INVESTIGATING THE LOW PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS’ ENGLISH IN THE BASIC EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN THE SUNYANI MUNICIPALITY

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF M.PHIL TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE DEGREE

DECEMBER, 2014
DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of studies I have undertaken entirely by myself and that I was guided by Professor Kofi Agyekum and Dr. A. K. Dzameshie both of the department of linguistics, University of Ghana.

In spite of the fact that my supervisors guided me, I wish to state that I take sole responsibility for any blemishes that this work may contain.

I have endeavoured to acknowledge all sources of information quoted, cited or used in any other way in the work.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, Mr. G.E.A. Yeboah, who has always inspired me to have a passion for self-improvement.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to God Almighty for the strength in body and mind to pursue the study with enthusiasm.

I am especially indebted to my supervisors: Professor Kofi Agyekum and Dr. A. K. Dzameshie for their patience in pointing out my errors and for their suggestions and motivation which have contributed to the completion of this work.

I would like to specially thank the circuit supervisors, head teachers, teachers of English, parents and students in the Sunyani municipality who were selected for the study. This work could not have been completed without their help.

Finally, to all who contributed in one way or the other towards the completion of this research work, I say may God richly bless you.
ABSTRACT

The low performance of students in government schools in the area of English Language during the Basic Education Certificate Examination has been a source of worry to all educational stakeholders.

The study therefore was aimed at investigating the low performance of students’ English in the Basic Education Certificate Examination in the Sunyani municipality. The study examined the factors that impede the acquisition of English as a second language leading to dismal performance in the B.E.C.E. Subjects for the study included circuit supervisors, head teachers, teachers of English, parents and students.

Findings revealed that insufficient teaching and learning materials, large class size, misuse of instructional time, incompletion of the English syllabus, teachers’ limited proficiency in English, students’ negative attitude to the study of English and lack of supervision among others have contributed to the low performance of students in the B.E.C.E. in the Sunyani municipality.

Consequently, it has been suggested that schools and communities should establish reading clubs where students who read extensively are rewarded. Government should improve basic school libraries and provide schools with the needed teaching and learning resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Special attention should also be given to the teaching of phonetics and phonology in the colleges of education. This is because the exposition of students to the sound systems of the English language sharpens their pronunciation, spelling and reading skills. Students in the various colleges of education should be given the opportunity to either major or minor in the English language as it is done in the universities. This would give them an in-depth knowledge in the teaching of the English language.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. B E C E – Basic Education Certificate Examination
2. C R T – Criterion Referenced Test
3. CHILD S C O P E – Child School Community Progress in Education
4. D B E – Diploma in Basic Education
5. E F L – English as a Foreign Language
6. E Q U A L – Education Quality for All
7. E S L – English as a Second Language
8. F C U B E – Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
9. F G – Focus Group
10. G E S – Ghana Education Service
12. G S F P – Ghana School Feeding Programme
13. I C T – Information and Communication Technology
14. J H S – Junior High School
15. L I – M other Tongue
16. L 2 – Second Language
17. L A D – Language Acquisition Device
22. Q U I P S – Quality Improvement in Primary School
23. S P S S – Statistical Product and Service Solution
24. T L M – Teaching and Learning Materials
25. TV - Television


27. UNICEF – United Nation International Children’s Emergency Fund

28. USAID – United State Agency for International Development

29. UTDBE – Untrained Teacher Diploma in Basic Education

30. WAEC – West African Examination Council
CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction.

Modern English is sometimes described as the global Lingua Franca, (Graddol, 1997). Millions of people all over the world speak English since a working knowledge of English is required in certain fields, professions and occupations. In Ghana, many languages and dialects are spoken. In view of the linguistic and associated cultural differences, and as a result of the country’s colonial past, English has been adopted as Ghana’s official language. Unfortunately, examination results clearly show that the standard of English keeps falling. Therefore there is the need to find out factors that have contributed to this poor state of affairs.

In this introductory chapter, the following issues are discussed: Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the study, Objectives of the Study, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Scope of the Study, Delimitation and Organization of the Study.

1.1 Background to the Study.

Language, according to the UNESCO report 2000, is one of man’s major means of expression. It enables people to communicate things and phenomena that they would never be able to do without a language. Language is the most important tool in the teaching and learning process. The choice of the language of instruction used in school is of utmost importance. The importance of its effective use in basic education cannot therefore be overemphasized.
The importance of English language acquisition as a spring board for proficiency in other school subjects cannot be overestimated. Its prominence as a school subject derives mainly from its utilitarian value to the Ghanaian society. The teaching syllabus for the basic schools demands that teachers teach students how to speak and write English very well which will develop them socially, economically and occupationally. The rationale behind the teaching of English language therefore is to teach students to be able to communicate effectively.

Bamgbose (1996) as cited in Markin- Yankah (1999:14) opined that in formal education the degree of mastery of instruction greatly influences schools’ achievement. However, it is sad to note that fifty seven years after independence, Ghana is still grappling with which language to use as the medium of instruction in the lower primary schools.

Basic education in Ghana embraces two languages: L1, being the child’s mother tongue and L2, being the English Language which has a much wider use in education. For many decades, the official policy regarding these two languages in education has been the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction as well as one of the subjects to be studied at lower primary (P1-P3), while the English language is a subject. From primary 4 the English language becomes the medium of instruction as well as a subject.

This policy worked almost perfectly until it began to generate a controversy between policy makers and language professionals. Policy makers regarded the policy as unworkable and believed it had been the cause of lowering of standards in basic education. Policy makers therefore proposed the use of English Language as a medium of instruction right from Day 1 in Primary 1. The change of the policy to “English only” in 2002 is a clear evidence of this fact. Language experts, however, disagreed with this

One of the issues that had been of great concern to many literacy educators and which was highlighted in the Kraft’s report in 2003 is the language policy and its implementation in Ghana. Why do students have so much difficulty in learning the English language in school? Is it because of the language policy we are dealing with?

Before formal education was introduced into Ghana, traditional education was conducted in the indigenous languages. With the coming of formal education the indigenous languages were seen as ‘inadequate’ as the medium of instruction, (Bamgbose, 2000:12). The situation however changed with the arrival of the missionaries who resorted to the development of the local languages in both their educational and proselytizing efforts. The language policies during this period were as varied as they were independent (Andoh-Kumi, 1992:68). The Ghanaian language had gained root to the extent that when the British colonial government took over the administration of education in the country in 1925 it could not reverse the trend. (Bamgbose, 2000:12). Therefore the first legislation on the use of Ghanaian language in education was promulgated (McWilliam, 1962:46). Ghanaian language was to be used as medium of instruction only in the lower primary level with English used thereafter.

During the colonial periods, particularly between 1821 and 1904, after the British assumed more administrative control over the Gold Coast, they made many attempts to bring some control over which language to use as the medium of instruction. However, all their attempts to promote English supremacy in the colony failed because
as McWilliams (1962:32) put it, their policies were based on “current or obsolete English methods with little attempts to satisfy local conditions”.

Later, the British government gave recognition to the teaching and learning of the local languages. For instance, as a result of a popular commission in the 1920s, the Phelps-Stokes Committee on language in the African schools, recognition was given to a new language policy which made “the teaching through the medium of the mother tongue compulsory at least in the lower classes of the primary school” (McWilliams, 1962:57). By 1957, four Ghanaian languages, Twi, Ga, Fante and Ewe, had been approved to be used as the medium of instruction in primary schools and also as examinable subjects that could be taken at the end of the high school programme.

After independence, in 1957, when Ghana officially adopted English as the official language of the country, the language policy of the Phelps-Stokes committee remained. English, however, was to be the medium of instruction from class four while the Ghanaian language was to be taught as a subject.

From 1959 to 1966 a Ghanaian language was not used at all. From 1967 to 1969 it was used only for the first year. Between 1970 and 1974 Ghanaian language was used for the first three years. In February, 2002 the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government came out with a new language policy which stressed that English should be used as a medium of instruction from the first day the child walks into the classroom while the Ghanaian language of the locality is taught as a subject.

The minister of education argued later in parliament that since English was used in all spheres of education and there was the need to improve the standard of the spoken language, it was essential to begin using it early in school so that the children become fluent in it. This assertion received reaction from several quarters including the linguists
in the department of Linguistics of the University of Ghana. They stressed the importance of the child’s mother tongue (L1) in second language (L2) acquisition. To them, plunging the child into a new language in the first term of his educational life is not the best for achievement in language proficiency.

From 2008 to date there has been the implementation of the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP) developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and Ghana Education Service with technical and financial support from Education Quality for All (EQUALL) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (MOESS, 2008). The decision to introduce a new instructional approach is the outcome of discussions with language experts, consultants, policy makers and implementers. It contributes to the implementation of the official language policy which stipulates that Ghanaian language be used as the medium of instruction at the kindergarten and lower primary levels with English where necessary. English becomes the medium of instruction from Basic four.

