
**THE HANDLING OF SUBORDINATE CLAUSES BY STUDENTS OF TEACHER
TRAINING COLLEGES: A STUDY OF SELECTED TEACHER TRAINING
COLLEGES IN ASHANTI REGION**

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ABSTRACT: *This study is aimed at examining how students of selected Teacher Training Colleges handle one important aspect of sentence structure, i.e. "subordination". Data were collected from written scripts, questionnaire, and tests responded to by 150 participants from three randomly selected colleges. These were analyzed by identifying both correct and incorrect uses of subordinators to link sentences in their compositions. Three teachers were interviewed to find out their students' attitudes towards the teaching of grammar and the general challenges in the teaching and learning of English as a second language. All these were also intended to investigate the causes of the errors the participants made. Findings from the tests and the written scripts showed that participants faced a significant level of difficulty in the use of subordination. This meant that the majority of the participants lacked the linguistic understanding of subordination. The response to the interviews and the questionnaires suggested that the cause of participants' inability to use subordination appropriately was partly attitudinal as students least preferred Grammar. The study suggests that subordination be given the attention it deserves at the Teacher Training Colleges since it is one of the important skills needed to form meaningful sentences in English language.*

KEYWORDS: Subordinate Clauses, Teacher Training Colleges, Ashanti Region

INTRODUCTION

The English Language in Ghana owes its origin to the coming of the European traders and missionaries, particularly the British. The arrival of the British on the African continent marked a very important era in the overall growth of the English Language globally. With Ghana joining the league of users of the English Language, that is, the Commonwealth, the language eventually assumed an international prestige.

Background to the Study

The importance of English today is reinforced in the many concerns raised all the world over, especially among many developing countries, about the falling standard of English, especially among non-natives and the possible consequence of unintelligibility English will assume globally if the trend is not reversed. Locally, that is, in Ghana, there have been many calls for the strengthening of the forts of English use to make education meaningful. The calls stem from the current general complaints about the standard of English in Ghana. For many

people the present standard of English in Ghana is unacceptable. There is a general dissatisfaction about the English proficiency of students of all levels of our education as well as many users of English in the corporate world. Amua-Sekyi E.T (2000) in her paper *The Status of English as a Subject in an English Medium Context: The Ghanaian Situation* states “the inability of students and graduates of our educational institutions to express themselves correctly and creatively in speech and in writing, suggests that their proficiency in English is seriously flawed”. This shows that English as a subject is failing to develop the degree of operational competence in the students that the use of English as a medium of communication requires. In Ghana, it appears the standard of education is measured largely by the correctness of spoken and written English.

While some linguists think that the cry about the standard of education in Ghana is just a feeling common to those who belong to the ‘*complain tradition*’, others are of the view that the standard of English has fallen and that has had tremendous adverse effects on the general quality of education in Ghana. One common source of evidence in support of the view that the standard of English has fallen is the popularly cited examiners’ reports of the various examining bodies, external or internal. Year after year such reports bemoan the deplorable and continuous fall in the standard of English and education in general. For instance, the Chief Examiner’s report from the West African Examinations Council, which examines students at the basic and senior secondary levels, states “...as usual, the poor performance of the majority of candidates was attributed to their inability to express themselves well in English Language” (WAEC 1999:vi). The use of the phrase ‘as usual’ suggests a kind of trend and this is confirmed by Dolphyne (2001:9) who on observing a number of reports of the WAEC states that “...reports on all the other subjects did regularly express concern about the inadequacy of the English of many candidates which resulted in their poor performance in those subjects.” Also, the Institute of Education (UCC) Chief Examiner’s report (2007) on students’ performance in Science in their End of Second Semester examination made the following observations:

One problem area was with the English Language. In some cases the English was so bad that one wondered how the candidates got into the training college. Candidates with this type of problem could not express themselves; spelling was also a problem area. Some explanations were outrageously weird. For example, a candidate wrote “After sometimes they are toughed with hand will be observes that the iron rod is very meaning it conducts heat from one end to another”.

Arguably, we are at a loss as to where the source of our woeful education is. However, if we can fortify English proficiency and eventually improve the quality of our education, it will be necessary to examine the competence of teachers and ensure that they are better qualified to effect the desired positive change on our educational landscape.

