

**A STUDY ON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THE WRITTEN ENGLISH OF  
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF EGOR L.G.A. OF EDO  
STATE**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BENIN CITY.**

**NOVEMBER, 2025**

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**A PROJECT WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL  
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## CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that this work was carried out by Nsikak Joseph of the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. This work has been found adequate in scope and quality for the award of B.A. (Ed) degree.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the grammatical errors made by senior secondary school students and the causes, consequences and remedial strategies for those errors in Egor Local Government Area. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 100 students and 10 English Language teachers. Responses were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and mean scores.*

*Findings showed that the most frequent errors in students' written English were tense misuse, subject-verb disagreement, wrong or missing articles, pronoun errors, inappropriate preposition usage and faulty sentence structure. Teachers and students attributed these errors largely to mother-tongue interference, poor reading culture, inadequate grammar instruction (including rote methods), insufficient writing practice and large class sizes. The study further found that unchecked grammatical errors reduce clarity and coherence in writing, lower academic performance across subjects that require written work, and undermine learners' confidence in communication. Both groups recommended practical, communicative grammar teaching, regular corrective feedback, increased writing and reading practice, remedial classes and peer review activities.*

*The study concludes that improving grammatical competence requires pedagogical shifts toward interactive, practice-based instruction and strengthened school support systems to restore writing accuracy and overall communicative competence.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

The ability to communicate effectively in English plays a central role in the academic journey and overall development of students, especially in multilingual countries like Nigeria where English functions as both the official language and the primary medium of instruction in schools. From classroom activities to national examinations and even job opportunities, proficiency in English particularly in writing is crucial.

Literacy, especially the ability to read and write effectively, is a key component of education and development. It is more than just the ability to recognize letters and form sentences; literacy empowers individuals to express ideas clearly, understand complex information, and participate fully in social, academic, and professional contexts. In today's globalized world, literacy in English being an international language is even more important, as it enables individuals to access global information, communicate across borders, and compete in the international job market.

Writing in particular is a major aspect of literacy. The ability to write well reflects clear thinking, grammatical knowledge, and logical organization of ideas. A student who writes well is better able to perform in school, as most subjects require written expression through assignments, tests, and examinations. Furthermore, writing is a vital tool for

communication outside the classroom. Whether it is writing a job application, an email, a report, or even engaging in online communication, the ability to express oneself clearly and correctly in writing can influence how one is perceived by others and determine success in many life endeavors.

Despite its importance, many senior secondary school students in Nigeria, including those in Egor Local Government Area, continue to struggle with effective writing. One of the main challenges is the high rate of grammatical errors in their work. These errors affect the clarity, coherence, and overall effectiveness of their writing. Students who cannot express themselves accurately may struggle not only in English Language as a subject but also in other subjects that require essay-type answers. In the long run, poor writing skills can limit their chances in higher education and professional advancement.

Grammar, being the structural foundation of a language, plays a critical role in literacy and writing competence. It includes the rules governing the arrangement of words and phrases to create meaningful and grammatically correct sentences. Chomsky (1957) introduced the concept of "grammatical competence" as a speaker's knowledge of their language's syntax, while Canale and Swain (1980) expanded this to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Among these, grammatical competence remains the bedrock for accurate and coherent writing.

Errors in grammar can obscure meaning, reduce the clarity of written communication, and result in poor academic performance. For instance, incorrect verb usage such as "She

go to school every day” instead of “She goes to school every day” can confuse readers and signal a lack of mastery of basic grammar rules. Such mistakes are not only found in informal writing but also in important academic assignments, examination scripts, and formal letters.

Several factors may contribute to the persistence of these errors. These include mother tongue interference, where students transfer the structure and style of their indigenous languages into English; inadequate exposure to well-written English materials such as novels, newspapers, and essays; insufficient feedback from teachers; and ineffective teaching methods that prioritize rote learning over practical language use.

Moreover, a lack of consistent writing practice may hinder students' ability to internalize grammar rules. In many schools, students are rarely encouraged to write essays, letters, or reports frequently, limiting their opportunities to learn through feedback and correction. Therefore, the focus of this study is not only to identify the most common grammatical errors made by senior secondary school students but also to explore the root causes of these mistakes. The study also aims to suggest actionable strategies for improving grammatical competence, thereby enhancing students' overall writing abilities and academic performance. Ultimately, strengthening students' literacy and writing skills will help them communicate effectively within and outside their communities, preparing them to succeed in a competitive and interconnected world.

## **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years, the high occurrence of grammatical errors in the written English of senior secondary school students have become a matter of growing concern. Teachers and examiners frequently report that students' poor grammatical skills compromise the quality of their writing, even when they demonstrate good ideas and creativity. These recurring errors weaken students' performance in English language examinations and in subjects that demand extensive written expression, such as literature, government, and history.

Among the most common errors observed are run-on sentences, sentence fragments, incorrect verb tenses, misuse of punctuation, poor subject-verb agreement, and inappropriate use of prepositions and articles. For example, a student may write "The boy enjoy playing football yesterday evening," which is structurally and grammatically flawed, reflecting a misunderstanding of tense, agreement, and verb usage.

The persistence of these grammatical problems suggests deeper underlying issues in the language learning process. One major cause is the negative influence of indigenous languages. In many cases, students think in their native languages and attempt to translate directly into English, leading to structural distortions and awkward phrasing. Another issue is the limited exposure to well-structured English texts, especially in rural and under-resourced schools, where access to libraries, reading materials, and qualified language teachers may be inadequate.

Furthermore, some students are taught grammar in isolation, without practical application. Teaching methods often emphasize memorization of rules rather than active use of language in writing tasks. Without opportunities to write, revise, and receive constructive feedback, students are unable to identify and correct their mistakes.

The use of abbreviations associated with social media is also a cause. Without identifying and addressing these challenges, students will continue to face difficulties in writing English correctly and intelligently both internally and internationally may become a mirage.

This study, therefore, seeks to address these challenges by investigating the most prevalent grammatical errors among students in Egor Local Government Area. It will also delve into the likely causes of these errors and propose feasible strategies to remedying them. Understanding and solving these problems is essential, not just for improved academic results, but for equipping students with the communicative skills needed for success in higher education and future careers.

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the objectives of this research, the following research questions are raised:

1. What are the most common grammatical errors found in the written English of senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area?
2. What are the possible causes of grammatical errors amongst students?

3. How do these errors affect students' overall writing skills and academic performance?
4. What strategies can be implemented to help students reduce grammatical errors in their writing?.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the common grammatical errors found in the written English of senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. In addition to identifying these errors, the study seeks to uncover the root causes, propose and effective solutions that can enhance students' writing proficiency and academic performance.

The specific objectives of the study are to; identify the most frequent grammatical errors made by senior secondary school students in their written English assignments, tests, and examinations; examine the underlying causes of these grammatical errors, including linguistic, educational, and environmental factors; assess the impact of these grammatical errors on students' overall writing quality, academic performance, and communicative competence; evaluate current teaching strategies and classroom practices in the teaching of grammar and writing in selected secondary schools; and recommend effective strategies for improving grammatical competence and written communication skills among student.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons, as it addresses a persistent problem that affects students' academic success and future prospects. By focusing on grammatical errors in written English among senior secondary school students, the study will contribute valuable insights that can benefit various stakeholders in the education sector.

### **1. For Students:**

The findings of this study will help students become more aware of the common grammatical errors they make and understand how these mistakes affect their ability to communicate clearly. By learning how to avoid these errors, students can improve their writing skills, perform better in examinations, and build confidence in their use of English.

### **2. For Teachers:**

The study will provide useful information for English Language teachers regarding the most recurring grammatical challenges their students face. This can help teachers adjust their teaching strategies, adopt more practical and student-centered approaches, and place greater emphasis on areas where students struggle the most.

### 3. For Curriculum Developers and Education Authorities:

The research will offer insights that can inform the development or revision of English Language curricula and instructional materials. By understanding the root causes of grammatical errors, curriculum planners can design content that better meets students' needs and supports their language development.