The rationale behind the adoption of the NALAP is the overwhelming evidence that mother tongue-based instruction is a powerful tool for the acquisition of literacy skills. Proponents of this approach believe that the mother tongue (L1) based literacy instruction approach has a built in transition to English (L2), (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, Primary 2, Teacher’s Guide, 2008). This methodology enables primary school children to learn the skills of reading and writing in the Ghanaian language as well as helping in the reinforcement and transfer of skills acquired into the English language. In effect, by basic three, pupils would be functionally literate and would have achieved reading fluency in their mother tongue and in English (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, Primary 2, Teacher’s Guide, 2008). The question
now is; can the varied nature of language use in instruction at our various schools be a possible factor for this abysmal performance of students in English examinations?

In Ghana, the basic level of education comprises six years Primary and three years Junior High School (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004). The Junior High School is the entry stage for a comprehensive Senior High School training in vocational, technical, agricultural and general education. It is also a preparatory stage for a structured scheme of apprenticeship. A good performance at this level must therefore be seen as the preparatory stage of education and the determining entry point into further levels of education in Ghana. Such performance is measured through externally supervised examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) on behalf of the Ghana Education Service (GES) called the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Selection and placement of pupils to Senior High Schools and Technical/Vocational Institutes are based on pupils’ performance at the BECE. Results from the BECE are the yardstick for the measurement of quality education at the basic level by many parents in Ghana. Poor performance in this area has therefore become a great source of worry to majority of Ghanaians.

In addressing this perceived poor performance, the government of Ghana and other stakeholders in education have put in place a number of measures aimed at improving the general quality of education in the country. For instance in 1996, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was introduced to ensure that children get access to basic quality education. Again strategies like Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) and Child School Community Progress in Education (CHILD SCOPE) sponsored by the United Nation International Children’s
Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to improve children’s reading, writing and numeracy skills have been some of the measures towards quality education in Ghana.

Mayer (2001:18) stated that one of the foremost problems of education deals with the recruitment and preparation of teachers. In view of this, the government of Ghana has initiated certain policies aimed at improving the quality of teachers at the basic schools. The teacher training colleges have been upgraded into Diploma Awarding Institutions (Colleges of Education) with better facilities. The universities have organized Distance Education programmes to enable as many as are willing to upgrade themselves to obtain either a diploma or degree in Basic Education. The Teacher Education Division of the Ghana Education Service has also organized the Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education (UTDBE) programme to enrich the knowledge of ‘pupil teachers’ and improve their competencies since most of them are handling the basic schools. With the above stated interventions in place, coupled with a great percentage of the national budget on basic education in the form of capitation grants, school feeding and others, one would have expected a remarkable improvement in the performance of students. On the contrary, standards are falling.

The situation is even worse when it comes to English assessment in the Sunyani Municipality. A study of the BECE results from 2008 to 2012 gave the following appalling picture in the area of English language.
Table 1: Statistics on BECE English Language Results of Students in the Sunyani Municipality from 2008 to 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES</th>
<th>NUMBER PASSED</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE PASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,583</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,031</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,851</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,851</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source-Sunyani Municipal Education Directorate)

Table 1 shows the total number of government school candidates who sat for BECE in the Sunyani municipality from 2008 to 2012 as against the number that passed. In 2008, out of a total of 2,583 candidates 1,008 students representing 35.6% passed with grades ranging from 1-5. In 2009, 858 students representing 42.3% of the students passed. In 2010, the percentage pass was 45.3 %. In 2011, 44% passed in English. In 2012 when the pass grade was extended to grade 6, 58% of the students passed. It was therefore evident that a great proportion of the junior high school students had performed badly in English in the national examinations.

Various researchers had investigated and found a number of factors that contribute to poor performance of students in the English language at the basic level in several places. For instance, Etsey et al (2004), in their study of some private and public schools in Ghana, revealed that academic performance was better in private schools due to effective supervision of work.
Paaku (2008) showed her concern about the poor academic performance in the BECE in some selected schools in the Ajumako-Enyan-Essian district in the Central Region of Ghana. The study revealed that poor methods of teaching, negative attitude of students towards learning and non-availability of relevant text books were some of the causes of poor academic performance of J.H.S. students.

Again, Oluwole (2008) investigated the impact of mother tongue on students’ achievement in the English Language in Junior Secondary Certificate Examination in western Nigeria. The study brought to light that language background, lack of professional growth and development of teachers and lack of motivation caused students to fail in their examinations. Findings of these researchers were guiding policy makers in addressing the problem. Yet, students’ performances continued to fall.

There was therefore the need to conduct further research into the causes in order to find out other factors that had contributed to the low performance of students in English language and suggest ways of managing them.

1.1.1 The Importance of Teaching the English Language in Basic Schools.

In recognition of the importance of the English language in enhancing educational attainment, as well as for improving communication ability of citizens, the government of Ghana had made the subject a core subject. It was also compulsory for students to have credit in the English language before entering either the senior high school or the university.

In spite of the tremendous importance attached to the English language in Ghana, standards were still falling. It was for that reason that the study sought to obtain
evidence of factors that had contributed to the low performance especially in the English language as reflected in the BECE in the Sunyani municipality.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

The extensive use of the English language in the formal sector demands an appreciable degree of competence in the language of both teachers and students. This could help teachers to teach effectively, and students, to understand lessons and apply concepts efficiently. Unfortunately, there was an absence of such a degree of competence. The chief examiners’ reports on the BECE, the chief examiners’ reports on teacher-trainees and other reports had provided some evidence of real fall in standards.

1.2.1 Report on the Performance of Students in English.

The fact that English is the language that learners use in communicating their thoughts to the examination bodies in almost all subjects portrays that one’s excellent performance in many other subjects is closely linked to one’s command of the English language either in writing or speech. WAEC, the main examination body in Ghana in charge of BECE, had severally complained about the poor use of English by students.

Reporting on the performance of candidates who wrote the BECE in 2008, the chief examiner stressed among other things that few candidates were able to produce work of exceptional performance at their level but general performance showed no spectacular improvement over the previous years. (Chief Examiner’s Report, 2008). It was therefore suggested that the teaching and learning of spelling and basic rules of grammar should be intensified. In 2011, the chief examiner reported that the inability of the candidates to express themselves well in the English language was evident in
other subjects. He therefore suggested that teachers should use the English language as the medium of instruction in all schools to help candidates improve their command of the language.

1.2.2 Report on the Performance of Teacher Trainees in English.

Much as we tend to blame the students for the deterioration of the English language in Ghana, we do not have to lose sight of the fact that if the source of the problem comes from the teachers as resource persons themselves then we are not addressing the root cause of the problem of English language deficiencies in our schools. Trained teachers form a vital link in the teaching and spread of Standard English in the country. Therefore their inability to speak and write Standard English properly has far reaching consequences on the quality of formal education in the country. It was therefore expedient to look at reports on these teacher trainees to ascertain if the problem of students’ abysmal performance could be traced to the teacher.

The report released by the Chief Examiner of colleges of education for March 2012 was not anything better compared to the previous ones. The Chief Examiner stressed that candidates still had difficulty in spelling. Examples to show how simple words were wrongly spelt were given. For example, oath spelt ‘oarth’, swear spelt ‘sward’, college spelt ‘colledge’, witness spelt ‘withness’, message spelt ‘massage’, and eye-sore spelt ‘eye-saw’, to mention but a few. It was noted that candidates had ideas but lacked appropriate register and expression to tackle the questions. Most of the candidates had problems with the organization of their paragraphs making the flow of their ideas incoherent. Expressions were inconsistent with what they were describing. There were wrong uses of sequence of tense making expressions clumsy.
With the comprehension, 121 candidates representing 62.2% of the 180 candidates presented scored between 0-5 out of 20 marks. Most of the candidates could not answer inferential and deductive questions. Most candidates also had problems with meaning of words, phrases and clauses underlined. On communication skills and speech work, apart from candidates from one college of education that did extremely well, others performed poorly. On the whole, students’ performance was far below expectation. (Chief Examiner’s Report for Year Three, DBE-End of First Semester, 2012-English Language Studies).

Agor (2003), in his thesis, also highlighted difficulties teacher trainees had in the use of concord. Boadi (1973) as cited in Ahadzie (1995:75) placed the root of the problem at the doorstep of teachers who teach in the colleges of education. He suggested that attention should be given to equipping teacher trainees with English language skills rather than in the methodology of instruction. Ahadzie added, “A teacher can hardly hope to teach English if his mastery of it is inadequate”. Puhl and Swart (1995:2) expressed concern about the constant negative impact the teacher’s poor quality of English could have on learners who actually need good role models of language use.

Who then was responsible for the low performance of students in the English language in the Sunyani municipality?

- Was the fault entirely of teachers or students or both?
- Was it that students were ‘non-achievers’ because they had low intelligent quotient?
- Was it because teachers were not putting in much commitment?
- Was it in teachers’ method of teaching and interaction with students?
• Was the poor performance of students caused by social issues like parents’ neglect, separation, poverty, ignorance or irresponsibility?
• Was the fault from the government or the Ministry of Education or Ghana Education Office?
• Was it with the colleges or universities of education?

