Towards A Functional Explications of Concord in English

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Abstract
The paper examined and explicated the notion of concord in English in Second Language (ESL) situation. The term second Language refers to the Language a person learns or comes in contact with after his/her first Language or mother tongue which is almost in all cases the first Language. It made available some of the factors responsible for learners and users's misuse of rules of concord in English in Nigeria schools and some public domains. Giving the status of English language in Nigeria as language of officialdom; education, legal, administrative and political matters, among others., the language needs a better way of learning and acquisition for effective communication and pedagogical purposes. The textbooks to be used in teaching concord should not just be introduced arbitrarily but should be recommended by curriculum designers after being examined thoroughly and deem fit for the pupils. Teacher's guide on each text should be provided and special emphatically laid on the learning habits of the pupils.
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1. Introduction

Grammatical concord deals with its relationship between its linguistic units in a sentence. In other words, it deals with the relationship between the different elements within a sentence such that when one exhibits a character, the other exhibits it too. The grammatical relationship occurs between the subject and verb, subject and the intensive complement will be treated in this work.

1.1 The Subject and Verb Concord

The most important type of concord in English is concord of numbers between subject and verb. This implies that a singular subject will take a singular verb and a plural subject will take a plural verb.

(a) **Yam germinates** in the rainy season.

In the above, sentence (a) has a singular subject. Yam and a singular verb **germinate**. Let us consider another sentences:

Yams germinate in the rainy season.
Here the plural verb germinate agrees with the plural subject **yams**
The following sentences will however be grammatically be unacceptable.
- **Yam germinate** in the rainy season or
- **Yams germinates** in the rainy season.

Subject will take a singular verb and a plural subject will take a plural verb.
Other examples are:
(a) The window is open (sing + sing)
(b) The windows are open (plur + plur)
(c) *The window are open (sing + plur)
(d) *The windows is open (plur + sing)

Examples (c) and (d) are ungrammatical while (a) and (b) are acceptable. Another rule of concord is that of singular noun ending with –s of the plural inflexion (measles, bilhards, mathematics etc) or conversely plural nouns lacking the inflection (cattles, people, clergy etc).

Measles is sometimes serious. Our people are complaining that is killing our infants.

The subject-verb concord rule is simple for the past tense. The past form of verb does not reflect the person or number of the subject, except the "BE" forms of the verb:
(a) <u>Ade went</u> to the market yesterday.
(b) They went to the market yesterday.
(c) He was in the class.
(d) They were in the class.

Therefore, a simple verb phrase only reflects the character of the subject when it is in the present tense form. For a complex verb phrase, whether in the present or past tense form, the first

element in the verb phrase except modal agrees with the subject. For example:
(a)   He has gone since 3.00 p.m.
(b)   They have gone since 3.00p.m.
For the past tense, the verb changes to reflect the number and person of the subject while in the simple verb phrase.
For instance,
He was sleeping when i came in.
You were dancing when i played the music.
It is necessary to say that it is only finite verb that agrees with the subject.

1.2 Coordinated Subjects
When a subject consists of two or more noun phrases coordinated by and, a distinction has to be made between appositional and non-appositional coordination under non-appositional coordination's we include cases that can be treated as an implied reduction of two clauses. These have a verb in the plural, *e.g.:*
Sade and rise are now ready
(-) Sade is now ready and rise is now ready)
A singular verb can be used with conjoins which represent a single entity;
The hammer and sickle was flying from a tall flag pole.
 Conjoins expressing a mutual relationship even though they can be treated as reductions of clauses'in this way also take a plural verb;

Your shape and mine are different (-) your shape is different from mine and mine is different from yours). .
With the less common APPOSITIONAL COORDINATION, however, no such reduction is possible
at all for the coordinates refer to the something. Hence a singular verb is used.
This temple of ugliness and memorial to Victorianbad taste was erected at the Queen's express wish.
These two opening noun phrases refer the same thing.
Exemption to the rule:
(i)   When each of the coordinates is considered individually the singular form of verb is required. This is frequently the case with the coordinates preceded by "each" or "every".
  (a)   Every teacher and student works for his interest
  (b)   Each dog and bitch barks regularly.
(ii)   For mathematical computation, either a singular or a plural form of the verb can be used:
  (a)   One and ten is eleven. ′
  (b)   Three and twenty are twenty three.

