in this regard. This study, indeed, reveals a close correlation between the micro and macro cultures that the learner finds him/herself in. The micro environment refers to the cultural setting of the family and the learners' immediate environment whilst the macro culture has to do with the larger Ghanaian culture within which the learner learns. This embodies the influence of socio-economic and technological changes that act in one way or the other to affect the performance of the learner. Cultures endure over time and thus represent sets of ideas, perspectives, values and practices into which individuals are likely to be socialised. The playground cultures of children provide an example here. In one sense, learners in friendship groups develop unique and particular ways of perceiving school life in general and certain subjects in particular and for that matter grammar. They use these as a means of understanding school and coping with it. (Clarricoates, 1987; Davies 1992). It has also been observed that continuity in learners' culture from generation to generation provides a context which young learners absorb. (Opie & Opie, 1959; Sluckin, 1981).

The community within which the school is situated provides another cultural context. This will influence and be influenced by the perspectives of parents, learners, and teachers and the community as a whole. The attitude and general disposition of learners are thus greatly influenced by these factors. Among the many divisions which can be characterized as the community's culture are those relating to ethnicity, language, religion, social class, gender, political and personal values. The existence of such cultural diversity is particularly important to the English teacher. Cultures have a huge impact on learning and behaviour, as has been progressively demonstrated by the rapidly developing field of 'cultural psychology' (Bruner 1986). For instance, Wertsch (1991) argues that the thinking of most learners is dependent on the cultural tools that are available to them. These concepts and artifacts frame and mediate understanding and thus shape development. They will thus certainly have some impact on school performance.

Similarly, new learning may affect or even change the sense of identity of individuals and such changes may or may not be viable to them within the home environment. There is thus a sense in which cultures can both enable and constrain learning. Indeed cultures are likely to afford different opportunities for particular individuals and groups. In the case of school cultures, they develop in response to particular conditions, many of which teachers and learners are unlikely to control. In a school where some students and even teachers speak Pidgin or "broken English," many of the students are likely to adopt the Pidgin instead of using standard English. On the other hand, there are schools in which a 'culture of silence' is developed in a bid to control students' language and behaviour. This is where students are either asked to speak English or remain silent for the period that they are within the school

premises. This situation is particularly common in schools in which the administration is considerably authoritative. However, silence is not always golden. Many are those who will consider silence as being synonymous with well-controlled classrooms in which learners are thought to be working hard and focusing on the learning task. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

3.10.2 Role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The influence of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on the learning of the English Language and, for that matter grammar, is a controversial issue. Whilst some believe that it has helped to improve learning in general, others maintain that the habit of reading among the youth is on the decline because the youth spend more time viewing television programmes and playing computer games or browsing the internet.

Acquiring a computer, a video recorder or Video CD player or a mobile phone is now more or less a necessity to most Ghanaians. Indeed, Information Communication Technology is designed to improve upon communication among the citizenry. ICT however seems to be focusing mainly on fastness and easiness of communication rather than quality of the communication medium with regard to the use of language. It is quite easy to recount the benefits that technology has contributed to the socio-economic development of a society or nation. Many people however, do not seem to realise that technology has had remarkable negative influence on the performance of users and learners of English, more so with grammar. Modern technology is persistently reversing the drive of the Ghanaian English learner or user towards proficiency. Writing is being used lesser and lesser and correctness in usage has been receiving lesser attention than ever before.

In some of the schools, where discipline is a bit relaxed, students are seen during class hours making phone calls. It was also observed that most of the students speak the vernacular while communicating on the phone. Similar observations were made on the use of mobile phones on these campuses. This situation goes a long way to reduce the proficiency of the learner of the language since he does not seize the opportunity to use the language, though he is communicating with a literate. A survey of the schools indicated that an average of four out of every ten students possessed cell phones. Though not as many as those who possessed phone cards, it was realised that students shared phone numbers with their room mates. In that case, they give out the phone numbers of their colleagues to friends and relatives and consequently receive calls through those phones. The overall effect of using the telephone to replace writing is that it reduces the amount of learning that can take place in terms of the English language in general and the learning of grammar in particular.

The internet is yet another area that students, though in relatively small numbers, spend a good portion of their time browsing. It is true that there is much to learn from the internet. However the question is, what type of items do these students learn on the internet, and whether the type of information they access can be controlled by any means. Furthermore, a good number of students admitted that when they write letters to send to their friends by e-mail they do so using Pidgin, and when asked why they use pidgin, they indicated that their recipients feel more comfortable replying to their letters in pidgin. Others maintained that it has more fun to the communication. Computer games have also taken the better part of most of our youth especially students. Studies have shown that during holidays, students who have access to

computers and internet facility spend endless hours entertaining themselves with these games to the detriment of other activities that would help them to improve upon their use of the English language.

3.10.3 Effects of ICT on the Performance of Students in English Usage

The effects of mobile phone and internet usage on our students are remarkable. Most parents and guardians hold the view that prior to the introduction of phone booths and mobile phones, communication between many students and their friends and relatives was done through letters. However, as a result of the use of telephone facilities, students now scarcely write letters. This view was corroborated by officials of Ghana Post Company Limited who recalled the past when they used to provide writing desks in their premises for students to sit and write letters. When students used to write, they were compelled by circumstances to use the dictionary whenever they were confronted with spelling difficulties. Once they made an effort to learn how to write letters, it implied that grammar too would be a matter of concern to them. In the course of looking up a word one learnt the part of speech and the tense of the word, as well. All these made the learning of grammar relevant to the learner. On the contrary, now that telecommunication has virtually taken over writing, it implies that there is little need and use for grammar.

The effect of this phenomenon is far-reaching. Students send text messages in a manner without regard to grammar and spelling. An interview with one English teacher in one of the senior high schools revealed that a good number of students have developed bad spelling and grammar as a result of sending text messages. She cited examples of words that were spelt wrongly resulting from one getting used to

the texting style of writing. Some of the examples she cited as having been found in students essays were.

| | |
|------|------------|
| luv | (love) |
| gud | (good) |
| moro | (tomorrow) |
| C u | (see you) |
| d | (the) |
| kno | (know) |

Tell mum I see her moro (Tell your mother I will see her tomorrow)
I wan Luv u. (I want to love you.)

The above two examples of sentences are neither acceptable in terms of grammar nor spelling

The situation that learners of English have created certainly violates the basic learning principles and theories of language

3.10.4 Learning Theories and the Classroom Reality.

Language theories are designed to help teachers and students in the teaching and learning of a target language. These theories expose student to the relationship between language acquisition and language learning. The researcher sees these two key words as crucial in the teaching and learning of English grammar in particular and therefore considers it appropriate to discuss the two concepts in much detail.

The acquisition-learning hypothesis claims that there are two independent ways of developing ability in second language. Language acquisition and language learning are seen as subconscious processes which are identical. They are conscious processes that result in 'knowing about language.' Richards et al (1985). Though these differences might exist, there are remarkable similarities in 'learning' and 'acquisition.' Richards et al (1985) for instance, maintain that the process by which a

person learns a language is sometimes called acquisition instead of learning because some linguists believe that the development of a foreign language in a child is a special process. Similarly, Chomsky believes that:

- a. Children are born with linguistic learning ability.
- b. Children learn language by being exposed to it.
- c. Children develop linguistic rules unconsciously.

Thus children are said to acquire the rules of their mother tongue by being exposed to examples of the language, and by using the language for communication. (Richards et al 1985:3).

3.10.5. The Innateness Theory of Language.

The innateness theory of language is based on the assumption that a child's language acquisition and learning ability is not necessarily based on conscious teaching, but rather on the behaviourist approach of response to stimuli. Chomsky (1959) and Lenneberg (1967) believe that there is an innate mechanism in the child's brain which they refer to as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). They assert that children are born with an innate capacity for language development. The LAD theory claims that the acquisition of one's first language is facilitated through an innate mechanism or apparatus within the human brain. According to Chomsky, human beings are born with LAD that enables them to have basic knowledge of the nature and structure of a human language. According to Chomsky, the child must be exposed to the language for the LAD to be activated. Rivers, (1989) on the other hand, believes that although adults are different from children, they are equally capable of reactivating their LAD to acquire a second, third, or fourth language naturally. (Rivers,1968, Yalden 1983: 8-9, Krashen, 1981:81) The theory therefore

believes that the child's ability to acquire language and the number of languages the child can acquire are unlimited.

3.10.6. The Behaviourist Theory

The behaviourist theory of language acquisition and learning is based on the assumption that language learning and acquisition are based on response to stimuli. In other words, the behaviourist theory claims that learning and acquiring a second language are necessarily based on the effect of conscious teaching and learning. It also draws the conclusion that a child's impetus for learning should not be to acquire a language but to achieve success in games and problem solving. The behaviourist approach views language acquisition as a process of imitation and reinforcement. According to this theory, children learn to speak by copying the utterances heard around them and by having their responses strengthened by the repetitions, corrections and other reactions that adults and teachers provide. This theory foregrounds the role of adult influence on the attitude of children towards the learning of a particular language or an aspect of it.

3.11. The Natural Order Hypothesis

This is a hypothesis proposed by Pit Corder (1967). According to Corder, the second language learner acquire the rules of a language in a predictable order; with some rules tending to come early while others come late. The order, Corder stresses, does not necessarily correspond with the order in which rules are taught in language classes. (Krashen, 1983 *ibid*)

3.11.1 The Monitor Hypothesis

This is a theory proposed by Krashen (1978) that distinguishes two distinct processes in second language and foreign language development and use. It shows how acquisition and learning are used in language production. Acquisition, it states is a subconscious process, which leads to the development of ‘competence’ and it is not dependent on the teaching of grammatical rules. That is, our ability to produce utterances in another language comes from our acquired competence from our subconscious knowledge. Learning on the other hand refers to our conscious study and knowledge of grammatical rules. It serves as a monitor or editor of our performance. That is to say, in producing utterances learners initially use their acquired system of rules, and the rules learned through learning serve as a monitor or editor of the utterances initiated by the acquired system.

3.12.0 The input hypothesis

The input hypothesis maintains that in second or foreign language learning, for language acquisition to occur, it is necessary for the learner to understand language input that contains linguistic items that are slightly beyond the learners linguistic ‘competence’ (Richards et al, 1985:143). The input hypothesis claims that learners acquire language in only one way by understanding messages or comprehensible input containing structures a bit beyond the existing level of the learner. It states that we acquire structures by understanding messages without being bogged down by the form of the input. It maintains that learners can understand language containing structures they have not yet acquired by using context (situation, or circumstances), extra linguistic information, or the learner’s knowledge of the world (schemata). This, according to Richards, (1982) explains why in beginning second language

lessons, teachers resort to the use of visual aids or give the scenario to aid comprehension.

Language Teaching Methods and the evolution of Linguistic Theory.

A critical analysis of the link between the evolution of Language Teaching Methods (Grammar Translation, Direct Method, and Audio-lingual Habit Formation) and the evolution of Linguistic Theory is necessary. The Grammar Translation Method was used to outline the stages to develop an appropriate syllabus for teaching English. It is concerned with written language of literature. It makes use of taught in L1 Texts are accompanied by list of vocabulary with L1 translation . The method gives basic foundation to build communicative skills later. However, it can be boring and less communicative as it ignores speaking. Much of learning is about the language, but not how to use the language. (1950s-1960s Structuralist approach).

Skinner's Behaviorism: Skinner sees language learning as a psychological development process which has its origin on observable aspects of verbal behaviour. According to him language is a copy of external world; a relatively passive record of associations of previous data.

Chomsky's Innatism He believes that human development process occurs in a natural way in terms of maturation of 'innate' structures. He sees language as a genetic program which unfolds and results in a level of complexity that does not reflect what is 'outside'. It develops as a 'mental organ' with congenital capacities and limits. It implies mental representation of a generative grammar.

Piaget's Cognitivism and Constructivism. He places emphasis on the individual, and everything which cannot be understood as mere copy or reproduction. The theory places importance on what the individual brings into the learning process." He

discovers the world actively and constructs knowledge of reality and language , through a process of constant ‘ equilibration’ (Bermeosolo, 2001) According to Piaget learning and development are not the same and not one before the other. He is of the view that thinking and language have different genetic roots, which later join together. He emphasises that meaning is constructed in reference to others, representative of culture and history.

Audiolingualism. This involves mastering of vocabulary and rules by which these two elements combine from ‘sound to sentence. The method holds the belief that language learning is a habit formation through repetition and by the use of dialogue, drills, mimicry and memorization. Accurate pronunciation and control of structure is paramount. One problem with this method is the difficulty of transferring to real communication situations. Learners may find it difficult to say what as it neglects useful language for structurally complex one.

D.A. Wilkins Notional-Functional [1972] believes that meaning is needed to express and understand effectively. It categorised language into two: notions and functions. It allows the use of complex grammatical structures. Learners may however, have difficulty in understanding the order of functions presented. It also presents a wide range of grammatical structures for basic functions which may only be understandable at the higher levels of learning.

Michael Lewis Lexical Approach. This approach to teaching grammar examines how lexical phrases play important role in producing fluent speech. According to this

theory, language consists of “grammaticalized lexis”, not “lexicalized grammar”: and it makes use of language generative power.

In conclusion, in our practices there must be an emphasis on communicative activities which improve the students’ ability to communicate. The good approach is one that allows sufficient practice and application of whatever the learner has been able to grasp.

3.1.3.0. Common Methods Used in the Teaching of English Grammar Schools Visited

The researcher undertook classroom observation on the methods teachers use in the teaching of grammar in the schools selected for the study. The schools visited for observation were Ghana Senior High, Tamale Senior High, Viting Senior High, Zabzugu Senior High, Savelugu Senior High, Pong Tamale Senior High, and Business Senior High schools. In addition, three Junior High schools were visited. They were; Bagabaga Demonstration Junior High, Zogbeli Junior High, and Sakasaka Junior High schools. Most of the schools observed adopted methods that were either arbitrary or which lacked procedure in the teaching of the rules of grammar. Below is a typical procedure that most of the teachers observed used in teaching various aspects of grammar from the senior high school English textbooks. The following topics were taken from the year one textbook of the senior high school English textbook.

Nouns (p. 12-13)

- proper/common
- count/non-count
- concrete/abstract
- singular/plural

The lesson took the following form:

Teacher: (Writes title “Parts of Speech” on the chalkboard). Today, we are going to continue with our grammar lesson with the nature of Parts of Speech in English.

Mention the types of speech we have in English.

Class: (Mention the types of Parts of Speech as follows. Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives, Prepositions, Conjunctions, Verbs, Adverbs, Determiners)

Teacher: (writes a list of the types of Parts of Speech on the chalkboard) and explains; Nouns name persons, objects, and places. Nouns can either be proper or common Nouns, Concrete nouns, Abstract nouns, collective nouns, E.g. Kofi, Tamale, Ghana, are all examples of proper nouns whilst examples of common nouns are car, sheep, radio, boy, man etc. Nouns can also be plural or singular. Plural nouns take the ‘s’ to mark its plurality while singular nouns do not take the ‘s’

However, some nouns do not take the ‘s’ in their plural forms. Example ‘sheep’

The plural form of the noun sheep is the same as the singular noun ‘sheep’.

Class: (Write down examples of the various types of nouns that teacher writes on the chalkboard).

Teacher: The second part of speech in English is the ‘verb.’ A verb is a word that expresses action or state of being in the sentence. There are two types of verbs in English, regular and irregular verbs. Regular verbs take ‘ed’ or ‘d’ to form the past tense while irregular verbs take other forms as their past tense. The English verb takes different forms. These are; the infinitive tense, the present tense, past tense, continuous tense, and the perfective tense. Both regular and irregular verbs take these forms. This is shown in the following tables.

Table 3.2.: Forms of Regular Verbs

| Infinitive | Present | Past | Continuous | Perfective |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| to laugh | laugh(s) | Laughed | Laughing | Laughed |
| to suffer | suffer(s) | Suffered | suffering | suffered |
| to listen | listen(s) | listened | listening | listened |
| to wash | wash(es) | washed | Washing | washed |

Table 3.3: Forms of Irregular Verbs

| Infinitive | Present | Past | Continuous | Perfective |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| to come | come(s) | Came | Coming | Came |
| to beat | beat(s) | Beat | beating | Beaten |
| to tell | tell(s) | Told | Telling | Told |
| to fall | fall(s) | fell | Falling | Fallen |

The teacher then asks students to copy the verbs from the board and use each one of the categories of verbs to form sentences of their own. The above method was generally the pattern that was adopted by most of the teachers observed in the course of the study. This approach to the teaching of grammar is by no means adequate for the full understanding of the rules that govern the use of English. Students in a class of this nature are compelled to learn by rote the verbs and nouns that the teacher has listed. They can scarcely go beyond those words that the teacher has written on the chalkboard. This approach certainly does not present grammar in the pleasant and analytical manner that would make it enjoyable for learners. Indeed, students in such a class are bound to see the learning of grammar as boring and tedious.

