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Tense Errors among Secondary School Students in Selected Secondary Schools in Abakiliki, Ebonyi State

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Abstract
This study examined tense errors among secondary school students in selected secondary schools in Abakiliki, Ebonyi state. The study was carried out to determine the significant effects of tense errors on secondary school students. The researcher employed survey research design and the questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. Based on data analysis, the findings revealed that most students make errors as they communicate in English, spelling errors are made when communicating with English, tense error negatively affects students' performance in English, tense errors hinder the development of good vocabulary among secondary school students, tense errors negatively affect students' social communication in secondary school**,** and tense errors are prevalent in written English among secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers can help their students improve their level of language competency in the use of present perfect tense by encouraging them to participate in as many activities as possible. More so, teachers of Senior Secondary Schools students should not dominate the classroom activities but allow the learners' considerable chance to improve their usage of present perfect tense.

Keywords: Tense Errors, English Language Spelling Errors, Tense Errors, Vocabulary.

Introduction

It is pertinent to note that the English Language has what we call formal and informal varieties that are, the written and the spoken form. In the written form, formal rules are applied strictly while the spoken form which is largely informal, these rules are not obligatory. The Nigerian English does not differentiate between formal and informal usage in speech; but keeps strictly to the formal in writing. Language has been an integral part of human development and interactive process which manifests itself in verbal and symbolic forms. It serves as a vehicle of interaction through which we understand ourselves. It is obvious that no single sentence, spoken or written, is without a verb. Tense is the pivot of the intended communication of a sentence. Tense as defined by Yule (2016) "is the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or the state it describes". By tense we understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of tense.

Despite the importance attached to the tense in bringing out the meaning of the verb, with our students of senior secondary schools, tense has gone berserk. They are only comfortable with the choosing game of true or false or option from A – E which gives them less than 50% chance of passing their leaving school certificate. It is against this background this paper explores the status of tense aspect in English of which Perfect Tense has been emphasized through the exploration of some strategies of teaching second language learners of English. The Nigerian student who is a second language learner is confused or ignorant on which to use. The student might choose to use that variety which he/she is exposed to or that which is commonly used. The student may even use that which his/her teacher uses even when it is sometimes incorrect.

These students have their individual Languages (L1) which has great impact on their English especially when expressing themselves in essays. As a result of students not being able to use English appropriately in the written form; there have been cries over the proficiency and performance of these students in the subject at the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) level. Therefore, the need to improve proficiency in English has led many studies on the use of English among students. Various scholars like Ofuokwu (2012), Anasiudu (2013), Banjo (2019), Olaofe (2016) among others studied the grammatical errors made in the written and spoken English of users of English in Nigeria. They all agree that errors vary in complexity and source.

Many researchers carried out studies in the use of English among University students e.g. Ofuokwu (2012) and Olaofe (2016) in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. While Olagoke (2011) and Anasiudu (2013) investigated the English of students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Likewise other researchers mainly in the field of linguistics pedagogue, have for sometime dwelt extensively on providing possible solutions to the problems militating against

the smooth learning of the English language especially by second language learners. Areas of Syntax, Phonology, Morphology, Semantics and Literature in English (language) have continued to receive attention. In this effort, myriad problems relating to the wrong use of tenses, unacceptable operations in lexical constructions, poor pronunciation etc. are found among non-native speakers of English.

Statement of the Problem

Various writers, teachers and examiners have pondered over the rate of mass failure and poor performance of students at the Secondary School level in English Language. Adeyanju (2014) states that however, many students at secondary and tertiary levels, as well as others in various professions have not mastered the English language structure usage, mechanics, and therefore communicate ineffectively. The wrong application of tense in student essays is a common feature in the spoken and written English of many Senior Secondary school students. Tense errors affect the students' overall ability to communicate and thereby, militate on their performance in public examinations. There is this general contention that the students' failure to correctly make sentences is due to insufficient knowledge of its functions.