Answers to the above questions and others were what the research work sought to find.

1.3 Purpose of the Study.

The study set out to find the reasons for the low performance of Junior High School students in government schools in the English language in the BECE. It was also intended to discover the mechanisms that existed in monitoring the performance of students in the Sunyani municipality.

1.4 General Objective of the Research

The main objective of the work was to examine factors that impeded the acquisition of English as a second language leading to low performance in the BECE. Findings of the research would go a long way to address some of the causes of students’ language deficiencies in the basic schools.

1.5 Specific Objectives of the Research.

The specific objectives of the work were;

1. To examine the general teaching and learning environment as well as learning materials of the selected schools in the Sunyani municipality.
2. To assess the supervisory role of head teachers and circuit supervisors in the Sunyani municipality.

3. To find learner factors that have contributed to the low performance in the English language in the Sunyani municipality.

4. To find social factors that have contributed to the dismal performance in the English language in the Sunyani municipality.

1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What school environment factors are contributory factors to the low performance of government school students in English?

2. What teacher related factors result in poor performance of students in English language in the BECE?

3. What student characteristics are responsible for the abysmal performance of students in English language examination?

4. What social factors are responsible for the dismal performance of government school students in English language?

5. What mechanisms exist in monitoring students’ performance in English in the Sunyani Municipality?

1.7 Significance of the Study.

It is envisaged that the findings of the study would contribute towards the diagnosis of the problems and solutions to the causes of the English language deficiency in Junior High Schools in the Sunyani municipality. This exposition would help the Sunyani
municipal directorate to adapt workable measures that are likely to improve the performance of students in the English language in the BECE.

The findings of the study would also help lecturers at the colleges of education to further enrich their course content. This will equip these teacher trainees with knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach English at the basic schools upon completion of their course.

It might also provide syllabus designers and textbook writers with information on the contemporary problems at the Junior High School level as far as English language learning is concerned. This awareness might help in re-designing the syllabus and textbooks to meet the needs of both teachers and students in basic schools. It might also elicit positive attitudinal change on the part of other stakeholders so as to promote effective learning of English. The study would also provide information that is likely to be useful in in-service training programmes for teachers and other educational stakeholders in the municipality.

Finally, this study is likely to inspire other researchers to embark on similar studies in other districts or municipalities so that more general information about factors that contribute to poor performance of students in the English language especially in public schools could be obtained and addressed to improve the performance of students.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The investigation was designed to look at factors that had contributed to the low performance of government school students in the English language in the BECE. The study covered seven Junior High Schools in the Sunyani municipality. The schools selected had taken part in the BECE for at least five years.
The focus of the study was on the selected Junior High Schools with parents and external supervisors inclusive. Attention was focused on attitude of students towards the English language as a subject, school factors that contribute to poor performance of students in English, teachers’ methods of teaching English, social factors that hamper the progress of English language acquisition and the supervisory roles of internal and external supervisors.

1.9 Delimitation

The study was limited to 446 participants from seven selected junior high schools in the Sunyani municipality. These were made up of students, parents, teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to include all schools in Ghana. The study’s external validity is therefore affected since external validity has to do with the extent to which a study’s results can be generalized from samples to population (Nunan 1992:15). Nevertheless, findings of the study might prompt further in-depth research into the issue at stake.

1.10 Organization of the Study.

The study comprises six chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction which throws light on what to expect in the study. It considers the Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the study, Objectives of the Study, Significance of the Study, Scope of the Study, Theoretical Framework, Research Questions, Limitation and Organization of the Study.

The second chapter deals with a review of relevant literature on the study. Related literature from books, the internet, journals, articles and periodicals are reviewed.
Chapter three focuses on the methodology. It includes the study design, study population, research instruments, methods of data collection and analysis.

The fourth chapter presents the analysis of the data obtained from the field. These are presented in tables. Data collected were analyzed using simple mean scores, percentages and frequencies.

The fifth chapter discusses the result of the study. The discussion is done based on the presentation of the results of the study in chapter four.

The last chapter contains a summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations. The findings of the study suggest important conclusions. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations are also made.

1.11 Summary

In this chapter, the general overview of the study has been given. The situation that has necessitated the research into the low performance of public school students in the BECE English language has been highlighted. The objectives, as well as the research questions that guide the study, have also been stated among other things. It is anticipated that findings of the study would give suitable and reliable answers to the questions posed in order for the objectives set for the study to be achieved.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW
2.0 Introduction

This chapter takes a look at the theory that underpins the study. It also reviews literature that is relevant to the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Swanson (2013) defined theoretical framework as the structure that supports a theory of a research study. It introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. It also connects the researcher to existing knowledge.

Krashen’s monitor model of language acquisition is a propeller as far as this research work is concerned. Krashen (1982:10) explained that a new language is acquired naturally and subconsciously as the community around the learner engages him in the functional use of the new language. There are five hypotheses in his model. These are:

- The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
- The Natural Order Hypothesis
- The Monitor Hypothesis
- The Input Hypothesis
- The Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The first hypothesis, The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, emphasizes how the provision of a supporting and risk free environment can help English as a Second Language (ESL) students acquire the new language subconsciously as they use the language for various authentic purposes.
The second, The Natural Order hypothesis posits that language is acquired in a natural order. Krashen (1982:10) claimed that language rules and grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable, natural and necessary order. He posited that second language acquisition proceeds in a natural order through informal and implicit learning. He also hypothesized that some aspects of language are picked up earlier than others. For example, children learn to use the plural morpheme “s” as in “girls” earlier than learning to add the “s” to the verb of the third person singular (e.g. He drinks).

The third, The Monitor hypothesis explains how the first language speaker naturally monitors the grammatical functions of the language when he speaks, or writes and how it becomes very difficult for a second language learner to learn the rules of the second language to enable him or her, monitor what he or she speaks or writes.

The fourth, The Input hypothesis, emphasizes how giving comprehensible input to students aids their learning processes.

Krashen’s fifth hypothesis, The Affective Filter hypothesis, crowns it all. It stresses the affective aspect of learning. According to Krashen, it is not sufficient for learners to simply receive comprehensible input. They must also let in the input for second language acquisition to occur. This hypothesis explains how the affective factors may serve as a filter blocking input. The affective filter hypothesis emphasizes the fact that, affective factors do not impact acquisition of language directly but prevent input from reaching what Chomsky calls the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) (Freeman and Freeman, 1994:85). For example, if the language learner is anxious, demotivated, has low self-esteem, is hungry, etc., effective learning will not take place. When the affective filter is down or low, learning goes on but if there is so much tension
and threat in the second language learning classroom, the learner finds it difficult to learn anything.

The conclusion the researcher draws from Krashen’s five hypotheses is that, people acquire second language when they obtain comprehensive input and when their affective filters are low enough to allow the input. By this, the primacy of the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis is perceived. The first three hypotheses are considered as the set up for the last two vital ideas. The implication of the input hypothesis is that if the method of teaching a second language learner is contrary to the needs of that learner, it will not yield the desired result. Again, having the right materials and techniques can make the input comprehensible. With the affective filter hypothesis, the effort to reduce the stress of the learning environment will have a direct positive impact on the ability of a second language learner to acquire the language. Therefore, applying Krashen’s hypotheses in this study is a step in the right direction as it provides a good platform for looking at the peculiarities of the problem of low performance of students in the BECE English language as they manifest themselves in each of the selected schools.

2.2 The Literature Review

Many researchers have touched on issues concerning the poor performance of students in the English language. The purpose of this literature review is to outline the factors that contribute to the poor performance of students in the English language. This section
looks at related literature from books, the internet, journals, articles and periodicals. The review is done under the following strands:

- Government related factors that lead to poor performance of students in English.
- Teacher related factors that contribute to poor academic performance of students in English.
- Learners’ attitudes and behaviour that affect their acquisition of the English language.
- Social factors that have adverse effect on the academic performance of students.
- School environment factors that contribute to poor performance of students in English.
- Monitoring mechanisms that exist in schools that can help improve academic performance.

2.2.1 Government Related Factors that Lead to Poor Performance of Students in English.

Although English occupies an important place in the Ghanaian educational system, there are problems connected to its teaching and learning in the schools. Some of the problematic factors are government related. These include the language policy, curriculum issues and the nature of the English syllabus.
2.2.1.1 The Language Policy and Problems Associated with its Implementation in Basic Schools.

Several studies conducted to evaluate the implementation of the Language policy showed that there is no problem with the policy itself in the first place because it agrees with universal research on second language learning worldwide. There had been much research on how important it is for children to first learn their mother tongue before learning a second language. Also research is clear on the benefits children derive from instruction that encourages the use of the primary languages to support the teaching of English as a second language.