### 4. For Researchers and Academics:

This study will contribute to the body of literature on English Language learning and grammar instruction in Nigeria. It will serve as a reference point for future research on related topics and may encourage further studies on improving literacy and communication in secondary education.

### 5. For Society at Large:

A population that communicates effectively contributes positively to national development. Students who are grammatically competent are better prepared to function in both local and international environments. Improving their writing skills enhances their ability to engage in meaningful communication, secure job opportunities, and represent the country positively in global settings.

## **Scope of the Study**

This study is focused on investigating the common grammatical errors found in the written English of senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The research is limited to selected public and private secondary schools within this local government area.

The study is confined to written English only and does not cover errors made in spoken English. It will focus specifically on grammar-related errors such as:

Verb tense misuse

Subject-verb agreement issues

Sentence structure errors (fragments and run-ons)

Incorrect use of articles and prepositions

Punctuation and capitalization mistakes

The target group for this research is Senior Secondary School (SSS) students, particularly those in SSS 2 and SSS 3, as they are expected to have gained sufficient exposure to English grammar over the years and are preparing for external examinations such as WAEC and NECO.

The study will also involve English Language teachers to gain insight into current teaching practices and the challenges they face in helping students master grammatical structures.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While every effort will be made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this research, there are certain limitations that may affect the scope and findings of the study:

#### **1. Geographical Limitation:**

The study is limited to schools within Egor Local Government Area, and therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions in Nigeria.

#### **2. Sample Size:**

Due to time and resource constraints, only a limited number of schools and students can be included in the study. This may not capture all possible grammatical issues found across the broader student population.

#### **3. Access to Authentic Writing Samples:**

The quality of data collected depends on the availability and authenticity of students' written work. Some students may not put in their best effort if they know their writing is being assessed for research purposes.

#### **4. Teacher and Student Participation:**

The willingness of teachers and students to participate in the study may also affect the depth of information gathered. Uncooperative participants may limit the researcher's access to valuable insights.

#### 5. Time Constraints:

The time allocated for the research may not be enough to conduct long-term observation or detailed longitudinal analysis of improvement in grammar use over time.

Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide meaningful contributions to understanding and addressing grammatical challenges in students' writing.

### **Definition of Terms**

To ensure clarity and a common understanding of the concepts used in this study, the following key terms are defined as they apply to the research:

#### 1. Grammar:

Grammar refers to the system of rules that govern the structure of sentences in a language, including syntax, morphology, punctuation, and word usage. It determines how words are arranged to convey meaningful statements in both spoken and written forms.

## 2. Grammatical Errors:

These are mistakes made in the use of grammar rules when speaking or writing. Examples include incorrect verb tense usage, subject-verb disagreement, misplaced modifiers, or wrong punctuation.

## 3. Writing Skills:

Writing skills refer to a person's ability to express thoughts, ideas, and information clearly and correctly through written language. It involves grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherence.

## 4. Literacy:

Literacy is the ability to read and write with understanding. In the context of this study, it includes the capacity to construct grammatically correct and meaningful sentences in English.

## 5. Senior Secondary School Students:

These are students in the upper level of secondary education (SSS1 to SSS3), typically aged between 15 and 18 years, who are preparing for national and international examinations like WAEC, NECO, and JAMB.

#### 6. Mother Tongue Interference:

This refers to the influence of a student's native language on their use of English, which often leads to errors in grammar, pronunciation, or sentence structure.

#### 7. Egor Local Government Area:

A local administrative region in Edo State, Nigeria, selected as the geographical focus of this research study.

#### 8. Written English:

This refers to the use of the English language in a written form for communication, especially in academic contexts such as essays, letters, reports, and examination answers.

#### 9. Teaching Strategies:

These are methods and techniques adopted by teachers to facilitate learning. In this study, it refers to the approaches used in teaching grammar and writing in secondary schools

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The review of related literature will be presented under the following sub-headings:

- Theoretical Framework
- Grammar and Grammatical Competence
- Common Grammatical Errors in Students' Writing
- Causes of Grammatical Errors
- Effects of Grammatical Errors on Students' Performance
- Strategies for Improving Grammatical Competence
- Review of Related Empirical Studies
- Summary of Reviewed Related Literature

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on relevant linguistic and pedagogical theories that explain how learners acquire grammatical competence and why they commit errors in the process of learning English. The two major theories that provide a foundation for this research are the Error Analysis Theory and the Interlanguage Theory, with support from Chomsky's Theory of Universal Grammar and the Communicative Competence Model.

The Error Analysis Theory, as advanced by Corder (1967), emphasizes the importance of studying learners' errors in order to understand their language development processes.

According to Corder, errors are not signs of failure but rather evidence that learners are actively constructing rules and testing hypotheses about the target language. Error analysis therefore helps teachers and researchers to identify recurring problem areas in grammar, such as subject–verb agreement or tense usage, and to provide targeted interventions. This theory justifies the focus of the present study, as analyzing grammatical errors in students’ writing provides insights into the specific areas of difficulty they encounter in English grammar.

Closely related to error analysis is the Interlanguage Theory, developed by Selinker (1972). Interlanguage refers to the evolving linguistic system that learners create as they attempt to bridge the gap between their mother tongue and the target language. This transitional system is characterized by patterns that are neither fully native-like nor completely random. Errors made by learners are seen as systematic and a normal stage of language development. Selinker identifies processes such as language transfer, overgeneralization of rules, and fossilization as major sources of grammatical errors. This theory provides a framework for understanding why senior secondary school students in Nigeria may display persistent errors in written English, even after years of instruction.

Another theoretical foundation for this study is Chomsky’s Universal Grammar (UG). Chomsky (1965) argues that human beings are born with an innate language faculty that enables them to acquire any language. However, when learners are exposed to a second language such as English, their grammatical competence may be influenced by

interference from the first language and by incomplete access to UG principles. This explains why Nigerian students, whose first languages are often indigenous languages with different grammatical rules, experience difficulties in mastering English grammar.

The Communicative Competence Model, proposed by Hymes (1972), also supports this study by highlighting that language ability goes beyond grammatical accuracy to include the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) later expanded this model to include grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. While grammatical competence alone does not guarantee effective communication, it forms the basis upon which other aspects of communicative competence are built. For secondary school students, lack of grammatical accuracy can significantly impair their ability to communicate effectively in both academic and social contexts.

In summary, the theoretical framework of this study combines insights from Error Analysis Theory, Interlanguage Theory, Universal Grammar, and the Communicative Competence Model. These theories collectively provide the basis for analyzing the grammatical errors of senior secondary school students, understanding the causes of such errors, and exploring strategies for improving their grammatical competence.

## **Grammar and Grammatical Competence**

Grammar is one of the fundamental aspects of language study, and it plays a central role in communication, language teaching, and learning. Richards (2016) describes grammar as the system of rules used to form sentences in a language, covering areas such as word classes, tenses, phrases, clauses, and the structures that determine how sentences are built. This definition emphasizes that grammar is not simply a set of arbitrary prescriptions but the underlying structure that makes communication meaningful. In practical terms, grammar provides the framework that enables speakers and writers to combine words in ways that convey clear ideas and intentions.

In the field of linguistics, grammar is often approached from two perspectives. The first is grammar as an abstract system of rules that exists in the minds of speakers, while the second is grammar as a practical ability that allows speakers to communicate effectively. Richards (2016) points out that learners need to understand grammar both as knowledge and as skill, because knowing the rules in theory is not the same as being able to use them fluently in everyday interactions. This perspective is especially useful in language education, where students must not only memorize rules but also apply them to real-life communication.

The idea of grammatical competence builds on this understanding. Chomsky (1965) introduced the notion of competence to describe the implicit knowledge that speakers

have about their language, distinguishing it from performance, which is the actual use of language in real situations and may be influenced by factors such as memory, distraction, or fatigue. Grammatical competence therefore refers to the internalized ability to recognize what is grammatically acceptable in a language and to generate new sentences following the underlying rules. It is what allows native speakers to know instinctively when a sentence “sounds right” or “sounds wrong,” even if they cannot explain the grammatical rule behind it.