Various studies on tense have been based largely at the tertiary level, but not much work has been done on its usage in the expression of Secondary School Students. This implies that the students' knowledge of this grammatical category is limited or it is not properly handled at this level. It might be based on the forms of their indigenous language and the Nigerian English. This affects the production of correct sentences as those produced in their local languages are not applicable to English. Therefore, this study focused on tense errors among secondary school students, using Saint Theresa Secondary School, Abakiliki, Ebonyi State, as a focal point.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study focused on tense errors among secondary school students, using Saint Theresa Secondary School, Abakiliki, Ebonyi State. The specific purposes are;

1. To identify the effects of tense errors on secondary school students.
2. To examine the possible causes of tense errors among secondary school students.
3. To show prevalence of tense errors among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study

1. What are the effects of tense errors on secondary school students?
2. What are the possible causes of tense errors among secondary school students?
3. In what areas are tense errors prevalent among secondary school students?

Conceptual issues

Concept of Tense Error

Crystal (2008) says in language teaching and learning, error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics. Errors are assumed to reflect in a systematic way, the level of competence achieved by a learner: they are contrasted with 'mistakes', which are performance, limitations that a learner will be able to correct.

Furthermore, tense as defined by Yule (2016) "is the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or the state it describes". By tense we understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of tense. There are many types of tense error. They include errors of pronominal usage. Errors associated with the use of pronouns were of three kinds namely, using a pronoun without an apparent nominal antecedent (as in a & b) using the wrong pronoun (masculine for the feminine gender and vice versa as in c & d). The following are some of the examples of sentences with pronominal errors: (a) when they came to colonize us they have the rule to teach us the language so as to make of their journey easy (b) it enable the entire world to accommodate us in what they do (c) if a woman is proficient in English then he can climb the career ladder to any level (d) for instance I know of a girl who is not yet thirty years old and still he is made the manager of a company". There were two major subtypes of errors associated with articles. There were outright omission of articles where necessary and the use of the wrong articles. For instance, "the English language is language of white people". "Is language used in political arena". "... It is an omen of good things to come when a worker is given leave to do further studies". "There is limit that one can go in civil service without good mastery of English". Errors Associated with Plurality 150 out of 450 had problems with plurality. These are "it is often difficult to caution our self when we code-switch". "The function of English in Nigeria is many and be said to..." Also, in social gathering which involve educated elite. Errors of Non-Sentences Several anomalous constructions were found in 51 out of the 450 sample scripts which amounted to 20% of the total scripts studied. These constructions ranged from making a subordinate clause stand as a whole sentence, making more than one sentence stand as a single sentence, to a jumbling together of several though units linked together by coordinating conjunctions.

Functions of the Present Perfect Tense

A tense is said to be perfect when the action is over and complete. The present perfect tense shows an already recently completed action. It is formed by the use of have/has plus past participle. It is usually termed as "en" or "ed" participle. In teaching English language present perfect tense is considered very important so as to help the learners of English language to understand the time of the perfection and completeness of an action. The aim

of every English L2 teacher is to introduce the learners the way to develop and improve their speech and written competency. The learning of present perfect tense therefore cannot be over emphasized. The teacher is in the position to expose the students to the correct usage and rules governing the formation of the present perfect tense through various pedagogies. There are four major functions realized in the usage of present perfect tense. The functions are here presented with examples:

1. **Present perfect tense:** shows the completed action in the recent or immediate past. In another way it indicates a just concluded action. This is why sometimes it is conveyed with the word just. However, a perfect user knows the action is completed in the recent past even without physically presenting the word just. Examples:

a. Janet has just gone out.
b. We have finished the class work.
c. I have just returned home.

2. **Present perfect tense**: is used to show that the action which began in the past has continued up to the present. Examples:

a. I have lived in Khartoum since 2013.
b. Bilkisu has worked in the college for 10 years.
c. They have studied English for 3 years.