Subordination as a Veritable Tool

Subordination is one of the essential elements in constructing sentences in language. It is a way of combining clauses so as to make one part of it more important than the other(s). In Linguistics, subordination is a complex syntactic construction in which one or more clauses are dependent on the main clause. Greenbaum & Quirk (1973:309) underscore the importance attached to the acquisition of the skill. They state that “The device of subordination enables us to organize multiple clause structures.” In effect, the idea of

subordination is that you can create a number of clauses, one of which becomes the superordinate of another.

The complex nature of subordination, as well as the subordinate conjunctions, makes subordination an unfriendly topic to teacher- trainees. For instance, *because* and *since* signify consequence but their usage in joining two simple sentences is not the same. In using '*because*' the second occurrence must come before the first occurrence whilst the reverse is true of the use of *since*. When one looks at the discussions so far made, one would not be wrong to say that the skill of subordination is important in the teaching/learning process with which teachers can arm the students with the necessary skills to enable them to construct meaningful sentence structures. However, it appears that there is very little or no effective use of this tool that could help teachers determine how students construct meaningful sentences in a written discourse, and also help students appraise their own performance in the classroom. If teachers should pay more attention to subordination, many of the problems that result in the poor performance of students, not only in English language but in other subjects as well, would be solved.

Statement of the Problem

Besides high professional conduct, the teacher is expected to exhibit a high standard of competence in their subject matter. The teacher is expected to demonstrate a strong command of language too because it is their prominent vehicle of instruction. In recent times, the English language competence of teachers in Ghana has been the subject of discussion, with many lamenting on their command of both oral and written English. In attempts to get to the roots of teachers' linguistic deficiencies, some researchers have turned attention to teacher education. This is ostensibly to investigate whether the training given to teachers offer the right competence they need to meet the realities and expectations of the profession today. One of the areas of teachers' deficiency in the English language identified is concord (Agor, 2003). Preliminary investigations which piqued the interest for the present study revealed that teacher-trainees also have challenges in handling subordination as an aspect of the English grammar.

Purpose of the Study

The rationale behind this study is to find out how students at the teacher training colleges handle the basic elements that go into acceptable sentence structure i.e. *subordination* and how they use this concept in written discourses as well as in communication. Again, it is to find out students' attitudes towards the English Language, particularly, Grammar and how these attitudes affect the teaching/learning process.

Significance of the Study

It is certain that by the end of the study, the relevant information on *subordination* would be provided for students as well as tutors involved in the learning and teaching of the English Language. This would help students to be able to present their ideas well in both spoken and written forms. Not only would this study help students and tutors at the teacher training colleges but it would also help students and teachers at all levels of education.

Objectives of the Study

The objective for this study is to discover how students understand and apply the skill of *subordination* at the teacher training college level. It intends to:

- i. Discover what attitudes underlie learners' approach to Grammar as an aspect of the English Language.
- ii. Find out how learners understand and use subordination
- iii. Suggest appropriate solutions to learner's problems in the use of subordination

Research Questions

The following questions are to be answered at the end of the study in order to ensure a systematic and an objective approach to the study.

- Can students identify the different types and functions of the subordinate clauses?
- Can students use the various types of subordinators to construct the subordinate clauses?
- Do students' attitudes to an aspect of the English Language affect their general performance in that aspect of the language at the teacher training college level?
- How do teachers perceive their students' attitude towards the teaching/learning of the English Language?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Structural Linguistic Theory

The structural linguistic theory is one of the theories underpinning this study. This theory emerged in the early years of the 20th century, as a precursor to the generative or transformational linguistic tradition, which sought to justify the belief that language acquisition is not entirely accounted for by behaviourism as claimed by Skinner (1957) in his Verbal Behaviour hypothesis (Littlewood 1985:5). On the contrary, many linguists believe that humans acquire language because of an innate propensity to do so (Chomsky and Caplan 1980, in Westen 1996: 283). In proving this view various linguists have attempted to study the nature of human language with the view of understanding how the human mind produces and processes language (Radford 1987:1). In Chomsky's own words:

There are a number of questions that might lead one to undertake a study of language. Personally, I am primarily intrigued by the possibility of learning something, from the study of language, that will bring to light inherent properties of the human mind.(Chomsky, Language and Mind (1972: 103) cited in Radford, 1981:1)

Structuralism, unlike traditional grammar, views language as a system of structurally related elements for encoding meaning, (Agor, 2003:17). Put differently, proponents of structuralism agree that all human languages, whether living or dead, have syntactic structure (Tallerman 2005:22), that is, a set of rules which account for basic constructions and sentences (Baker 1995: 19). Scholars like Chomsky argue strongly that the native speaker intuitively knows about these set of rules of his language (Radford 1981:2).

