

CONCORD PROBLEMS AND MISUSE OF INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES IN LESSON PLANNING BY STUDENT TEACHERS OF THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA

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Abstract

Language is ubiquitous; it is used everywhere at the same time in different situations. In view of the above, this study explored the use of language among science education students of Federal University Lokoja, as it relates to language use in writing lesson plans. Lesson planning is one of the major components of teacher education and training which is carried out using language resources. The study is motivated by the desire to see how students of science education navigate through the inconsistencies that characterized the rules of concord and inflectional morphemes. The methodology adopted was a selection of some of the sentences written by the students in their lesson plan for analysis in order to determine their levels of awareness and usage of concord and inflectional rules in writing error-free lesson plans. The framework of analysis is a Morpho-syntactic Analytical Model (MAM) proposed by Awobi, A. M. (2018, p.159). This was used for the analysis of the research. The findings of this research revealed that 97.9% of the 48 lesson plans that were examined were filled with errors. Only 2.1% of the 48 lesson plans were error-free. The study recommends that students across all departments should be exposed to concord and inflectional morphological and syntactic rules in order to make their writings error-free.

Key words: Concord, inflectional morpheme, lesson planning, error-free and error-filled sentences

Introduction

Over the years, lesson planning has been an essential part of what a teacher requires for effective performance in lesson delivery. A lesson plan is a teacher's detailed description of the course of instruction or "learning trajectory" for a lesson. It is the sequence of events which will take place as the lesson is delivered. It is an instructional input or the actual lesson delivery - that is, what the teacher intends to do or say that will enable the learners to learn new skills or express new ideas with the guidance of the teacher. A daily lesson plan is developed by a teacher to guide class learning. The details vary depending on the preference of the teacher, the subject to be taught and the needs of the students. A lesson plan is the teacher's guide for running a particular lesson and it includes the goals (objectives), what the students are supposed to learn, how the goals/objectives will be achieved (the method or procedure) and a way of measuring how well the goal/objectives were reached (test or assignment) as evaluation resources adopted. All these are done through the utilization of language resources.

As important as lesson plan is, it has always been characterized by concord and inflectional errors especially by second language learners of English due to inadequate knowledge of the application of morphological and syntactic rules of the English language. This paper therefore, is motivated by the desire to find out the levels of awareness of the use of concord and inflectional morphemes by the would-be-teachers of science education. The Department of science Education of the Federal University Lokoja has six programmes: Biology Education, Chemistry Education, Computer Science Education, Integrated Science Education, Mathematics Education, and Physics Education. The lesson plans written by 200 level would-be-teachers of the department of science education under examination conditions were selected and thoroughly examined in order to find out the levels of compliance to the appropriate use of concord and inflectional morphemes in their lesson plan(s). The assumption of this study is that most teachers in science based courses are more likely to neglect the

adherence to concord and inflectional rules in their writings than teachers in arts based courses.

The teacher is described as a professional who imparts knowledge, learning experiences at his disposal to stimulate, guide, direct and facilitate learners to acquire adequate mastery of the skills being imparted. As important as the role of a teacher is in knowledge dissemination, he is expected to be fluent in his presentation by ensuring that there is concord or coherence in his lesson plan with the right use of words to match the nouns and verbs in the lesson plan. This is imperative in the sense that the English language we use for instruction from the upper primary to the university level (National Policy on Education, NPE 2004 revised) is governed by rules that must be obeyed for grammatical harmony or concord to occur (Chomsky 1957, p.2). Agreement or concord happens when a word changes form depending on the other words to which it relates. It is an instance of inflection which usually involves making the value of some grammatical category 'agree' between varied words or parts of the sentence. In English grammar, concord refers to the way in which a word has form appropriate to the number, case or gender of the noun or pronoun that it relates to. For examples, they are coming; John is coming; the man with the wife is here; the man and the wife are here etc. The lineal combination of words (syntax) is governed by the rules of concord which lesson planners must be familiar with in order to have a successful lesson delivery devoid of grammatical blunders.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed over the years that many teachers often flout the rules of concord in their lesson plans, especially some teachers in the core science-based courses. The phenomenon can be embarrassing when their lesson plans are being assessed by a language expert. Most times, when errors of concord are discovered in their lesson plans, the usual excuses by the defaulting teachers are: "I did not read/study English language". "I am not a language specialist". Some analysts have also categorized this problem as a 'fundamental problem'