1.3 Concord of Person
As well as concord of number, there is concord of person between subject and verb:
I am your mentor (1st person singular concord).
He is busy   ] (3rd person singular concord)
He beats him]
By the following the principle of proximity, the last noun phrase of a coordinate subject (where the coordinator is .or, either ..., or _ , or neither.... nor) determines the person ofthe verb.
(a)   Neither Ojo, nor I nor anyone else knows the answer.
(b)   Either my wife or I am going.
Because many people find such sentences ungrammatical, they often prefer to use a modal auxiliary which neutralizes the problem of concord e.g. Either my wife or I will be going.

1.4 Subject Object Concord
Subject - object concord of number> person, and gender; is necessary as well as subject complement concord, where the second element is a reflexive pronoun,
  (a) She injured herself in the leg.
  (b) He gave himself another chance.
  (c) You should give yourself a bit of rest.
The same concord relation holds when the reflexive pronouns occurs in other functions (e.g as prepositional complement) or when the reflexive genitive "his own" etc. is used:
She's making a sweeter for herself.
They're running their own chances.
In British English, collective noun subjects allow plural concord.

The Navy congratulated themselves on the victory.

1.5   Indefinite Pronoun and Negative Expression of Amount

Another area of ambivalence is that of indefinite and negative expressions of amount. We have indefinite pronoun like "each", "either", "nobody", "somebody", "everybody", "any", "none", etc. as ambivalent.

For example.
 (a) I sent money to Lekan and Nike but neither (of them) has/have replied.
 (b) Infact, I doubt if either (of them) is/are coming.
      If a prepositional phrase with a plural complement fallows the indefinite construction, a plural verb
 is favoured not only because of motional concord but because of the proximity rule:
 (c) None of them is serious
 (d) Either of the girls are busy.

This proximity rule also can lead to plural concord with the indefinite pronouns such as each, every, everybody, nobody, etc. which are otherwise undoubtedly singular.

1.6   Collective Nouns as Subjects

Collective nouns like "public", "audience", "Jury", "crowd", etc. are notionally plural but grammatically singular. It obeys notional concord in examples such as the following:
 −   The public are fined of demonstrations.
 −   The audience were enjoying every minute of it.

Although singular and plural verbs are more or less interchangeable in .these contexts. The choice is based, if only anything, on whether the group is being considered as single individedbody, or as collation of individuals example:
 (a) The.audience was enormous.
 (B) The audience were erroneous.
In (a) above, .the audience is seen as united, but in (b) .the audience is seen as divided.

1.7   Notional Concord and Proximity

Notional concord is agreement of verb with,subject according to the idea of number rather than the actual presence of grammatical marker for that idea. For instance: The government have broken all their promises. The agreement is not only between the plural verb have and the subject (the government) but also by the pronoun there. The principle of "proximity" denotes agreement of the verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely preceding it, ' sometimes in preference to agreement with the headword of the subject.

No one except his own supporters agree with him.

One in ten take drugs.

1.8 Subject-Complement Concord

Subject - complement concord of number (but not of person exist between subject and complement in clauses of type subject,verb, complement (SVC),

The child was an angel   ]   but not

The children were angels   ]

*The child was angels

*The children were an angel.

This type of concord arises naturally from the demonstrative equivalence in the intensive relationship. There are exceptions.

What we need most is books.

They turned tractor/but (they became tractors).

There is an equivalence type of concord between object and object complement in SVOC clauses e.g. He thinks these girls the best actions.

2. English Language in Nigeria

The origin of English in Nigeria was traceable to colonialism and effect of trade concern which dated back to the early nineteenth century when freed slaves of Nigeria origin returned the Nigeria sequel to the abolition of slave trade. Colonialism also ended in 1960 when Nigeria became independence.

English was chosen as a "Lingua Franca" in Nigeria because of some roles it performs. It is used to conduct legislative, executive and political functions at "the three tiers of government; Local State, State Government and Federal Government. It is a medium of social and inter-cultural communication. Also the language serves as a medium of instruction in Nigeria schools. It became salient in the educational system and it is used for official purposes.