The emergence of the structural linguistic theory of language has widened the debate over how humans acquire language. There has been a shift from the behaviourist theory of language acquisition which is widely condemned as inadequate in explaining language acquisition (Littlewood 1985:6,7). Characteristically, the structural linguistic theory is founded on the following:

First, that human language is rule-governed, that is, language is governed by coherent system of rules (Radford 1981: 16). Second, the rules comprise different but interrelated

components, namely: syntactic rules of sentence formation, which specify how to form sentences; semantic rules of sentence interpretation, which specify how to interpret the meaning of sentences; and phonological rules of sentence pronunciation, which specify how to pronounce sentences (Baker 1995: 19, Radford 1981: 34, Richards, Jack, Rogers & Theodore 1986:49).

METHODOLOGY

The Research Design

The descriptive survey was the research design used for the study. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, properties that prevail, beliefs, points of view or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt or trends that are developing and this does not usually involve the manipulation of any variable, (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Creswell 2003). Doyle (2004) observes that surveys are an invaluable tool for collecting information. Key (1997) citing Van Dalen (1979) to confirm Doyle's observation, also indicates that descriptive surveys are appropriate for assessing current practices and conditions and to make wise decisions and plans to improve upon them.

The descriptive survey was considered the most appropriate design for conducting the investigation since it is the one that deals with things as they currently are (Creswell, 2003). A survey would be useful in fulfilling the purpose of the study to investigate how *subordination* is handled by teacher training college students.

Sources of Data

Teacher trainees from three Teacher Training Colleges in Ashanti Region of Ghana were used for the data collection. These colleges are Akrokerri Teacher Training College, Mampong Technical Teachers College and St. Louis Teacher Training College. Some teachers who teach English language were also interviewed.

The Teacher Training College

There are 38 Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana. Ashanti Region alone has 7 out of the number of Teacher Training Colleges in the country, and 3 out of 7 Teacher Training Colleges in Ashanti Region of Ghana have been selected for the study. One of these colleges, Akrokerri Teacher Training College, is in the Adansi North District in Ashanti Region. The other two colleges, which are Mampong Technical Teacher Training College and St. Louis Teacher Training College, are found in Mampong Municipal and Kumasi Metropolitan respectively. The choice of these three schools and districts was purposely selected to ensure that data collected would be diverse enough to meet the primary objective of the study.

The Population of the Study

The target population for the study was all second year students of the seven Teacher Training Colleges in the Ashanti Region. There were 2,631 second year students in these colleges. In addition, all English language teachers in the colleges, numbering 31, were also targeted.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the three colleges which were used for the study. Out of the seven colleges, three are female institutions, one is a male institution and the remaining three are mixed institutions. The purposive sampling technique was used because the study wanted to focus on single sex colleges and a mixed college. St.

Louis Training College which is a female institution was selected because most female applicants choose the college as their first choice because it is located in Kumasi. For this reason it receives about one thousand applications every year and the best are chosen. Mampong Technical Teachers College is also an all-male institution which trains teachers to teach technical skills in Junior High Schools. About eighty-five percent of students admitted into the college have a background in science. The perception is that science students have a weak English language base. The third college, Akrokerri Training College was chosen because it is a mixed institution which offers both science and general courses. The college therefore has a blend of students with both science and arts background.

The random sampling technique was used in selecting the students and tutors who were used for the study. This technique was used in order to ensure equal opportunity to all the students and tutors to take part in the study. Numbers (both even and odd) were written on pieces of paper and put in a bag for students to pick. Those who picked the even numbers were selected to form the sample. One hundred students were selected from each of the three colleges. In the case of the English tutors, one tutor from each of the three colleges, who were prepared to take part in the study voluntarily were used. In all a total of 300 students and 3 tutors were used for the study.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used for data collection in this study were questionnaires, interviews, test item and written scripts. The choice of these instruments was informed by the fact that descriptive survey research as indicated by Creswell (2000) lends itself to questionnaires and interviews. This observation is confirmed by (Borg, Gall & Gall, 1993) as cited by Nasseh (1996) that survey research typically employs questionnaires and interviews to determine the opinion, attitudes, preferences, and perception of persons of interest to the research.

Data Collection Procedure

Personal visits were made to the colleges to seek permission from the principals to administer the data. The selected students were first briefed about the purpose of the study before the questionnaire and the test item were distributed to them. They responded to the questionnaire and test item in the presence of the researchers with the help of some of the English tutors and the questionnaires were collected at the end of the exercise. In the case of the written scripts, essays of all the selected students which they had written as class assignment were presented and fifty scripts from each college were randomly selected to give a total of 150 scripts for the study. The interview schedule was for only the selected English tutors.