Inappropriate methods of teaching grammar have indeed contributed to the negative attitude that most students have developed towards learning it. The negative attitude

has led to grammatical aberrations in the language of students. A closer examination of the kind of errors that students make will be relevant for a full understanding of the consequences of the problem of teaching and learning English grammar in Ghana. However, it is equally important to discover the views of scholars of the language on errors in the learning of a language.

Making errors in learning a language is a natural phenomenon. Nelson Brooks, an error analyst, is quoted as having said, “It is just as unrealistic to reckon on language learning without errors as to reckon on existence without sin.” (Brooks 1976). He maintains that learning errors help in understanding the processes of second language acquisition. Similarly, S. Pitt Corder (1957) sees language learning as a “creative, goal-oriented, developmental process.” Errors are therefore bound to occur. Corder further observes that even though most, if not all the learners know the guiding principles that govern the use of language, they still commit errors. This observation presupposes that the learner has an attitude or perception that results in the persistence of the errors that he commits even after knowing the principles that govern the use of it. Therefore, much as one would agree with Brooks that errors can be natural and, therefore, be part and parcel of the learning process, it is important to delineate the role that the perception and general attitude of the learner plays in bringing about the errors that are found in the language of the learners. In doing that it is useful to identify the kind of grammatical errors that students generally commit in their use of the language and the sources of those errors. The researcher focused on errors that border on concord, tense and aspect, recognition of sentence parts and punctuation.

3.14. Conclusion:

The problem of under achievement in English by students will continue to be on the agenda of educational institutions as long as the perceptual and attitudinal component of the problem remains. The analysis so far establishes a strong interdependence between teaching and learning English on the one hand and the perceptual and attitudinal disposition of the learner on the other hand. Irrespective of the knowledge level of the teacher, it is important to explore the inner disposition of the learner if one is to achieve success in the teaching of English. A lot of factors account for the poor attitudes and perceptions of learners toward English and grammar in particular. Since attitudes can change depending on the approach that one adopts towards changing those undesirable attitudes, it behoves all the stakeholders- the student, the teacher, parents and the policy makers, to seek information as to the way forward so as to adequately equip themselves to address the problem. The analysis of the data gathered in this study would serve as a vital reservoir of information needed for a concerted intervention measure.

The analysis that follows this chapter is designed to give the teacher as well as all other stakeholders, including the student him/herself, an insight into the learner and the learning situation. This insight is important in the light of teaching for attitudinal change. Such understanding about learners allows us to build relationships that are grounded on knowledge of learners' personal interests and goals. An understanding of students' perspectives of this nature allows the teacher to use information to affect relationship building and learning. This relationship is key to successful teaching for attitudinal change. A detailed analysis of the data gathered in this study is what can guide the teacher in building this relationship as a teacher.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the main findings of the study. Relevant aspects of the characteristics related to students' attitude to and perception of English, especially grammar, are hereby discussed. They include the categories of respondents, gender knowledge about the teaching and the learning of English language, with focus on grammar and the way forward for enhancing the learning of English. Details of the various characteristics are hereby presented.

4.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents

The research has shown that more males participated in the research than females. Though the selection of participants for the focus group discussion (FGD) was purely on a voluntary basis more boys volunteered to participate in the exercise than girls. When students were asked to pick pieces of paper that contained 'Yes' or 'No' boys were more forthcoming than girls. Most of the girls often shied away and, in some cases, teachers had to intervene by persuading some of the girls to participate. However, in the all girls' school that participated, (Tamale Girls Senior High), most girls were eager to be part of the exercise. It was also revealed that boys often make fun of girls who commit grammatical errors and nickname them (the girls) by their errors. Below is a table showing the gender of respondents in the focus group discussion.

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents (Questionnaire)

| School | Total No. | Boys | (%) | Girls | (%) |
|--|-----------|------|-----|-------|-----|
| Tamale Senior High | 50 | 27 | 54 | 23 | 46 |
| Ghana Senior High | 50 | 26 | 52 | 24 | 48 |
| Northern School of Business | 50 | 32 | 64 | 18 | 36 |
| Business Senior High | 50 | 28 | 56 | 22 | 44 |
| * ¹⁴ Tamale Girls Senior High | 50 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 100 |
| Seventh Day Adventist Senior High | 50 | 40 | 80 | 10 | 20 |
| Islamic Senior High | 50 | 45 | 90 | 5 | 10 |
| Presbyterian Senior High | 50 | 32 | 64 | 18 | 26 |
| *St. Charles Senior High | 50 | 50 | 100 | - | 0 |
| Walewale Senior High | 50 | 37 | 74 | 13 | 26 |
| Gushegu Senior High | 50 | 44 | 88 | 6 | 12 |
| Yendi Senior High | 50 | 39 | 78 | 11 | 22 |
| Salaga Senior High | 50 | 44 | 88 | 6 | 12 |
| Damongo Senior High | 50 | 38 | 76 | 12 | 24 |
| Bole Senior High | 50 | 46 | 92 | 6 | 08 |
| Bimbila Senior High | 50 | 40 | 80 | 10 | 20 |
| Kumbungu Senior High | 50 | 35 | 70 | 15 | 30 |
| Gambaga Senior High | 50 | 42 | 84 | 8 | 16 |
| Zabzugu Senior High | 50 | 38 | 76 | 12 | 24 |
| Savelugu Senior High | 50 | 41 | 82 | 09 | 18 |

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Participants. (Focus Group Discussion)

| School | Total No. | Boys | (%) | Girls | (%) |
|---|-----------|------|------|-------|------|
| Tamale Senior High | 20 | 12 | 60 | 08 | 40.0 |
| Ghana Senior High | 25 | 18 | 72 | 7 | 28.0 |
| Northern School of Business | 15 | 10 | 66.6 | 5 | 33.4 |
| Business Senior High | 20 | 10 | 50 | 10 | 50.0 |
| ¹⁵ *Tamale Girls Senior High | 15 | --- | 0 | 15 | 100 |
| Seventh Day Adventist Senior High | 15 | 11 | 73.3 | 4 | 26.7 |
| Islamic Senior High | 25 | 23 | 92 | 2 | 08.0 |
| Presbyterian Senior High | 23 | 17 | 73.9 | 5 | 26.1 |
| *St. Charles Senior High | 20 | 20 | 100 | ---- | 0.0 |
| Walewale Senior High | 12 | 6 | 50 | 6 | 50.0 |
| Gushegu Senior High | 18 | 10 | 55.5 | 8 | 44.5 |

¹⁴ Single sex (Girls)school .

¹⁵ Single sex (Boys)school .

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|----|----|------|---|------|
| Yendi Senior High | 12 | 8 | 66.6 | 4 | 23.4 |
| Salaga Senior High | 17 | 10 | 58.8 | 7 | 41.2 |
| Damongo Senior High | 24 | 20 | 83.3 | 4 | 16.7 |
| Bole Senior High | 12 | 8 | 66.6 | 4 | 33.4 |
| Bimbila Senior High | 16 | 10 | 62.5 | 6 | 37.5 |
| Kumbungu Senior High | 21 | 17 | 80.9 | 4 | 19.1 |
| Gambaga Senior High | 21 | 15 | 71.4 | 6 | 29.6 |
| Zabzugu Senior High | 24 | 18 | 75 | 6 | 25.0 |
| Savelugu Senior High | 18 | 15 | 83.3 | 3 | 16.7 |

The tables above show clearly the difference in the number of females as against males that participated in the exercise. The comparatively lower percentages of females that participated mirrors the English lesson situation in the classroom. The fear of being mocked is a deterring factor for the participation of girls. They are not often sure of the grammatical appropriateness of what they intend to say. This fear, ultimately, translates into negative attitudes towards learning English. A good number of the female students did admit that they did not feel comfortable speaking English in the presence of their male counterparts for fear of being mocked. The majority of the students are between the ages of seventeen (17) and twenty (20) as revealed in the questionnaire administered. Find below a table showing the age distribution of the student respondents from the twenty schools that participated.

Table 4.3: Showing Age Distribution of Respondents

| School | Age Group | Frequency |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Tamale Senior High School | 16 -18 | 10 |
| | 19 – 21 | 40 |
| Ghana Senior High School | 16-18 | 17 |
| | 19 -21 | 43 |
| Northern School of Business | 16-18 | 14 |
| | 19 -21 | 46 |
| Business Senior High | 16-18 | 41 |
| | 19 -21 | 19 |
| *Tamale Girls Senior High | 16-18 | 32 |
| | 19 -21 | 28 |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| S D A Senior High | 16-18 19 -21 | 18 42 |
| Islamic Senior High | 16-18 19 -21 | 16 34 |
| Presbyterian Senior High | 16-18 19 -21 | 10 40 |
| *St. Charles Senior High | 16-18 19 -21 | 21 49 |
| Walewale Senior High | 16-18 19 -21 | 14 46 |

Generally, it can be said from the table above that a majority of the student respondents were between the ages of nineteen (19) and twenty-one (21). It can also be observed from the above that the average ages of students in the districts are much higher than those in the Tamale Metropolis. This is because in the rural areas children tend to enrol in school much later than their counterparts in the cities. The importance of the age groups of respondents to the study lies in an important observation made by parents, guardians and some teachers. Teachers' response to questionnaire indicated that the attitude and line of thinking of learners about learning English, and more so, towards grammar tend to be less inhibiting with younger students. The adolescents on the other hand, are more selective of what they learn and that what they learn depends on what they deem necessary and easy to learn. Additionally, it is a phenomenon across the educational structure of Ghana that young learners are more obedient to their teachers and parents as compared to adolescents who rely more on their peers than teachers and parents. These observations influenced the researcher to use the age groups of respondents as a variable in assessing the attitudes and perceptions of learners in the study.

It is also important to note that the attitude of respondents from literate homes was remarkably different from that of non-literate homes. Those from literate homes were

much better inclined to applying more attention to the rules of grammar than those from the non-literate homes. For instance, during the grammar lessons observed, students' contribution in class was higher with respondents from the urban schools. It was also observed that those from non-literate homes were the majority. This revelation underscores the significant role that the home environment plays in the perception of learners about English. The table below summarizes the above information on the home background of respondents.

Table 4.4: Showing the literacy status of parents of respondents

| School | Total No. | Literate | (%) | Non-literate | (%) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Tamale Senior High | 50 | 43 | 86 | 7 | 14 |
| Ghana Senior High | 50 | 41 | 82 | 9 | 18 |
| Northern School of Business | 50 | 38 | 76 | 18 | 24 |
| Business Senior High | 50 | 28 | 56 | 22 | 44 |
| *Tamale Girls Senior High | 50 | 36 | 72 | 14 | 28 |
| Seventh Day Adventist Senior High | 50 | 31 | 62 | 19 | 48 |
| Islamic Senior High | 50 | 23 | 46 | 27 | 54 |
| Presbyterian Senior High | 50 | 42 | 84 | 18 | 16 |
| *St. Charles Senior High | 50 | 29 | 58 | 21 | 42 |
| Walewale Senior High | 50 | 16 | 32 | 34 | 68 |
| Gushegu Senior High | 50 | 12 | 24 | 38 | 76 |
| Yendi Senior High | 50 | 19 | 38 | 31 | 62 |
| Salaga Senior High | 50 | 21 | 42 | 29 | 58 |
| Damongo Senior High | 50 | 16 | 32 | 34 | 68 |
| Bole Senior High | 50 | 10 | 20 | 40 | 80 |
| Bimbila Senior High | 50 | 08 | 16 | 42 | 84 |
| Kumbungu Senior High | 50 | 17 | 34 | 33 | 66 |
| Gambaga Senior High | 50 | 15 | 30 | 35 | 70 |
| Zabzugu Senior High | 50 | 21 | 42 | 39 | 58 |
| Savelugu Senior High | 50 | 27 | 54 | 23 | 46 |

The data in the above table shows that a good number of students come from non-literate homes. This was particularly true with respondents from the districts. It can be observed that almost all nine schools in the Tamale Metropolis recorded higher literate parental backgrounds than schools in the districts. Most schools in the

catchment areas are the rural areas where most parents are non-literate. Secondly, competition for the more endowed schools is much keener than those in the districts. Consequently, students from poor homes, which are, more often than not, non-literate, tend not to have access to the advanced schools by virtue of their poor performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level. For instance, while Tamale Senior High School recorded a literate population of forty-three (43) and non-literate of seven (7), that of Bole Senior High recorded ten (10) literates as against forty (40) non-literate. This variation of respondents can be better appreciated in a graphical presentation as follows:

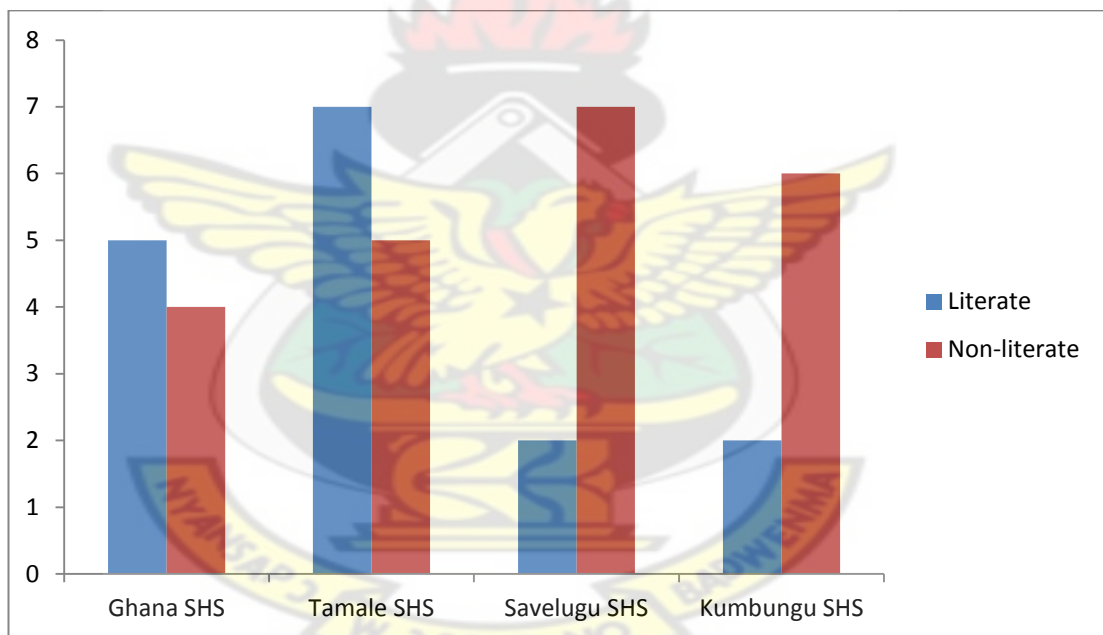


Fig. 4.1: Showing the literacy status of parents of the target population in four schools.

The attitudinal and perceptual disposition of respondents from these two categories of homes was significantly different in learning English.. While those from literate homes perceived English to be simple and easy to learn, those from the non-literate

homes perceived it as difficult. It is important to add that though respondents from literate homes indicated that English was easy to learn by virtue of their competence in spoken English at home, they did not show any good knowledge of the grammatical categories of the very words they use in communicating, a knowledge that will be useful in their ability to firmly grasp the language and use it effectively in the future.

Furthermore, most of these respondents could not spell many of the very words they use in their spoken language thus confirming the observation that learners can become complacent with their ability to express themselves orally and will not bother to look up the spelling of words they are familiar with, as they see these items on daily basis and use them in their daily language. To ascertain this observation, the researcher conducted a short spelling test for fifty (50) students of Ghana Senior High School. The words were carefully selected to ensure that there were only vocabulary that students were familiar with. This was to ensure that students would have no cause to say that they had never heard nor seen the words. The researcher simply looked around the classroom environment and picked out some of the words for the dictation while others were at least within the school environment. Table 10 shows the performance of the class in the said dictation.