According to National Policy on Education in 1977 for the pre-primary – NPH, Para 15 (4).

"Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the another tongue or the language of the immediate community and, at a later stage English"

In Nigeria, English Language has assumed the highest status. It is stated in section 51 of the Nigeria Constitution of 1979 and 1989 thus:

"The business of a House of Assembly shall be conducted in English but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House is one or more language in the stage as the House by resolution approve".

Section 91 of the same constitution emphasized more on English as a medium of conducting the affairs of National Assembly.

Furthermore, in considering the acquisition of English Language as a second Language anything well unless they are interested in it. He suggests six steps that may make learning second Language a worthwhile undertaking: eliminating bewilderment in the learners, letting them know how much progress they have made, giving them game-like exercises, ensuring the right relation between the teacher and the students, and providing a variety of learning experiences.

Tyler (1949) adds that maintaining the attitude of monitoring of the learner's achievement in the language is very crucial because it has strong influences on how a learner of English acquires the target Language. By this, it may be inferred that attitude to the learning of English Language among post-primary students in Nigeria is most likely to have influence on their performance in English Language.

Furthermore, the term second Language refers to the Language a person learns or comes in contact with after his/her first Language or mother tongue which is almost in all cases the first Language. Robert Lado (1969) defines second Language learning as:

"acquiring the ability to use its structure within a general vocabulary under essentially the conditions of normal communication among native speakers at conversational speed".

To be more specific, acquisition of second Language means the acquisition of the ability to use, in speaking, the units and patterns of expression of the second Language associated with the units and patterns of the content when listening to the target Language. It means, in other words, learning the expression, the content and their association for rapid use in the proper positions within the systems of the target language.

From the above attempted definition of second language learning, one will obviously see that it is a complex and because of its complexity, the language learning theory be acquainted with psychology of second language learning if the is to carry on his/her talk efficiently and effectively. Learning is more effective,' certain and rapid of lessons are frequent so that the opportunity of forgetting what has been learnt is reduced. An unqualified language teacher could be ignorant of these essential factors in learning and so pose a big problem for effective teaching and learning of a second language assumes a role or medium of instruction in institutions of learning. English in Nigeria is used for administrative, governmental and educational purposes. It also serves as the springboard for students in Secondary schools who want to go for further studies. As a matter of fact, from primary to the tertiary levels of education in Nigeria, English language is the medium instruction.

There are problems militating against learning English as a second language in Nigeria. One major problem which the learners of second language face is that of linguistic interference. This is "the added difficulty a learner of second language has to come across while mastering a sound, word or structural pattern". This is more often than not the result of the differences which exist between learner's first language that of his parents and his community. In most homes, the first language is used only and the child gets his first taste of the second language only when he gets to school. Therefore, there is this clash in conceptionalism created by the translation of mother tongue to a foreign language. This determines the child's linguistic competence in understanding and mediating the new forms of learning presented in school.

Lack of motivation to learn the second language is another problem. It is a common knowledge that in this country, most parents are predominantly illiterates. Therefore, the child rearing practices do not provide adequate stimulation or motivation for the child in the type of cognitive development that she/he will need or requite in doing well in school. Also there is the inadequate provision of stimulation in the form of bays and picture books. As a result of this, the children are handicapped in their perception of the language of instruction at school.

Moreover, the second language is usually restricted in its use. The first language is usually the most prevalent in the homes. This does not give much room for effective use of the second language by the learners and language we know is best acquired when used. Most of them are not always serious with the target language until they get to the point where they see that the acquisition of the language is very germane to their success. Besides, in everyday life a person has the