Tools for Analysis of the Data

The basic tools of analysis of the data collected were item analysis, tabular and graphical representations.

Analysis of Data on Attitudes

The colleges will be lettered A, B, and C for the purpose of the analysis:

College A – Akrokerri Teacher Training College.

College B – Mampong Technical Teacher Training College.

College C – St. Louis Teacher Training College.

The Teacher Training Colleges

The administration of the questionnaires at the Teacher Training Colleges is to determine the attitudes of the teacher trainees to grammar in particular, as well as the English language in general. A total of three hundred students were provided with the questionnaires, one hundred in each college. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses on cognitive and affective domains with suggestions made on the cognitive and affective domains to which trainees responded. Some of these items that were specific on the two domains include the following:

Cognitive

- English is important in the academic work you are doing.
- I can pass my examinations without being good in English.
- I will not need English Language after school.

Affective

Specific suggestions to elicit their feelings about grammar in particular were:

- Which aspect of the English Language do you like best?
- If you had a choice, which aspect of the English Language would you rather not do?

Responses on the Cognitive Domain

The table below shows responses given by trainees reflecting their perception about the relevance or otherwise of the English Language.

Table 1: Perception Chart

COLLEGES	RESPONSES	QUESTION A	QUESTION B	QUESTION C
		English is important in the academic work you do.	I can pass my examinations without being good in English.	I will not need English Language after college.
COLLEGE A	Agree	100%	9%	6%
	Disagree	Nil	88%	92%
	Uncertain	Nil	3%	2%
COLLEGE B	Agree	100%	9%	2%
	Disagree	Nil	87%	95%
	Uncertain	Nil	4%	3%
COLLEGE C	Agree	100%	5%	10%
	Disagree	Nil	80%	85%
	Uncertain	Nil	15%	5%

College A

All the respondents 100% agree to the suggestion that English is important in the academic work of the students. Only 9% agree that they can pass their exams without being good in English. 88% respondents disagree with the suggestion that a student can pass his/her examinations without being good in English. Only 3% were on certain. To the suggestion that subjects will not need the English Language after school, only 6% of them think they will not need it after school, 92% of them disagree, and only 2% respondents are not sure.

College B

In this school, all the respondents, 100% agree that English Language is important in the academic work they are doing. Only 9% do agree that they can pass their without being good in English. 87% of the respondents disagree to the suggestion that students can pass their exams without being good in English. 4% were undecided.

College C

Respondents in college C all agree (100%) that English is important for school work. To the suggestion that it is possible to pass examinations without being good in English, 80% of the respondents disagree, only 5% agree and 15% of the respondents were not sure, that they can pass examinations without being good in English. To the question that they would not need the English Language after school, 10% thought they would not need it, 85% of the respondents disagreed and 5% uncertain.

SUMMARY

From the analysis so far given, it is clear that almost all the students agree to the fact that the English language is important in their academic work. The certainty of their agreement regarding the place of the English language in the academic work of students is evident in the number that agreed on the importance of the language. All the respondents (300) agreed that the English language is important for work in school. Even with the suggestion on the role English language plays in examinations, no less than 80% at least agreed that being good in English is essential to passing examinations.

Responses on the Affective Domain

On the affective domain, respondents were expected to indicate their feeling towards the English language in general and grammar in particular by stating which aspect of the English language they liked and which they did not.

Table 2: Preference Chart

ASPECTS	COLLEGE A		COLLEGE B		COLLEGE C	
	Highly preferred	Least preferred	Highly preferred	Least preferred	Highly preferred	Least preferred
Speech Work	20	10	31	8	13	14
Composition	23	2	27	3	33	7
Comprehension	19	10	16	3	26	10
Grammar	10	41	11	34	8	39
Literature	19	30	14	28	20	30
TOTALS	91	93	99	76	100	100

College A

With the question on which aspect of the English language respondents liked best, 20 of the respondents chose Speech Work, 23 ticked Composition, 19 said Comprehension, 10 picked Grammar and 19 Literature, 9 of the respondents indicated none, meaning that they liked all aspects equally. The other question required the respondents to indicate which aspect of the language they would rather not do. 10 students picked Speech Work, 2 Composition 10

Comprehension, 41 Grammar, and 30 Literature. 7 chose none to indicate that they would like to do all the aspects.