Table: 4.5: Showing Results of Spelling Test for 50 students In An SHS Three Class of Ghana SHS.

| Item | No. Of Correct Ans. | Percentage (%) | No. Wrong Ans. | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| blackboard | 20 | 40 | 30 | 60 |
| ceiling | 4 | 08 | 46 | 92 |
| concrete floor | 30 | 60 | 20 | 40 |
| dining hall, | 21 | 42 | 29 | 58 |
| dormitory | 6 | 12 | 44 | 88 |
| wardrobe | 9 | 18 | 41 | 82 |
| fluorescent tube | 0 | 0 | 50 | 100 |
| intestines | 21 | 42 | 29 | 58 |
| mattress, | 41 | 82 | 9 | 18 |
| corn dough, | 18 | 36 | 32 | 44 |

The information was particularly relevant to the study in the sense that it exposed the perception of students from literate homes that once one can speak English one can easily write it. It also serves as a wake-up call to both learners and parents who consider spoken English as all that there is to know about English. In the course of the exercise, it was observed that some students were visibly surprised at their inability to spell certain words that they were until then, cocksure they could spell. Others racked their brains to no avail to spell some of the words. Words that were commonly spelt wrongly by students were as follows:

| Word | Wrong Spellings |
|--------------------|---|
| • blackboard | - blackbord / blackbod |
| • ceiling | - seeling / celing/ ceeling / cieling |
| • concrete floor | - conkrate floor / concret flor |
| • dining hall, | - dinning hall / daning hall |
| • dormitory | - dometry / dormetry / dormetory |
| • wardrobe | - wordrop / wadруп /wodrope |
| • fluorescent tube | - floorescent tube / flooresent tube/flouressent tube |
| • intestines, | - intestins / interstings / interstines |
| • mattress, | - matres / mattres / mattress |
| • corn dough, | - corn do / corndow / corn dowou |

The kind of errors that the students made in the above exercise are indicative of the fact that students know these words but have not taken pains to learn their spelling. The surprise on their faces as they tried to spell indicated that they took it for granted that since they knew those words they could spell them. In the test, therefore, respondents who made the above mistakes only tried to spell the words according to their pronunciation. It is similar attitude that the students have towards the learning of grammar. Students take it for granted that since they speak English well, which contains the grammar of the language, they are competent enough to apply it to writing. The fact that students were surprise at their inability to spell some of the words suggests that they did not border to go beyond just uttering those words. After the exercise, some of the students approached the researcher to confess that they actually did not know that they could not spell some of the words in the dictation, the reason being that they became complacent with their ability to use the words in sentences. In their use of grammar for instance, students could not, for instance explain why in the sentence;

“I will see you today”,

cannot be written as;

“I see will today you”

They could not tell the parts of speech that the individual words represent, much less the functions and order in which they should be arranged to make meaning.

4:3 Perception of Students of Learning English Grammar

The research revealed that most students believe that English is a subject that is easy to learn while arguing that grammar is difficult to learn. Responding to the question “what subject is the most difficult among the following three core subjects you

pursue in school? (English Language, Mathematics, Science), majority of respondents (73.5%) indicated Mathematics and Science as the most difficult subjects to them while citing English Language as the least.

Respondents also maintained that English is easy because it is the only subject they have much knowledge in, even before starting school. Notwithstanding this claim of knowing English, and it not being difficult, students ironically indicated that English is one of the subjects that they fail most in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

The reason given by some students for the failure was attributed to a strict marking scheme for English. As to what aspect of the subject was more difficult, students indicated essay writing, comprehension, and grammar in the order of difficulty.

The responses were graded;

- (1) Strongly Agree,
- (2) Agree,
- (3) Not Certain
- (4) Disagree
- (5) Strongly Disagree

A summary of the responses is illustrated on the table below:

Table 4.6: Results of questionnaire on aptitude of learners

| No. | Questionnaire Item | Agree / Strongly agree (%) |
|-----|--|----------------------------|
| 1 | 3. Grammar is difficult to learn English. | 89.4 |
| 2 | 4. I know that someday I will speak English well. | 75.1 |
| 3 | 7. Grammar has too many rules for easy understanding. | 86.3 |
| 4 | 15. I have a good feel for English grammar. | 48.5 |
| 5 | 21. I am confident that I know how to find the effective way to learn English grammar. | 54.2 |
| 6 | 43. I have the ability to get the grade I desire in the WAEC English examination. | 46.3 |
| 7 | 42. I find it embarrassing when I speak English and make mistakes, | 45.7 |
| 8 | 50. I am afraid that people will laugh at me if I make mistakes when speaking English. | 35.7 |
| 9 | 41. When I read grammar books I easily understand | 24.6 |
| 10 | 34. I can communicate effectively without much knowledge in English grammar. | 76.9 |

Generally, the majority of respondents believe that grammar is difficult to learn adding that the rules are simply too many to learn and apply appropriately – item 3 and 7 (89.4 and 86.3) respectively. However, this general low level of optimism seems to be diametrically contrary to the responses to item 43, where respondents express confidence in their ability to obtain the grades they expect. Again, this optimism is against the background that very few respondents are able to read grammar books with understanding. item 41, (No. 9). The fact that students can admit that they cannot read grammar books and understand, yet are optimistic of obtaining the grades they desire underscores the kind of attitude and perception they

have about grammar and English in general. The confidence respondents have about their performance does not emanate from their experiences but rather from their perceptions. Furthermore, students believe they can communicate effectively without much knowledge of grammar. This may be true of oral communication. However, they certainly would have difficulties with written communication without a good knowledge of grammar. Another issue that is worth mentioning from the above data is the fact that fewer students (45.7) feel embarrassed when they commit errors in the course of communicating in English. Majority either do not feel embarrassed, as it could be commonplace or that they are not even aware of the mistakes they commit.

Moreover, the researcher feels that the picture painted about the level of confidence of the students may not be entirely accurate about how students perceive themselves. Having alerted the students that the exercise was part of a research that was ongoing, it is suspected that the modesty of students might have played a part in their responses to the questionnaire item on confidence. For many of them to say that they consider themselves good in English language grammar or essay writing or that they have the ability to get the grade they set themselves, may make them appear confident. This postulation is in line with the findings of Jin and Cortazzi (1998) that “....students view their academic life in a collective way in which they care about relationships, and harmony in their learning and in their communication with others,” (112).

There are others who may not like to appear over-confident. So there is the possibility that the low scores of No. 5 .Item 21 and No. 6 item 43 are, in part, due to the reluctance of students to appear boastful and out of sync with their colleague students

4.3.2 Analysis Based on Responses to Questionnaire.

Questionnaire administered to students sought to elicit information on their level of confidence in grammar, students' belief in self - directed learning, and, students' belief in teacher directed learning.

4.31 Assessing Students' Disposition to Learning English Grammar.

The following were questionnaire items that bordered on the disposition of the learner as regards learning English in general and grammar in particular. The questionnaire was then administered to one hundred (100) respondents. Generally, the results revealed that students showed varied levels of confidence in their ability to learn some of the aspects of the English language. The researcher drew upon two sets of data for discussion in this study; the percentage and the mean of the responses of respondents. In order to establish the consistency in the thinking of respondents, the questions were designed in an indirect repetitive manner making some questions serve as checks on others. The responses that were given by the one hundred (100) subjects contained varying degrees of opinions about the nature of grammar and English language in general. There were situations that respondents gave different responses to the same question posed in a different way. The responses suggest that respondents were not certain with their views on the learning of English and grammar in particular. This could be either as a result of insincerity on the part of respondents or genuine uncertainty of their opinions on the learning of the language. Find below a table illustrating the position of respondents regarding the learning of English grammar and English Language in general.

4.3.1.1 Self-directed Learning Belief.

One other aspect of the questionnaire sought to reveal respondents' belief in self-directed learning. The questionnaire that focused on this aspect was as follows, together with a brief analysis of the responses.

Table 4.7: Results of Respondents' Self- Directed Learning Aptitude

| Sr. No. | Questionnaire Item | Agree / Strongly agree | Mean |
|---------|---|------------------------|------|
| 1. | I should work harder in order to understand grammar. | 85.7 | 4.3 |
| 2. | I should identify my own weakness in English. | 76.8 | 3.5 |
| 3. | I notice my grammatical errors and use that information to help me do better. | 23.7 | 2.1 |
| 4 | .I practise grammar exercises in the absence of the teacher. | 16.7 | 2.3 |
| 5. | I know best how well I am learning. | 78.4 | 5.3 |
| 6. | I am good enough to decide the kind of English books that can help me improve upon my language. | 87.6 | 3.1 |
| 7. | Being laughed at will not discourage me from continuing to speak English. | 35.6 | 2.2 |
| 8. | I can get the grade I desire in the WAEC English examination. | 78.2 | 3.6 |

An overwhelming majority of respondents admitted that they need to work harder. (No.1 in table12) The responsibility and ability to identify their own weaknesses in English, and then overcome them feature prominently in the responses. Students believe that they have the capacity to evaluate their own learning and performance in English (No. 5). There is hence a strong emphasis on self-effort and self-evaluation as reflected in item 1, and 3. Furthermore, students are of the view that they should decide on the kind of English language books they read outside the classroom

(No.6:87.6)), yet only a few (No.4:16.7) like trying their hand on grammar exercises when the teacher is not present. These responses mean that most students are aware that they need to put in effort to learn the language, especially grammar; yet they scarcely study grammar on their own. They also seem uncertain as to whether when colleagues mock their poor expression in grammar it affects their desire to speak English in public. This is evidenced in No.7, (35.6). This goes to confirm their belief that they know best how well they are learning, (No.5). Overall, the students indicated that they are capable of learning grammar on their own and that they only need to work hard to understand the rules that govern grammar and English in general.

Table 4.8: Dependence on Teachers

| No. | Questionnaire Item | % Agree / Strongly agree | Mean |
|-----|---|--------------------------|------|
| 1. | The role of the teacher is to tell me what progress I am making. | 92.3 | 4.1 |
| 2. | My teacher should make sure I understand all the rules of grammar to enable me use English effectively. | 76.8 | 3.4 |
| 3. | The teacher should choose what grammar books I should study in class. | 67.9 | 2.1 |
| 4 | My teacher should make sure I make progress in English outside class. | 89.4 | 5.3 |
| 5. | The teacher knows best how well I am learning English grammar. | 76.3 | 2.3 |
| 6. | My teacher should decide what kind of English books I read outside class. | 54.3 | 2.1 |
| 7. | Without the teacher it is difficult to learn and understand grammar. | 54.3 | 2.5 |
| 8. | When my colleagues explain the rules of grammar to me I understand better. | 22.1 | 2.9 |
| 9. | I do only grammar exercises given by my teacher. | 91.4 | 3.3 |

From the results shown on table 13 above, it appears that respondents display a high degree of dependence on their teachers in various aspects of learning English. They agree to a large extent with statements that their teachers are responsible for ensuring their progress in class as we see in No. 4. 89.4. This, however, does not correspond with their response on Table 12 which suggests that they need to put in effort in their leaning of English grammar. They also do think that their teachers should monitor their progress outside the classroom, (No. 4. 89.4). Similarly, over half of respondents believe that the teacher should determine the kind of grammar books they should study outside class. Although a good number is of the view that they need to put in more effort, as shown in the previous table, they still admit they do grammar exercise only when given by the teacher. The question then is what personal effort is put in by respondents in trying to learn English

The results from the three tables though, not without some few contradictions, indicate that respondents are pretty much aware of the fact that they need to do more in learning grammar and English in general, but they are not very sure of how to go about achieving competence and proficiency in the language in the here and now. They are also diffident in pointing out the role they themselves need to play in the learning of the language. This is all as a result of the attitude and perceptual orientation that students have developed towards the learning of English. They tend to place much of the responsibility on their English teacher though, they admit that they need to put in effort on their own. Their own role in the learning of English is what students need to be encouraged to identify and appreciate. It is important to help students develop greater confidence in their own ability to learn the language both in class and outside the classroom. Students should be sensitised to awaken to

the reality that they should play a more active role in the teaching-learning process, whether in class or out of class, but not to be solely dependent on their teacher. Sensitising students to understand the need to learn on their own and set their own objectives of learning is a useful tool to raising students' (metacognitive) awareness of English learning over time. This in turn would help students to become more independent learners in the long term. (Young & Fong 2003).

4.4.0 Observations Made During Classroom Interactions

One key observation that was made in the course of the study was that there are differences in mental programming programming of learners. The study brought to the fore, some differences among individuals and these differences manifest themselves in the perception of learners, processing and storage of information, memory management, reproduction and production what has been learnt. The keystone of all teaching-learning is good communication, for the acquisition of knowledge is predicated upon an accurate exchange of information between the instructor and his students.

The researcher observed the behaviour of students in class from different. The first dimension is uncertainty avoidance. Students avoid risks and show little value of personal choice or freedom of thought. If they are not sure of the right answer, they avoid the question. In the grammar class, when the teacher asks a question, the student looks down shyly and avoids eye contact as he/she scrambles through his/her notes for an answer. The classes observed also showed complete authoritativeness in the teaching- learning process. The words and statements of the teacher do not create the avenue for students to contribute. The power distance sets the tone where

students would not demand for elaborate explanation when they do not understand. Teachers and students do not interact in the real sense of the word; their communication is less mutual, but rather a one-way process, directed from the teacher to the students. Students do not make the effort to become active and dynamic players of the communication that takes place. If they react at all, they do so after being encouraged. They do not enter into the communication flow in the teaching-learning process with some commitment because they feel they do not have the right to do so. One can interpret their passiveness in interaction from a different standpoint: as a sign of respect (from the African frame) and as a sign of indifference emanating from an assumed attitude towards the subject being taught. The general impression created is that the teacher is the only one who understands the complicated rules of English grammar and therefore, should be the only one who should do all the talking. Paradoxically, most respondents in the course of the investigation indicated grammar as the easiest among the various aspects of English. Below is a graph showing respondents' views on their level of difficulties as regards learning the various aspects of English.

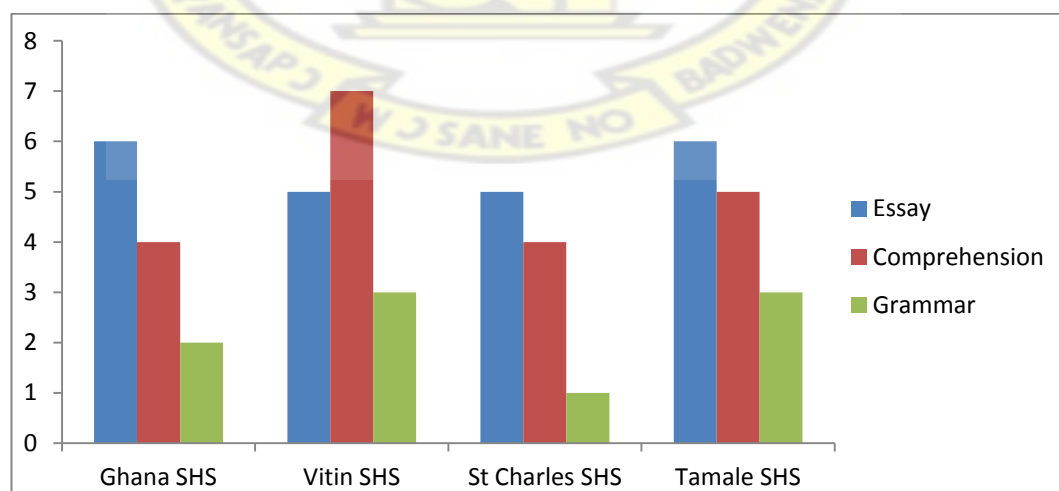


Fig. 4.2: Showing the level of difficulty of the aspects of English

The above information suggests that most students perceive grammar to be the easiest of the three aspects mentioned above, followed by comprehension, while essay writing is perceived as the most difficult among the three. In fact, the pattern of responses could be attributed to the observation that most teachers of English teach grammar more often than the other aspects. This is because it is much easier to mark and score. Also, the idea that grammar is the easiest of all aspects of the language is only a perception because it is the aspect they hear and see often in their English lessons. Most of the grammar exercises are given with possible answers in which students only have to guess without much mental exercise. Moreover, most students in earlier questionnaire claimed grammar was difficult because of the numerous rules and exceptions. But when compared against essay and comprehension, they maintain it is the easiest. What further makes these responses contradictory is that respondents claim grammar is easier, but that did not reflect in their exercises and their spoken language. Interactions with respondents revealed a lot of grammatical errors in their spoken language.

Respondents were also candid in their assessment of the teachers who teach English and those who teach other subjects. Asked how they will grade their English Language teachers, respondents were generally not satisfied with the performance of their teachers. Out of the one thousand (1000) students who responded to the questionnaire only 6% of respondents scored very good for their teachers. 24% scored “good” while 60% were of the view that the performance of their teachers was average. 10% however, scored poor. It is important to add that these responses were kept away as much as possible from the teachers of the schools as they could incur the displeasure and disappointment of both teachers and heads of the schools

selected. Some of the students also pleaded anonymity as they feared they could be punished for not saying what is pleasing to about their teachers. The pie chart below is an illustration of the perceptions of students about the competence of their teachers of English.