For instance, Andoh-Kumi (2002:38-51) talked about some of the reasons given by those who found the policy laudable. One of the reasons was the view that, the L1 serves as a bridge between the home and the school and children therefore consider teachers as parent substitutes because they speak their language. Another reason was the belief that the use of L1 as a medium of instruction enables the child to express him or herself freely in the classroom and consequently the child will not perceive any negative impression about school. There was also the claim that language is a fundamental human right for every individual and therefore children should not be denied the use of the language they speak.

Fawcett (1980:43) also contended that home and school make highly contrasting psychological demands on a young child. He stated that if the mother tongue is not used, to some children, the school becomes a traumatic experience rather than the place of delight in discovery and creativity that it should be.

Cummins (1979:1-26), a second language researcher, posited that there is a "Threshold level of linguistic competence" that the second language learner has to
attain before success in any cognitively demanding academic work can be achieved. If a second language learner fails to attain that threshold level before he is introduced to serious academic and cognitively demanding task, he or she may end up performing poorly.

Agyekum (2001:11) stated how bad and ineffective a method of education which ignored the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the early stages of education could be. According to him, teachers who want to use English as early as possible as the school language are holding back their children’s mental power. He observed that children could not develop thinking powers while struggling to learn a foreign language.

Cheung (1999:62) also asserted that the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction creates a happy learning atmosphere in the class - lots of jokes and healthy discussions - whereas the use of L2 as medium of instruction makes most learners feel very unhappy and very pitiful in class.

Notwithstanding arguments in favour of the use of mother tongue (LI) as a medium of instruction in promoting the acquisition of English, there are equally strong arguments on the need to use English as a medium of instruction.

For instance, Ellis (1985:15) mentioned that classroom management and organization as well as more obvious pedagogic goals should be carried out in the target language. He suggested that using the mother tongue would deprive the learners of valuable input in the second language.

Kropp-Dakubu (1988:11) asserted that in a multilingual country like Ghana, any native language chosen as the medium of instruction throughout the whole educational
system might promote the spirit of ethnocentrism and therefore English should be used as the medium of instruction to avoid all odds.

Andoh-Kumi (2000), Agyekum (2001) and Asamoah (2009) discussed why some scholars frown on LI as the medium of instruction. According to each of them, these scholars feel that the multi-lingual nature of the country encourages the use of English as a medium of instruction. To them, any education given through the medium of a Ghanaian Language could only be an inferior one since it would breed tribalism and hold the nation back industrially, economically and scientifically. They held the view that since the child learns language easily in his or her critical period, he or she should start using English as soon as he or she enters school because he or she will need English more than the Ghanaian Language in his or her academic life.

The mother tongue was given a minor place because according to Agyekum (2001) the Ministry of Education in the Gold Coast (Ghana) was influenced by certain difficulties in its use. The three main difficulties were the existence of a greater number of different languages and even of different dialects of the same language; the difficulty of training teachers in a multiplicity of languages; and the difficulty in the production of text books and literature. The writer also talked of a UNESCO publication in 1953 which stated that the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools is criticized on the basis that the child already knows his or her own language before entering school, and that there is no need for the school to teach him or her again. He said that some people claimed that it is impossible for children to acquire a good use of the second language if the school fails to adopt the second language as a medium of instruction from the very beginning. He concluded that it was as a result of these that most schools in the past actually forbade any use of the mother tongue in the schools.
Ubahake (1999), Ohia (1997) and Duff (1997) stressed that the falling standard of English is due to the use of tribal indigenous languages in the lower classes. They therefore suggested that students should be exposed to English early from the lower primary class irrespective of the advantages of the use of the mother tongue.

Having considered the views of the various scholars, the researcher believes that although English is regarded as the official language in Ghana, the learners are still learning it as a second or third language. Therefore English should be taught as a second language and not as a first language of the children. Failure to recognize that English is a second language would result in policy makers introducing instructional programmes that would not work with the English language learners in Ghana.

2.2.1.2 Lack of Flexibility in Changing the English Curriculum in the Schools.

The English language syllabus is organized in a way that English language instruction is generally split between reading, grammar, writing composition, and library (Primary School English syllabus, 2010). Although it is explicitly stated in the syllabus that “the subject, English, integrates the receptive and productive skills in the teaching and the learning of English” (Primary School English syllabus, 2010, p. ii), in practice, there is little integration in the teaching of the various aspects. The five hours a week allocated on the weekly schedule for English teaching is split among the skills with each discrete skill taught in isolation. As Kraft (2003) pointed out, the syllabi follow the traditional pattern with little or no connection to standard movement worldwide.
2.2.1.3 Overload of Content in the Syllabus.

According to Kraft (2003) the syllabus shows evidence of overloading of content to be taught in each grade level. Many teachers are not able to complete the syllabus as well as the reading text assigned to each year. He described the situation and the problem created by the overloading of the textbook in particular when he said, “Teachers in the next grade start with the new book, regardless of whether students have mastered the previous essential skills or not. The results of the Criterion-Referenced Test\(^1\) (CRT) indicate that by Primary 6, a large majority of Ghanaian children are hopelessly lost” (Kraft, 2003:46).

2.2.2 Teacher Related Factors that Contribute to Poor Academic Performance of Students in English.

The importance of the teacher in the educational system cannot be overemphasized. No matter how good a curriculum may seem, it is the human touch provided by the teacher that will ensure that good and lasting results are produced. It must be noted that it is not the presence of a human being tagged “teacher” in the classroom that will ensure the desired success of the teaching-learning process. Some factors such as teacher’s method of teaching, quality, commitment, motivation and personal characteristics among others affect teachers’ output in the language classroom.

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\(^1\) Criterion Referenced Test (CRT)- It is a type of test that provides measures that can be interpreted in terms of the ability to perform clearly defined tasks. In this type of test, the focus is on what the individual can do rather than on the relative position of the person with respect to others.
2.2.2.1 Teacher’s Method of Teaching.

Many studies conducted in Ghana confirmed that the failure of students in learning the English language could be attributed to the current teaching methods being used in the classrooms today (Kraft, 2003).

Bezanson and Hawkes (1972), described the teaching methods of Ghana as being the traditional, whole-class, teacher-dominated type. The early stages of reading often consist of ‘alphabetic’ and of much ‘look-and-say’ work, with words and sentences mechanically repeated, especially in English. Reading instruction in the lower primary school is focused on teaching the blending of letters and sounds to form words.

Finn (1990:57) explained that the Grammar-Translation methods which focus heavily on the teaching of rules, vocabulary, structure and analysis of the language into parts do not encourage communication in the target language. This is because such methods do not give students the opportunity to practice language in a meaningful and purposeful environment. As Dzameshie (1996:173) put it, “The teaching of English in Ghanaian classrooms is more analytical and grammar-based rather than meaning-oriented”.

In his keynote address at the 4th quadrennial delegates conference of the Berekum municipal branch of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), Mr. Charles B. Kala, a retired unionist, observed that the poor reading ability of students is as a result of the introduction of the “Look and Say” method replacing the “Phonic” method. He recalled that when one Rev. Ofosu re-introduced the phonic method in the Asunafo district in 2008, it worked miraculously. Pupils could read in six weeks. He
therefore stressed that the ‘phonic’ method is better than the ‘look and say’ method and that it should be re-introduced.

Olugbodi (2006:89) asserted that teachers are producers of knowledge, by teaching the learners one additional language besides their mother tongue. Teachers should know the different kinds of problems and how these affect the intellectual, social, emotional and cultural lives of their students. There is also the need to have knowledge of the pupils’ cultural backgrounds as teachers attempt to teach these learners the new language. A rich and stimulating language environment during the early years and beyond is essential to the development of verbal and intellectual skills necessary for language learning. Olugbodi (2006:89) again stated that teachers are required to make students become more balanced through teaching and setting of high goals regarding competence in the language to be learnt. The teacher should be a good model and should let the learners really use the language to achieve communicative competence.

Trifonovitch (1981:213) noted that a student is automatically placed at a disadvantage when he already has a language of his own and he is asked to learn another language. Therefore, language teachers must be adaptive rather than rigid in their approach to teaching children.

Azikwe (1998:2) affirmed that the development of the ability to learn the second language is one of the most important responsibilities of the language teacher. English language competence is important because it is essential to personal enrichment and the development of intelligent citizenship. Having known linguistic, cultural, socio-linguistic, political and psychological problems of English language, the teacher should be in a better position to reduce these problems.
Offorma (1990:9) stated that the teacher should encourage the learners to have positive attitudes to learning the English language. This is because the matter of attitude could enhance or inhibit level of proficiency. According to him, since students’ perceptions are responsible for their attitudes, English language teaching should be customized according to students’ needs. Teachers need to accept students’ mistakes as a necessary part of language learning. As facilitators, they must motivate students to speak more in class and to use the English language outside the classroom. To develop positive attitudes in students, language teachers should be good at English, capable of correcting mistakes without hurting their ego, and to create an informal environment in the class where students can learn with fun.

Adeyanju (1988:51) posited that the world is getting smaller day by day. Therefore, there is the need for changes in our approaches to the teaching of language. To choose any method at all, the teacher should consider the learners, the environment, instructional materials and objectives of learning the language. Classroom teachers must therefore study the methods to know which one is relevant and which is not.