3. **Present perfect tense:** also shows that an action completed in the past has implication for the present. Performance of certain action in the past resulted or gave birth to another completed action present situation. For instance, Mary may give some story about the United States of America and in order to convince you to trust her information I can say "She lived in New York for two years". By implication, she can now tell you a lot about New York or America. See further examples below:

a. You have walked a long distance.
b. She has driven for 3 years.
c. It has bitten the frightened girl.

4. **Present perfect tense**: expresses past action without specification unspecified action is the one which no time marker is attached to it. Examples:

a. She has never been to Jos.
b. Have you ever seen her before?
c. They have always waited for their turn.

Some Mistakes Realized In Students' Use of Present Perfect Tense

We are going to see some grammatical deformities in the learner's use of the present perfect tense. These mistakes are occasioned by the non application of the appropriate rule of the present perfect tense which the "ed" or "en" participle has not been added to the

verbal node. In the following cases the "A" sentence represents the learner deformed grammar in the sentence while "B" sentence denotes the proper grammar or correct usage of the tense in question. 1A. The rain has lessen the number of the participants. 1B. The rain has lessened the number of the participants. 2A. The technologist has acquire knowledge. 2B. The technologist has acquired knowledge. 3A. The engineers have mobilize the steam engine. 3B. The engineers have mobilized the steam engine. 4A. These countries have develop. 4B. These countries have developed. 5A. Scientists have try to make things easy. 5B. Scientists have tried to make things easy. 6A.
Democracy in Nigeria has already go a long way. 6B. Democracy in Nigeria has already gone a long way. 7A. The multilingual nature of Nigeria has lead to tribalism. 7B. The multilingual nature of Nigeria has led to tribalism. 8A. You have get nothing to offer. 8B. You have got nothing to offer. 9A. I have choose my career. 9B. I have chosen my career.
English language teaching and learning must go simultaneously. Isyaku (2002) says that "The purpose of teaching is for learning to take place which is visualized in form of students' achievement as a result of using effective teaching strategies".
In the same vein, Denga (2001) has this to say "The unique characteristics of learning process is where the strategies of teaching English language is imparted and acquired". The two scholars assert that the inductive activities of English aspect, rather than the conclusive were among many factors taking responsible to maintain tenses while speaking. It is widely known that many students loose precious marks due to their inconsistency in the use of tense in writing. The learners usually start a sentence with one tense and end it with another. This disturbing trend may persist largely if measure is not taken. Now we are going to observe a teacher talk method used by the professionals in the trade of teaching and its influence on the performance of the students.

Theoretical Framework

Error Analysis Theory

An error is the use of a word, speech act or grammatical items in such a way it seems imperfect and significant of an incomplete learning (184). It is considered by Albert (1997) as a systematic deviation that happens when a learner has not learnt something, and consistently gets it wrong. However, the attempts made to put the error into context have always gone hand in hand with either language learning and second-language acquisition processes, Cedar (2014) mentioned that errors are 'signals' that indicate an actual learning process taking place and that the learner has not yet mastered or shown a well-structured competence in the target language. All the definitions seemed to stress either on the systematic deviations triggered in the language learning process, or its indications of the actual situation of the language learner themselves which will later help the monitor be it an applied linguist or particularly the language teacher to solve the problem respecting one of the approaches argued in the Error Analysis (Seyyed, 2012), the occurrence of

errors doesn't only indicate that the learner has not learned something yet, but also it gives the linguist the idea of whether the teaching method applied was effective or it needs to be changed.

According to Corder (1967) errors are significant of three things, first to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he or she undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards that goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide the researcher with evidence of how language is learned or acquired, and what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Third (and in a sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. The occurrence of errors is merely signs of ''the present inadequacy of our teaching methods'' (Corder 1967). There have been two schools of thought when it comes to errors analysis and philosophy, the first one, according to Corder (1967) linked the errors commitment with the teaching method arguing that if the teaching method was adequate, the errors would not be committed, the second school believed that we live in an imperfect world and that errors correction is something real and the applied linguist cannot do without it no matter what teaching approach they may use.