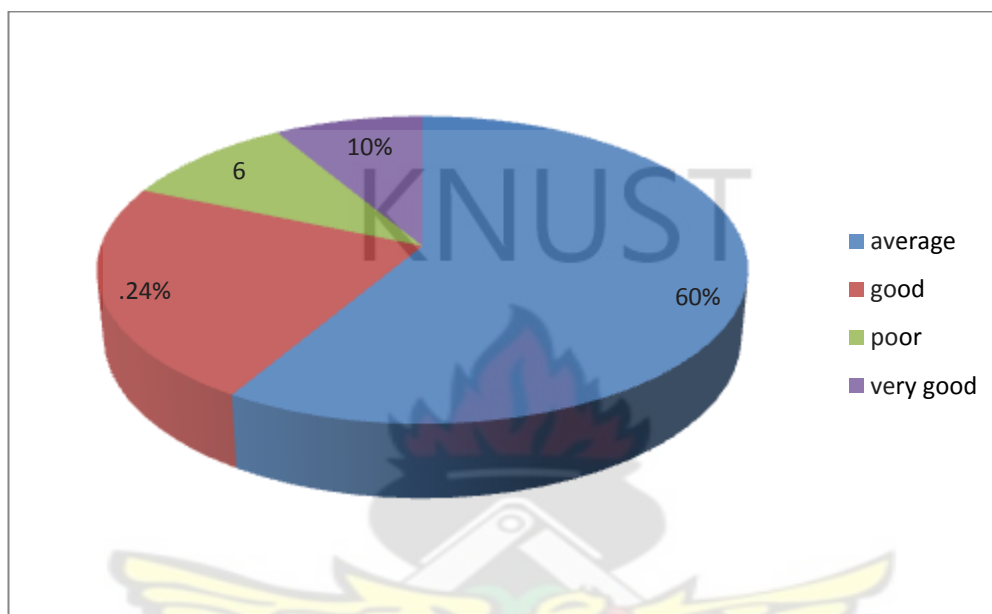


Fig.4.3: Students' perception of their teachers of English

Out of the entire student respondents, 550 indicated that teachers of other subject areas do not bother about English when assessing their work. Respondents cited subjects such as Mathematics, Home Economics, and Chemistry, as subjects for which the appropriateness of spelling and grammar did not matter during assessment. 689 respondents answered, “No” to the question: “Do your teachers in other subjects correct your grammar when assessing your work in those subjects?” As to what aspect of English their English teachers teach most, sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents indicated grammar. In a related question as to what aspect is rarely taught, respondents noted summary writing and oral English. Some respondents, during the focus group discussions, noted that some of their English teachers simply

come to the classroom with a grammar book, and copy exercises on the chalkboard for students to “Fill in the gaps.”

Another astounding revelation from the study was that a good number of students study English only when they have an English lesson, and during examination. Students read books only when they are given comprehension exercise. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that many students perceive English as a subject that is easy to learn but difficult to pass. Five hundred (500) representing 50% of students maintain that English is easy to learn but examiners are simply too mean with marks. This view is particularly common with students pursuing Arts subjects. In other words, these students believe that the English they write was standard but their teachers simply expect too much from them. This view suggests that students are most likely to do little to improve upon their English, since they believe that they are doing well but that the English teacher is difficult to please. A number of students also believe that one can be born good in English and therefore might need little effort to use it effectively. Respondents also believe that the only effective way to learn English is to read story books. Others indicated that speaking the language frequently would enhance one's learning efforts, especially in learning the rules of grammar. Notwithstanding this view, respondents admit in the questionnaire administered that they speak vernacular more often on campus than English. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the one thousand (1000) student respondents indicated that they speak vernacular during conversations with friends; and a similarly high percentage admitted they seldom write letters to their friends because they are not sure of their grammatical expression.

4:5.0 The Use of Mobile Phones

Respondents disclosed that their most frequent means of communication is by telephone. The study clearly shows that a large number of students possess mobile phones on campus though the schools outlaw the use of mobile phones by students on campus. In each of the schools visited, there were a number of phone booths erected by the service providers, Ghana Telecom. These booths provide an avenue for those students who do not have their own mobile phones. At break time and after classes, students were found queuing to make calls. Below is an illustration of the number of students who use mobile phones on campus.

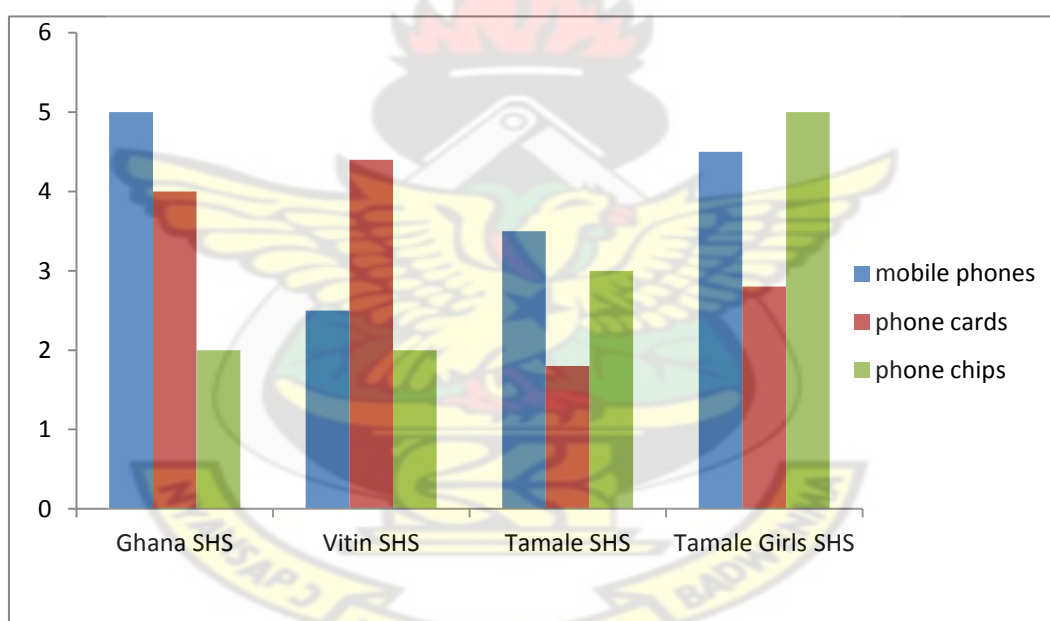


Fig. 4.4: Showing phone usage by students in three schools.

In response to a question as to why they prefer using telephones to writing to friends and relations, majority of respondents said the use of phones was a much faster means of getting feedback. Others expressed the discomfort of being criticised by their friends and relations over poor grammatical expression when they write.

Majority of respondents (73%) also disclosed that the mobile phones they use are given to them by their parents. This presupposes that some parents approve of the use of mobile phones by their wards, and indirectly discourage them from writing letters, through which they could improve upon their use of grammar and expression. Indeed, if a student is to write a letter, she or he would be compelled to crosscheck his /her spelling of words that he or she is not sure of. This is not the case with the use of telephone. In fact, majority indicate that they speak a local language when using the phone, which makes them feel much more comfortable.

The fact that majority of the respondents prefer the use of phone is indicative of an escapist attitude assumed by students since a considerable number indicate that they prefer the phone because they avoid the inconvenience of having to battle with grammar and expression. This negative attitude is reinforced by parents who acquire mobile phones for their wards. The tendency is that once the student has a mobile phone there is a greater tendency to use it irrespective of how much it would cost, than to write a letter, which in some cases, is cheaper. About thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents, however, indicate that when they speak English and make errors at home their parents do correct them. Others indicate that their parents are more particular about their general performance in school than a particular subject area. They buy mostly text books recommended by the school.

4.6 Teachers' Perception of English Grammar.

Many teachers have a rather escapist attitude towards the teaching of English grammar. They see teaching English as a tedious activity and therefore look for easy ways of going round the problem, hence the high tendency to resort to teaching

students more grammar than essay writing. Marking essays is seen as a tedious exercise. This practice is not limited to the senior high schools. In the tertiary institutions, students are often cautioned not to exceed some number of pages with their essays. The question often limits the candidate to two to three pages. Students who often exceed this number of pages are penalised in one way or the other. Though an essay must definitely have a limit and that the length should be appropriate to the level of the students, it is inappropriate to limit students solely because of the task of assessing the exercise.

The research disclosed a number of attitudinal dispositions that indeed raise pertinent issues regarding the teaching and learning of English. In the first place, most teachers interviewed consider writing as a product rather than a process. In some classes that the researcher observed, for example, students write a composition in the classroom, which the teacher corrects and hands back the next day covered in red ink. The student puts the corrected work in a folder and rarely looks at them again. The teacher, on his part, does not follow up on students to ensure they effect the corrections. In this case, both the teacher and learner focus on writing as a product rather than a process. In other words, the student's attention is focused on the '*what*' rather than the how of text construction. No pre-writing activity is mentioned in class before asking learners to embark on writing.

Responses the researcher obtained from the questionnaire administered to the two hundred (200) teachers revealed some important issues worthy of mention and discussion. Though majority of respondents (teachers) are of the opinion that standards of English in schools are falling, they are quick to blame students for not

being interested in speaking the language. The general complaint is that students' performance in English is bad and that teachers were doing their best in the circumstances. Some teachers admitted they do speak pidgin but only when they are with their colleagues. One hundred (100) representing 50% of respondents indicate that poor knowledge of English has been affecting the overall performance of students. They are also of the opinion that teachers of English need to sit up to curb the downward trend of English. English teachers' responses to the question:

“What aspect of English is more difficult to teach?”

significantly point to the assertion by students that their English teachers have preference in teaching the language. The responses of the two hundred teachers involved in the study are as follows:

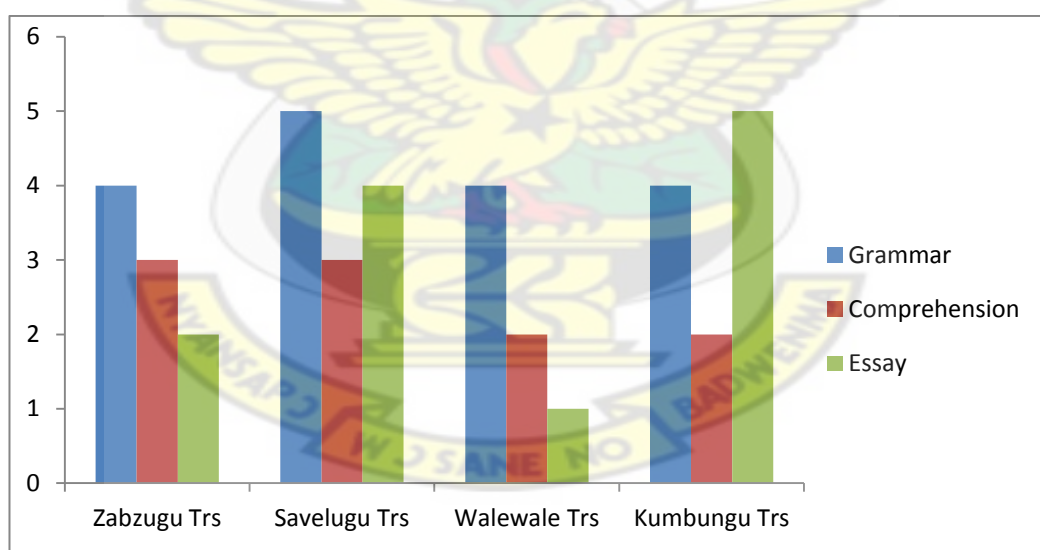


Fig. 4.5: Preference of teachers in teaching English (Scale: 1:2)

In the above chart, eight (8) out of the ten (10) teachers of Zabzugu Senior High School in responding to the questionnaire maintain that they teach grammar more often. This was followed by Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing. All ten

teachers of Savelugu indicated they teach grammar more often. The next most frequently taught aspect was Essay writing eight (8) followed by Reading Comprehension, six (6). On the other hand, teachers of Walewale SHS teach Grammar mostly, followed by Reading Comprehension and then Essay Writing.(2). Kumbungu SHS teachers teach Essay Writing most. This is followed by Grammar (8) and then four (4) persons for Reading Comprehension. The findings above generally portray a situation in which grammar is the aspect of English most frequently taught by most teachers. This revelation attests to the assertion by student respondents that their English teachers often over-concentrate on grammar lessons to the detriment of the other aspects of English. It was discovered in an interview with some respondents that some English Language teachers would get into the classroom, write some incomplete sentences from “an old grammar book” on the chalkboard, and ask students to complete the sentences. The research also revealed that there was often no adequate explanation before the exercise. In some cases, the teacher asks the students to exchange their exercises, and mark. Some of the books contained the answers, which the teacher writes on the board for students to refer to. The rather lackadaisical attitude, not only of students, but also of some teachers of English is a worrying phenomenon. The fact that teachers would go straight to giving exercises without adequate explanation of the grammatical concepts accounting for whatever answers that they give is, to say the least, outrageous. The approach of such teachers signifies either a lack of competence or little desire to teach the subject.

In addition, the study reveals that very little attention is given to essay writing through which students’ knowledge of grammar can be exposed and assessed. This is probably due to the deliberate attempt by teachers to avoid having to read students

essays and mark; a task they consider a heavy burden. Consequently, other aspects of English such as writing and Speaking skills are comparatively less emphasised or abandoned. A close look at the exercise books of students in some of the classes reveals that most of the English exercises given to students in the schools visited, were on grammar. Others have a good number of comprehension exercises. However, interaction with the students indicates that students are often asked to read the passage on their own and proceed to answer the questions that follow. When one weighs this point against the over dependence of students on their teachers for improvement, one can draw the conclusion that there would be an achievement gap. The inadequacies that characterise the teaching and learning of English have resulted in a number of grammatical errors that are found to be common among students. A close examination of these errors would help in understanding the complexities that both teachers and learners go through during English lessons.

4.7. Analysis of students' errors:

One of the major instruments used in identifying these errors was examination of students' essays and their contribution during English lessons. The researcher read students' essays, listened to some students speak the language in class as they contribute to the lesson, and engaged students in purposeful interaction. During the exercise, a number of errors were observed both in written and spoken English and these errors were similar to those identified by Yankson.

4.7.1 Errors Emanating from Concord:

Errors under concord fell into five types, namely,

- notional concord errors,

- proximity concord errors,
- memory limitation concord errors,
- plural inflectional concord errors, and
- inability to identify the noun head.

(Yankson, 1994)

a. The Notional Concord Errors:

Notional concord is one of the areas that students have difficulty with. The rule that a singular subject requires a singular verb poses some challenges to the learners. This was observed in both spoken and written language of learners. For instance the following sentences were found in the essays of seventeen (17) of the students:

- i. *The community as a whole **have** no portable water. (has)*

In the above error, the student has the notion that the word ‘is made up of many people, community’ notwithstanding the phrase “as a whole” and therefore should take a plural verb, instead of considering it as a collective noun.

b. The proximity error:

- ii. The belief of Ghanaians **are** that God is a Ghanaian. (is)

The source of error in the example above can be explained in terms of proximity. The noun that is closest to the verb is plural (Ghanaians), and so the student chose a plural noun. That means his knowledge of the noun ‘belief’ could be singular but he may think that the corresponding verb applies to the noun. Other examples of proximity errors that were observed in the writings of students are as follows:

- iii. “..... a very long story which the teacher told the students **were** one of the interesting things of the day. (was)
- iv. “I learnt that the kind of rain that fell last Friday and destroyed properties **were** going to come again this evening.” (was)

c. Memory limitation concord errors.

Students constructed long sentences in a manner that makes it difficult for them to remember which noun should correspond with the verb. For instance, there were errors such as;

- v. This boy, who scarcely respects elders in his school, and even back in his home **tell** people that he is enjoying his rights and freedoms as a citizen. (tells).

We can assume that by the time the student wrote the verb 'tell' he had forgotten the right subject 'boy' and might have mistaken the word 'elders' or 'people' as the head noun.

d. Plural inflectional concord errors.

A number of the writings of students whose work were observed revealed concord errors that arise from inflection of the plural form of the noun. Most of those errors occurred with words that contain the /s/ sound at the end of the word though the word is a singular noun. A few of the sentences that were found in the writings of students are listed below:

A lot of emphasis **were** placed on the importance of learning while in school.
(was)

Physics **are** one of the most dreaded subjects by many senior high school students.

The student might have mistaken the /-s/ at the end of the noun for the plural inflection and as such assigned them the plural verb form.

e. Inability to identify the head word in the sentence.

Observations on students' writing revealed that a good number cannot identify the headword in the sentence. The researcher asked a number of students, which word in the sentences they constructed constitutes the head word. The responses some of them gave suggest a lack of knowledge of the word that represents the headword.