Babikko (2002:12) asserted that teachers have different expectations and attitudes towards their students and this could lead to labeling and stereo-typing. These actions have a dramatic effect on the students’ performance during the class instruction. He advised teachers to make their teaching student centered that focuses on learning skills rather than on the subject matter.

Umeh (2002:5-9) also studied the utilization of the language laboratory for teaching oral English as a means of enhancing the learners’ performance. His focus was on the idea that skills of oracy should be practised in a language laboratory which is designed to provide an atmosphere conducive for learners to master them. However, he
goes further to link the poor oral competence and academic performance of learners to the scarce nature of language laboratories in our secondary schools.

On teaching practices, Horwitz (1986:559) highlighted the importance of naturalistic experience in L2 that promotes listening and reading practice. Horwitz stressed the involvement of learners in life-like conversations in developing their listening and reading abilities.

One area that poses difficulty in the acquisition of the English language is the mother tongue interference. Most error analysts trace English learners’ errors to their L1 interference. For instance, Yankson (2006), in his discussions on causes of learners’ errors stressed that the sources of language learners’ errors are mostly mother tongue interference. According to him, in learning a second language the learner sometimes transfers consciously or unconsciously certain features of his L1 system into the L2 system. Thus, certain L2 learners’ errors can be traced to L1 negative influence. For example, phonologically, there are certain English vowel sounds notably the sound /æ/ found in words like ‘man’, ‘cat’, etc.; the schwa /ə/, the unstressed English vowel which occurs in words like ‘against’, ‘famous’, and the sound transcribed /ʌ/ which is found in words like ‘cupboard’ which do not exist in the phonological categories of most African languages. In such cases West African speakers of English tend to substitute these English vowel sounds with near equivalents from the mother tongue.

Other language learner errors such as the perception blind spot, and Language Loyalty, among others have the tendency of interfering English learning (Yankson, 2006). To avert these negative L1 interferences on L2 acquisition and other learner errors like over generalization, Yankson (2006) stressed that the competent teacher needs to devise effective strategies and methods to systematically de-condition the
learners and to develop their powers of recognition, identification and discrimination of the new sound systems. This could be possible if the language teacher is at home with the numerous methods of teaching English.

2.2.2.2 Teacher Motivation

Musaazi (1985:2) defined motivation as the inner drive which prompts people to act in a certain way. Chauhan (1988:3) explained that motivation causes movement in an organization or institution. From the above, it is realized that motivation involves a trigger of an action by a stimulus or an event which is aimed at goal attainment. Chauhan (1988) further explained that an individual is aroused by two types of motivation, namely the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. He explained intrinsic motivation as those needs, wants and desires which exist in individuals and that, the worker who is motivated intrinsically works on his own with little supervision. On the other hand the extrinsic motivation stems from external stimulation.

A teacher whose needs are not met may be psychologically unstable and consequently not productive (Asamoah, 2009). On the other hand, a satisfied teacher is stable and thus, efficient and effective. In line with this, Cook (1980) observed that the key to improving performance is motivation, and for this reason employers need to understand what motivates their employees.

Language teacher motivation has not been researched extensively despite its importance. However, language teacher motivation is not much different from teacher motivation. As a result Pennington (1995:43) claimed that because the determination of satisfaction in language teaching is no different from other careers, what a language practitioner wants is what any professional might anticipate. These include job security, right pay and benefits, logical workloads, recognition of professional credential,
participating in decision-making, decent working conditions and provision of materials and systems for organizing and managing the work and individual learners.

Notwithstanding, there are some differences which are unique to EFL and ESL teaching. For example, Johnston (1997:685) postulated that English language teachers are regarded as second class teachers and in effect are treated as ‘underclass’ by colleagues and superiors. In fact, Johnston (1997) supported the establishment of the ‘professionalization’ of language teachers in order to alleviate the lack of proper career structure, low morale and the unfair treatment such EFL and ESL teachers receive. A study conducted by Doyle and Kim in South America in 1999 revealed language teachers’ desire to help students which was often taken advantage of by the school management. Their study revealed that language teachers were demotivated by mandated curricula which stressed out teachers for two reasons. The first one entailed the restrictions of the teachers’ autonomy to teach what they thought was most appropriate taking into account students’ needs. The second one involved the fact that the standardized tests given to their students did not at times resemble the material that language teachers were obliged to teach because of the mandated curricula, national and regional examinations.

One problem with English teaching is that the final product, second language proficiency, is not really seen as an academic subject but a skill. Therefore, English teachers are regarded as trainers rather than intellectuals. Evidence of this fact is the ministry of education’s agreement to give special allowances to some selected subject teachers of which English teachers are excluded in Ghana. (GES Collective Agreement, 2010). This perception, to the researcher, is unfortunate because even though language entails mastering a skill, it also involves the creation of a new identity in the learner.
2.2.2.3 Teacher Quality

Professional qualifications are important in education. The professional skill of the teacher ‘establishes a productive classroom atmosphere from the start by means of good organization and carefully planned teaching structures’ (Farrant, 1980:31). Professional competence, according to Farrant, often transforms into high quality of teaching with the expectation that this would influence students’ learning. Teacher professionalism should be exhibited in skills like giving prompt feedback, questioning, dealing with students’ problems effectively and creating specific kinds of climate for different lessons, making sure that pupils understand and cope with the amount of knowledge given to them.

According to Aikings (1990) as cited by Ofosuhene (1997) the falling standard of the English language has a bearing on wrong language habit formation. It was pointed out that at the primary school level, some untrained and incompetent teachers are employed to handle the lower classes and so such teachers find it difficult to teach the English language and to correct their students when they make mistakes. Aikings (1990) was of the view that students who pass through the hands of such teachers internalize teachers’ mistakes. These mistakes are carried into their future lives since language, like habit, once learned becomes difficult to shed off.

The importance of the quality of the teacher is much appreciated in Mitchell & Myles’ (2004:94) assertion that the problem of language learning is caused by messy and fragmentary input that makes abstract concepts, based on limited examples. Gass (1997:62) in Bailey (2006: 65) referred to input as “……the language to which the learner is exposed, either orally or visually…..” In this vein, teachers are responsible for an inadequate language input due to their own limited English proficiency. Stander
(2001:108-110) saw transference from one speaker’s use of language to another speaker’s use of language as a contamination factor in the use of the L2. To this writer, where the teacher’s own L2 knowledge is not on an acceptable standard, his/her poor usage and knowledge of the language are transferred to the learners. Morinova-Todd (2003:61-70) concluded from reviewed studies that the availability and the access to good L2 input and instruction produce the best outcome in L2 and ensure native-like proficiency.

In his research, Ankomah (2002:34) found that regular in-service training of teachers help to boost their quality and performance. It could be deduced from the above statement that, both pre-service and in-service training are essential for the quality professional development of the teacher of English.

### 2.2.2.4 Teacher Commitment

A teacher’s influence can be unlimited and his/her ideas can affect thousands (Mayer, 2001:18). In view of this, a research conducted by Etsey (2005), on the causes of low academic performance of primary school pupils in the Shama-Ahanta East Metropolitan area in Ghana highlighted poor teacher habit and commitment as some of the main causes of poor academic performance of students in English and Mathematics. According to the researcher, this attitude makes the pupils unable to learn well and acquire much classroom content and knowledge resulting in the poor performance in the BECE. This supported Lockheed & Verspoor’s (1991) assertion that, lack of motivation and professional commitment produce poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students which in turn affect their academic performance.
A well committed teacher may consider assigning homework to students to augment their efforts at completing the content for a particular year. Etsey (2005), citing Butler (1987:474-482), found homework to be a correlate of academic performance. He stated that homework bears a positive relationship with learning outcomes when it is relevant to learning objectives, assigned regularly in reasonable amounts, well explained, motivational, reviewed during class time, and used as an occasion for feedback to students. Teachers who are seen by students as supportive and who set clear expectations about behaviour help to create an expected atmosphere. Otherwise even if every needed thing is placed at his disposal he will still not perform and this can lead to poor performance of his students.

2.2.2.5 Teachers’ Negative Attitude to Work

According to Etsey (2005), lateness and absenteeism of teachers reduce the amount of instructional time and these results in the syllabi not being completed.

Morakinyo (2003) stressed that the falling trend of academic achievement is attributable to teachers non-use of verbal reinforcement strategy. He found out that the attitude of some teachers to their job as reflected in their poor attendance to lessons, lateness to school, unsavory comments about students’ performance that could damage their ego, poor method of teaching and the like, could affect students’ academic performance. Other attitudes such as drunkenness, trading during contact hours and having sexual relationships with students all contribute to poor performance of students. This is an indication that some teachers have given up rather too easily in their attempt to teach English. Lack of interest, imagination and creativity, and failure to make the best use of the little that is available in the schools for the teaching of English remain major national problems (Tsadidey, 1988).
2.2.3 Learners’ Attitudes and Behaviours that Affect their Academic Performance in English.