that has deter solutions and that even those who studied the English language are faced with the problem/challenge. This generalisation may not be true, considering that adequate knowledge of the rules of concord and inflectional rules will help to reduce or ameliorate the problem. The rules of concord or agreement are so inconsistent to the extent that one may get confused if not well knowledgeable in the rules. There are wide exceptions to the rules such that care must be taken to avoid overgeneralisation.

For a start, the lesson note planner must be able to differentiate between the subject and the verb of a sentence and ensure that there is an agreement between the two. The subject of a sentence is a noun, noun phrase, noun clause, a noun phrase + relative clause, pronoun, nominal adjective, or prepositional phrase, about which something is said. On the other hand, the verb of a sentence is an action word (verb or verb phrase) that says something about the subject. The ability to differentiate the aforementioned variables constitutes problems to the would-be teachers. Also, most of the researches carried out on the use of concord are done using Corder's (1957) Error Analysis without any reference to inflectional morphemes. These are the gaps that this study is set out to fill.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate and determine the level of awareness and use of concord and inflectional morphemes by would-be teachers of the Department of Science Education of the Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State.
2. Investigate and determine whether the would-be teachers can effectively apply the rules of concord and inflectional morphemes in their lesson plan, and show the percentage of compliances and non-compliances of the lesson plans to the rules of concord and inflection.

The paper is significant in the sense that it will help to reduce the incessant cases of concord and inflectional errors in teachers' lesson

plans irrespective of whether they are Arts, Social Sciences, Management Sciences, or Science Education students. It is also significant in terms of exposing teachers and non-teachers and other language users to the rudimentary rules of concord and their applicability to real writing situations. It will help to build confidence in students' and teachers' speaking and writing abilities both in and outside the classroom situations.

Literature Review

Several researches have been carried out to find out the effects of the use of concord on the writings of students and writers (journalists, teachers, and etcetera). It has been observed that most of the researches explored the use of concord in essay writings and in most cases too, the Error Analysis Approach (EA) has been the theoretical analytical approach. For example,

Atinga (2013) conducted a Master of Arts (M.A) degree research on "The problem of Concord Errors in the Essays of SS2 Students in some Selected Secondary Schools in Kaduna Metropolis". The researcher treated concord in terms of subject-verb agreement and she mentioned types of concord as: subject-verb concord, subject-verb concord by number, notional concord and pronoun antecedent concord. The researcher used essay test to obtain her data for analyses in four Secondary Schools in Kaduna Metropolis. The findings showed a high percentage rate of failure in the use of concord by the students. However, the study did not mention anything about inflectional problems in students' writings.

Isyaku, H. and Latiff, N. (2020) did "An Analysis of English Concord Errors in Selected Nigerian Newspapers." The study analysed the concord errors committed by Nigerian Newspaper writers in their written communication. The study also employed qualitative method to analyse Newspaper writer's errors in relation to the use of concord in selected Nigerian Newspapers. The study used "Error Analysis (EA)" approach to analyse the selected Newspapers. The findings revealed that concord errors in Nigerian newspapers are found in subject-verb

concord, pronoun concord and tense concord. The most common type of concord errors made by the writers is subject-verb agreement according to the research. The study is similar to the current paper. However, it differs slightly because the current study explored the use of inflectional morphemes as alternative to tense concord.

Maugero, A., et al (2022) conducted a study titled “An Assessment of the use of English Grammatical Concord in the Compositions of Senior Secondary School Students.” The study examined the writings of Senior Secondary School students in Maradi municipality in order to find out the types of misuses in concord that can hinder them from communicating effectively in writing. The researchers selected 370 students from 4 Senior Secondary Schools in Maradi municipality for the study. The students were asked to write an essay choosing one of the 4 different topics given to them. The analysis revealed that the use of concord was very chaotic in the writings of the students. The study indicated that pronoun/antecedent concord was easier for the students to use, while concord in person appeared to be more complicated for them. In other words, the students had issues using concord rightly to generate effective communication. However, the study did not explore any aspects of inflectional morphology.