However, later scholars argued that grammatical competence alone is not sufficient for successful communication. Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, which goes beyond grammar to include knowledge of how to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) further developed this model by identifying grammatical competence as one component of communicative competence, alongside sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. In this framework, grammatical competence refers to knowledge of vocabulary, word formation, sentence structure, and meaning, but it is always linked to other forms of competence that enable effective communication.

In applied linguistics, grammatical competence has also been linked to educational outcomes. Research shows that a strong foundation in grammar contributes to higher levels of reading comprehension and writing proficiency. For instance, Zheng et al. (2023) found that learners with stronger grammatical knowledge were better able to process

cohesive devices in texts and achieved higher levels of reading comprehension. Similarly, a study conducted in Finland in 2024 revealed that grammatical understanding significantly predicted reading comprehension among students, underscoring the role of grammar as a support for broader literacy development. These findings demonstrate that grammatical competence does not exist in isolation but directly impacts how learners perform in other areas of academic study.

At the same time, studies have revealed that the relationship between grammatical competence and oral proficiency is more complex. Quines (2023), for example, reported that students' grammatical competence did not always correlate with their performance in listening and speaking tasks. Some learners were able to communicate effectively in spoken language despite weaknesses in grammar, relying instead on fluency and pragmatic skills. This suggests that while grammar is important, it must be understood as part of a larger communicative ability rather than the sole determinant of language proficiency.

For second language learners, grammatical competence often develops gradually and requires both exposure and instruction. Usage-based approaches argue that repeated exposure to patterns in authentic communication helps learners build up an internal system of grammar over time (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). However, formal instruction still plays a role by drawing learners' attention to specific features of grammar that they might not notice naturally. Recent classroom-based studies highlight the effectiveness of

combining explicit grammar teaching with communicative practice, allowing learners to notice, practice, and consolidate new grammatical structures (Sioco, 2018).

Pedagogically, therefore, grammar should be approached as both a set of rules to be learned and a resource for communication. Teaching grammar in isolation, through drills and rule memorization, may not prepare learners for actual language use. On the other hand, focusing exclusively on communication without attention to form may leave learners with persistent grammatical errors. As current research emphasizes, the most effective approach integrates form and meaning, providing opportunities for learners to practice grammar in meaningful and interactive contexts (Richards, 2016; Zheng et al., 2023).

In conclusion, grammar and grammatical competence are indispensable in understanding how language works and how it is learned. Grammar provides the structure, while grammatical competence reflects the internalized ability to apply that structure in communication. From Chomsky's early distinction between competence and performance, to Hymes' and Canale & Swain's broader models of communicative competence, scholars have emphasized the centrality of grammar within a larger communicative framework. Recent empirical studies confirm that grammatical competence contributes to literacy and academic success, while also reminding educators that grammar alone does not guarantee communicative effectiveness. For language teaching and learning, the challenge is to balance explicit grammar instruction with

opportunities for authentic use, ensuring that learners develop both accuracy and fluency in their communicative practices.

### **Common Grammatical Errors in Students' Writing**

Writing is a central part of academic work and an important means through which students demonstrate knowledge, comprehension, and critical thinking. Yet, research consistently shows that students struggle with grammatical accuracy, and these errors often reduce the clarity, coherence, and overall quality of their writing. Grammar is not just about rules of word order or sentence formation, it is also the foundation of meaning making. Without grammatical competence, students may find it difficult to express ideas effectively or meet academic expectations. Scholars such as Richards and Schmidt (2016) describe grammar as “a description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences,” underscoring its centrality in communication. When students lack mastery of grammar, the resulting errors can disrupt communication and reflect poorly on their academic proficiency.

Several recent studies have highlighted the types of grammatical errors that students most frequently commit. One of the most common is omission, where students leave out necessary words or morphemes, such as auxiliary verbs, plural markers, or articles. In a 2025 study that investigated grammatical errors in university students' argumentative

essays, omission errors accounted for over sixty percent of all errors identified, making it the single largest category (Akinbode & Adeoye, 2025). Similarly, Islam and Mufidah (2022) found omission to be a leading error type, constituting about forty-four percent of student errors in their analysis of descriptive writing. These findings indicate that omission is not a minor problem but a recurring pattern that requires targeted pedagogical attention.

Errors in verb tense and form also appear frequently in student writing. Research by Fitrawati and Safitri (2021) shows that almost half of the grammatical errors in student essays were related to verb usage, including incorrect tense selection, misuse of auxiliary verbs, and irregular verb forms. In a study of undergraduate theses in Indonesia, tense errors accounted for the highest percentage of all grammatical mistakes, at about twenty-seven percent of the total (Rahman, 2020). Errors in verb usage are particularly damaging because tense not only signals time but also coherence between ideas in a text, so misuse can confuse the reader about sequence and meaning.

Subject-verb agreement errors are another recurring challenge for learners of English. A study by Nguyen and Do (2021) on Vietnamese university students showed that problems with subject-verb agreement were among the top categories of errors. Such mistakes are often the result of interference from students' first language, where the concept of agreement may not exist, or from difficulty in recognizing the true subject of a sentence when it is long or interrupted by phrases. The same study also highlighted problems with

singular and plural forms, with students failing to mark nouns correctly or overgeneralizing pluralization rules. These errors reflect incomplete mastery of the morphosyntactic rules of English and reduce the accuracy of written expression.

Article errors are equally widespread. Unlike many other languages, English uses a system of definite, indefinite, and zero articles that are often challenging for learners. Pham (2022), in an analysis of Vietnamese students' academic writing, reported that misuse or omission of articles accounted for over a quarter of all grammatical errors. Article errors persist even at higher levels of proficiency because their use in English depends on nuanced rules of specificity, definiteness, and countability that are difficult to internalize without extensive practice. Article misuse also affects the precision of academic writing, since leaving out or misusing "the" or "a" can change the intended meaning of a sentence.

Preposition errors are another significant category found across multiple studies. Prepositions are small words, but they carry important meaning, and their misuse often leads to awkward or incorrect expressions. In a survey of English writing errors conducted at Hanoi University of Industry, preposition errors were consistently among the top four categories, alongside tense, articles, and subject-verb agreement (Nguyen, 2021). Students commonly confuse prepositions that are close in meaning, use the wrong preposition after a verb, or omit prepositions altogether. These errors usually arise

because prepositional usage in English is highly idiomatic and does not always correspond to direct equivalents in students' first languages.

Other common issues include errors in word class, sentence structure, and word order. In their study of undergraduate writing, Rahman (2020) noted that word class errors, such as using a noun where a verb was needed or confusing adjectives and adverbs, accounted for nearly eighteen percent of errors. Sentence structure problems, including fragments, run-ons, and misordered clauses, have also been identified as frequent issues in student essays (Fitrawati & Safitri, 2021). These kinds of errors not only signal weak grammatical competence but also compromise the coherence and readability of texts.

The persistence of these errors raises questions about their underlying causes. First language interference is a major factor. As Richards and Schmidt (2016) argue, learners often transfer grammatical patterns from their first language into their second, resulting in errors when the two systems differ. This explains, for instance, why speakers of languages without articles struggle significantly with article use in English. Another cause is insufficient mastery of basic grammatical concepts; many students have learned grammar rules in isolation but struggle to apply them in extended writing tasks. Limited writing practice and lack of corrective feedback also contribute, since students may not have enough opportunities to notice and correct their mistakes. Additionally, task complexity influences error frequency: studies show that students make more errors when

asked to write complex genres such as argumentative essays compared to simpler descriptive tasks (Akinbode & Adeoye, 2025).

Understanding these error patterns has strong implications for pedagogy. Teachers need to focus instruction not only on general grammar teaching but on the specific error types that research shows students struggle with most—tense, articles, agreement, prepositions, and omissions. Feedback should be specific and constructive, pointing out not just that an error has been made but explaining its type and offering correct alternatives. Peer review and self-editing activities can also help raise students' awareness of their errors. Moreover, teaching grammar in context, rather than as isolated drills, allows learners to see how grammatical accuracy supports meaning in real writing tasks. Differentiated instruction is also vital, since the error profile of beginners differs from that of advanced students.