Much research in recent years has focused on identifying the key factors that promote academic success among learners. One of such factors is engagement and learning. Student engagement, according to Akey (2006:1), could be defined as the level of participation and intrinsic interest that a student shows in school. The author further posited that, engagement in school work involves both behaviours such as persistence, effort, attention, and attitudes such as motivation, positive learning values, enthusiasm, interest, and pride in success. Thus, engaged students seek activities, inside and outside the classroom, that lead to success of learning. They also display curiosity, a desire to know more and positive emotional responses to learning.

The Middle School Programme (2004) of West Orange Public School, America as cited in Paaku (2008:22) noted the importance of the presence of a student in class. It therefore posited that it is the student’s responsibility to make up work missed as a result of being absent.

Otoo (1992:18) stressed that the poor performance of students in the English language is partly due to the fact that many students have little or no knowledge of what examiners look for in marking English examination papers. As a consequence of such ignorance, students present their materials poorly and disorderly. He accentuated that some students do not even bother to read the questions and instructions well enough to know exactly what the questions demand and as a result, write out-of-topic. It must be admitted that many students fall victim to the assertion Otoo raised.

Amable (1990:8) also stated clearly that spelling mistakes contribute to the falling standard of English. She explained that mistakes arise as a result of wrong
pronunciation of words. To illustrate her point she cited the word ‘purchase’ which she said people pronounce as ‘perchase’ hence students spell the word as it is pronounced. Amable further hinted that the wrong use of idioms, tense as well as ambiguous statements all lead to failure of students in English examinations. The earlier schools and teachers began to build students’ competence and proficiency in the English language, the better their performance would be.

2.2.4 School Environment Factors that Contribute to Poor Performance of Students in English.

The way the school is managed is one of the critical factors that contribute to the quality of education and consequent achievement of students. It is an undeniable fact that a teacher who is academically and professionally qualified, but works under unfavourable working environment would be less dedicated to his work and thus be less productive than a teacher who is unqualified but works under favourable environment. Creating a literate and rich environment in our schools and classrooms is therefore an important step in promoting literacy learning. As pointed out by Reutzel & Cooter (1996:322), “a supportive and inviting reading classroom is integral to achieving a balanced and successful reading instructional program”.

The school environment must take into consideration the physical, emotional, social, and academic needs of the child. There is the need therefore to look at what researchers have said about environmental factors that make or mar the progress of second language acquisition.
2.2.4.1 The Physical Environment.

The physical environment should not serve as a background for classroom activities but as an important influence on teaching and learning. The physical environment includes the availability and use of relevant teaching and learning materials, class size, the physical layout and school infrastructure.

2.2.4.1.1 Availability and Use of Teaching and Learning Materials

The availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect teachers’ motivation and the effectiveness of their lessons as well (Etsey, 2005:29). Broom (1973:69) also pointed out that, the creative use of a variety of media for learning increases the probability that students would learn more, retain better what they learn and improve their performance on the skills that they are expected to develop. Ausubel (1973:11) buttressed Broom’s point when he hinted that young children are capable of understanding abstract ideas better if they are provided with sufficient materials and concrete experiences with the phenomenon that they are to understand.

Adedji and Owoeye (2002:36-45) found a significant relationship between the use of recommended textbooks, and academic performance of pupils. According to them, the availability of physical and material resources is very important for the success of any worthwhile educational endeavour. The researchers affirmed that resources such as classrooms, furniture as well as teaching and learning materials (TLMs) are imperative to educational achievements, if they are made available and in their right quantities and qualities. They emphasized that the major contributory factor to academic performance is the facilities the school has.
In a related research Opare (1999:1-12) also argued that the provision of the needed human and material resources goes a long way to enhance academic performance. In that comparative research of public and private basic schools, one of his findings was that the schools which were well equipped with better resources did better than those without the necessary resources for teaching and learning.

For Atakpa and Ankomah (1998:19), effective teaching and learning greatly lie on the competence of its human resources as well as material resources which are needed for the impartation of knowledge. Similarly, Ofodu (2004:33) avowed that the use of instructional materials is aimed at simplifying teaching for effective learning. Therefore, the material should not be complicated thereby sending the learners into the realm of abstract thinking. Aiyepeku (2006:14) also observed that learning facilities are indispensable in the learning process. It is universally agreed that adequate instructional facilities enhance students’ performance in academic pursuits, whereas, their deficiency detracts greatly from quality education. He posited that adequate learning materials bring about increment in students’ level of performance since there are many aspects of the teaching of English. Ocran and Etsey (2006:26) therefore stressed that teaching and learning materials (TLMs) should be provided in all these aspects to immerse children in environmental prints in the learning of such skills. For example, the classroom should emulate literate homes, where one would find reading materials, labels, bookshelves, menu charts, duty rosters and TV guides.

There should be language games of all kinds. This, according to Larcabel (1992:28) could be profitable and very much in place. He affirmed that the situation which brings a foreign language to life in the classroom are provided by gestures, handling and touching things, actions and incidents, pictures, dramatization, interesting
stories and certain contests and games. To Larcabel, games provide an enjoyable atmosphere and a situation in which communication is essential.

From the above, it is evident that the availability and use of teaching and learning materials motivate and affect the effectiveness of teachers’ lessons as well as enhance the retentive memory of students thereby, improving learners’ performance in English.

2.2.4.1.2 Class Size

Policy makers and researchers in many countries are concerned about how much students learn in primary and secondary schools. They constantly debate whether particular policies are effective in promoting learning. One policy that has received considerable attention is reduction in class size. A teacher (whether professional or not) who had to work with too large a class size would undoubtedly have his performance hindered and this would have a negative spillover effect on students. Too large class sizes could be one of the unfavourable conditions that affect the performance of teachers in most Ghanaian schools.

With the inception of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP, 2005), school enrolment has increased tremendously. In some cases over 90 pupils in a class are handled by one teacher. This increase in class size brings in its trail problems of ineffective class management, poor supervision of assignment, fear of marking and ineffective teaching and pupil – teacher contacts. In his study of the ideal class size and its effects on effective teaching and learning in Ghana, Kraft (1992) concluded that, class sizes above 40 have negative effects on students’ achievement. Maxwell (1987:67), lamenting over this situation said:
No football coach in his right mind would try to teach 150 players one hour a day and hope to win the game. The team is limited to 40 or 50 highly motivated players and the coach has three or four assistants to work on the many skills needed to play the game. The student – teacher ratio may be 15:1. But the English teacher- all alone- has 150 players of the game of composition, not to mention literature, comprehension, grammar and other matters dropped into the English curriculum by enthusiasts.

According to Bracey (1995:10) the greater the number of students in class, the fewer the opportunities for students to participate orally. The writer also observed that reduced class size provides students with greater individual attention and improved instruction in the language classroom.

Freire (1987:7) asserted that teachers of larger classes are more likely to spend less time with each student’s paper and to concentrate on mechanics rather than on style and content. The author analyzed that if a teacher spends 20 minutes reading, analyzing and responding to each paper for a class of 25 students, the teacher must have 500 minutes for these processes alone. It is therefore clear that reduced class size gives students ample opportunities for effective interaction with peers, for developing critical and reflective thinking and to have a fair share of the teacher’s time.

2.2.4.1.3 The Physical Layout.

According to Ocran and Etsey (2006:43) the physical layout of the classroom, the way the room is partitioned into smaller spaces to improve verbal interaction and cooperation among students, the type of furniture and attractive literacy centers with a variety of reading and writing materials such as literacy corners, writing centers where there is a message board for children to paste their writing, dramatic play corners and so on, go a long way to promote effective acquisition of English.
They suggested that classroom environment should be clean, healthy, arranged orderly, and well ventilated. It should also be a Print-rich environment which would provide students with the reading of printed materials on signs, displays, and labels found in the environmental context of everyday living.

2.2.4.1.4 School Infrastructure

Adedji and Owoeye (2002:39) found that, physical structure is significantly related to academic performance and therefore there should be a serious effort to acquire and maintain these resources for better performance. The physical structure of the classroom is a critical variable in effecting student morale and learning. But according to Ralenala (2003:8), thousands of schools still have poor physical infrastructure and many are dilapidated, dangerous and unfit for human habitation. There is often no water in schools. Such conditions do not only restrict teaching and learning activities but also threaten the health of learners and educators as well. Isangedighi (1998:220-226) referred to such an environment as learners’ environment mismatch. According to him, this promotes poor academic performance.

2.2.4.2 The Emotional Environment

The emotional environment in the classroom is an atmosphere devoid of threats and intimidation from the teacher or other people in the environment. Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasized the fact that presenting a comprehensible input alone is not a necessary condition for acquisition of language. Teachers should note the affective prerequisites to acquisition of language. This hypothesis explained how the affective factors in the second language classroom can serve as filters blocking input
from the teacher. It explained how two students can receive the same comprehensible input, yet one makes more progress than the other (Krashen, 2003).