From the fore-going investigations on the use of concord, none has been done using students’ lesson plans. This study therefore, is unique by exploring the use of concord in lesson planning with the aim of finding out whether the would-be teachers can use concord effectively to write error-free lesson plan. Also, all the investigations carried out above used “Error Analysis” approach as the theoretical model. However, this study is using a Morpho-syntactic Analytical Model (MAM) proposed by the author of this study for the analyses of the student teachers’ lesson plans. This is a novelty by proposing an alternative to Corder’s (1957) “Error Analysis”.

Framework for Analysis

The framework for analysis is drawn from a Morpho-syntactic Analytical Model (MAM) proposed by Awobi (2018, p.159) for

analysing concord and inflectional morphemes in English language. The model is drawn from the works of Halliday's (1961) Scale and Category Grammar, Kibort, A. & Cobbert (2009); Morpho-syntactic Features and Yule's (1997) Conversion Process Theory. The Morpho-syntactic Analytical Model (MAM) is a six (6) step model thus:

1. The application of Halliday's (1961) Elements of Clause Structure – Subject, Predicate, Complement and Adjunct (SPCA) on identified sentences.
2. The inherent or internal changes that occur in words during inflection. For examples, man changes to men, baby/babies, monkey/monkeys, money/monies etc. (Kibort & Corbett 2009).
3. The alternative lexical form of a word when inflected. For examples, fish can be fish or fishes, stadium-stadiums/stadia, learn-learned/learnt, wealthy-wealthier/more wealthy etcetera.
4. The movement of words from one class to another. For examples, table as a noun can be converted to a verb tabled; man/manned; head/headed etcetera (Yule, G. 1997).
5. The application of various morph-syntactic rules.
6. The exceptions in morph-syntactic rules.

For the purpose of this study, only steps, 2, 3, 5 and 6 will be applied to the lesson plans written by the would-be teachers for the analysis of their sentences. This is because elements of clause structure were not applied to the sentences used by the would-be teachers as in the case of number 1, also, conversion of word classes were not too necessary as in the case of number 4. This why numbers 1 and 4 have been left out in the analyses of the data.

Research Methodology

A total of 48 (forty-eight) lesson plans were written by 200 level would-be teachers (students) of the Department of Science Education, FUL. The lesson plans were written as a test requirement for the purpose of this study. It was strictly supervised under examination

conditions such that they could not copy from one another. The lesson plans were submitted and thoroughly examined using the various components of a lesson plan. The sentences were selected for analyses using simple random selection process which grouped similar sentence errors and selecting one out of them to represent the others. In other words, sentences which are very similar in meaning and structure were identified and only one of such sentences was selected for analysis in order to avoid multiple repetitions of similar sentences. This study therefore analysed 33 (thirty-three) sentences selected from the 48 (forty-eight) lesson plans written and submitted to the researcher. The 33 sentences were selected from the 6 programmes of the department and analysed accordingly. The wrong sentences are presented and analysed stating the errors or breaches committed and then followed by the correct sentences.

Data Presentation and Analysis

There are six programmes in the Department of Science Education as stated earlier in the introduction. The lesson plans written by the would-be teachers under strict examination conditions were examined and some sentences were selected and analysed based on each of the six programmes as indicated below:

B.Sc. Biology education

A total of ten (10) lesson plans written by Biology Education students were examined and all of them were error-filled. The sentences selected violated concord and inflectional rules as shown below:

- b. The teacher use some instructional materials and also uses some examples in sentences.

This compound sentence has no agreement between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (use). If a subject is singular, the verb must be singular too (S1 = V1). Therefore, the sentence violates subject - verb agreement. The correct sentence is:

The teacher uses some instructional materials and also uses some examples in (his/her) sentences.

- c. The teacher summarize the topic to the student and ask them his own question.