Research Method

For the purpose of this study, the research design that is adopted by the researcher is descriptive survey research design.

The population of this study comprises the entire 700 students in Saint Theresa Secondary School, Holy Ghost Secondary School, and Urban Modern secondary school all in Abakiliki, Ebonyi State. The above secondary schools have population strength of 190, 300 and 210 respectively, making a total of 700 in all (**Source:** Personnel Unit of the selected schools).

When the population is large, sample becomes necessary. For that, the researcher used quota sampling technique to select a sample of 100 each from the three secondary schools. In the secondary school itself, the researcher used simple random sampling technique (the shuffling card method) to select 100 each from the schools. Therefore, our sample size is 300. Bierene-Nnabugwu (2010) stated that the shuffling card method which is under the Simple Random Sampling (SRS) techniques is a simple but very practical technique, involving the numbering or naming of cards or slips so that each one represents a unit of the population. This method was used to give the entire population an equal chance of being selected in the sample. The researcher used primary sources of data through questionnaire.

The use of questionnaire was employed to gather necessary and relevant data from the respondents.

For data analysis, the researcher utilizes simple percentage method. The data were presented in tables for easy codification and analysis that follows. The formula for solving simple percentage is given thus:

$$\frac{X}{N} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where,

X = True outcome

N = Total number of possible outcomes.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

It should be noted that out of 300 questionnaires distributed to the sampled population, only 280 were properly filled and returned.

Data Presentation Analysis

Section A: Demographic Variables of the Respondents

Question 1: Sex

Table 1: Sex distribution of the respondent

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
Male	80	28.6
Female	200	71.4
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

According to table 1 above, 28.6% of the respondents are males whereas 71.4% of the respondents are females.

Question 2: Age

Table 2: Age distribution of the respondent

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
10-13	40	14.3
14-15	180	64.3
Above 15	60	21.4
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

According to table 2, 14.3% of the respondents are 10-13 years whereas 64.3% of the respondents are between 14-15 years and 21.4% of the respondents are above 15 years.

Question 3: Religion

Table 3: Religion of the respondents

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
Christianity	280	100
Islam	-	
Others	-	
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above table has shown that all the respondents are Christians.

Section B: The Subject Matter (based on research questions and hypotheses)

Question 4: Do you agree that most students make errors as they communicate in English

Table 4: Responses on if you agree that most students make errors as they communicate in English

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	150	53.6
A	100	35.7
UND	-	-
D	20	7.1
SD	10	3.6
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 53.6% of the respondents strongly agree, 35.7% of the respondents agree while 7.1% of the respondents disagree and 3.6% of the respondents strongly disagree.

Question 5: To what extent do you make spelling errors as you communicate in English

Table 5: Response on if you make spelling errors as you communicate in English

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
Very high extent	80	28.6
High extent	100	35.7
Moderately	30	10.7
Low extent	50	17.9
Very low extent	20	7.1
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 28.6% of the respondents strongly agree, 35.7% of the respondents agree, 10.7% of the respondents were undecided 17.9% disagree and 7.1% of the remaining respondents strongly disagree.

Question 6: Tense error negatively affects student performance in English
Table 6: Response on if tense error negatively affects student performance in English

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	170	60.7
A	100	35.7
UND	-	-
D	10	3.6
SD	-	-
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 60.7% of the respondents strongly agree while 35.7% of the respondents agree and 3.6% disagree.

Question 7: Tense errors hinder the development of good vocabulary among secondary school students
Table 7: Response on if tense errors hinder the development of good vocabulary among secondary school students

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	90	32.1
A	80	28.6
UND	50	17.9
D	35	12.5
SD	25	8.9
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 32.1% of the respondents strongly agree, 28.6% of the respondents agree, 17.9% of the respondents were undecided, 12.5% of the respondent disagree and the remaining 8.9% respondents strongly disagree.