College B

31 out of the 100 subjects selected Speech Work as the aspect they preferred above all others, 27 chose Composition, 16 preferred Comprehension, 11 Grammar and 14 preferred Literature and one (1) respondent liked all aspects equally.

To the question of which aspect the respondents would like to do away with if they had the choice, 28 indicated literature, 34, Grammar, 8, Speech Work, and 3 each for Comprehension and Composition. 24 respondents would like to maintain all aspects of English. None of the respondents like all aspects equally.

College C

13 out of the respondents prefer Speech Work to all the other aspects, 33 Composition, 26 chose comprehension, 8 chose Grammar and 20 chose literature. Concerning which aspect of English subjects would rather not do, 14 chose Speech Work, 7 chose Composition, 10 chose Comprehension 39 chose Grammar and 30 chose Literature. None of the respondents like all aspects equally.

Summary of Responses on Attitudes

From the table, it is clear that only 29 out of the total 300 respondents considered grammar as an aspect of the English Language they would study. This number represents roughly 10% of the total number used for the study. That is, 10 respondents are from College A, 11, from College B, and 8 from College C. 114 respondents representing 38% of the total respondents from the three colleges wished that grammar was not part of the subjects they studied.

Analysis of Written Scripts

The researchers, seeing the important role subordination plays in sentence construction and wanting to find out how students at the teacher training colleges in Ghana are able to use the concept in written discourses, analysed written scripts of students from three teacher training colleges. Particular attention was given to how the students used the different kinds of subordinators in constructing the different types of subordinate clauses in their essays. In all, 150 scripts composed by 150 participants (50 from each college) were used for the exercise and each of the 150 scripts was critically analysed to find out how the students had used the various types of subordinators to construct sentences to bring out their ideas.

The use of subordinators like *which*, *who*, *that*, *whom*, *whose*, etc. by the students to form relative clauses was what was first looked at in the scripts. Of the 150 scripts analysed, the relative pronoun *which*, appeared in 92 scripts with each of the scripts using this subordinator correctly to construct the relative clause, except 15. For example, one of the scripts had a sentence like:

1. *Mr. Chairman, related to the above is huge pocket money **which** is given to boys by their parents (adults).*

In the above construction, it is seen that the student does not only use the subordinator *which* to construct the relative clause correctly, but he is also able to show that the clause (subordinate) is embedded in the matrix/main clause. Some of the wrong forms identified were:

- a) *Some students destroy school furniture **which** is not good.*
- b) *They chose to do **which** ever they want.*
- c) *All the people **which** are witnesses must volunteer information.*

The next subordinator which was used correctly by most of the students was *who* and this appeared in 60 scripts out of the 150 scripts. For example, a student wrote:

- 2. *I then decided to go to join the area guys **who** had assembled near the stream making merry.*
In this construction, the student is able to use the relative clause to give us additional information about the noun 'the area guys' in the sentence. He therefore makes it easy for us to know the specific 'area guys' he is talking about. Another subordinator which was used in almost all the 150 scripts is the subordinator *that*, used in constructing the relative clause. In fact, this subordinator appeared in 147 scripts and it appeared severally in each script. Examples of the use of this subordinator in some of the scripts are:
- 3. *I will begin my submission by making it emphatically clear **that** corruption is becoming more alarming in recent times and the root cause of this is politicians.*
- 4. *To begin with, survival syndrome is one of the greatest problem (sic) **that** causes (sic) the high number of street children in our society.*

The ability of some students to use some of the subordinators mentioned above to construct relative clauses correctly, gives a clear indication that they know what goes into the construction of the relative clauses, to some extent. However, there are instances where some of the subordinators used in constructing some relative clauses are used wrongly by some of the students. In fact, the majority of the students did not use these subordinators and the few who attempted using them had them wrong. For instance, the subordinator *whom* appeared in only 2 out of the 150 scripts, meaning that only two students attempted using it. However, the two who attempted to use it had it wrongly used. One of the scripts had the sentence below, as the writer tried to use the subordinator *whom*:

- d) *It is no wonder that the president claim (sic) that any DCE or MCE **whom** wanted to contest for election as MP should resign.*

That of the second script is:

- e) *On the 11th day of January, 2000, thieves broke into the room of one of the tenant (sic) **whom** had travelled at about 2:00 p.m. and took away a lot of his precious personal effects.*

What can be said about the two sentences in relation to the use of the subordinator *whom* is that it seems the students cannot differentiate between the uses of the subordinators *who* and *whom* to form the relative clause. *Who* as a subordinator is used when the pronoun in the relative clause is the subject of the verb. On the other hand, if the pronoun is not the subject but the object of the verb in the relative clause, then *whom* as a subordinator is used. For instance, in a sentence like:

*The boy **who** sold the pen is my brother,*

the subordinator *who* is selected because it is the subject of the verb sold. But in a sentence like: *The boys **whom** we beat are crying,*

the pronoun *whom* as a subordinator is selected because it is not the subject in the relative clause, instead *We* is the subject. This information is what the students lack, therefore, their use of the wrong subordinator to construct the relative clause which has made the whole structure wrong.