According to Ocran and Etsey (2006:44) the instructional implication of this hypothesis is that in second language learning classroom, educators should create a low anxiety atmosphere and a favourable environment, in which all students will feel belongingness and safe to learn. According to Krashen and Terrell (1983:155-156), “Factors that contribute to low affective filter include positive orientation to speakers of the language, acquiring in a low anxiety situation, and at least some degree of acquirer self-confidence”. When the affective filter or the affective condition in the classroom is tensed up, students become anxious and frustrated and much learning does not take place. In other words, if there is much criticism and tension in the second language classroom, children cannot learn. If the filter is low, children flourish and learn effectively.

2.2.4.3 The Social Environment

The social environment deals with the kind of interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the pupils. It also looks at the general interaction patterns that exist in the classroom.

According to Cazden (1985:595-610) and Moll (1994:5), second language educators need to encourage positive interaction patterns and collaboration among students and between students and teachers. They stressed that in learner-centered classrooms, where cooperative learning is encouraged, students work in smaller groups to help one another learn through discussion and debates. Positive climate conducive to
learning is created when the teacher maintains cordial interpersonal relationship with students.

Morrow (1997:11) stressed that interaction and collaboration among small groups of students promote achievement and productivity. Children should be engaged in task-oriented dialogues with peers rather than teachers always presenting information to them. Group discussion among peers should be encouraged. Cazden (1985:600) admonished teachers to avoid IRE (Inquire, Respond and Evaluate) interaction patterns and promote interaction between teachers and students and students and their peers. This is because social collaboration in the language classroom facilitates children’s engagement in a task. The teacher therefore needs time to guide the students in the literacy activities. The children also need time to practice with peers, independent of the teacher, Ocran and Etsey (2006:43).

2.2.4.4. The Academic Environment

To establish a classroom environment that will enhance motivation, Morrow (1997:11) instructed the teacher of English to do the following:

- Provide children the opportunity to have and make choices. Classroom should have a variety of literacy materials, spaces and activities that students can decide to participate in. Making choices gives children a sense of control and promotes motivation.
- Give children challenging tasks to promote goal attainment.
- Encourage success. Give children tasks that they can complete successfully. Success gives students a sense of being competent. When students feel that they are competent and successful in the task they perform in the classroom
they are more likely to participate. It is important to give students task that they can handle, that will make them feel a sense of accomplishment and success.

Vygotsky’s (1978) theory proposed that instruction should be given in a meaningful social context and tasks that are given to students should be within the reach of their zone of proximal development. According to him, when teachers teach strategies in the context of daily reading instructions and use interesting reading materials, children are motivated to learn.

2.2.4.4.1 Instructional Time on Task

Academic excellence thrives on effective management of instructional time. Shipman et al (1987:78) saw time as a commodity that is unbiased, available to everyone in the same quantity and completely at one’s own disposal. The only difference is how each and every one makes use of the time available to him/her. Time lost is lost forever and this makes time a non-renewable resource (Watkins, 1986:2). Time is one of the scarce resources which administrators must manage, other than that nothing can be managed, (Drucker, 2003:22-29).

Cambone (1994:4) defined Instructional time as the appropriate use of time, duration and period, indicated on the time-table for a particular subject by the teacher. It should be in an interactive setting with pupils on relevant issues that would enhance teaching and learning. This implies that appropriate use of instructional time is not limited to only the physical presence of the teacher in the classroom with the pupils at the appointed time but also, to the lessons that are taught and learnt during that time, and from which guidance is given. Cambone saw instructional time as different from
planning time. He thought instructional time is time allocated to the actual teaching and learning activity.

A study conducted by Koomson et al (1999:30-40) on the management of instructional time in some selected Ghanaian public primary schools revealed that total time spent on actual instruction in the classes observed was 55% of the day’s instructional time. It meant that 45% of the total time of instruction was wasted. The study also revealed that the 15 minutes allocated for morning assembly was abused with announcements taking the bulk of the time and therefore eating into the first periods. Also the change-over periods created some time lost.

Again, the study revealed that sports and cultural festivals also wasted a lot of instructional time, since classes had to be skipped to make way for rehearsals and the event itself. Teachers were made to also attend meetings during school instructional time which also affected the academic work and the efficient use of instructional time.

In 1993, the then Director General of Ghana Education Service (GES), Mr. Atta Quaison, considering the above situations and many others came out with the following directives, in the form of a circular to all district directors of education with the following content:

1. All meetings of head teachers and teachers with District Education Officers or Circuit Supervisors should be reduced to a minimum and should take place after official hours.

2. Preparation for and holding of sporting and other events should take place outside official school hours except as are authorized by the Ministry of Education.

3. Except for very urgent reasons, head teachers and teachers who wish to visit district or regional education offices or the headquarters should do so outside
official school hours. (Refer GES Circular Reference Number GES/DG/011/22 and dated April 22, 1993).

Despite all these directives, Koomson et al (1999:36) observed that, instructional time is still being wasted with impunity. Sports festivities like inter-schools, inter-houses and many more are still being organized during instructional hours. The electoral commission of Ghana still uses teachers for many exercises during election years, and they are done during instructional hours. Meetings and refresher courses are organized during instructional hours. Until all stakeholders get on board to avert this situation, the wastage of instructional hours would continue and academic performance would inevitably be negatively affected.

2.2.5 Social Factors that Influence Academic Performance of Students in English.

An individual is not separable from social life. Consequently some social factors can influence learners’ acquisition of English. This session reviews findings of researchers on parental involvement and information and communication technology as social factors to influence learners’ acquisition of English.

2.2.5.1 Parental Involvement.

Family has an over-riding role in shaping personality and determining the well-being of a child. It motivates and induces the child to perform activities necessary for meeting social needs. In fact, family stands out as the “first educational institution” for the child. The child acquires informal education by way of talking to the elders and interacting with others before embarking upon formal education. The family’s involvement in children’s education takes variety of forms. These include helping with
homework, attending school functions, parent-teacher communication and parent-to-
parent communication.

Jeynes (2005:4) was of the view that children whose families are more involved
in their children’s education display higher levels of achievement than children whose
families are less involved. Parental involvement in children’s education is an important
variable that positively influences pupils’ education. Parental involvement is defined
as “Parents’ role in educating their children at home and in school” Deslandes &

Goodwin and King (2002:12) proved that strong parental involvement in
children’s education is essential to their success. For Ahhunawallia (1985:3), the main
determinants for the educational achievement of the children are parents’ education,
socio-economic status and size of the family. Panda (1982:103) studied that, home
conditions such as parental support, size of the family, income level and illiteracy of
the parents adversely affect the achievement of the students.

Chinnapan (1987:34) was of the view that parental occupational level and
educational attainment of their children are closely associated. Beside these, family
environment holds an important position for the educational attainment of the child, as
it is a place of secured living and learning for every child.

Dave (1988:188) stated that students who do not get sufficient time to read due
to domestic activities and social environment perform poorly at school. He further
added that the problem sometimes multiplies for the students due to drunkenness,
illiteracy and poor economic conditions of the parents.

Coleman (1990), as cited by Chall (2000:143), revealed that socio-economic
status of the child’s parents and their educational attainment have the strongest impact
on a child’s school learning, even stronger than the amount of funding for the school.
According to him “what schools teach matters little in school achievement, what matters most is the background of the parents”. In Thorndike’s (1999) research conducted in many different countries, he found out that higher reading achievement is linked to people who have parents of higher socio-economic status.

Opare (1981:9), in his comparative study of academic performance of day and boarding students in Ghana found that most of the students who performed well came from homes of higher socio-economic standard. He inferred that “pupils in the private basic schools are better academically than their public school counterparts because of the middle class background of the former”. According to this writer, children draw inspiration from their parents and most parents are role models for their wards hence in the course of instilling knowledge, pressure is exerted on the child to perform, through monitoring. The monitoring done by parents goes a long way to serve as a source of motivation for their wards. That may explain why one may have a doctor who has a parent who is a doctor or is in a related profession.

According to Dampson & Dominic (2010:18), the unrelenting parental courage and determination to persevere despite all odds has a ripple effect on children’s attitudes toward education and challenge. A study conducted by Etsey (2005) revealed that the inability of parents to provide the basic needs of students, attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and interact with their children’s teachers among others are some of the causes of low academic performance of some public schools in Ghana. Inability to provide basic school needs like textbooks, supplementary readers, food to eat when coming to school, and school uniforms among others, have ripple effects on the child’s performance.

Therefore, parental involvement makes an enormous impact on the student’s attitude, attendance, and academic achievement and promotes better cooperation
between parents and school. It also allows parents and teachers to combine efforts to help the children succeed in school.

2.2.5.2 The Negative Impact of Information and Communication Technology on English Language Acquisition.

Technology has developed so much that it is almost crucial to have electronic devices particularly the personal computers, televisions and mobile phones at home and internet cafés. However, while having these devices that make life easier and comfortable at most times, they could also have negative effects on students’ studies when used too much.