The compound sentence above is characterized by concord and inflectional errors. The singular subject (teacher) requires a singular verb (summarizes) and the non- inflection of student is an inflectional problem as they are more than one (students) in a class. The second part of the sentence requires a singular (asks). Therefore, the correct sentence is: The teacher summarizes the topic to the students and asks them his own question (s).

- d. The teacher assign the students by giving them homework~~~~

This sentence lacks agreement between the subject (teacher) and the verb (assign). Therefore, the correct sentence is: The teacher assigns the students by giving them homework.

- e. The teacher ask the learners what he has taught them and understand of punctuation marks.

This sentence lacks concord/agreement between a singular subject (teacher) and a plural verb (ask) and other grammatical errors. The correct sentence is: The teacher asks the learners what he has taught them on the understanding of punctuation marks.

- f. The teacher conclude the lesson by giving students assignment.

This sentence lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (conclude). The right sentence is: The teacher concludes the lesson by giving the students (class/home) assignment.

- g. The teacher read out loud to the hearing of the pupil and they repeat after her.

The compound sentence lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (read) as well as not inflecting the noun (pupil) in the object position to agree with the pronoun (they) in the second clause. This is a clear violation of subject-verb and pronoun antecedent concord. The correct sentence is: The teacher reads out loud (loudly, or aloud) to the hearing of the pupils and they repeat after her.

- h. The **teacher give** them assignment to do in their assignment book.

The sentence lacks concord between the subject (teacher) and the plural verb (give). The correct sentence is: The teacher gives them assignment to do in their assignment book(s).

- i. **Teacher ask** question on what is family.

This sentence lacks agreement between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (ask) as well as not using a determiner and punctuation problems. The correct sentence is: The teacher asks question(s) on the concept of family or what is family?

- j. The **teacher ask** the learners questions based on what he/she taught them.

This sentence lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (ask) as well as omitting a helping verb in the second noun clause. The correct sentence is:

The teacher asks the learners questions based on what he/she has taught them.

- k. The **students writes** the topic on his/her notes.

The sentence lacks concord between the plural subject (students) and the singular verb (writes). The his/her can be replaced by a singular pronoun (their). The correct sentence is: The students write the topic in his/her or their note(s).

- l. The **teacher present** his lesson by writing the topic on the chalkboard.

The sentence lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (present). The correct sentence is: The teacher presents his lesson by writing the topic on the chalkboard.

- m. The teacher evaluate his lesson by asking the pupils to read from the chalkboard, explain it to them and ask them to copy their note.

The compound sentence above lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the three plural verbs in the clauses. The correct sentence is: The teacher evaluates his lesson by asking the pupils to read from the chalkboard, explains it to them and asks them to copy their note.

- n. Teachers ask student on what they remember about their last class.

This sentence manifests careless and avoidable errors of wrongful inflection of the subject by pluralizing the subject (teachers) and singularizing the object (student) thereby making one to wonder whether the reverse is now the case by having more teachers to a student at the same time in a class. There is also an omission of direct object (question(s) in the sentence. Therefore, the correct order is: Teacher asks the students questions on what they remember about their last class.

- o. Teachers introduces the topic by writing it on the board 'Linguistics'.

This sentence is guilty of wrongful inflection of the subject (teachers) thereby violating concord rules when used with a singular verb (introduces). The correct sentence is: (The) Teacher introduces the topic "Linguistics" by writing it on the (white/chalk) board.

- p. Teacher give room for question.

This sentence lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (give). The correct sentence is: (The) Teacher gives room for question(s).

- q. **Teachers talks** about what was discuss in the previous class and ask questions.

The sentence lacks agreement between the plural subject (teachers) 'sic' and the singular verb (talks) as well as not inflecting the verbs (discuss and ask). Therefore, the correct sentence is:

(The) Teacher talks about what was discussed in the previous class and asks questions.

- r. **Teachers asks** questions from the learners from what they are familiar with in the new lesson.

The subject is wrongly pluralized and that makes it to be in disagreement with the singular verb (asks). The correct sentence is: (The) Teacher asks questions from the learners what they were familiar with in the new lesson.