Eg. Anytime I meet Kofi he always smiles .

Students indicated anytime as the headword in the above sentence.

f. Problem nominal group.

The essays of a good number of students revealed errors of concord in the use of some nominal groups. Students construct sentences such as the following in their essays:

viii. The number of players that make a team are eleven.

ix. Kwame was one of the boys who refuses to do the work the teacher gave as home work.

The students committing these errors conceive of the structure "The + number + of + noun plural" as constituting a grammatical plural subject noun phrase and therefore assign a plural verb to it.

Heid C. Dulay and Marina K. Burt (1977) attempt explaining the sources of some of these errors committed by students. They observe that English children are known to omit the /s/ inflection (for instance), when learning their mother tongue. They attribute such errors to the interference of the mother tongue of the learner. However, the survey results point to the fact that errors of this nature are intralingua, an error based on the partial exposure of the learner to the data of the target language. This is

because the mother tongues of respondents do not pose this problem Heid and Dulay have observed. There is no doubt that agreement is essential in producing standard English sentences. It is therefore, important that one should learn how to use number, person, gender, tense, and voice consistently. However, very few students have adequate knowledge of these aspects as most students are scared by the numerous rules and exceptions governing English grammar.

4.7.2 Errors in the Use of Tense and Aspect

Most aberrations in the use of English border on tense and aspect. Its appropriate use was one other area, besides concord, where students encountered considerable difficulties. Results of a class test conducted by the researcher on grammar, indicates that students have considerable problems in understanding the way tense and aspect function in grammar. The initial reaction of learners upon hearing that they were going to carry out a short exercise on tenses, was one of excitement. They were sure they were going to perform well since grammar, especially tenses, according to them was a daily exercise. Some even remarked that they were going to spend much less time than was given by the researcher. However, the results of the exercise proved completely different.

Examples of these errors that were identified included the following:

- i. If I had (see/ saw/ seen/) him, I would have told you.
- ii. You are (/be/being/ been) childish by demanding such an amount.
- iii. But for the timely arrival of the fire officers, the house (will/would/ can/should/) been burnt completely.

A summary of the results of the test is as seen overleaf:

Table 4.9: Results of Class Test (300 respondents) on Tense and Aspect.

(Tamale Senior High, Zabzugu SHS and Ghana Senior High).

| No. of Students | Mks. Scored (20 marks) | (%) |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----|
| 2 | 2 | 10% |
| 9 | 4 | 20% |
| 14 | 5 | 25% |
| 22 | 6 | 30% |
| 27 | 7 | 35% |
| 38 | 8 | 40% |
| 44 | 9 | 45% |
| 41 | 10 | 50% |
| 31 | 11 | 55% |
| 25 | 12 | 60% |
| 23 | 13 | 65% |
| 9 | 14 | 70% |
| 7 | 15 | 75% |
| 3 | 16 | 80% |
| 3 | 17 | 85% |
| 2 | 18 | 90% |

Zabzugu Senior High was chosen to represent the rural schools. The fact that the problem exists in both urban and rural schools indicates that it is a general problem. No single student scored the entire exercise (20 marks) though almost all students expressed confidence in dealing with the exercise given. 156 students scored below the pass mark. These scores suggest that students have difficulties in dealing with grammar, though they may not appreciate this difficulty.

Scores Presented on Form Basis

Table 4.10: Scores in Tamale SHS

| MARKS | No. (SHS1) | No. (SHS2) | No. (SHS3) | TOTAL |
|-------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| 15-20 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 11 |
| 10-14 | 26 | 30 | 24 | 83 |
| 0-9 | 19 | 18 | 19 | 56 |

Table 4.11. Scores in Ghana SHS

| MARKS | NO (SS1) | NO (SS2) | NO (SS3) | . TOTAL |
|-------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| 15-20 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| 10-14 | 10 | 19 | 19 | 48 |
| 0-9 | 40 | 29 | 30 | 99 |

Table 4.12: Scores in Zabzugu SHS

| MARKS | No. (SS1) | No. (SS2) | No.(SS3) | . TOTAL |
|-------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 15-20 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| 10-14 | 5 | 12 | 19 | 36 |
| 0-9 | 18 | 12 | 10 | 40 |

The above results indeed, call for a close examination of Tense and Aspect as a major problem area in English usage since the problem cuts across geographical boundaries, be it urban or rural school. It is important to note that this rather poor performance is against the background that the same students are of the view that grammar is the easiest of the various aspects of English that they need to learn. Obviously, it is the wrong perception of the students that makes them feel they know grammar though they are unable to perform as they claim.

4.8.0. Observation of Classroom Interaction

The researcher observed classroom interaction in English lessons. The most common method of teaching grammar in classes observed is the grammar translation method. A typical lesson consists of the presentation of grammatical rules, a study of a list of vocabulary followed by exercise. Learning in these classes is mainly the mastery of grammatical rules and memorisation of long lists of English language vocabulary related to the aspect being dealt with. One challenge this method poses to learners is the emphasis on language as a mass of rules and exceptions to them. The method also places a premium on reading rather than the ability to communicate using the target language. The kind of teaching that goes on in the classes, involves imitating, repeating and memorising the rules of grammar and vocabulary that are being taught.

This kind of teaching situation is diametrically opposed to Merrill Swain's, a Canadian Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researcher's input – output theory. In the 1980s, Merrill Swain advanced the output hypothesis that meaningful output is necessary to language learning. However, this study has shown little if any correlation between learning and quantity of output. Similarly, the negative perception and unhealthy attitude of students disprove Long's interaction hypothesis, which proposes that learning a language is strongly facilitated by the use of the target language in interaction. The findings from this study suggest that there is more to learning a language than just ensuring the use of the first language, and the availability of teachers and materials. The disposition of the learner is as important as the materials and competence of the teacher to do explicit teaching. Thus an important issue that this study has brought up is the effectiveness of explicit teaching. Explicit teaching of grammar can have a constructive effect beyond providing learners with enhanced input in the use of the language.

The perception of the students of English in general and grammar in particular is key to improving proficiency in the language. A good number of respondents believe that if one can speak English, it is enough for one to write and deal with grammar and communicate effectively. The analysis above point to one main deficiency: lack of knowledge of grammar. There is therefore, the need to include a critical exposition of how students' knowledge of grammar can be improved in a more holistic manner.

To do this it is imperative to have an in-depth knowledge of the general perception of the people involved. For this reason, a set of questionnaire was designed to assess the

disposition of students towards English language. A total of five hundred respondents (students) were selected. The break down was as follows:

| Class | No. of Stud. |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| General Arts Class | - 100 |
| Science Class | - 100 |
| Home Economics Class | - 100 |
| Agriculture Science Class | - 100 |
| Business Class | - 100 |

The results were subjected to statistical analysis. Such analysis will help us understand, not only the views of students about the language but also appreciate any statistically significant differences among the classes who participated in the study. A quick look at the overall means of respondents (see Table18) supplies us with a general picture of students' attitude towards learning grammar and for that matter, English in general. It can be deduced from the results that a considerable number of students display immaturity in learning the English language.

Table 4.13a: Results of survey questions administered to 500 respondents

| No | Question | No of Response | | | | % Diff. |
|----|---|----------------|------|------|------|---------|
| | | YES | % | NO | % | |
| 1 | Studying English in senior high school causes fear and unpleasant feelings. | 321 | 64.2 | 179 | 35.8 | 28.4 |
| 2 | What is your source of fear in learning English? | ---- | | ---- | | |
| 3 | Passing examination is the basic purpose of studying English. | 404 | 80.8 | 96 | 19.2 | 61.6 |
| 4 | I like to learn English through grammar rules. | 31 | 6.2 | 469 | 93.8 | 87.6 |
| 5 | I fear making grammar errors while speaking English | 467 | 93.0 | 33 | 7.0 | 87.0 |
| 6 | I learn English in any English environment. | 439 | 87.8 | 61 | 11.2 | 76.6 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| 7 | I listen and understand everyday English. | 500 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| 8 | It is enough to be able to speak English. | 210 | 42.0 | 290 | 58.0 | 16.0 |
| 9. | The skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing are of equal importance. | 436 | 87.2 | 64 | 12.8 | 74.4 |
| 10 | Speaking is the skill I wish to learn most. | 451 | 90.2 | 49 | 9.8 | 80.4 |
| 11 | Reading is the skill I wish to learn most. | 403 | 80.6 | 97 | 19.4 | 61.2 |
| 12 | Writing is the skill I wish to learn most. | 433 | 86.6 | 67 | 13.4 | 73.2 |
| 13 | What is your opinion about the teacher's style of teaching English.? | ---- | | ---- | | |

*Note: Question 2 and 13 were open ended question.

(2.What is your source of fear? Responses to this question were as follows:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Fear of failure | 96 |
| Fear of examination | 44 |
| Fear of exposing one's mistakes | 80 |
| Fear of being mocked at. | 180 |
| Fear of being condemned by the teacher | 65 |
| Fear of being condemned by parents | 75 |

(13) What is your opinion about the Teacher's style of teaching English? Responses to this questions are:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Too difficult to understand. | 320 |
| Too many rules | 100 |
| It does not follow any logic | 80 |

The researcher used the SPSS system of data analysis in order to find any differences among the classes surveyed. While the means are generally informative, they do not give much insight into differences among respondents. Five of the questions did not show any significant difference. There are four questions where clearly all the

students from different classes had similar responses in their opinions. These four responses are:

1. Studying English in senior high school causes fear and unpleasant feelings. (321)
9. Listening, reading, speaking and writing are of equal importance. (436)
3. Passing examination is the basic objective of learning English. (404)
10. Speaking is the skill I wish to learn most. (451).

The last three of these responses are particularly useful for the purpose of this study. They are related to preferences in learning English skills and can be used as the basis for comparison to judge the degree of students' attitudes. Fear caused by senior high school English teaching has been raised as having a negative influence on learning English. Respondents in this survey agree on the influence of fear, rating the fear caused by teaching, high. Following question 1 was an open ended question asking of their sources of fear in their English learning history. The responses tended to fall into five main categories:

- 1) afraid of being laughed at by others due to inaccurate pronunciation,
- 2) fear of making grammatical errors,
- 3) fear of examinations,
- 4) the ways classes were taught in the past, and
- 5) physical punishment.

While we cannot compare the finding above to other groups due to its subjective nature, it is in itself a useful finding as it shows that the respondents begin with a strong fear and unpleasant feelings towards learning English. The following questions should, therefore, be somewhat influenced by previous negative feelings, that is if previous English classes had emphasized reading, or learning of grammar with punishment for those who did not perform well, students may have a resulting

fear of reading and learning grammar even though they may concede the importance of this skill when studying English.

Moving on to the remaining three questions we can observe that students agree that the four main language skills are of generally equal importance, as seen in the responses for questions 10, 11 and 12 show that a strong emphasis on listening and speaking are what respondents are looking for.

4.8.1 Class by Class Analysis

Following this analysis Question 3 reveals that passing examination, is generally seen as the basic purpose of learning English, with the Science Classes rating this purpose higher. Students responding to this survey generally find the grammar translation method difficult. The Home Economics class, however, showed the most differences from other classes, evaluating the style of teaching good. This may have something to do with their perceived lower level of English proficiency. Most teachers and students have the perception that students in Home Economics class are “difficult to teach” or “have comparatively low performance level though this cannot be justified.

Question 8 has the highest overall mean of all the questions and majority of the classes had the same opinion. Business and Arts students feel much stronger that; ability to speak English is not enough, compared with Home Economics and Science Classes. The study revealed that good number of teachers believe that General Arts students tend to have a comparatively higher English proficiency level than other classes. This is often attributed to the Literature in English subject they pursue. It is obvious that though most of the students involved in this study generally have a

negative attitude towards English grammar, it is more obvious with some students pursuing the Sciences and vocational related courses.

One other significant finding in the study is the close relationship between attitudes and motivation. According to Gardner (1985), attitudes are a component of motivation, which "refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language." (10). Students are intrinsically motivated when they are interested in learning the tasks and outcomes for their own sake, and that results in internal feelings of self-determination and competence. On the other hand, students are extrinsically motivated if they carry out some actions to achieve some instrumental end, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment. Irrespective of what motivates a student, it seems clear that a positive attitude towards the target language or any aspect of it, is important. Gardner and Lambert (1972) identify two related types of motivation which they call instrumental and integrative. Some of the respondents, with instrumental motivation maintain that they strive to acquire proficiency in English for such reasons as to get a better job, to read any kind of material, or to further their studies to higher levels. It was obvious from the study that there is a correlation between positive attitudes and successful language learning. Results from the study point to the fact that motivated students have greater self-confidence, resulting in a greater willingness to communicate. This finding corresponds with studies conducted by researchers like Yashima (2002) and Noels et al. (2000) who find a strong correlation between instrumental motivation and self-determination theory, which deals with students' need for competence, satisfactory social connections, and autonomy. What is clear, according to the findings of this study, is

that learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes lead to decreased motivation and poor language competence.

A good number of the respondents had a reasonable knowledge of English but were reluctant to speak or produce words of the target language. It is equally an important observation that students were generally reluctant to write, with the reason that they often do not know what to say. This was a common response of many students when asked why they do not write letters to friends and relations. On the contrary, when communicating by phone they have a lot to say, whether to their friends or parents. A good number of the teachers interviewed had the impression that students were simply lazy, and that some of the male students were particularly disinterested in improving upon their English language performance. The researcher also observed that many of the female students often exhibited the pretence of being engaged with lessons but frequently did not participate nor respond to questions.

In response to the question; “Why do you need to have good command of English?” The students' reasons for studying English revealed a wide array of attitudes and motivations, including the belief that teaching English is an easy and comfortable job. But majority would not like to be in the teaching profession because in their assertion, the teacher commands less respect and has fewer advantages than persons in other professions. Others intimated that their parents insisted on their making a particular choice of professions for them. Some female students stated that becoming a teacher was a suitable job, as teaching incorporated their love and nurturing of children. When the same questions were posed to the teachers of English, many admitted that they had chosen English teaching by default because they were not

successful in Mathematics or Physics. Surprisingly, almost a third of the teachers exhibited negative attitudes towards some aspects of English. A considerable number of teachers demonstrated some positive attitudes by stating that they enjoy teaching in general and the language in particular. They believed that teaching was a sacred profession and that English was an important international language. All of these attitudes exhibit a range of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for learning English and becoming an English teacher as well. Unhealthy attitudes could impede the progress of both students and teachers and interfere with classroom harmony.

In addition, the survey questions that were prepared and administered to students included the following three open-ended items to elicit their attitudes and motivations toward learning English and grammar in particular.

1. Why do you want to learn English?
2. Describe an interesting experience you have had in which you needed to understand or use English.
3. What experiences have you had with learning grammar in the past?
How do you feel about these experiences? What did you like or dislike about these experiences?

These survey items were developed to elaborate on the students' reasons for learning English, to discover the circumstances when they used English, and to reveal the effect of positive and negative experiences on learning the language. Thirty-eight Arts students and twenty-four Science students responded to these questions. The results of the survey are presented in Tables 19, 20, and 21.