In another instance, a student constructs the relative clause alright with the subordinator *which*, but it is done as if it is a complete sentence on its own, therefore, making the construction incomplete as in:

- f) ***Which** will lead to a decrease in the number of school drop out.(sic)*

This student does not understand what is meant by subordination and therefore she/he does not know that a subordinate clause cannot stand alone but needs a main clause to depend on.

The student does not know that the relative clause, which is a type of subordinate clauses, needs a main clause to depend on. Looking at the construction above, there is no main clause for the relative clause to depend on.

For example, in one of the scripts it is written:

g) ***While** most cases poor parents engage their wards in hard time businesses which involve roaming on the streets of our country instead of attending school.*

A critical look at this construction reveals that the sentence is incomplete. What this student failed to do is that he/she did not add a main clause to the subordinate clause. This is a clear indication that he/she does not know how to construct sentences using the subordinate clause.

Till appeared in only one script, and that was wrongly used as:

h) *To solve these problems **till** the Government should establish a lot of job opportunities for the youth.*

With a critical look at the sentence, one cannot tell which part of the sentence the subordinate clause with the subordinator is *till*. The whole sentence has no meaning. Therefore, it would have been better if the student had not put in the subordinator, and this would have made the sentence meaningful.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM WRITTEN SCRIPTS

From the analyses so far made it is clear that some of the students can use some of the subordinators to construct some subordinate clauses correctly while some cannot. Through the analyses, it was clear that the students found it easy to construct the relative clauses, but when it came to constructing some of the adverbial clauses some of the students could not use the appropriate subordinators to construct them. This means that they did not understand the nature of some of the adverbial clauses. For example, the subordinators *while* and *till* could not be used to form the correct adverbial clauses as shown in examples g and h.

The Test

A test item made up of ten questions was administered to 100 students from each of the three selected teacher training colleges. The objective of the test was to find out how trainees at the Teacher Training Colleges selected were able to identify the various functions of the subordinate clauses. The test is analysed below.

Trainees' Responses

Below is an analysis of trainees' responses on a college-by-college basis on the test item. There is a tabulation of the number of correct and incorrect responses. Then there is a description of the error types and their frequency.

Colleges A, B and C:

The table below shows trainees' correct and incorrect responses to the test administered.

Table 3: Tabulation of Correct and Incorrect Responses (Raw Scores/Frequency)

Questions	College A		College B		College C	
Questions	Correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect
1	20	80	21	79	36	64
2	3	97	6	94	12	88
3	43	57	30	70	17	83
4	31	69	40	60	40	60
5	43	57	46	54	41	59
6	32	68	27	73	37	63
7	13	87	23	77	9	91
8	31	69	39	61	38	62
9	2	98	2	98	7	93
10	20	80	35	65	38	62

All the 300 respondents returned their responses. Questions 1 and 3 required students to underline the Subjects in the sentences and in all three colleges, the responses as shown on the table do not give any good picture regarding the performance of the students. Out of the total number of 100 students each college, 20, 21 and 36 correct answers respectively, were provided for question 1. These constitute 20%, 21% and 36% respectively. For question 3, 43, 30 and 17 correct answers were provided, constituting 43% and 30% and 17% respectively.

Questions 2 and 9, tasked respondents to underline the Objects in the sentences. To these questions, 3, 6 and 12 correct answers constituting 3%, 6% and 12%, with 97, 94 and 88 incorrect ones of the total responses, were provided for question 2, while question 9 had only 2, 2, and 7 correct answers for the three colleges respectively.

Questions 4, 8 and 10 required subjects to underline the Adjuncts in the sentences. 31, 40 and 40 correct answers were given to questions 4. question 8 had 31, 39 and 38 correct responses, while 20, 35, and 38 correct answers were given to question 10. The percentages for these figures are all over 100.