- s. **The teachers writes** the note on the board.

There is no concord between the plural subject (teachers) and the singular verb (writes). The correct expression is: The teacher writes the note on the (black, chalk, or white) board.

- t. **Learners copies** in their notes.

In this sentence, there is no concord between the plural subject (learners) and the singular verb (copies) as well as omission of an article and omission of an object. The correct sentence is: The learners copy the summary in their notebook.

From the analyses above, it has been established that all the ten lesson plans written by the Biology Education students were error-filled lesson plans.

B.Sc (Ed) Chemistry Education

A total of seven lesson plans were examined as written by Chemistry Education students. None of them scaled through without violating concord and inflectional rules. Some of the examples are:

20. The teacher guide the students to list the state and classes of matter.

This sentence lacks concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (guide). The correct sentence is: The teacher guides students to list the state and classes of matter.

Most of the sentences written by the would-be teachers of Chemistry Education were similar to the ones written by Biology Education students. Therefore, only the sentence above was chosen from their lesson plans.

B.Sc (Ed) Computer Science Education

A total of thirteen (13) lesson plans were written by Computer Science Education students. However, only one (1) lesson plan stood out without any concord and inflectional errors. The fact that one person can do it well means that with adequate teaching, the rest can also do it. Examples of some of the error-filled sentences are:

1. The teachers defines and gives examples of computer hardware on the blackboard.

This sentence wrongly inflected the subject (teachers) which ought to be in singular form. Therefore, the correct sentence is: The teacher defines and gives examples of computer hardware on the blackboard.

22. The students pays attention to the teacher and takes note of the materials brought by the teacher and also its functions.

This sentence lacks concord between the plural subject (students) and the two singular verbs in the sentence as well as pronoun antecedent concord. The correct sentence is: The students pay attention to the

teacher and take note of the materials brought by the teacher and their functions.

23. The teacher will then **conclude** the class with asking the student question **of** what he just taught and allow the student to ask also.

This sentence fails to use the appropriate and conventional language of a lesson plan which ought to be a futuristic action. Therefore, the sentence is characterized by inflectional and substitution errors. For example, the object “student” needs to be pluralized. The correct sentence is: The teacher concludes the class by asking the students questions on what he just taught and allows them (students) to ask questions (or to also ask questions).

24. The teacher went further to explain and guides the student to understand different types of Network topology and communication modes.

This sentence has inflection problem as well as wrong use of tense. The correct sentence is:

The teacher goes further to explain and guides the students to understand different types of Network topology and communication modes.

25. The students explains the functions of the computer hardware components which are ...

This sentence has concord problem because the subject and the verb do not agree. The correct sentence is:

The students explain the functions of the computer hardware components which are ...

From the analysis above, only 8% wrote error-free lesson plan, while 92% wrote error-filled lesson plans.

B.Sc (Ed) Integrated Science Education

A total of three (3) lesson plans written by Integrated Science Education would-be teachers were examined and none of them got it right. In fact, the three of them wrote very poor lesson plans of which an example is shown below:

26 Topic: Noun; Sub-topic: Pronoun

The question is why would an Integrated Science student pick up a topic in English studies when they were instructed to pick a topic in their areas of discipline? This student went on to write these sentences:

Students' Activity: the students were able to define a noun.

Teacher Activity: I asked the students to give examples on noun.

This is just an example showing that many of them lack the basic skills in writing plans.

Therefore, it is 100% error-filled lesson plans with the would-be teachers of Integrated Science Education.

B.Sc (Ed) Mathematics Education

A total of ten (10) lesson plans written by Mathematics Education students were examined. All of them violated concord and inflectional rules. Some of the examples are:

27. The teacher ask the students to list the Notation used in a set and identify them.

This sentence has concord problem because there is no agreement between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (ask). The correct expression is: The teacher asks the students to list the notation used in a set and identify them.

28. The teacher lead the students to explain argon diagram of complex number.

Similarly, this sentence has concord problem because there is no agreement between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (lead). The correct sentence is: The teacher leads the students to explain an argon diagram of complex number.