Table 4.13b. "Why do you want to learn English?"

| Response Category | Number of Responses |
|--|----------------------------|
| I like English Because English is an international language. | 25 |
| I want to be an English teacher. | 24 |
| To learn more about the target language. | 17 |
| Get a good job. | 14 |
| Interested in travelling out of Ghana. | 10 |
| Communicate with foreigners easily. | 7 |
| Speaking a second language has prestige. | 7 |
| Compelled by the curriculum to learn. | 5 |

Table 4.13 c: "Describe an interesting experience you have had in which you needed to understand or use English."

| Response Category | Number of Responses |
|---|----------------------------|
| Not being able to help and communicate with friends. | 28 |
| Laughed at in public for grammatical errors. | 22 |
| Could not express self and was cheated in transacting business. | 10 |
| Not using the language correctly when it is most needed. | 4 |
| Difficulty in reading and speaking. | 3 |
| Performing poorly in a school debate competition. | 7 |
| Lost respect as a result of not being able to speak English well. | 7 |
| Losing opportunity as a result of poor expression in English. | 5 |

Table 4.13d: What did you like or dislike about your English lessons?

| Response Category | Number of Responses |
|---|---------------------|
| The many rules and exceptions of grammar rules. | 28 |
| The method the teacher adopts in teaching is not motivating. | 22 |
| The inability to apply the rules when speaking the language. | 10 |
| Spelling of English words is difficult. | 4 |
| Not learning English properly/getting inadequate explanation. | 3 |
| Enjoyed learning English. | 21 |
| I hate the numerous class and home exercises the teacher gives. | 7 |
| Teachers were not very good in English. | 13 |
| People laughed at my English. | 4 |
| The literature aspect of English is difficult. | 23 |

For data reporting purposes, the survey responses were grouped according to categories. Because some of the survey questions required open responses, students often provided multiple answers for each question or statement. Students gave extended answers, which led them to note several points related to the questions. Respondents related both positive and negative experiences to when they needed to understand or use English. Most responses expressed the desire to communicate in public. This was remarkable as it indicated the importance of integrative motivation. The responses in Table 21 represent what students liked or disliked about learning English. Results of this survey is used to establish the point that the approach of the teacher and the student in learning English impacts remarkably on the performance of learners. While some students reported that they enjoyed learning English but not so much of grammar, others recounted specific negative aspects about their teachers,

the lessons, and how they were being laughed at for their poor grammar. Additionally, several students disliked the overall difficulty of English, mainly the speaking and writing skills, both of which are controlled by grammar. Some students noted the inspirational and positive effect their teachers have had on their goal of learning English. However, over 20% of respondents noted that their teachers' approach to teaching the language, especially grammar did not help them in overcoming their difficulties. The results in Table 18 are also of immense importance because a positive attitude towards the teacher may make students to be more at ease and relaxed, in which case they will "seek out intake by volunteering and accepting the teacher as a source of intake" (Krashen 1981, 23). 61% of respondents displayed negative attitudes concerning English, such as

"Grammar is too difficult"
"Homework is too frequent and wastes of time," and
"I have difficulty in spelling words"

Overall, the three open-ended survey items showed that motivation is scarcely present among the students. However, a threat to motivation also exists because of difficulty with tasks, lessons, especially with the grammar lessons which manifests in their spoken and written English.

The next step was to plan interventions based on sound theoretical foundations to deal with the problems associated with the issues of course difficulty, poor attitudes, and the lack of motivation. The research has shown that the perception of most students about English is negative and this has in no small way led to a corresponding negative attitude towards learning English. Most teachers of English also do not have the desired enthusiasm to undertake the teaching of English in a manner that would lead to positive habit formation as regards learning of English.

The large numbers of students in classrooms have been largely accountable for the inability of some teachers to perform as expected of them. This has resulted in most teachers concentrating more on the teaching of grammar with multiple tests for students to deal with. The frequency with which grammar is taught in the schools has led to students believing that grammar is much less difficult than the other aspects of English. Consequently, students tend to think that they are better off in grammar, but the reality is that they have serious challenges in grammar in the same way that they have in the other aspects of English.

The study also reveals that the issue of poor performance of students in English is very much known to the students themselves, though some few students do not accept it. It is true that some school libraries are not well stocked with books that students can use to develop their reading habit. Ironically, the few books that some of the schools have in stock are poorly patronised. Librarians indicated in an interview with the researcher, that students come into the libraries only when examination is close. During those visits they go into the libraries to read their notes but not library materials. According to the Librarian, students appear to see the library as a convenient place to sit and read their notes, instead of library materials.

The researcher's interaction with the staff of Ghana Postal Company Ltd. also revealed that the era in which students used to go to the post office to sit and write letters was past. The post office authorities blamed the phenomenon on the proliferation of mobile phones and phone booths by telecommunication companies.

The short dictation that the researcher conducted for students further attests that spelling is a major challenge to most students even for those in the final year of the senior high schools. Indeed, most students have this problem without being aware of it. Little do they know they cannot spell some words that they use virtually every day. There is therefore the need to emphasize spelling, and deeper understanding of whatever construction that students make in the English language. That is the sure way that students can improve upon their writing and grammatical interpretation of the words and sentences that they use. The study also exposes the lukewarm attitude of most teachers of other subject areas. Few teachers concern themselves with correcting the spelling and grammatical errors of their students when assessing their exercises. The effect of this is that it enhances the perception of students that the English language can be completely divorced from other subjects, and that they will not need it to be able to pass in other subjects.

The study has also brought to light the perception that some students use mobile phones to avoid. This is further buttressed by the observation of most students communicating through the telephone, in which they often speak the local language with their friends and relations during communication, irrespective of their literacy status. Also, there is a direct relationship between the attitude of the individual and his / her level of competence in the use of language. Students who have the impression that English is not difficult to learn and could be easily learned and understood a few days to examination, perform poorly in their English exercises as well as in examinations. This implies that the impression they have about grammar and for that matter, English, as a subject influences their approach to learning it.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5:1 Introduction

This concluding chapter provides an overview of the major issues from the analysis of the data collected, in a manner that gives prominence to issues that call for holistic remedies. Some important conclusions drawn from the findings are made and, recommendations are also made in a bid to help students develop the desired aptitude, attitude and perception in learning English.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

It is imperative that key findings of the study are outlined in a manner that will highlight the major concerns of the study. Attitudes begin developing early and are influenced by many things, including parents, peers, and interaction with people who have social and cultural differences. Therefore, attitudes "form a part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living" (Brown 2000, 180). It is also clear that negative attitudes towards grammar, which often come from biases and superficial teaching of the language, can impede the learning of English. Conversely, positive attitudes towards grammar and English increase language learning success. This finding corroborates Brown's description of the effects of attitudes on language learning.

It is obvious from the survey data that when students with positive attitudes experience success, the attitudes are reinforced, whereas students with negative attitudes fail to progress and become even more negative in their language learning

effort. The researcher has a strong conviction that because attitudes can be modified by experience, effective language teaching strategies can encourage students to be more positive in their attitude and perceptual orientation.

The study has revealed that enhanced knowledge of grammar is important for the teacher. Knowledge is in the minds of the individual learner and can only be constructed in an active manner through social interaction. We have also gotten to understand that language and literacy are used to convey and construct thought. The findings underscore the teacher's role in providing several opportunities for students to talk about ideas and ways of making sense of new information and guiding students' constructions of particular concepts.

It is also clear that beliefs of students are also of great importance to the teacher of English. The beliefs of the respondents were based on past experiences, either an intense experience or a succession of failures in attempts to learn grammar in the past. It is therefore imperative that the teacher of English understands that the beliefs of students are personal and can have an impact on his/her actions than his/her own knowledge base does. This point is particularly important because beliefs are the foundations of students' perceptions and attitudes towards what the teacher teaches. Moreover, the beliefs that were exhibited are resistant to change even in the face of new evidence of difficulty. This therefore makes it imperative for the teacher of English to adopt a systematic and pragmatic approach to overcoming the persisting negative attitudes learners have developed towards learning grammar.

Also, evidence from the study brought to the fore how the lack of competence in English has adversely affected the general performance of students in other subject areas. They are often not able to read and understand questions even in subjects that do not need much reading.

The study further highlighted the extent to which telecommunication has come to virtually replace writing among not only students in their leisure time, but adult Ghanaians as well. This problem is better appreciated when one considers Tribble's view about writing. In his book "Writing Skills" he maintains that "to be deprived of the opportunity to learn to write is to be without power and prestige." (1987) Additionally, it has been revealed that learners are not being deprived but rather, they are depriving themselves the opportunity to write by preferring other forms of communication to writing.

One other startling discovery that was made had to do with students' readiness to learn. The learners' readiness influences the efficiency of a learning process and often determines whether a given intellectual skill or type of school material is learnable at all. Postponement of learning was common among learners leading to wastes of valuable learning opportunities, thereby unnecessarily reducing the amount of subject matter that can be mastered in a designated period of schooling. The learners were not physically, psychologically and mentally ready to learn. It is obvious, from the study, that a considerable number of students as well as parents believe that the negative attitude of students towards learning English is due to immaturity. This makes it difficult for the learner himself to appreciate that insufficient readiness may reflect inadequate learning.

5.3.0 CONCLUSIONS

Much of the problem and, therefore, the solution lies within the purview of the learner. The student has the greatest responsibility in developing a positive attitude towards learning English. In the first place, the student needs to recognise that there is a problem and that problem is a bad attitude or perception about English. The student needs to understand the role of grammar in the learning of English and other subjects. When students begin to understand that grammar, and for that matter, the English language is important in their daily academic activities, they would come to appreciate the need to learn the language and use it well. An attempt to learn all grammar rules before being able to use a language is a near impossibility. However, there is need for the student to be able to acquire appreciable knowledge of how the language is organised and operates. A basic understanding of, for instance, what constitutes proper word order in the English sentence will guide or prompt the learner to detect errors in his /her usage.

The findings of the study suggest that there are external factors that affect the learning of English. One should be concerned with the question:

“How do learners get information about English?”

The study has focused on the effects of different kinds of input, and on the impact of the social context of learners. The research has disclosed that language learning can be very stressful, and the impact of positive or negative attitudes from either the learner or surrounding society can be critical. Community attitudes toward the language being learned can also have a profound impact on students' learning of the language. Where the community has a broadly negative view of the target language

and its speakers, or a negative view of its relation to them, learning is typically much more difficult. Other common social factors include the attitude of parents toward language study, and the nature of group dynamics in the language classroom. Additionally, early attitudes may strengthen motivation and facilitate learning.

5.4 Input and Intake

Learners' most direct source of information about the target language is the target language itself. When they come into direct contact with the target language, either through teaching or interpersonal communication, it is referred to as "input." When learners process that language in a way that can contribute to learning, it is referred to as "intake." The amount of input learners take in is one of the most important factors affecting their learning. It must be at a level that is manageable and comprehensible to them. The important point is that a focus on input enhances the ways in which input may be altered so as to direct learners' attention to linguistically important areas. This is absolutely necessary if the poor attitude towards English is to be reversed. In this regard, all stakeholders in the education sector (student, teachers, parents, and policy makers) have crucial roles to play in developing a positive attitude in our students.

The issue of poor English among students has more to do with inadequate knowledge of grammar, and poor reading and writing habits. For this reason, the researcher deems it appropriate to focus more on measures that would lead to the desired attitudinal and perceptual change which, in turn, would lead to a better understanding and use of English. Analysis of the various responses from subjects has disclosed significant information from which one can draw a number of conclusions.

Many are those who fail to understand that learning grammar is personal and involves not only memorizing rules but also integrating what one already knows or has experienced to new understandings. Learning, especially grammar with so many rules and exceptions, takes place through effective interaction between the learner and the teacher. The interaction that is limited to the classroom only does not yield much results. It is useful having learners actively engaged in the teaching–learning process, while being self-disciplined, creative, and motivated. Learners also tend to put in more effort when they are involved in the evaluation of their own learning. Clearly, before one can take a step toward eliminating the biases about grammar, it is important to know the unique properties that govern English Language.

5.5 Language Units Are Constructed According To Rules

There is the need for learners to understand that the units of a language have a hierarchical organisation. They are made up of a series of units, each of which has an internal structure. Some linguistic units (for example the words of a language) usually have to be learnt one at a time. But when one needs to combine these words to form broader meaning, the rules of grammar come into play. However, larger units of a language are often put together in a systematic way by means of the rules of the language. The rules combine or rearrange smaller units to form larger ones, and assign meaning to the result. For instance, the following groups of words virtually make no meaning when they are not put in the proper syntax according to the rules of the English language:

- a. sleeps, a, baby, newborn.
- b. in, house, live, green, the, a, people.
- c. the, kicked, boy, ball, a.

It can be seen that it is difficult to make meaning from these groups of words without a conjecture. Individually, they make some meaning; however, as a group they do not make any sense because the order is contrary to the rules of English sentence construction. Teachers of English need to teach the rules that determine how units in English may be combined. Though these rules might not be easy to learn, their diversity can be examined by looking at how they operate in particular instances. Some rules determine which sequence of sound is permitted, to be words in English, for instance, of the word 'black' and 'blcka'. Only "black" is a potential English word. Speakers of English can also locate which sequence is not permitted in the case of 'black'. Also, there are rules which determine how words fit into sentences. For example, the sentence: '*Mary wheeled*' is somehow unfinished because the word 'wheel' requires additional constituents to play a role in this sentence. Similarly, there are rules that determine the grammatical category of words. Generally, the speakers of a language recognise not only words of a language, but also, recognise that those words fit in different places in phrases and sentences. In this regard, teachers of English must take the pain to let students understand that these rules exist to guide the use of English. It is not enough to tell students a series of rules and exceptions without explaining the principles underlying those rules. A closer examination of the spelling system in English would throw more light on this point.

5.6 Addressing spelling difficulties.

For a learner to confidently and independently tackle spelling in English it is important for him/her to understand the sound characteristics of the English language. This approach, in no small way, will help reduce the frustrations that characterise the learning of the language especially, in written and spoken English.

The study brought to the fore considerable challenges students have as regards pronunciation and spelling of English words besides grammatical problems. The researcher observed that English teachers teach English pronunciation without explaining the basis of related sounds that are contained in those words. For instance, it would be more helpful that in teaching spellings of words the teacher asks the students to say the words loudly, and write down the number of sounds that they realise in those words;

| | | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| i. Fill | ii. Feel | iii. Tree | iv. Bitter | v. Thesis |
| vi. Sing | vii. Drunk | viii. Single | ix. Marry | x. Mary |
| xi. jungle | xii. Meander | xiii. Theory | xiv. Beer, | xv. Furious |

The number of sounds that can be identified in the above words are as follows:

| | | | | |
|-------|-------------|--------------|------------|-------|
| i. 3 | ii. 3 | iii. 3 | iv. 4 or 5 | v. 5 |
| vi. 3 | vii. 5 | viii. 5 or 6 | ix. 4 | x. 4 |
| xi. 5 | xii. 6 or 7 | xiii. 4 or 5 | xiv. 3 | xv. 7 |

One would observe from the above that the number of spelling symbols (letters) in a word does not necessarily correspond with the number of sounds. Accordingly, students should be made to understand that one would not be able to tell how many sounds are in a particular word just by looking at its spelling. This means that in English the relationship between spelling and sound is not one-to-one. Each spelling symbol does not necessarily correspond with a single sound. Some words have fewer sounds than letters contained in them.

Eg. fill, bitter, phone, and sing.

In the examples above, there is no sound associated with some of the spelling symbols contained in them. Other words have the same number of sounds as the number of symbols it contains. e.g. *drunk*. Also, the word '*cube*' contains four spelling symbols and four sounds but there is no spelling symbol associated with the

second/*w*/ sound and '*e*' does not represent any sound. It is 'silent'. Furthermore, there are cases where a word consists of more sounds than the number of spelling symbols. E.g. *Cuba* consists of five sounds. There is no spelling symbol that corresponds to the second sound, /*w*/. These are some of the mismatches in the spelling of English that the learner should learn, in order to overcome the kind of spelling problems that they encounter. Merely looking up for spellings from a dictionary without understanding the basis of the spelling and pronunciation might not lead to permanent grasp of the system of spelling words in English. It is also important to consider the phonetic interpretation given to the word in the dictionary.

5.7 The Learner's Poor Writing Habit

One other important revelation from the study is the poor writing habit of students in the target schools. Most students simply preferred to use **phone** as a medium of communication instead of writing. The reasons students advance for this phenomenon include among others, the uncertainty of vocabulary and expression to use. This implies that concerted effort must be made to build good writing habits in learners right from the basic level, so that when they get to the senior high level, they can still maintain those habits.

The first step that the teacher should take is to build confidence and enthusiasm in the learner. The study has established that majority of students do not write when they have an option. The unwillingness derives from anxieties they have about their spelling and their ability to construct sentences and paragraphs. These uncertainties are reinforced by the kind of teaching methods most teachers adopt in teaching grammar and English as a whole. It is equally an important observation that students'

reluctance to write stems from the fact that they have ‘nothing to say’. This was a common response of many students when asked why they do not write letters to friends and relations. Meanwhile, they have much to say when communicating by phone. This study therefore has some recommendations that can boost the desire and ability of students to write.

5.8 Need to Develop the Right Attitude (Building the Reading Habit)

Reading is one of the ways that can lead to gaining mastery of English, especially with spoken language. This is because any acceptable written material in English Language takes cognisance of the rules of grammar. Reading materials written in good Standard English is therefore a sure way of learning grammar. A good reading habit would go a long way to enhance effective learning of English.

There are a number of simple activities that students, teachers, parents and policy makers can undertake to build reading habits in the youth which eventually would lead to the mastery of the language. The roles that each of the aforementioned stakeholders are expected to play are, in some cases, complementary.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

All these findings have remarkable implications for teachers, policy makers, as well as educational researchers. When learners share a similar position in relation to the difficulty or otherwise of a subject or an aspect of a subject as we see in the case of English grammar, and regularly speak about the subject in that light, then it becomes their attitude towards that language. In any case, language is a primary medium of social interaction and learning. For this reason, learners should be prepared to use language appropriately in relation to particular audience and context on the one hand,

and according to the rules on the other hand. In trying to suggest ways of developing healthy attitude and perceptions about learning English, it would be useful to examine the views of some theorists about teaching for attitudinal change. If the problem we are confronted with is beyond the teacher, then the English teacher has no business teaching English.