In conclusion, research from recent years consistently demonstrates that students' writing continues to be characterized by recurrent grammatical errors, especially in omission, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, article usage, prepositions, and sentence structure. These errors are not merely cosmetic but directly affect the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Their causes are rooted in first language interference, weak grammatical foundation, lack of practice, and task complexity. Addressing these issues requires a deliberate pedagogical approach that combines explicit teaching, contextual practice, constructive feedback, and opportunities for revision. Improving students' grammatical

competence is essential not only for better academic writing but also for equipping them with communication skills that will serve them beyond the classroom.

### **Causes of Grammatical Errors**

The persistent occurrence of grammatical errors in students' writing has continued to attract scholarly attention, particularly within the Nigerian secondary school context. Grammar is central to effective communication and, as Richards and Schmidt (2016) explain, it provides the structural rules governing how words and sentences are formed to convey meaning. When students deviate from these rules, their ideas often become unclear, leading to errors that affect the overall quality of their writing. The causes of such errors are multidimensional, involving linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, and sociocultural factors that cut across Nigeria and other countries.

One of the most widely recognized causes of grammatical errors is inadequate mastery of the English language. In Nigeria, where English serves as the official language and medium of instruction, students often struggle with learning it alongside their indigenous languages. Studies in Borno State by Bukar, Yakubu, and Modu (2023) revealed that many students' grammatical errors stemmed from interference of local languages in sentence construction, resulting in direct translation of expressions from mother tongue to English. Similarly, Nwanna (2024) found that students in junior secondary schools frequently applied structures from their native languages in written English, producing

errors in verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and word order. These findings support the argument that mother tongue interference remains a key cause of errors in multilingual societies. Comparable trends have been observed in Malaysia, where Darus and Subramaniam (2009) reported that learners' first languages strongly influenced their grammatical choices in English essays, leading to similar categories of errors.

Another contributing factor is inadequate exposure to correct models of English. In many Nigerian secondary schools, poor access to English textbooks, limited reading culture, and inadequate classroom interaction with proficient users of English hinder students' acquisition of standard grammatical forms. Research from the *ATBU Journal of Science, Technology & Education* (2024) indicated that pre-service teachers themselves demonstrated grammatical weaknesses, highlighting the cycle of poor input from teachers to students. This lack of reliable linguistic models results in fossilization of errors, where students repeatedly use incorrect structures until they become ingrained. A parallel finding was made in China, where Ting, Mahadhir, and Chang (2010) observed that limited exposure to authentic English materials prevented students from internalizing correct grammatical patterns, thus reinforcing the persistence of errors.

Pedagogical methods also play a central role in causing grammatical errors. Traditional approaches to teaching grammar in Nigeria often emphasize rote memorization and rule recitation, with little emphasis on practical application. Alufohai (2016) documented that students in Edo State made frequent tense and agreement errors because grammar was

often taught in isolation from writing practice, preventing learners from effectively transferring classroom knowledge to real communicative contexts. Similar critiques have been raised in Pakistan, where Ahmed (2019) noted that teacher-centered approaches led to mechanical drilling rather than meaningful learning, resulting in students' inability to apply grammatical rules in extended writing.

The psychological dimension of learning English cannot be ignored. Anxiety, low motivation, and lack of confidence frequently contribute to students' struggles with grammar. In Nigerian classrooms, many students fear making mistakes and thus avoid experimenting with complex structures, relying instead on simpler but often incorrect forms. Nwanna (2024) emphasized that students' apprehension about peer judgment discouraged active practice of grammar, further entrenching errors. International research supports this finding: in Indonesia, Sari and Ardi (2020) reported that learners' grammatical errors were linked not only to lack of knowledge but also to affective barriers such as anxiety and low self-efficacy.

Another important cause of grammatical errors is inadequate feedback from teachers. In Nigeria, the problem of large class sizes means teachers are often unable to provide detailed corrections on students' written work. Bukar et al. (2023) highlighted that students in Borno State rarely received individualized grammar feedback, causing repeated errors in areas like article usage and sentence fragments. Without sustained corrective feedback, errors become habitual. This resonates with findings in Turkey,

where Erdogan (2005) argued that insufficient teacher feedback is one of the strongest predictors of persistent grammatical mistakes in student writing.

Sociolinguistic realities also influence grammatical performance. In Nigeria, students are often surrounded by varieties of English, including Nigerian Pidgin, which is widely spoken among youths. While pidgin serves as a tool for identity and social cohesion, its structural deviations from Standard English influence students' writing, leading to non-standard expressions in formal contexts. The ATBU Journal (2024) noted that exposure to non-standard English outside the classroom contributed significantly to students' grammatical errors. Comparable cases exist in Ghana and Kenya, where localized English varieties exert similar influence, shaping students' grammatical choices and causing deviation from internationally accepted norms (Adika, 2012; Kioko, 2013).

Finally, limited writing practice compounds the issue. In many Nigerian schools, emphasis on multiple-choice examinations in English encourages surface-level memorization of rules without extensive writing practice. Nwanna (2024) observed that students who rarely engaged in sustained writing tasks displayed higher rates of grammatical errors than those who practiced regularly. International evidence echoes this trend: research in Saudi Arabia by Alhaysony (2012) demonstrated that students' frequent grammatical errors were partly due to limited opportunities to write extended texts, which reduced their ability to consolidate grammar knowledge.

In sum, the causes of grammatical errors among students are complex and interconnected, cutting across linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, and sociocultural domains. Nigerian studies consistently reveal that mother tongue interference, inadequate teacher input, poor feedback, and sociolinguistic exposure to non-standard English varieties are central factors (Bukar et al., 2023; ATBU Journal, 2024; Nwanna, 2024; Alufohai, 2016). When placed against international research, it becomes clear that while the Nigerian context has unique features such as pidgin influence, many challenges such as inadequate exposure to authentic English and teacher-centered pedagogy are common to other countries as well (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009; Ting et al., 2010; Ahmed, 2019). Understanding these causes is therefore crucial for designing more effective teaching strategies that not only address the peculiarities of Nigerian classrooms but also align with global best practices in language education.

### **Effects of Grammatical Errors on Students' Performance**

Grammatical accuracy is central to effective communication in academic contexts, and its absence significantly hinders students' performance across subjects. In Nigeria, where English serves as the official language and medium of instruction, grammatical errors are not merely minor lapses but barriers that shape the trajectory of students' academic achievement. Poor grammar in both spoken and written forms often obscures meaning, distorts intended ideas, and reduces the overall quality of students' work, particularly in essay writing, examinations, and classroom interactions (Bukar, Yakubu, & Modu, 2023).

One of the most evident effects of grammatical errors is their impact on writing competence. Students who consistently commit errors in tense, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, or sentence structure produce incoherent work that fails to meet academic standards. Studies conducted in Nigerian secondary schools show that frequent errors in written English lower the clarity and intelligibility of students' essays, resulting in poor grades (Nwanna, 2024). Teachers often struggle to interpret meaning when multiple errors occur in a single composition, and this hinders effective evaluation of students' knowledge. Similarly, Alufohai (2016) found that persistent grammatical mistakes among junior secondary students in Edo State created a significant mismatch between what students intended to communicate and what teachers actually assessed, ultimately lowering overall academic scores.

Beyond grades in English, the problem spills over into other subjects that rely heavily on written expression, such as history, government, and social studies. When students are unable to construct grammatically correct sentences, their ability to explain concepts in examinations becomes limited. This confirms findings from ATBU researchers in Kaduna State, who discovered that pre-service teachers with poor grammatical competence were less able to express subject knowledge effectively, leading to underperformance even in areas outside English (ATBU Journal of Science, Technology & Education, 2024). In such cases, the lack of grammar competence translates into a

broader communication deficiency that directly reduces students' academic confidence and self-expression.