Question 8: Tense errors negatively affect students' social communication in secondary schools

Table 8: Response on if tense errors negatively affect students' social communication in secondary schools

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	200	71.4
A	75	26.8
UND	-	-
D	-	-
SD	5	1.8
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 71.4% of the respondents strongly agree, 26.8% of the respondents agree, and 1.8% of the remaining respondents strongly disagree.

Item 9: Use of unprofessional teachers who did not study English to teach English language is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students

Table 9: Response on if use of unprofessional teachers who did not study English to teach English language is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students

Option	**No of respondents**	**% of responses**
SA	120	42.9
A	110	39.3
UND	-	-
D	50	17.9
SD	-	-
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 42.9% of the respondents strongly agree, 39.3% of the respondents agree and 17.9% disagree.

Item 10: First language interferences is a possible causes of tense errors among secondary school students

Table 10: Response on if first language interferences is a possible causes of tense errors among secondary school students

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	140	50.0
A	90	32.1
UND	5	1.8
D	30	10.7
SD	15	5.4
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 50.0% of the respondents strongly agree, 32.1% of the respondents agree, 1.8% of the respondents were undecided 10.7% disagree and 5.4% of the remaining respondents strongly disagree.

Item 11: Lack of good textbooks is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students

Table 11: Response on if lack of good textbooks is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	25	8.9
A	21	7.5
UND	4	1.4
D	160	57.1
SD	70	25.0
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 8.9% of the respondents strongly agree, 7.5% of the respondents agree, 1.4% of the respondents were undecided 57.1% disagree and 25.0% of the remaining respondents strongly disagree.

Item 12: The errors made by most of the students in the study were similar to those heard in the wrong expressions made by various teachers, and journalists in print and electronic media

Table 12: Response on if the errors made by most of the students in the study were similar to those heard in the wrong expressions made by various teachers, and journalists in print and electronic media

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	100	35.7
A	80	28.6
UND	50	17.9
D	37	13.2
SD	13	4.6
SA	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 35.7% of the respondents strongly agree, 28.6% of the respondents agree, 17.9% of the respondents were undecided 13.2% disagree and 4.6% of the remaining respondents strongly disagree.

Item 13: Tense errors are more prevalent in speaking English among secondary school students

Table 13: Response on if tense errors are more prevalent in speaking English among secondary school students

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	130	46.4
A	90	32.1
UND	50	17.9
D	7	2.5
SD	3	1.1
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 46.4% of the respondents strongly agree, 32.1% of the respondents agree, 17.9% of the respondents were undecided 2.5% disagree and 1.1% of the remaining respondents strongly disagree.

Item 14: Tense errors are prevalent in written English among secondary school students

Table 14: Response on if tense errors are prevalent in written English among secondary school students

Option	No of respondents	% of responses
SA	90	32.1
A	100	35.7
UND	30	10.7
D	50	17.9
SD	10	3.6
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: field survey (2025)

The above analysis has shown that 32.1% of the respondents strongly agree, 35.7% of the respondents agree, 10.7% of the respondents were undecided, 17.9% of the respondent disagree and the remaining 3.6% respondents strongly disagree.

Fill in the spaces with the correct forms of the verbs

Table 15: The boys _____ here (is / are)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Is	80	29
Are	200	71.4
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the above table, it could be seen that 29% of the respondent fail the answer and 71.4% got the answer.

Table 16: Tea and bread _____ ready (is / are)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Is	80	29
Are	200	71.4
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the above table, it could be seen that 29% indicated Is and therefore got the answer, while 71.4% indicated Are and therefore failed the answer.

Table 17: The team of experts _____ arrived (has / have)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Has	130	46.4
Have	150	54
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

In the above table, it could be seen that 46.4% indicated Has and failed it while 54% indicated Have and got the answer.

Table 18: The police _____ investigating the crime presently (are / is)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Are	100	36
Is	180	64.2
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The table above showed that 36% indicated Are and failed the answer and 64.2% indicated Is and got the answer.