An important way of overcoming the problem of poor attitude is connectedness. Connectedness, as a necessary factor in literacy pedagogy, is created by a supportive classroom atmosphere where students are motivated to participate and take some responsibility for their learning. In order to achieve attitudinal change, in learning a particular subject, effort must be made to introduce communicative activities around relevant topics. With this method, students receive praise (motivation) for their contributions to class discussions. Limitations, such as shyness and feeling of inability, are minimised by positive encouragement. As a result, students will begin to respond with attitudes that are more positive. However, any effort to reform learners' perception about learning grammar require more practical interventions from all stakeholders, with the learner being central focal point to any strategy for attitudinal transformation. Key findings of this study have made it imperative for the researcher to make the following propositions for any teaching that is designed to positively redefine the attitudinal and perceptual orientation of learners.

5.9.1 Specialisation in Specific Aspects of the English language.

In the first place, teachers must themselves have a good understanding of English and grammar in particular, and appreciate how it is linked to other aspects of English and how it applies to the real world of communication. The teacher should command

specialised knowledge of how to convey and reveal the subject matter to students. Their instructional repertoire should allow them to create multiple paths to the subjects they teach. It should, therefore, be possible for the education authorities to consider a form of specialisation in the area of English. This implies that one, upon completing the College of Education should specialise, in addition to the general English, an aspect of English. This will enable the trainee teacher to gain an in-depth knowledge of her area of specialisation.

5.9.2 Producing Responsible and Dutiful Trainee Teachers

Secondly, teachers should be aware of the fact that they are responsible for managing and monitoring students' learning. The English teacher should be trained in a manner that can enable her to create, enrich, maintain and alter instructional settings to capture and sustain the interest of her students. The teacher should be adept at engaging students and adults to assist their teaching and at enlisting their colleagues' knowledge and expertise to complement their own. Above all, responsive teachers do not brand learners as non-achievers or bad cases. The responses from students about the attitude of their English teachers point to the need for character transformation.

5.9.3 Self Assessment by Learners

Closely related to this is the need for the teacher to encourage self-assessment among students. The kind of lukewarm attitude that students portray makes self-assessment imperative. Self-assessment is concerned with thinking about your own performance in relation to your objectives of learning the language.

5.9.4 Strategic Teaching for Attitudinal Change

There are phases of teaching, learning and assessment which the English teacher should, as a matter of necessity, adopt to help build a positive attitude in his/her students. With this, even the most disinterested student will end up being constantly engaged in the lesson in a manner that would make him/her develop the needed attitude, attention and interest in the lesson in particular, and in the subject as a whole. The phases that a language teacher can take his students through can be summarised in Appendix E.

5.9.5 Teachers Conducting Research on Learners

It is important that teachers should always endeavour to investigate the problems of their learners thoroughly before they can be in a position to find lasting solutions to them. For instance, if students are unable to inflect verbs for tense, it may not mean that they are stupid but that they are not well exposed to tense formation and that would demand a remedial lesson to help them overcome the problem. If this is not done early enough, it may affect their general performance in the language.

5.9.6 Building Vocabulary of Students

In some instances, it might be appropriate to give students some amount of the language that the student will need to write a given essay. This may involve offering them some phrases, parts of sentences and/or vocabulary. When students are well equipped with vocabulary, they are most likely to be more interested in writing, through which they can improve upon their grammar.

i. Students should make it a point to speak the language at the least opportunity that they have. In learning any language, practice is the watchword. If students could eschew shyness and fear of making mistakes, they would attain fluency in the shortest possible time of learning English just as in the case of any mother tongue. This point partly explains why children attain fluency in learning a new language faster than adults do. They are not bothered by the fear of making mistakes. Frequent speaking can go a long way to improve upon the grammatical challenges that learners face. Students should create space in their daily programmes to listen to people speak the language. They should listen to news, public lectures and speeches during which they would take note of the expressions used. They should note these expressions in their vocabulary notebooks for their daily use. This would lead to the students gradually developing the habit of writing.

i. Students should read ‘anything’ that comes their way. Any inscription that they come across is a potential source of reading material, i.e signposts, inscriptions on clothing, newspapers, journals and books. As they read the material they should try to analyse the grammatical aspects contained in what they read. This would enable them to begin to develop the habit of not only reading but also beginning to appreciate the role that grammar plays in English as a language. Keeping a vocabulary notebook would also encourage students to consciously look for new vocabulary using the dictionary. Students should learn the spelling of the daily vocabulary that they already know. For instance, a student may learn the word ‘journey’ and use it in his/her daily English, yet does not know the spelling of the word. He/she should consciously and continuously ask him/herself,

“Can I spell this word that I have just used?”

He might for instance spell

understand as ‘andastand’

Marry as mary

Interested intrested

Hurry as harry

It is important to note that this revelation would never surface without the attempt to put what has been said into writing. This kind of situation arises because speech precedes writing. As soon as the learner learns to speak English he/she assumes that he/she understands the grammar and dynamics of the language when in fact he does not.

5.9.7 Helping Learners to Generate Ideas

One other related finding that came up was that students expressed the lack of ideas on which to base their writing. As a way out, teachers need to be able to suggest ideas to help students when they get stuck. The brain-storming method is useful in helping students to generate ideas for their writing. An illustration of how to generate ideas is as seen below:



Fig. 5.1: The Brain Storming Diagram

Each of these ideas about the town can constitute a paragraph. It should be possible to combine some of the ideas into single paragraphs depending on how the writer

decides to explain the points or ideas. Providing patterns and schemes for students to follow is another way of helping them to develop the habit of writing. This is particularly helpful to students who have very little vocabulary of their own or are slow in thinking out ideas for their writing. The fact that some parts of the work has been done already can serve as an incentive for the student to approach the lesson with the needed confidence.

5.9.8 Sentence Writing

Writing sentences is another way that can help students become interested in writing and therefore improve upon their grammar and writing skills. Students can be asked to write two or three sentences about a certain topic. For example, they can be asked to write three sentences on their hopes and aspirations in life. If they are discussing education, they can be asked to write sentences on why examination is a good or bad thing for students.

5.9.9 Music: The use of music is also crucial in building positive attitude towards the learning of English especially grammar. Music can be an effective way to stimulate writing, since it often provokes feeling and ideas. One does not need to be a musical expert for a piece of music to make one feel happy or sad. Music can be used in different ways to promote learning.

Using words from music: one activity is to play a piece of music and have students write down words that come to their mind as they listen to the music. Later they can share what they have written with their friends in the class to learn how each one has reacted to the same piece of music. Music can also be used to undertake descriptive

writing. The theme of a piece of the music can be centred on a particular story, for example child labour, poverty, sickness or death. Students can be asked to write stories on the themes of music that they listen to. If the music conveys a strong atmosphere it would often spark the student's creativity and almost tell them what to write. This is particularly true with music that the student enjoys.

i. Writing in Groups and Pairs: An important discovery from the study is that most writing exercises in the senior high schools are individual-based. Almost every exercise or class test that students undertake is on individual basis. Meanwhile, there are many activities which are suitable for students writing in pairs and groups. A group may have a secretary to write the final version of the piece, while some may involve every single member writing their own version of the text. One advantage of having a secretary is that the other students have more time to concentrate on the language, think about what is being written, and evaluate it in a more objective way perhaps than they judge their own individual efforts.

iii. Rewriting (and Expanding) Sentences.

In this exercise, students are presented with a stereotypical statement and asked to amend it to suit the opinion of the group. This provokes discussion not only about the topic but also about how to write a consensus opinion appropriately. An example of a stereotypical statement for discussion can be as follows:

| |
|--------------------------|
| Boys like football |
| Girls like mobile phones |

Each group has to rewrite these sentences in a way that accurately reflects its views. For instance, one view might argue that though most boys like football, there are girls who like football so much that they would stop cooking in order to watch football. The same argument can be used for the second sentence. Another way of rewriting sentences is to give students a sentence and asked them to expand the sentence by adding details to it. For instance, one can give students the following sentence to expand;

“The driver drove the car away”.

The student is then expected to expand the sentence as much as his/her vocabulary would permit him/her. In any case the final elongated sentence must be grammatically acceptable and reasonable. The statement above, for instance, could be expanded as follows:

The driver, who is still in the process of learning how to drive, and therefore yet to obtain a driver's licence to enable him qualify to move a vehicle by himself, sparked the car and started moving it in the reverse gear.

An exercise of this nature can be on competitive basis where the group with the highest number of words and appropriate punctuation and grammar is declared winner.

iv. Providing First line / Last Line of stories.

This type of exercise was common among teachers of English of the schools visited.

The teacher would provides statements such as;

“That reminds me of my primary school days.....” (Beginning)

“Thank God it was a dream” (Ending)

However, most of the exercises given were done on individual basis. It would be much more beneficial for students to discuss the topics given in groups before embarking on the writing process. The entire group discusses the story line whilst a secretary notes down the points for the story. This activity needs not be limited to lines, however. Alternatively, students can be given opening and closing paragraphs of essays for them to complete by writing the middle paragraphs or portions of the essay.

v. Base-Tope Explanatory Approach (BTEA) to teaching grammar

This is a systematic approach to the teaching of grammar in which the teacher divides the grammatical units into bits and undertakes piece meal explanation of each part in relation to the other. This approach makes the learners understand the various concepts much better. Appendix E is an illustration of the BTE method of teaching grammar.

5.10 Nationwide Sensitisation on the need for attitudinal change toward English

There is urgent need for the issue to be taken up by the media, both Radio and Television as well as the print media. To begin with, the thematic song composed by the researcher would be presented to the television and radio stations both private and public to be aired as part of their social responsibility to the public. If both parents and children begin to hear and see the song performed on daily basis it would go a long way to change people's perceptions and attitudes toward the language.

5.11 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The differences in attitudes and perceptions among students found in this study shed considerable light on the peculiar situation and the specific needs of learners. While most studies on English learners in Ghana have dealt with attitude towards Ghanaian languages there are far more students learning English because it is a core requirement for most institutions and schools in Ghana other than seeing it as a necessity in life as a Ghanaian.

It has been discovered that the problems students face are largely attributable to their perceptions and attitudes. The method of teaching grammar has also been identified as key factor, it is the kind of attitude that students have towards learning English grammar and English in general that accounts in large part for the poor performance. It is therefore recommended that further research be undertaken on the content of the syllabuses of the colleges of education as well as the perception of teacher trainees about English and how it affects their level of competence as teachers of English. For instance, final year students of teacher training colleges do not study English. The subject is dropped at the end of the second year. This certainly is unacceptable and can be damaging to the overall competence of the trainee teacher. A study that focuses on the teacher trainee colleges would complete this effort that has been initiated towards discovering some of the problems that adversely affect the development of the right attitude and perception towards learning grammar in particular, and English as a whole in our schools.

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APPENDIX A

Interview With Mr. John Sumaila (A Retired English Teacher of The 1970s).

Researcher: Can you describe to me, vividly, how teaching and learning of English was like in the early 1970s?

J. Sumaila: The 1980's were heady days for me as a teacher because I began to read the theories that formed the foundation for many classroom practices that I had begun to adopt. These were the days when I seemed to react most strongly against many of the more traditional classroom practices. And part of that reaction was to abandon the teaching of grammar. By that, I mean the teaching of Prescriptive School Grammar as outlined in all Prescriptive Grammar texts. This was the teaching of Hartwell's Grammars 3 and 4. I remember my own school and the years of drill and skill exercises that varied little from one year to the next.

Researcher: Would you describe yourself as a writer or a lover of the English language?

J. Sumaila: I did very little writing in school, but I was always recognized as a good writer. I paid little attention to the prescriptive rules in the grammar texts of the day, but I often wrote "error free" essays. I recall that even as a young student reader, I found myself paying attention to the conventions of punctuation and apostrophes. I did not realize for many years that others who read the same books as I, who grew up in the same neighbourhood and spoke a similar admirable standard of English, rarely noticed those conventions and had difficulty using them in their own written English.

Researcher: How did you become an English teacher?

J Sumaila: The fact that I eventually became an English teacher was due to my ability to write “error free” essays than it was about a love of reading literature or a call to teach English. As a new teacher I became caught up in the culture of my particular school and taught what I was told to teach by the text books. That included a large dose of English Grammar. But perhaps because I considered myself a writer, I also included a great deal of writing in my middle school English classes. The fact that I saw little transfer between the Prescriptive Grammar lessons and the writing I received from my students disturbed me. But I did not know how to change my teaching to bring about better pieces of writing, better in both issues of correctness and in the development of ideas.

Researcher: What is your view about prescriptive and descriptive grammar?

John Sumaila: The question I asked myself was whether the teaching of rules and the names of sentence parts had any positive effect on student writing. The answer continued to be a resounding “No”. If I were to place myself on the grammar continuum with the teaching of Prescriptive Grammars in isolation at the far right, my place would be at the far left of the continuum. Other than a few convention issues, I do very little whole class instruction in Prescriptive Grammar. I generally deal with such issues as tense, subject/verb agreement, and pronoun/antecedent agreement with individual students as the issues arise. My goal was to place students in as many language-rich experiences as possible. The model of writing instruction that I believed was most effective was that which was based on “rich and complex iteration of learner and environment in mastering literacy.”

Researcher: What is your observation about the present day methods used in teaching English?

J. Sumaila: To say the least, there is very little emphasis on correctness in usage. If you take a cursory look at the kind of exercises, especially grammar given to the students of senior high school and you feel it should have been for primary three class children. Our present day generation of learners loath grammar and try to avoid it like a disease. It is however, quite difficult to tell whether the students' reaction to grammar and English in general is due to poor teaching or lack of interest on their part or both. It is also a fact that our nowadays teacher trainees do not often have enough training on the English language, before going ahead to teach it. Some of them are equally guilty of speaking bad English.

Researcher: What is the way forward towards improving upon the standard of English in our schools?

J. Sumaila: Give English a special place in Ghana's national development agenda. There should be a review of the kind of training given to teacher trainees. I learn the third years in the training colleges do not do English and that is a disaster. What are they coming out to use to teach? The secondary school English is what they still come out with. The only difference is that they are taught some English methodology in the first and second years. The third year should have been the time for serious English studies so they come out with adequate command of the language and therefore be able to teach well.

Researcher: Thank you for your time. It is been nice meeting you for this discussion.

APPENDIX B:

Students' Research Questionnaire

General Instructions :

Answer The Flowing Questions As Independently, Objectively And Sincerely As Possible.

Section A; General Questions

Instruction;

Tick (✓) In The Box Provided, The Tick the Appropriate Response that Applies to you.

(1) What course do you do in school ?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Economics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural science | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural science | <input type="checkbox"/> Others ----- |

(2) What subject is your favourite or best in school?

- ☐ Core Maths ☐ Core Science ☐ English language ☐ Others

(3) Why do you like the subject?

- ☐ It is interesting
☐ It is easy to learn
☐ It is important to my life.
☐ I like the teacher (S/he teaches it well)
☐ Others

(4) In what subject area do students fail most?

- ☐ Core Maths ☐ English language ☐ Core Science ☐ Others-----

(5) If the WAEC office decides to give you a bonus pass (grade A or B) in one subject, which one would you select for them?

- ☐ Core Maths ☐ English Language ☐ Core Science ☐ Social Studies. ☐ Others-----

Section B

Questions On Teaching The English Language

Instructions;

Circle *The Appropriate Answer Based On Your Knowledge of the English Language.*

(6) What aspect of the English language does your English teacher like teaching most?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| (a) Comprehension | e) Oral English |
| (b) Grammar | f) Essay Writing |
| (c) Core literature | g) Vocabulary |
| (d) Summary | |

(7) What aspect of the above doesn't he or she teach often?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Comprehension | e) Core Literature |
| (b) Oral English | f) Core English |
| (c) Vocabulary | g) Grammar |
| (d) Summary | h) Essay Writing |

(8) How would you grade your English teacher's performance in class?

- a. Excellent b. Very good c. Good d. Average e. Poor Very poor

(9) Do your teachers in other subject areas teach or correct your grammar and expressions in your exercises, tests or exams?

- (a) Yes (b) No (c) Sometimes

(10) At home, do your educated (literate) parents correct your English, when you speak or write?

- (a) Yes (b) No (c) Sometimes

Section C:

Questions On Studying / Learning The English Language

Instructions:

Underline The Appropriate Option, Based On Your Opinion.

(11) When do you usually learn or study English language?

- A. During English lessons
- B At the least opportunity
- C When compelled (by exams)

(12) Is English language difficult to learn?

Yes No Not certain.