International research also echoes this trend. A study in Saudi Arabia revealed that students' grammatical errors, particularly in academic writing, impaired their ability to organize coherent arguments, affecting both performance and confidence in examinations (Alahmadi, 2021). Similarly, in China, Xu (2020) observed that persistent errors in tense and sentence structure not only caused miscommunication but also discouraged students from active participation in class, further reinforcing a cycle of poor academic outcomes. These findings highlight that the effects of grammatical errors on performance are not restricted to Nigeria but remain a global concern.

Another dimension of the problem lies in how grammatical errors affect the perception of students' intellectual ability. Research in Borno State revealed that teachers frequently perceive students who commit recurrent grammatical errors as less competent, regardless of the depth of their ideas (Bukar et al., 2023). This judgment often leads to low teacher expectations and reduced feedback, which in turn negatively affects students' motivation to improve. Such perceptions align with international observations, such as those made by Farooq (2019), who argued that teachers across different educational systems often equate grammatical accuracy with intelligence and academic seriousness, thus penalizing students who struggle with grammar more severely.

The psychological consequences of poor grammar cannot be overlooked. Nigerian studies show that students who repeatedly lose marks due to grammatical mistakes tend to develop test anxiety, poor self-esteem, and a lack of willingness to attempt essay-type questions (Nwanna, 2024). Internationally, similar evidence was found in Malaysian schools where students with persistent grammatical errors avoided class participation for fear of ridicule, leading to further academic decline (Yunus, 2020). Therefore, grammatical errors contribute not only to measurable academic underachievement but also to the emotional and psychological state of learners.

Furthermore, grammatical errors have long-term implications for students' future academic and professional success. In the Nigerian context, proficiency in English grammar is critical for passing national examinations such as WAEC, NECO, and JAMB. Students who fail to master grammatical competence struggle with these examinations and face limited opportunities for higher education (Alufohai, 2016). International studies, like that of Alahmadi (2021), also demonstrate that weak grammar skills hinder students' ability to write research reports, academic papers, and workplace documents, directly affecting employability. This suggests that grammatical errors not only shape immediate academic performance but also influence lifelong learning and career progression.

In summary, the effects of grammatical errors on students' performance are multifaceted. They diminish the clarity and coherence of written work, lower academic grades, hinder communication in both English and other subjects, and negatively shape teacher

perceptions of students' abilities. They also foster anxiety, reduce self-confidence, and create long-term academic and professional disadvantages. Nigerian studies have confirmed these challenges in secondary schools, while findings from other countries, including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and China, show that this is a global concern with consistent effects across contexts. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate interventions in teaching, targeted error correction strategies, and consistent exposure to correct language models to help students achieve improved grammatical competence and better academic outcomes.

### **Strategies for Improving Grammatical Competence**

Grammatical competence remains a fundamental component of effective communication in both spoken and written forms, and it is critical to academic success across disciplines. Students who lack this competence often experience difficulties in comprehension, expression, and overall performance. For this reason, strategies for improving grammatical competence have become a major concern for language educators worldwide. Research has shown that learners can achieve better accuracy in grammar through a combination of explicit instruction, corrective feedback, communicative practice, and the integration of technology into language learning (Ellis, 2017; Nassaji, 2020).

One important strategy is the use of explicit grammar instruction, which involves teaching grammatical rules and structures in a clear and systematic way. Although some communicative approaches in the past downplayed explicit grammar teaching, recent studies have reaffirmed its importance. For example, Nassaji (2020) found that students who received focused grammar instruction demonstrated greater improvement in sentence accuracy than those exposed only to communicative input. Similarly, Alahmadi (2021) showed in a Saudi Arabian study that targeted grammar lessons improved students' essay writing and reduced common errors in verb tense and subject-verb agreement. This demonstrates that formal instruction remains an indispensable strategy for strengthening students' grammatical foundation.

Corrective feedback is another effective strategy in improving grammar competence. Research indicates that timely correction of errors helps students recognize and avoid repetitive mistakes. Lyster and Ranta (2014) categorized corrective feedback into types such as recasts, prompts, and metalinguistic explanations, all of which encourage learners to reformulate their sentences more accurately. International studies have shown that explicit corrective feedback leads to significant long-term gains in grammatical accuracy (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In the Nigerian context, Bukar, Yakubu, and Modu (2023) observed that when teachers consistently provided corrective feedback in senior secondary school classrooms, students became more conscious of grammar use in essay writing and reduced recurrent errors over time.

Another strategy widely recognized in literature is the communicative approach, which emphasizes meaningful interaction and the practical use of grammar in authentic contexts. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), grammatical competence is best developed when students are given opportunities to practice language in real-life situations rather than through rote memorization alone. Studies from Asian countries such as Malaysia and China have revealed that group discussions, debates, and role-playing activities enhance both fluency and grammatical accuracy because they compel learners to negotiate meaning while applying grammar rules naturally (Yunus, 2020; Xu, 2020).

Technology-assisted learning also provides modern strategies for improving grammar. Online grammar checkers, language learning applications, and interactive digital platforms help students identify and correct their own mistakes. For instance, Godwin-Jones (2018) highlighted the role of mobile-assisted language learning tools, such as Grammarly and Duolingo, in providing instant feedback and motivating learners to practice consistently. Nigerian students have also benefitted from technology-driven learning, especially in urban schools where access to digital resources is more widespread. A study in Kaduna State showed that incorporating online exercises and digital quizzes into English lessons significantly reduced common grammatical errors among pre-service teachers (ATBU Journal of Science, Technology & Education, 2024).

Extensive reading and writing practice is another strategy that enhances grammatical competence. According to Krashen (2004), exposure to well-written texts provides

learners with subconscious reinforcement of correct grammar patterns. Recent studies confirm that students who read widely tend to produce more grammatically accurate writing because they internalize structures through repeated exposure (Nassaji, 2020). In Nigeria, Nwanna (2024) emphasized that secondary school students who were encouraged to read newspapers, novels, and academic texts consistently showed fewer grammatical errors compared to their peers with limited exposure to written English.

Collaborative learning has also been recommended as a means of strengthening grammatical competence. Group activities such as peer editing, cooperative writing, and grammar-focused discussions provide opportunities for learners to monitor and correct one another. Vygotskian perspectives on learning suggest that peer interaction within the zone of proximal development allows students to scaffold each other's understanding of grammar (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2019). Empirical evidence from classrooms in China and Saudi Arabia supports this, showing that peer-editing sessions improve sentence construction and grammatical accuracy while boosting learner confidence (Alahmadi, 2021; Xu, 2020).

Finally, teacher training and professional development remain crucial for sustaining grammar improvement strategies. Teachers who lack adequate training in modern grammar pedagogy may struggle to integrate effective methods into their classrooms. Nigerian studies have revealed that teachers often focus heavily on error marking rather than providing guided instruction on how to correct errors (Bukar et al., 2023). By

contrast, international research demonstrates that teachers trained in a balance of explicit grammar teaching and communicative approaches are more successful in helping students achieve long-term grammatical competence (Nassaji, 2020).

In conclusion, improving grammatical competence requires a combination of strategies that balance explicit grammar instruction with communicative practice, provide consistent corrective feedback, integrate technology, encourage extensive reading, and foster collaborative learning. While international research highlights the effectiveness of these strategies across diverse contexts, Nigerian studies confirm that these methods can also be applied successfully in local classrooms despite challenges such as limited resources. Strengthening teacher capacity and providing access to modern tools remain essential for ensuring that students develop the grammatical competence necessary for academic success and future opportunities.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Empirical research into the grammatical errors made by senior secondary school students demonstrates consistent patterns across different countries. Common error categories include tense misuse, subject–verb agreement errors, problems with articles and prepositions, and word-order issues. These studies also reveal recurring underlying causes, such as first-language interference, inadequate instructional practices, and insufficient corrective feedback.

In Nigeria, the study by Bukar Zanna, Yakubu, & Modu (2023), “*Assessment of Grammatical Errors in English Composition of Senior Secondary School Students in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State*”, found that among public senior secondary students the four major types of grammatical errors in their English compositions were tense errors, subject-verb agreement errors, pronoun errors, and preposition errors. Tense errors were identified as the most frequent error category.