Table 19: The audience _____ very attentive when he climbed the rostrum (was / were)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Was	170	61
Were	110	39.2
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the above table, 61% indicated Was and got the answer while 39.2% indicated Were and failed the answer.

Table 20: Soup and garri _____ very tasty (are / is)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Are	180	64.2
Is	100	36
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

In the table above, 64.2% indicated Are and failed, while 36% indicated Is and passed.

Table 21: He _____ instructions from his boss (take / takes)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Take	130	46.4
Takes	150	54
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The table above showed that 46.4% indicated Take and failed while 54% indicated Takes and Passed.

Table 22: The committee _____ submitted its report (have / has)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Have	130	46.4
Has	150	54
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the above table, it could be seen that 46.4% indicated Have and Failed while 54% indicated Has and Passed.

Table 23: She _____ like someone we know (look / looks)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Look	180	64.2
Looks	100	36
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the above table, it could be seen that 64.2% indicated Look and Failed while 36% indicated Looks and Passed.

Table 24: The president and commander in chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria _____ just arrived the stadium (have / has)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Have	200	71.4
Has	80	29
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the above table, it could be seen that 71.4% indicated Have and Failed while 29% indicated Has and Passed.

Summary of Findings

This study discovered that:

1. Most students make errors as they communicate in English.
2. Spelling errors are made when communicating with English.
3. Tense error negatively affects student performance in English.
4. Tense errors hinder the development of good vocabulary among secondary school students.
5. Tense errors negatively affect students' social communication in secondary schools.
6. Use of unprofessional teachers who did not study English to teach English language is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students.
7. First language interference is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students.
8. Lack of good textbooks is a possible cause of tense errors among secondary school students.
9. The errors made by most of the students in the study were similar to those heard in the wrong expressions made by various teachers, and journalists in print and electronic media.
10. Tense errors are more prevalent in spooking English among secondary school students.
11. Tense errors are prevalent in written English among secondary school students.

From the questions were students were ask to fill in the space with the correct forms of the verbs, it could be seen that students failed some of the questions and as well passed some of them. Most of the students passed the first questions few failed it. However, most of the students failed the second question and only few passed. Most of the students also got the right answer in number four, five, and six questions while few of them failed in those questions. Most of the student failed the number seven question and few passed. In number eight questions most of the student passed and few failed. However, most of the students failed number nine and ten questions as only few passed.

Conclusion

In second language teaching and learning, errors tend to be viewed negatively. Errors are usually considered to be a sign of inadequacy of the teaching and learning. However, it is now generally accepted that error making is a necessary part of learning and language teachers should use the errors with a view of improving teaching. The more we know

about language learning the more likely we are to be successful in our teaching of a second language. As Lightdown and Spada (2001) argue when tense errors occur frequently, it is useful for teachers to bring the problem to the students‟ attention. The significance of this study is, therefore, to inform teachers, educators and language study material developers about the kind of tense errors that their target learners make.

Although much work remains to be done in the area of error correction in L2 writing, we hope this study contributes to the quest by Nigerian teachers, learners and material developers to improve the standard of English language proficiency in secondary schools. This study concludes that Language learning is a step-by-step process during which errors or mistakes are to be expected. Errors are visible proof that learning is taking place. The researcher also discovered that the errors made by most of the students in the study were similar to those heard in the wrong expressions made by various teachers, and journalists in print and electronic media. The problematic areas were mostly in the use of tense forms to express repeated actions, short time duration `actions and actions completed at specific times in the future. In the light of the above, it can be concluded that there exists poor knowledge on the tense, concord and number concord (plurals forms) among secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers can help their students improve their level of language competency in the use of present perfect tense by encouraging them to participate in as many activities as possible.
2. Teachers of Senior Secondary Schools students should not dominate the classroom activities but allow the learners considerable chance to improve their usage of present perfect tense.

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