(13) Generally students do not pass well in English

() True () False

(14) The only way to learn English language is by reading story books.

() True () False

(15) One can be born good at the English language,

() True () False

(16) In your opinion, which of the following sex groups can easily learn English language

(a) boys (b) girls (c) both.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Provide Short Answers For The Following Questions

(17) Arrange the following aspects of the English language in order of difficulty; starting with the most difficult ones.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| (i) Essay writing | (i) ----- |
| (ii) Comprehension | (ii) ----- |
| (iii) Summary | (iii) ----- |
| (iv) Oral | (iv) ----- |
| (v) Grammar | (v) ----- |
| (vi) Core English | (vi) ----- |

(18) State briefly why you have problem with the first two most difficult ones you have indicated in question (17)

19) State briefly four (4) ways that you can improve upon your English. (written and spoken)

(i) -----

(ii) -----

(iii) -----

(iv) -----

SECTION D

Questions On Usage Of The English Language;

Instructions; - Shade In The Brackets (=) Provided, The Answer That Is Appropriate, Based On Your Opinion.

(20) In your view, is English language important (helpful) in your performance in other subjects?

== Yes == No == Not Certain

(21) Do you write letters to your friends parents and relations?

== Yes == No == Sometimes

(22) If yes, how often do you write?

== once a week == once a month

== once a term == others (- - - - -)

(23) If “NO” why don’t you write?

== lack of time

== prefer using phone

== Not sure of expression in the language

(24) Are there phone booths on your school campus or near by?

== Yes == No

(25) Do you use phone card or mobile phone in school?

==Yes == No == Sometimes

(26) If yes, how did you acquire it?

==From parents == From Friends == By my own means.

(27) When communicating (speaking) on phone, what language do you often use?

== Vernacular == English. == Mixture of the two.

(28) When chatting (Conversing) with friends or colleagues, in or outside class room, what language do you use?

== Pidgin == Good English == Vernacular

(29) If you are to speak fluently and without fear of making mistakes, which of these languages would you use?

== English == Pidgin English == Vernacular

(30) On your school campus, which of the following languages is commonly used among

students when they are chatting?

== English == Pidgin == Vernacular

(31) If one can speak English well, it means one can write it well.

== True == False == Not Certain

APPENDIX C:

TEACHERS' RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Tick (✓) The Appropriate Answer

*AGE; () 12-14 () 15-17 () 18-20 () 21-23 () Others

*SEX () Male () Female

*CLASS () SHS 1 () SHS 2 () SHS 3

1. Status of School: (A) Boys school (B) Girls' School (C) Mixed school
2. What subject(s) do you teach? -----
3. Do you speak non standard English in school? A) Yes B No C Sometimes,
4. If yes, in what domain? (A) Class (B) outside Class?
5. Are there official rules as regards the use of English Language.
(A). Yes, (B). No (C) Both
6. Does the school officially encourage the use of Ghanaian Language?
(A) Yes (B) No
7. What is your personal view about the standard of English Language in your school and nation at large/?

8. What in your view is the reason for the use of non-standard English by students?

9. Is there any link between discipline and use of nonstandard English?
(A) Yes (B) No (C) Not Certain
10. From your personal experience as a teacher, at what point in life is substandard English often used by the student? -----

11. Have you encountered students using pidgin outside class? (A) Yes (B) No
12. Do you think the speaking of nonstandard English affects the writing of the student in English?
- (A) Yes. (B). No
13. If “Yes”, in what ways? -----

14. Do you take into consideration the language aspect when assessing your students work in other subjects?
- (A) Yes (B) No (C) Not Certain
15. If you teach English, what aspect of English below do you enjoy teaching most?
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Comprehension | e) Core Literature |
| (b) Oral English | f) Core English |
| (c) Vocabulary | g) Grammar |
| (d) Summary | h) Essay Writing |
16. Do your students have the same attitude towards the various aspects of the Language? (A) Yes (B) No
17. If “No” which aspects do they have positive attitude towards?

- (18). Which aspects do they have negative perception about?

- (19) Do your students approach you for assistance in aspects of the English Language? (A) Yes (B) No
- (20) What in your view can be done to improve upon the competence of users of English? -----

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE ON SELF OR TEACHER DEPENDENT LEARNING OF ENGLISH

***NB**

1 = *Strongly Agree.*

1 = *Agree*

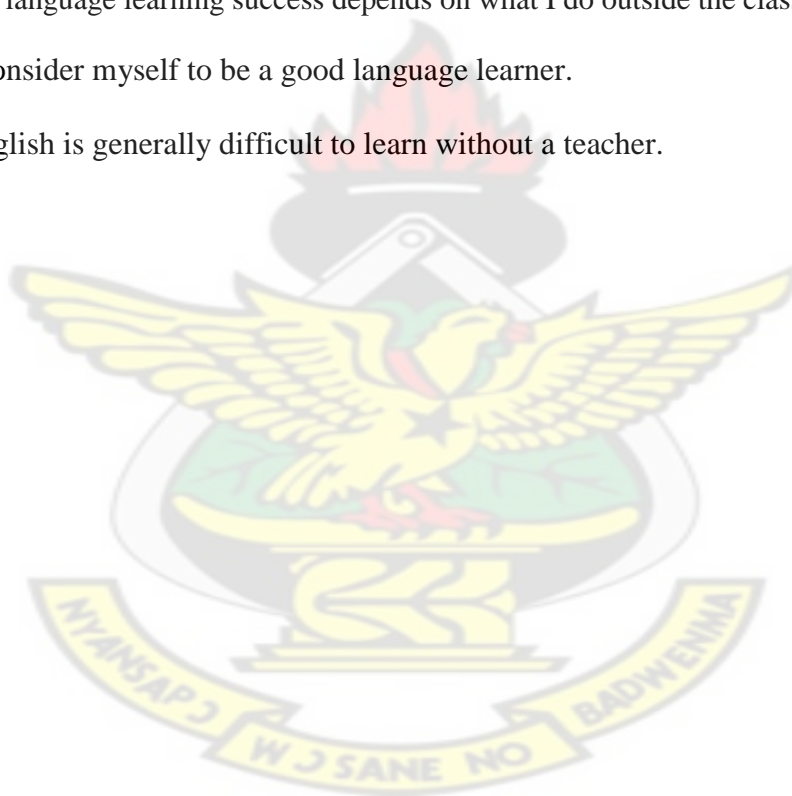
2 = *Not Certain,*

3 = *Disagree*

4 = *Strongly Disagree*

1. I practise English with other students. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Trying new things without a teacher is a waste of time. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I find it embarrassing if I make mistakes when speaking English. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I ask for help in English from other teachers and friends. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I like discussion with classmates in small groups. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I expect my English teacher to correct all my mistakes. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I have the ability to get the score I am trying for in my next English Exams. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel timid speaking English with other people. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I study English mainly because I want to pass my exams 1 2 3 4 5
10. In school I start conversations in English. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I like trying new things without the presence of the teacher. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I am confident that I know how to find an effective way to learn English. 1 2 3 4 5
14. My language learning success depends on what I do in the classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
15. My teacher should make sure I make progress outside class. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I can communicate in English without knowing the rules. 1 2 3 4 5
18. My teacher should identify my weaknesses in English. 1 2 3 4 5
19. The teacher's authority should not be questioned. 1 2 3 4 5

20. I should make myself work harder. 1 2 3 4 5
21. I need to know language rules before I can communicate in English. 1 2 3 4 5
22. I have had some bad experiences with learning English (i.e. being criticized). 1 2 3 4 5
23. I think I would be good at identifying my weaknesses in English. 1 2 3 4 5
24. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules. 1 2 3 4 5
25. I believe that someday I will speak English very well. 1 2 3 4 5
26. I think I have a good feel for English. 1 2 3 4 5
27. My teacher should stimulate my interest in learning English. 1 2 3 4 5
28. My language learning success depends on what I do outside the classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
29. I consider myself to be a good language learner. 1 2 3 4 5
30. English is generally difficult to learn without a teacher. 1 2 3 4 5



APPENDIX E:

BASE –TOP EXPLANATORY APPROACH TO TEACHING GRAMMAR.

5.7 Recommended Approach To Teaching for Attitudinal Change.

(The Base –Top Explanatory Approach B.T.E Approach)

After analysing the kind of grammar that respondents used in their everyday English, the researcher finds it necessary to suggest the following steps for teachers of English in dealing with some aspects of grammar. This, it is believed, will lead students to believe that there is indeed a definite pattern in dealing with grammar, rather than just being asked to “fill in the gaps.” For instance, in introducing the parts of speech to learners, the teacher could adopt what the researcher would refer to as Base-Top Explanatory (BTE) approach.

Topic: Parts of Speech in English

Introduction:

The sentence “The lazy girl” can be broken into three parts – i.e. *the, lazy, girl*. Each of these units has some meaning; therefore the three units combined cannot form one word. Rather the sequence is made of three separate words. The items *the, lazy, girl*, are three separate words because it is not possible to break up each item since the result will be meaningless. For instance, if we break up the item *lazy* into l, a z, y, we notice that each item has no meaning. Thus it will not be possible to call ‘l’ a word. All four items must be joined to form the one word, ‘lazy’. In writing, it is easy to point out words because one word is separated from the other by providing a space between them. In writing therefore, words are identified by the spaces between them. In using language, words are joined together to be able to say whatever we want to

say. It is the individual words we join together to form statements. For example, the statement:

We took supper late yesterday.

contains five separate words which all come together to produce a single statement. Words are therefore, the building blocks of the statements we make everyday. They do not work alone, they must work with other words to produce the statements we make. The third significant point to make about words is that they are combined in a specific order. This means that the words must be arranged in a certain order. For instance, if we rearrange the statement:

they must have left the town
to
left must town have the they

the resulting statement will not be meaningful since the order of words does not follow the normal way in which the words should combine (subject – predicate structure).

Key point: The fact that words must be arranged in a particular order means that there are different types of words. In the statement above, the word *the* cannot appear before the word *they*. Also the word *they* cannot appear in the position where *must* appears. The reason being that each word in the statement is different. Each word performs a different function from the other. This means words have different functions that they play. For instance, the word *they* is different from the word *must*. That means whatever role the word *must* is playing cannot be played by the word town or *they*. In a sentence like:

Ama sang beautifully yesterday.

the words will play the functions below:

- a. Ama ----- this word refers to a person
- b. sang ----- this word describes a specific action
- c. beautifully ----- this word tells us about the way the action was done
- d. yesterday ----- this word points to the time the action was performed

The above clearly suggests that words in English have different functions and can be grouped according to the function each word performs in a statement. When we group words according to their functions we are describing them as *parts of speech*. The parts of speech refer to the different types of words which are used in a sentence. The names given to these types of words identified by their functions are as follows:

| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Nouns, | Adjectives |
| Pronouns, | Prepositions |
| Verbs | Determiners |
| Adverbs | Conjunctions |
| Interjections | |

This approach can also be used in introducing any of the parts of speech mentioned above. For instance, in introducing nouns to learners, we can adopt the same Base-Top Explanatory (BTE) Approach to help learners identify nouns in a sentence.

APPENDIX F

Table 19 Framework for Teaching for Attitudinal Change

| Phase | Purposes | | Possible Processes |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Orientation | Arouse learners interest and curiosity | Ensuring that learners are focused on the topic and are motivated | Introducing, explanation and discussing |
| Elicitation/ Structuring | Helping learners to find out and clarify what they think | Enables the teacher to assess learners understanding in order to plan appropriate next steps | questioning, discussing, predicting |
| Intervention / Restructuring | Encouraging learners to test, develop, extend or replace their ideas or skills. | Provides opportunity for learners to engage actively in learning tasks. Enables teacher to observe learners' behaviour and attitude and by assessing their skill and understanding to make appropriate teaching interventions | practising, observing, |
| Review | Helping learners to evaluate the significance and value of what they have done | Offers a chance for learners to take stock of their learning and for the teacher to guide them in consolidating their understanding. provides an opportunity for the teacher to assess new learning and to consider next steps | recording, discussing explaining hypothesizing reporting speculating |
| Application | Helping learners to relate what they have learnt to their everyday life. | Enables the learner to locate new learning meaningfully in the wider context of their lives. Provides an opportunity for the teacher to reinforce and consolidate key points. | relating to experience, discussing, interpreting |

The above framework for teaching for attitudinal change reinforces the importance of classroom practices, which really enable learners to demonstrate their understanding. It further enables the teacher to develop real insight into the understanding of the learners. Feedback is another important component of the teaching plan outlined above. This should give specific information on the strengths and weakness of the work in relation to the objectives. The quality of feedback is a crucial element in effective self-assessment. It provides guidance on how to improve. In order to learn from the feedback given by the teacher, the learner needs to put into practice the suggestions for improvement. In order that learners would be able to benefit fully from the above strategy, it is incumbent upon the teacher to adjust the teaching to take account of learning. In so doing finding out about learners knowledge, skills and understanding before starting a topic would enable the teacher to make necessary adjustments to the teaching plan so that learning can be made more effective.

The teacher should share the learning objectives and success criteria with the learners. For example, the teacher could ask the learners; “How will we know we have achieved this objective? Furthermore, the teacher should explain to the learners how the learning objective ‘fits’ into the world. This would help the learners construct understanding and appreciate the relevance of their leaning. It is only when learners understand and appreciate the value of what they learn that they can consciously begin to modify their attitude towards it.

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF INVITATION TO FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Hse. No. D2
Choggu Lowcost
Tamale
January 12, 2009

Dear Sir/ Madam

Invitation: Focus Group Discussion

Ph.D Dissertation Research on:

**Perceptual and Attitudinal Effect on the Learning of English:
The Case of Senior High Schools Students in Northern Region of
Ghana.**

Researcher:

Michael Brigandi Akurugu ;
Doctoral Candidate,
English Department
KNUST- Kumasi

Contact Information:

Telephone 0244740144;
Email: brigandisee@yahoo.com

Research Supervisor:

Dr. Mrs. Dadson;
Department of English,
KNUST

As part of my doctoral degree requirements, I am undertaking a research on Perceptual and Attitudinal effect on the learning of English, with specific reference to English Grammar in our senior high schools in particular and Ghana as a whole. I am seeking to understand and explain the extent to which people's attitudes and perceptions about English account for the poor performance of students in particular and most Ghanaians in general. The study aims at establishing the point that perceptions and attitudes of people are key in any effort to bring about improvement in the educational sector. The study seeks to illuminate recent educational policy discourse in Ghana in the face of

falling standards of English in particular and education in general. It also adds to the academic literature on educational reform committee reports that the country has gathered over the years. On a more practical level, it will highlight how much success can be achieved in addressing the language problem by addressing the human element (perceptual and attitudinal orientation of learners and users of the language) and therefore make policy makers more successful in the implementation of their reform recommendations.

I am inviting you to attend and participate in a focus group discussion in order to assist me in collecting individual as well as collective experiences and views on the subject. I am particularly interested in your views on the factors that account for the low standards of English in Ghana and among our students in particular. The focus group discussion will last between sixty and ninety minutes. It will bring together between ten and fifteen participants drawn from educationists, policy makers, representatives of local civil society organizations (CSOs) in the field of education, parents, opinion leaders and ordinary citizens.

Your permission to audio record (tape record) the discussion will be sought. You may accept or decline this permission. The audio tapes from the discussion will be destroyed when the research project is finished. If you decline the audio recording, hand-written notes will be taken during the discussion. In addition, in all cases where the discussion is requested to be anonymous, any responses will be attributed to an anonymous source.

I look forward to meeting you. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely
Michael Akurugu, Brigandi.
(Student Researcher)

APPENDIX H

THEMATIC SONG (VIDEO CLIP)

SONG ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH

(II) P-l-e-a-s-e change your attitude,
I say onto you
Please change your perception of English. (II)
For High standards of education
Change your attitude and perception
of English. I say onto you.
(II) For High standards of education
Change your attitude and perception
of English. I say onto you. (II)
P-l-e-a-s-e change your attitude,
I say onto you
Please change your perception of English.

Written and composed by Researcher;

(Michael A. Brigandi)

APPENDIX I

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- SHS ----- Senior High School
- JHS ----- Junior High School
- FIG. ----- Figure
- SLA ----- Second Language Acquisition
- NPP ----- New Patriotic Party
- NDC ----- National Democratic Party
- ICT ----- Information Communication Technology
- LAD ----- Language Acquisition Device
- FGD ----- Focus Group Discussion
- BECE ----- Basic Education Certificate Examination
- WAEC ----- West African Examination Council
- BTE ----- Base –Top Explanatory Approach
- CSO ----- Civil Society Organisation
- CBO ----- Community Based Organisation
- NGO ----- Non Governmental Organisation