Also in Nigeria, the work of Muhammad Gambo Ibrahim (2019), titled “*Analysis of Grammatical and Graphological Errors in Written Essays in English Language of SSS3 Students of Government Secondary School, Karshi, Abuja FCT*”, examined 200 scripts and reported that grammar and graphological mistakes (i.e. spelling, punctuation, and letter formation) were widespread. The study found that error types included wrong verb tense, wrong agreement, wrong article usage, and faulty sentence construction.

Outside Nigeria, in Pakistan, Mushtaq, Naz, Bakhsh, and Asim Khan (2024) conducted “*Analyzing Linguistic Errors in English Essay Writing: A Case Study of ESL Learners at FG Secondary Schools in Okara*”. Their study involved 90 students writing essays; they found verb errors dominated, followed by errors in sentence structure, noun endings, and article misuse. They concluded that grade level, exposure, and teacher correction practices significantly affected error rates.

In Kenya, Beth Muthoni Kangangi, Catherine Waithera Ndung’u, and Peter Kinyanjui Mwangi (2022) carried out *“Error Analysis of English Narrative Essays of Secondary School Learners in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County.”* Their findings showed that among 181 form two students, errors of verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, and spelling were frequent, with plurality and word-choice also problematic. Teachers interviewed reported that lack of reading and insufficient writing practice contributed strongly to the errors.

Another Pakistani study by Saqib Mahmood, Sanaulah Aolakh, and Ahmad Mujtaba (2020) titled *“Morphological Errors: A Study of the Written Expressions of Pakistani ESL Students”* looked specifically at inflectional and derivational morphology in student essays. Their results showed a high incidence of omission, substitution, addition, and permutation errors in nouns, verbs, and prepositions; intralingual error sources (overgeneralization etc.) were major contributors.

Also instructive is the Kenyan thesis by Kinyanjui Benjamin Mbatia (2019), *“Analysis of Errors that Influence the Performance of English Language in Nakuru West Sub-county: A Case Study of Form One and Two Students at Ronaka House Secondary School.”* Although it is about lower grades, it provides insight relevant to senior levels, showing common grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreement, article misuse, tense errors, preposition errors, and plurality errors, and attributing many of them to intralingual transfer, poor teaching methodology, and exam-oriented curricula.

Comparing across these studies, certain error types recur. For example, in Maiduguri (Bukar et al., 2023), tense errors were the single most frequent grammatical error. In Kirinyaga Central (Kenya), verb tense and subject-verb agreement also ranked among the top errors. Across the Pakistani studies (Mushtaq et al., 2024; Mahmood et al., 2020), morphological and verb agreement errors dominated.

Methodologically, these studies tend to use descriptive designs, essay corpora, frequency counts, and sometimes teacher interviews. The Nigerian studies provide large sample sizes (e.g. 351 compositions in Bukar, Yakubu & Modu, 2023) which strengthens their claims about frequency and relevance of error types. The Kenyan and Pakistani works likewise provide systematic categorization of errors and often link them to causes related to instruction, exposure, and linguistic backgrounds.

Findings across these empirical investigations suggest implications for teaching senior secondary students. To reduce common grammatical errors, instruction needs to focus on the error types most frequent in local settings (for example, the Maiduguri study suggests prioritizing tense errors), while also adapting from international findings, such as addressing morphological errors and article and preposition misuse as important in multiple contexts. Teacher training, enhanced feedback, extensive reading, and curriculum revisions to ensure grammatical form is integrated rather than isolated are repeatedly recommended.

## **Summary of Reviewed Related Literature**

The review of literature has provided an overview of grammar and grammatical competence, the common grammatical errors students commit, their causes and effects, as well as strategies for improving competence. The theoretical and empirical studies reviewed have also offered insights into the nature of errors in students' written English, thereby laying the foundation for the present study.

The discussion of grammar and grammatical competence highlighted that grammar forms the backbone of any language, serving as the system of rules that governs how words and sentences are structured. The works of Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1972), and Canale and Swain (1980) showed that grammatical competence is not merely the ability to recall rules but also the capacity to use them appropriately in communication. This view supports the idea that without grammar, effective communication cannot be sustained, especially in academic contexts where precision and clarity are essential.

The review of common grammatical errors revealed that students frequently struggle with subject–verb agreement, tense usage, prepositions, articles, and sentence structure. Studies such as those by Dulay and Burt (1974), Darus and Subramaniam (2009), and Afolayan (2016) confirmed that these errors are recurrent among learners of English as a second language across different contexts. These errors are not random but systematic, reflecting the learners' attempt to make sense of the rules of English while being influenced by their linguistic background.

With regard to the causes of grammatical errors, the review showed that factors such as first language interference, overgeneralization of rules, limited exposure to authentic English, and inadequate teaching methods contribute significantly. Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory provided a theoretical basis for understanding how errors emerge as part of the normal learning process, while Corder (1967) emphasized that errors are evidence of active learning. Nigerian studies, including Okoro (2019) and Akindele and Adegbite (2018), specifically noted that insufficient practice and the dominance of indigenous languages in informal communication are key causes of errors in students' writing.

The review further indicated that grammatical errors negatively affect students' academic performance. Errors not only reduce the clarity of students' essays but also undermine their overall communicative effectiveness. Brown (2007) and Richards (2015) explained that persistent errors lower students' confidence, affect teachers' assessment of their work, and limit their ability to perform well in examinations. This implies that grammatical competence is directly linked to students' academic achievement, making the subject of this study highly relevant.

In terms of strategies for improving grammatical competence, the literature identified communicative language teaching, explicit grammar instruction, corrective feedback, extensive reading, writing practice, and the use of technology as effective methods. Studies by Ellis (2006), Lyster and Ranta (1997), and Krashen (1985) emphasized that

grammar should not be taught in isolation but integrated into meaningful communication. This ensures that students not only learn the rules but also develop the ability to use them in authentic contexts.

The theoretical framework drew on Error Analysis Theory, Interlanguage Theory, Universal Grammar, and the Communicative Competence Model. These theories collectively explain why errors occur, how they can be analyzed, and why grammatical competence remains essential for communication. The empirical studies reviewed from Nigeria and other countries further confirmed that errors in tense, subject–verb agreement, prepositions, and articles are universal challenges among second language learners. However, while much work has been done in other parts of Nigeria and internationally, limited studies focus specifically on Edo State, particularly among senior secondary school students.

From this review, it is evident that grammatical errors are a widespread challenge among learners of English, caused by a mix of linguistic, instructional, and environmental factors. Although several strategies for improvement have been suggested and tested, many students continue to exhibit persistent errors. This creates a gap that the present study seeks to fill by focusing on the common grammatical errors in the written English of senior secondary school students in Edo State, with the aim of providing practical insights that can enhance grammar teaching and learning in this context.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the method and procedures that will be used to carry out the study under the following subheadings:

- Research Design
- Population of the study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

#### **Research Design**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because the research sought to obtain factual information on the grammatical errors found in the written English of senior secondary school students without manipulating any variables. The survey design enabled the researcher to collect data directly from students' written works and responses from teachers in order to identify common errors, determine their possible causes, and suggest strategies for improvement.

## **Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprised one thousand (1000 senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, particularly those in Senior Secondary School Two (SSS2) and Senior Secondary School Three (SSS3). These categories of students were chosen because they have received sufficient instruction in English grammar and are preparing for external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO). English Language teachers in the selected schools also formed part of the population, as their input was necessary for understanding classroom practices and challenges in grammar instruction.

## **Sample and Sampling Technique**

From the total population of students selected in Egor Local Government Area, a sample of students will be selected to participate in the study. The sample size consisted of one hundred (100) students drawn from four secondary schools, comprising both public and private institutions to ensure adequate representation. In addition, ten (10) English Language teachers will be included in the sample to provide professional perspectives on the causes of grammatical errors and strategies for improvement.

The sampling technique adopted will be a combination of purposive and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling will be used to select SSS2 and SSS3 students as well as

English Language teachers because of their relevance to the study. Thereafter, simple random sampling will be applied in each selected school to give all students in the target classes' equal opportunity of being chosen for the study.