Respondents are required to underline the Complement in the sentence in relation to question 5. 43, 46, and 41 correct responses are given out of the total of 100 responses each, from the colleges and these constitute 43%, 46% and 41%.

Question 6 requires subjects to underline the Object Complement in the sentence. In this question, 32, 27, and 37 correct answers are provided.

In question 7, subjects are expected to underline the Complement of a Preposition in the sentence. 13, 23, and 9 correct answers are provided representing 13%.

Total Responses from all the three Colleges

The responses from respondents from all the three colleges involved in this study are shown in the table and the graph below.

Tabulation of Responses from All 3 Colleges

QUESTIONS	CORRECT	INCORRECT	TOTAL
1	77	223	300
2	21	279	300
3	90	210	300
4	111	189	300
5	130	170	300
6	96	204	300
7	45	255	300
8	108	192	300
9	11	289	300
10	93	207	300

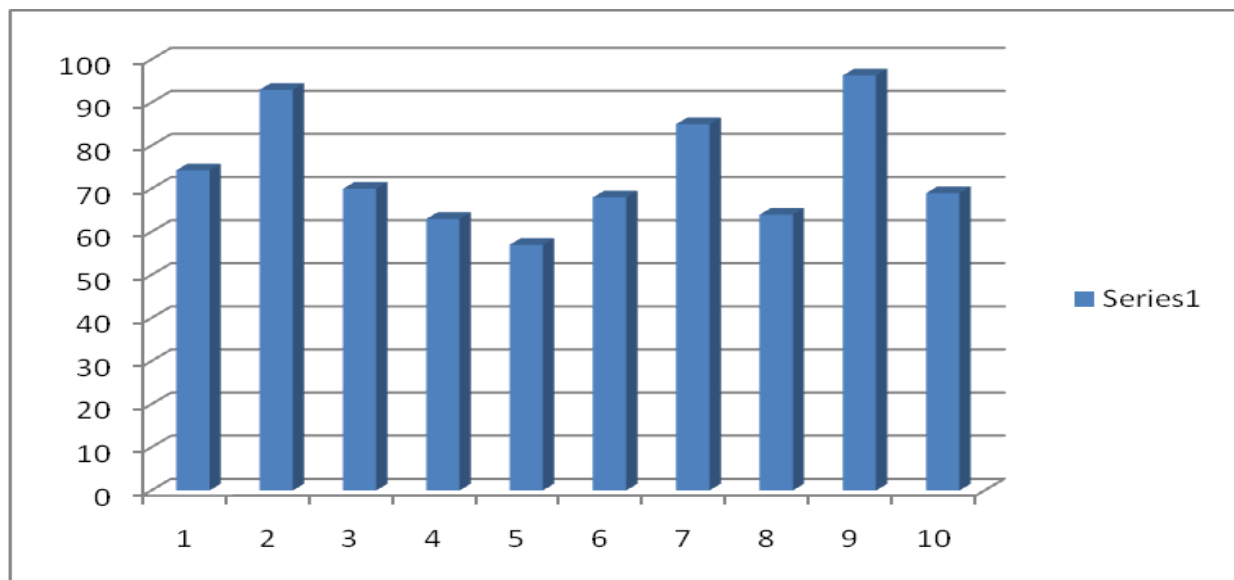


Figure 4: Graphical Representation (%) of Incorrect Responses for all the Three Colleges

From the table and graph it is clear that question 9 has the greatest number of incorrect responses, that is 289 representing 96.3% out of the total of 300 responses, with question 2 following with 279 representing 93% of the total. Then follows question 7 with 255 incorrect responses from the three colleges and this constitutes 85%, followed by question 1 with 223 incorrect responses constituting 74.3%, then question 3 with 210 constituting 70%, question 10 with 207 constituting 69%, question 6 with 204 representing 68%, question 8 with 192 representing 64%, question 4 with 189 representing 63%, and question 5 having the least number of incorrect responses of 170 also constituting 57%.

With the correct responses, question 5 has the greatest number of correct responses of 130 out of the 300 responses and this represents 43%. This is followed by question 4 with 111 correct responses representing 37%, question 8 with 108 representing 36%, question 6 with 96 with 32% of the total, question 10 with 93 constituting 31%, question 3 with 90 constituting 30%, and question 1 with 77 also correct responses representing 26.3%. The rest are question 7 with 45 correct responses representing 15%, followed by question 2 with 21 representing 7%, and question 9 with the least number of correct responses from all the three colleges which is

11 constituting 4% of the 300 responses. Questions 2 & 9 required respondents to identify the objects in the two sentences and these are the questions with the highest number of incorrect responses although the other questions also have high number of incorrect responses.