29. The **teacher asked** the students questions from the last class.

The verb (asked) is wrongly inflected in this sentence because it is an action to be carried out. The correct expression is: The teacher asks the students questions from the last class.

30. The **student answered** the question which the teacher asked.

This sentence is characterized by inflectional problems through the non-inflection of the subject (student) which should be students and the verb (answered) is wrongly inflected which should be in its simple form (answer). The correct expression is: The students answer the questions which the teacher will ask (them).

31. The **teacher ask** the student to draw a triangle.

The sentence has concord and inflectional problems. There is lack of concord between the singular subject (teacher) and the plural verb (ask) as well as the non-inflection of the object (student) which ought to be inflected as students. The correct sentence is: The teacher asks the students to draw a triangle.

All the ten lesson plans written by the Mathematics Education would-be teacher were 100% error-filled as none wrote error-free lesson plan.

B.Sc (Ed) Physics Education

A total of five (5) lesson plans written by Physics Education students were examined and all of them violated concord and inflectional rules. Some of the examples are:

32. The **teacher describe** the different methods of heat transfer and allow the student to examine.

This sentence is characterized by errors of concord, inflection and the lack of indirect object in the sentence. The singular subject (teacher) requires a singular verb (describes). The second plural verb (allow) ought to be a singular verb (allows) in order to agree with the singular subject (teacher). Also, the singular object (student) ought to be plural Object (students) and there is need for the 'to infinitive' verb to be followed by an object (it or the heat transfer processes). The correct sentence is: The teacher describes the different methods of heat transfer and allows the students to examine the heat transfer processes.

33. The **teachers guides** the students to learn the forms of energy and explain them.

This sentence has a concord issue arising from wrong inflection of the subject of the sentence. The lesson planner who is going to deliver the lesson is a singular person (teacher) not teachers. Therefore, the correct sentence is: The teacher guides the students to learn the forms of energy and explains them. All the five lesson plans written by the Physics Education would-be teachers were 100% error-filled.

Discussion of Findings

The study has thrown up a very serious problem among the would-be- teachers who are expected to write error-free lesson plans devoid of any grammatical blunders. Aside the issues of linguistic errors, lesson plans are vital tools which all students of education are expected to be able to write effectively following the laid down procedures of writing it. This study has shown that many of the students are still struggling to write effective lesson plan that would be adjudged error-free.

The level of awareness in applying the rules of concord and inflectional morphemes to writing lesson plans is very poor as most of

the lesson plans were characterized by different concord and inflectional errors as can be seen in the analyses of the selected sentences. These findings corroborated the earlier researches in the literature review where the students found it difficult to use concord effectively. Atinga (2013), Isyaku et al (2020) and Maiguero et al (2022) all reported that their subjects/respondents all had issues with using concord to communicate effectively in writing.

The problems in this current study are so widely spread such that amongst the would-be teachers of Biology Education, none was able to write an error free lesson plan. Amongst the would-be teachers of Chemistry Education, it is 100% error-filled sentences. Amongst the Computer Science Education students, it is 8% error-free and 92% error-filled sentences. Amongst the Integrated Science Education students, it is 100% error-filled sentences. For Mathematical Science Education would-be teachers, it is 100% error-filled sentences and for Physics Education would-be teachers, the results are 100% error-filled sentences.

On the whole, a total of 48 (forty- eight) lesson plans were examined but only 1 (one) representing 2.0% was error-free, while 47 (forty-seven) representing 97.9% which is approximated to 98% were error-filled sentences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that Education students (would-be-teachers) in the Department of Science Education have a general linguistic problem, which is their inability to adequately apply the rules of concord and inflectional morphology in writing error-free lesson plans devoid of any grammatical problems. Secondly, some students were not able to write a comprehensive lesson plan using the various components required of writing a lesson plan.

This study therefore recommends that special training on concord and inflectional rules should be given to would-be teachers in order to correct many of the obvious errors witnessed in their sentence constructions. Also, as would-be-teachers who are expected to be

proficient in writing lesson plans, they should be made to undergo special training in the art of lesson plan writing.

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