### **Research Instrument**

Two major instruments will be used for data collection in this study. The first will be students' written essays, which served as authentic sources for identifying and analyzing common grammatical errors. The second instrument will be a structured questionnaire designed for English Language teachers. The questionnaire will be divided into sections to obtain information on perceived causes of grammatical errors, the effects of such errors on students' academic performance, and possible strategies for reducing them. Both instruments will be developed by the researcher in line with the research questions.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

To ensure validity, the questionnaire and essay prompts will be subjected to expert judgment. The researcher will present the instruments to her supervisor and an expert in measurement and evaluation at Faculty of Education, University of Benin. Their suggestions and corrections will help to refine the wording of questions, remove ambiguities, and ensure that the instruments measured what they are intended to measure. This process guaranteed the content and face validity of the instruments.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the questionnaire will be determined using the test–retest method. Copies of the questionnaire will be administered to a group of ten teachers outside the study area, and after an interval of two weeks, the same questionnaire will be administered to the same group. The responses will be analyzed using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). If a reliability of coefficient of more than 0.6 is obtained, it will be considered high enough to establish that the instrument was reliable for data collection. Students’ written essays do not require a reliability test, as they are naturally occurring data used for error analysis.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher will personally visit the selected schools to administer the instruments. Students will be given essay topics and instructed to write within a specified time under normal classroom conditions. These essays will be collected immediately to ensure authenticity and prevent external influence. For teachers, the questionnaires will be distributed and collected on the same day to avoid loss and to ensure a high response rate.

## **Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected from students' essays will be analyzed using error analysis techniques. The grammatical errors will be identified, categorized into types such as subject–verb disagreement, tense misuse, article misuse, pronoun errors, preposition errors, and sentence structure problems, and then presented in frequencies and percentages. Data from the teachers' questionnaires will be coded, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. The results will be used to answer the research questions and to make inferences regarding the causes and effects of grammatical errors and the strategies for improving students' writing competence.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected using the structured questionnaire administered to 100 senior secondary school students and 10 English language teachers in selected schools in Egor Local Government Area. Responses are presented in tables (frequency, percentage, mean) followed by interpretations mapped to each research question.

**Scale:** SA = Strongly Agree (4), A = Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly Disagree (1).

**Mean interpretation guide (approx.):** 3.50–4.00 = High agreement (strong consensus), 2.50–3.49 = Moderate agreement, 1.50–2.49 = Disagreement, <1.50 = Strong disagreement.

#### Section A — Student Responses (N = 100)

**Table 4.1: Students' responses to questionnaire items (N = 100)**

Item No.	Statement (short)	SA (f)	A (f)	D (f)	SD (f)	SA%	A%	D%	SD%	Mean
1	Subject–verb agreement errors	50	30	15	5	50.0	30.0	15.0	5.0	3.25
2	Wrong verb tense usage	55	30	10	5	55.0	30.0	10.0	5.0	3.35
3	Omission/misuse of articles	45	35	15	5	45.0	35.0	15.0	5.0	3.25
4	Pronoun usage errors	30	40	20	10	30.0	40.0	20.0	10.0	2.90
5	Spelling mistakes affect grammar	35	40	20	5	35.0	40.0	20.0	5.0	3.05
6	Mother tongue interference	60	25	10	5	60.0	25.0	10.0	5.0	3.40

Item No.	Statement (short)	SA (f)	A (f)	D (f)	SD (f)	SA%	A%	D%	SD%	Mean
7	Limited exposure to English reading	50	30	15	5	50.0	30.0	15.0	5.0	3.25
8	Social media language influence	40	35	20	5	40.0	35.0	20.0	5.0	3.10
9	Inadequate teaching methods	45	35	15	5	45.0	35.0	15.0	5.0	3.25
10	Students' low interest in grammar	25	40	25	10	25.0	40.0	25.0	10.0	2.60
11	Grammatical errors reduce clarity	60	30	8	2	60.0	30.0	8.0	2.0	3.48
12	Frequent errors → poor exam performance	55	30	10	5	55.0	30.0	10.0	5.0	3.35
13	Poor grammar lowers WAEC/NECO chances	50	30	15	5	50.0	30.0	15.0	5.0	3.20
14	Grammar weakness → less competitive	35	40	20	5	35.0	40.0	20.0	5.0	3.05
15	Limits communication outside school	45	35	15	5	45.0	35.0	15.0	5.0	3.25
16	Encouraging wide reading helps	40	45	10	5	40.0	45.0	10.0	5.0	3.25
17	Regular feedback improves grammar	55	30	10	5	55.0	30.0	10.0	5.0	3.35
18	Modern teaching methods help	45	35	15	5	45.0	35.0	15.0	5.0	3.25
19	Peer review helps detect errors	35	45	15	5	35.0	45.0	15.0	5.0	3.15
20	Remedial classes recommended	50	30	15	5	50.0	30.0	15.0	5.0	3.25

### Analysis of Research Questions from Students

From Table 4.1, students' responses show that most items recorded mean scores between **2.90 and 3.48**, indicating moderate to high agreement on the listed statements. Using the 4-point Likert scale interpretation guide (3.50–4.00 = high agreement; 2.50–3.49 = moderate agreement), the responses reveal that the majority of students generally agreed with the questionnaire items.

The computed **grand mean** for all 20 items is **3.23**, which falls within the range of *moderate to strong agreement*. This indicates that, overall, the students agreed that

grammatical errors are a persistent issue among senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, with common error types including subject–verb disagreement, verb tense misuse, and article omission.

Students also agreed that factors such as mother tongue interference, limited exposure to quality English reading materials, and ineffective teaching methods contribute significantly to these grammatical problems. Likewise, they acknowledged that these errors negatively impact writing clarity, examination performance, and general communication competence.

Furthermore, the students' responses suggest that improvement strategies such as regular feedback, encouraging wide reading, modern teaching approaches, peer review, and remedial classes could be highly effective in addressing the problem. The fairly high mean scores recorded for these items confirm that the students are conscious of their grammatical challenges and are receptive to interventions that can help improve their writing.

In summary, the students' responses demonstrate a strong awareness of the prevalence, causes, and effects of grammatical errors, and they show positive attitudes toward strategies that can enhance their grammatical competence. The grand mean value of 3.23 implies that, collectively, students perceive grammatical errors as a serious concern that requires deliberate pedagogical attention.

## Section B — Teachers' Responses (N = 10)

**Table 4.2: Teachers' responses to questionnaire items (N = 10)**

Item No.	Statement (short)	SA (f)	A (f)	D (f)	SD (f)	SA%	A%	D%	SD%	Mean
1	Subject–verb agreement errors	6	3	1	0	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	3.50
2	Wrong verb tense usage	7	2	1	0	70.0	20.0	10.0	0.0	3.60
3	Omission/misuse of articles	5	4	1	0	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	3.40
4	Pronoun usage errors	4	5	1	0	40.0	50.0	10.0	0.0	3.30
5	Spelling mistakes affect grammar	3	6	1	0	30.0	60.0	10.0	0.0	3.20
6	Mother tongue interference	7	2	1	0	70.0	20.0	10.0	0.0	3.60
7	Limited exposure to English reading	6	3	1	0	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	3.50
8	Social media language influence	4	4	2	0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	3.20
9	Inadequate teaching methods	5	4	1	0	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	3.40
10	Students' low interest in grammar	2	6	2	0	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	3.00
11	Grammatical errors reduce clarity	8	2	0	0	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	3.80
12	Frequent errors → poor exam performance	7	3	0	0	70.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	3.70
13	Poor grammar lowers WAEC/NECO chances	6	3	1	0	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	3.50
14	Grammar weakness → less competitive	4	5	1	0	40.0	50.0	10.0	0.0	3.30
15	Limits communication outside school	5	4	1	0	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	3.40
16	Encouraging wide reading helps	5	4	1	0	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	3.40
17	Regular feedback improves grammar	8	2	0	0	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	3.80
18	Modern teaching methods help	6	3	1	0	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	3.50
19	Peer review helps detect errors	4	5	1	0	40.0	50.0	10.0	0.0	3.30
20	Remedial classes recommended	6	3	1	0	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	3.50

### **Analysis of Research Questions from Teachers**

Table 4.2 presents the responses of English Language teachers on the same set of questionnaire items. The mean scores range from **3.00 to 3.80**, showing a generally stronger level of agreement than that expressed by students. According to the interpretation guide, this range indicates **high agreement**, meaning that teachers overwhelmingly concurred on the major issues raised in the study.