The error types that occurred in the responses were tabulated to determine the frequency of occurrence, as a prevalence of a particular error type would be an indication of the degree of difficulty students have in the particular area of *subordination*. This is made manifest when as many as 97% of the total responses from College A for question 2 were incorrect. Due to lack of space the details of the errors will be presented in a subsequent study.

DISCUSSIONS

The Effect of Students' Attitudes to Grammar

The study examined attitudes of students towards grammar in particular and English Language in general in the investigation because of the importance of attitude as a major determining factor to proficiency in language acquisition. The investigation revealed that attitude played a role in the poor performance of students in grammar. This notwithstanding, only 29 out of the 300 respondents considered grammar as a favourite subject. Attitude affects the English Language in general and all the other subjects in the curriculum. In the researchers' view, investigating and finding solutions to what account for students' dislike of grammar, as well as the English Language is a prerequisite to finding an answer to the problems that we are faced with as far as education is concerned.

The Interviews

Three teachers were interviewed, one from each of the three colleges used for the study. Questions were asked casually but having in mind the guideline questions that were set for the purpose. These questions were aimed at finding out what the tutors considered their students' attitude to be towards subordination, if they considered it important and, if they considered its treatment in textbooks adequate.

All the teachers interviewed talked about the fact that there were no textbooks designed for use at the Teacher Training Colleges by both teachers and students. This, the teachers thought did not help in the teaching/learning process as they had to find their own means of getting materials to prepare notes for the students. This led to the teachers having different notes for the classes that the individual teachers taught. The teachers also talked about the fact that students found it difficult to distinguish between the subordinate clause and a main clause. One teacher added that *subordination* had not so much been highlighted in the course outline. Students did not find the treatment of clauses interesting at all and subordination being a topic under clauses was no exception as they saw it as a difficult topic to handle. The teachers interviewed all accepted the importance of *subordination* as a skill to construct complex sentences needed in written discourses.

CONCLUSIONS

The researchers decided to investigate the area of subordination because students were not able to write complete sentences when they tried constructing the complex sentence. The problem manifested in their end-of-semester examination conducted by the Institute of Education, which required students to write essays and answer comprehension passage questions. This problem made them perform poorly in the exams year after year.

The researchers also included the issue of attitudes in the study because of the premium the literature in second language acquisition attaches to attitude and motivation as factors determining second language acquisition. The study reveals that most students found grammar, an aspect of the English Language, an area they did not like and this included all the topics treated under grammar. They preferred that grammar was taken off the syllabus, if they had a choice in the matter.

Also, tutors interviewed attested to the fact that students did not find grammar a pleasant subject to learn and this included all grammatical issues. Apart from this problem, both teachers and students did not have prescribed textbooks to use for the teaching/learning process.

Recommendations

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

Pedagogical Implications on Findings

Policy makers are those who formulate policies in our educational system and see to their implementation. They should therefore ensure that teachers in the classrooms undertake researches into areas their students have problems with, through motivation. These researches when done would help both syllabus designers and textbook writers to get an insight into students' problems and design or structure their materials in line with the problems, by knowing what to put in the materials and what not to put in them. Since the teachers are with the students, they would have the practical situational problems of the students and would understand them better than the policy makers who are not actively involved in teaching.

It would be appropriate for the syllabus designers to collaborate with classroom teachers in structuring the syllabus to meet the educational needs of the students and the the country as a whole. This would also enable teachers to appreciate the selection of certain aspects of the subject and also motivate them to work on every aspect since they know that they are part of the structure of the syllabus.

Textbook writers in collaboration with syllabus designers must design specific textbooks to be used by both teachers and students at the Teacher Training Colleges. There should be more practical exercises designed in the textbooks for students to practice and this should address specific problems of students.

There is also the need to restructure the course content of teacher trainees such that they are conversant with the practical applications of the skill of subordination. This will help the students to understand and be able to put the skill into practical use.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study cannot be said to have covered all the issues concerning attitudes since its main attention is on the difficulties students face in their understanding and use of "subordination". It is therefore necessary for further scientific investigations to be done in order to discover how the various attitudinal factors impact on the teaching and learning of grammar, as well as the English language. This work has also tried to find out how students handle subordination, it is not conclusive on the issues of difficulties in the area of subordination and other

grammatical forms and structure. With further studies, the difficulties and solutions on “subordination” would be made clearer.

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