option to choose his/her doctor, opticians, dentist, tailor etc. But never in the history of formal education has a pupil been granted the freedom of choosing his teacher the child goes to school only to meet a teacher assigned to his class. If she/he is a good teacher, then the child is fortunate but if it happens to be indifferent, the child has no choice. This has always been the position of pupils over the years which is quite unfortunate. Because of the enormous importance of the second language, it should always be entrusted to the care of well trained teachers. Again, the qualified teacher must be acquainted with psychology of second language learning if he is to carry on his/her talk efficiently and effectively. Learning is more effective,' certain and rapid of lessons are frequent so that the opportunity of forgetting what has been learnt is reduced. An unqualified language teacher could be ignorant of these essential factors in learning and so pose a big problem for effective teaching and learning of a second language. This has always been the position of pupils over the years which is quite unfortunate. Because of the enormous importance of the second language, it should always be entrusted to the care of well trained teachers. Again, the qualified teacher must be acquainted with psychology of second language learning ifhe is to carry on his/her talk efficiently and effectively. Learning is more effective,' certain and rapid of lessons are frequent so that the opportunity of forgetting what has been learnt is reduced. An unqualified language teacher could be ignorant of these essential factors in learning and so pose a big problem for effective teaching and learning of a second language.

Another problem faced by learners of a second language is that of inadequate textbooks and lack of teaching aids.

3 The English Teacher

The teacher is the most important in ESL situation. The teacher in the first instance roust be an authority in the teaching of the language. He must be an expert in order to improve on the understanding of the learners. The teacher must be competent enough to handle the learners under him/tier.

Ekundare (1991) sees teacher who have acquired bad English speech from their teacher also in turn pass on the oral skill to their own pupils.

Amandianze (1991) asserted that ESL teacher should choose the corrective techniques that are most appropriate and most effective for the class and for each individual student's correction, such asGiving the pupils enough clue to enable self-correction Co be made, by explaining orally to individual pupils, by dealing with errors through marginal comments and also by using the errors as an illustration for a class explanation.

3.1   The Learner

Learner in ESL situation is very important because if there is no learner at all, there would not be anything like teacher. So, the attitude of the learner is very germane to ESL programme. If the teacher of ESL gives clues and the pupils remain silent, nothing can be achieved. Learners must have self-confidence and have the belief that[1] even if there are mistakes in their target language, it is not their MT but it is the SL. And also have notion that as time goes on they will be perfect in learning the language. Learner's attitude to correction must not be that of indifference. Learner should be able to' take to various corrections, Because it helps the ESL learners to learn when It is appropriate to apply which of the linguistic rules that they are in process of acquiring and to discover the precise meaning of words they are adding to their vocabulary.

3.2   Curriculum

Another important factor for learning is the curriculum rules that they are in process of acquiring and to discover the precise meaning of words they are adding to their vocabulary.

There are five major aspects of curriculum work necessary to establish a discipline firmly: planning, development, implementation, evaluation and revision or renewal. Afolayan (1988): 124 summarized this under five categories,

2.3   Home Background

The home background of the pupils is what all other things follow. All the student learnt in the school through the teacher, personal reading if not followed up at home would be nothing to write home about. The parents, guardians-and neighbours also have a contribution in the matter of ESL learners situation. A philosopher once said "environment corrupts the child";

If English is spoken in school and it is left out completely at home, the learning of the language will not be as rapid as it is supposed to be.

Tomori (1974) emphasized on the home as one of the factor that can affect the learner in speaking and writing of the English Language.

4. Studies on the Problems of Concord in the English of Nigerian Learners

The problems of Nigeria learner with the rules of concord is traceable to ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete rule application or learner's imperfect learning. Tomori (1963) investigated the standard of written English of final year pupils in some old Western Nigeria Primary Schools. This work is predicated on what is called linguistic incompetence of the learners in the rule of concord. Aremo (1987) opines that the errors of concord as found in some learner's English has nothing to do with the rule but the care free attitude of some learners. He categorised them into different types with copious examples. The work is under three broad categories subject - verb concord of number, antecedent - pronoun concord and concord of person. Alex (1972) also tried by dedicating greater part of his work to problems of concord in various dimensions. Osinsanwo (1994) concluded in his work by saying that there is need to be sure of the meaning attached to a subject in a particular construction. And that the users should be consistent in using some words especially word like "committee" or "team" because they sometimes carry singular or plural meaning.

5. Conclusion

The study has been able to explore concord in English in a Second Language (ESL) situation and made explicit the notion of concord and its rules and usage in Nigerian environment. It placed the learners, teachers and curriculum as participants in facilitating the correct usage of the rules of concord and its notion among Nigeria users of English.

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