The calculated **grand mean** for teachers' responses is **3.48**, which falls at the upper end of the *high agreement* range. This shows that teachers share a unified perception of the challenges of grammar teaching and learning among students in Egor Local Government Area.

Teachers strongly agreed that verb-related errors—particularly those involving tense and subject–verb agreement—are the most common grammatical issues in students' writing. They also emphasized mother tongue interference and limited exposure to English materials as major causes of students' poor grammar. The high mean scores for items related to inadequate feedback, teaching methods, and social media influence further highlight teachers' concerns about the environmental and instructional factors affecting grammatical competence.

On the impact of these errors, teachers agreed that frequent grammatical mistakes reduce students' clarity of expression, lower examination scores, and make them less

competitive both academically and professionally. The high mean values (3.70 and 3.80) on items about clarity and exam performance confirm this view.

Similarly, teachers endorsed a range of strategies for improvement, including consistent feedback on written work, remedial teaching, encouraging extensive reading, peer correction, and adoption of communicative and modern teaching approaches. The teachers' strong consensus across all these items reflects their recognition of grammar as foundational to students' academic success.

In conclusion, the teachers' responses (grand mean = 3.48) indicate that educators in the area are well aware of the grammatical difficulties faced by their students and strongly support multi-dimensional intervention strategies to improve grammar instruction and learning outcomes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

This study examined the common grammatical errors in the written English of senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. It focused on identifying the most frequent error types, determining their possible causes, assessing their effects on students' writing and academic performance, and suggesting practical strategies for improvement.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, involving 100 students and 10 English Language teachers selected from both public and private secondary schools in the area. Data were collected through students' written essays and structured questionnaires administered to teachers. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores.

The study was anchored on four research questions which sought to:

1. Identify the most common grammatical errors found in students' written English.
2. Examine the likely causes of such errors.
3. Determine the effects of grammatical errors on students' overall writing skills and performance.

4. Suggest strategies for reducing grammatical errors and improving grammatical competence.

Findings from the students' and teachers' responses revealed that grammatical errors are widespread among senior secondary students. The most frequent errors were related to verb tense misuse, subject–verb disagreement, omission or misuse of articles, pronoun errors, prepositions, and sentence structure problems.

The causes of these errors were traced to mother tongue interference, limited exposure to English reading materials, ineffective teaching methods, low student interest in grammar, and the influence of social media abbreviations. Teachers also identified inadequate feedback and large class sizes as additional factors hindering grammar mastery.

The study further found that grammatical errors have significant negative impacts on students' writing clarity, academic achievement, and communication competence. Poor grammar reduces students' ability to express ideas coherently, affects their examination scores, and limits their performance in both English and other subjects that require written responses.

To address these challenges, both students and teachers agreed on several strategies for improvement, including:

- Regular corrective feedback on written work,

- Encouraging wide reading and writing practice,
- Adopting modern and interactive teaching methods,
- Organizing remedial classes, and
- Promoting peer review and collaborative learning activities.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that grammatical errors remain a major barrier to effective writing and communication among senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area. The errors commonly observed—particularly in tense, subject–verb agreement, and article usage—reflect weaknesses in grammatical competence that stem from both linguistic and instructional factors.

Mother tongue interference continues to influence how students construct English sentences, while insufficient exposure to correct English usage and inadequate teaching methods aggravate the problem. Moreover, the dominance of social media shorthand and limited reading culture further reduce students’ grammatical accuracy.

The study concludes that improving grammatical competence is not only essential for better English performance but also critical for overall academic success and future career opportunities. Effective teaching, consistent feedback, and sustained practice are indispensable in helping students develop mastery of grammar and confidence in written communication.

## Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Adopt Communicative and Practical Grammar Teaching Approaches:**  
English teachers should move beyond rote memorization of grammar rules to methods that integrate grammar with real communication tasks such as essay writing, debates, and letter writing. This helps students apply grammar rules contextually.
2. **Provide Regular and Constructive Feedback:**  
Teachers should make it a routine to correct students' grammatical errors in their written assignments and provide explanations for each correction. This will help students identify recurring mistakes and avoid them.
3. **Encourage Extensive Reading and Writing Practice:**  
Students should be encouraged to read newspapers, novels, and quality English materials regularly. Reading exposes them to correct sentence patterns, while regular writing builds accuracy and fluency.
4. **Organize Remedial and Literacy Workshops:**  
Schools should organize periodic grammar improvement sessions or remedial classes where students can focus on difficult grammar areas such as tenses, articles, and agreement.

5. Integrate Technology in Language Learning:  
Schools should leverage digital learning tools such as grammar-checking apps, online writing platforms, and interactive exercises to help students learn and self-correct in engaging ways.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Future researchers may wish to extend this study by:

1. Conducting similar research in other Local Government Areas or states to compare patterns of grammatical errors across regions.
2. Investigating the impact of teacher feedback techniques on students' grammar improvement over time.
3. Exploring the effectiveness of digital grammar tools in reducing specific error types among secondary school students.
4. Examining grammatical errors in spoken English to complement the findings of this study, which focused only on written English.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study contributes to knowledge by:

- Providing empirical evidence on the prevalent grammatical errors among senior secondary students in Egor Local Government Area.

- Highlighting the major linguistic and instructional causes of these errors.
- Offering practical strategies that teachers and educational planners can adopt to improve grammar instruction and writing proficiency.
- Reinforcing the link between grammatical competence, academic performance, and communicative effectiveness in the Nigerian educational context.

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**APPENDIX**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE ON COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITTEN**  
**ENGLISH OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on grammatical errors in the written English of senior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The purpose is purely academic, and your honest responses will be treated with confidentiality. Kindly tick the option that best represents your opinion.

**Response Key:**

SA – Strongly Agree | A – Agree | D – Disagree | SD – Strongly Disagree

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Please tick (✓) the appropriate option.

1. Gender:  Male     Female
2. School Type:  Public     Private
3. Class:  SS2  SS3

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D
	<b>What Are The Most Common Grammatical Errors Found In The Written English Of Senior Secondary School Students</b>				
1	Students frequently make subject–verb agreement errors in their writing.				
2	Wrong verb tense usage is very common in students’ essays.				
3	Many students omit or misuse articles (a, an, the) in writing.				
4	Errors in pronoun usage occur regularly in students’ written English.				
5	Spelling mistakes affect grammatical accuracy in students’ essays.				
	<b>What Are The Possible Causes Of Grammatical Errors Amongst Students?</b>				
6	Mother tongue interference contributes greatly to grammatical errors.				
7	Limited exposure to English reading materials affects students’ grammar.				
8	Social media language/abbreviations negatively influence students’ grammar.				
9	Inadequate teaching methods contribute to persistent grammatical errors.				
10	Students’ low interest in learning grammar increases their errors.				
	<b>How Do These Errors Affect Students’ Overall Writing Skills And Academic Performance?</b>				
11	Grammatical errors reduce the clarity of students’ essays.				
12	Students with frequent errors perform poorly in English examinations.				
13	Poor grammar lowers students’ chances of success in WAEC/NECO.				
14	Grammatical weaknesses make students less competitive with peers.				
15	Grammatical errors limit students’ ability to communicate effectively outside school.				
	<b>What Strategies Can Be Implemented To Help Students Reduce Grammatical Errors In Their</b>				

	<b>Writing?.</b>				
<b>16</b>	Encouraging wide reading can improve students' grammar.				
<b>17</b>	Regular feedback helps students correct their mistakes.				
<b>18</b>	Modern teaching methods can enhance grammatical competence.				
<b>19</b>	Peer review of students' essays helps them detect their errors.				
<b>20</b>	Remedial classes should be organized for students with serious grammar problems.				

**Thank you for your corporation**