According to Deverensky and Gupta (2004:34) “Computer games, cyber relationships and internet gambling are some of the causes of students’ addiction to the use of the computer and can affect the academic performance of students.” There are a lot of students who develop bad habits in their computer use that lead to so many problems in their study. They spend a lot of time in front of the computer doing unnecessary things like visiting porn sites, involving in cyber relationship, involving in information overload, playing computer games and doing net compulsions instead of studying. To Lowinson (2004:8), goggling and face booking are the most common daily activities in our society and these have led to the high rate of failure and dropout of students.

Again, teachers of English have encountered new challenges as text messaging language shortcuts have made their way into the academic writing classroom. Carrington (2005:161-175) described a student who wrote an entire essay in text messaging language shortcuts and stressed the implications text messaging has had on
the education system in general. Carlson (2004:431) asserted that language shortcuts and colloquial language are reinforcing bad habit in writing. According to this writer, some students seem to have become more dependent on the shortcuts which may have adverse consequences on their formal writing skills. It is therefore clear that even though knowledge in information and communication technology is very crucial to academic excellence, it can have a negative effect on the second language learner if the learner is not cautious or self-disciplined.

2.2.6 Monitoring Mechanisms that Exist in Schools that can Help Improve Academic Performance.

Monitoring in schools has been of tremendous help in improving academic performance. According to the World Bank report (1996), inadequacies in the supervision of schools, both by district level officers and Head teachers, and the limitations of disciplinary processes are seriously undermining effective teaching and have had adverse effects on the academic performance of students.

2.2.6.1 Concept of Supervision

Supervision is seen by many as a means of helping to direct activities of individuals towards goal attainment. In education, supervision is a means of directing instructions towards achieving educational goal (Atakpa and Ankomah, 1998:2).

Many interpretations have been given to the role supervision plays in our education. While some see it as a fault finding machine, others are of the view that supervision helps to develop an individual professionally. But no matter how it is viewed, one thing stands clear, supervision focuses on ensuring the growth and development in the teaching and learning process. Neagley and Evans (1970) cited in
Etsey (2005) were also of the view that effective supervision of instruction could improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. They saw supervision as the process of bringing about improvement in an institution by working with people who work with students.

Etsey (2005) reported that, effective supervision is necessary for efficient work. It provides a climate in which people have a sense of working for themselves. In government schools in Ghana, internal supervision is normally done by the heads of institutions or their assistants while external supervision is done by supervisors or inspectors from the Ghana Education Service. Etsey et al (2004), in a study of 60 schools in Ghana (29 from urban and 31 from rural areas), found that academic performance is better in private schools than in public schools because of effective supervision of work.

The absence of an appropriate performance management framework which sets out clear and relevant accountabilities for monitoring purposes simply compounds the problem. Etsey (2005) was of the view that, supervision and regular visits to the schools would motivate teachers to be more regular and punctual at school. Also, when students realize that supervisors are regular in visiting the schools and teachers are always present, they would be challenged to change their attitudes towards school. This would in turn reflect positively on their academic performance.

2.2.7. Summary

The literature highlighted on some of the factors that affect academic performance of students in schools. Areas of concern were government related factors, teacher related factors, school environment factors, social factors and mechanisms for monitoring performance of students, teachers and head teachers.
The above factors and others have resulted in the poor performance of public school students in the English Language in the BECE. The purpose of this research work therefore is to obtain evidence of the factors that are responsible for the poor BECE results in English in the Sunyani Municipality.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the method used in investigating the factors responsible for the low performance of students in the BECE English language. It discusses the research design, population, sample, sampling technique(s), instruments, procedure for data collection, validity and reliability and data analysis procedure.

3.1 The Research Design

Gay (1992:11) noted that the research design indicates the basic structure of a study, the nature of the hypothesis and the variables involved in the study. The design indicates whether there is an intervention and what the intervention is, the nature of any comparisons to be made, the method to be used to control extraneous variables and enhance the study’s interpretability, the timing and frequency of data collection, the setting in which the data collection is to take place, and the nature of communications with subjects.
This research is a descriptive survey through which views and opinions were sampled from teachers, students, head teachers, circuit supervisors and parents. Avoke (2005:32) citing Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996:67), indicated that survey research in education involves collection of information from members of a group of students, teachers or other persons associated with educational issues. According to Ary, et al (2002:65), “survey permits the researcher to gather information from a large sample of people relatively quickly and inexpensively”.

The descriptive survey was chosen because according to Fink (2002:67) it is the dominant form of collecting data in education and other social sciences. The descriptive survey was considered the most appropriate design for conducting this study since it is the one that deals with current things (Creswell, 2003:43). Again, information gathered from the descriptive research could be useful in diagnosing a situation since it involves observing, describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting aspects of a situation as they naturally exist. It is designed to provide a ‘snapshot of how things are at a specific time’.

Survey was deemed appropriate for this study as views, attitudes and opinions of students, teachers, head teachers, circuit supervisors and parents needed to be sampled. The study aimed at gathering useful data on those conditions and variables that could not be manipulated and which would help in finding factors responsible for the low performance of students in the BECE English language in the Sunyani Municipality.

Notwithstanding the efficacy of the descriptive survey, it is not without difficulties. Kelley et al (2003: 263) pointed out some demerits associated with its use. These included the danger that, the significance of the data could be neglected if the
researcher focuses too much on the range of coverage to the exclusion of an adequate account of the implications of those data for relevant issues, problems, or theories. Also, the private affairs of respondents may be pried into and therefore generate unreliable responses and difficulty in assessing the clarity and precision of research questions (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2002:48). In spite of these demerits, the descriptive survey was appropriate for the study. This was because the research used the logical methods of inductive-deductive which covered many people or events.

In using the descriptive research design, the quantitative means of collecting data was used. This was because it allowed meaningful generalization with respect to the numerical relationships which existed in the data, and which reflected the attributes of the entire population. As Sarantakos (1988:123) had said, one of the most important attributes of a quantitative technique is that, the sample reflects the larger population, and hence conclusions drawn reflect the general attributes of the entire population.

3.2 Population

According to Ary et al (2002:65), population refers to the entire group of individuals to whom the findings of a study apply. It is whatever group the investigator wishes to make inferences about.

The population of the study was 2,975 people, made up of 1,508 J.H.S. three students in the 46 public Junior High schools, 97 teachers of English, 46 head teachers, 1319 parents and 5 Circuit Supervisors from the education directorate in the Sunyani Municipality, the capital of the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. People in the region are mostly Akans. This population was the targeted group of interest for the study.
3.3 Sample

Amedahe (2002:93) defined sample as a carefully selected subset of the units that comprise the population. In this study, 7 public Junior High Schools (J.H.S.) were sampled. They are identified as school A, B, C, D, E, F and G. School A and B are schools from the Sunyani ‘A’ Circuit, C and D are schools from the Sunyani ‘B’, school E is from the Sunyani ‘C’ circuit, school F, from Abesim circuit and school G, from Atronie circuit. For a fair representation, two schools were selected from circuits with large number of schools and one school, selected from circuits with small number of schools.

The focus was on J.H.S. three students of the sampled schools. This was because they were supposed to have almost completed their syllabus and were being prepared for the BECE. The total estimated sample was 465 participants. This sample was made up of 210 students; 210 parents; 20 teachers of English; 20 head teachers and 5 circuit supervisors. In each of the 7 schools, 30 students were picked.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the participants for the study. The teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors were purposively sampled because they are in key positions in the schools. As administrators of the school, the head teachers have information about pupils, teachers, and parents’ activities in the schools. Teachers of English were selected because that was the area of concentration. Parents of the selected students were sampled to find parental variables that impede second language acquisition. As Creswell (2002:28) stated, in purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or
understand a phenomenon. Cohen et al (2003:55) as cited in Avoke (2005:32) also pointed out that purposive sampling enables researchers to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement and typicality. By so doing the researcher builds up a sample that is satisfactory to specific needs.

Simple random sampling technique which provided participants with equal opportunity to be randomly selected was used to select the schools, the students and other head teachers. The researcher used students in selecting the schools for the study. Each of the students was given one of the names of the schools within their circuits. Pieces of paper labeled ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ were then placed in a box for the students to pick. Those who picked ‘Yes’ had the schools they represented forming part of the sample of the study. In each of the seven schools, numbers 1-30 were written on pieces of paper among blank papers for the students to pick. All those who picked papers with numbers formed part of the sample. Apart from the 7 head teachers of the schools selected, 14 others were also selected. In selecting these head teachers, names of all Junior High Schools in the Sunyani municipality were written on pieces of paper and placed in a box. These names excluded those of the 7 selected schools. Each of 14 students was made to pick a piece of paper from the box. The head teachers of those schools picked by the students were added to those of the selected schools. Random sampling was used here because the researcher wanted the sample method to be free from preconception and unfairness just as (Sidhu, 2002:99) asserted.

3.5 Research Instruments

The instruments employed in collecting the data were a questionnaire, observations and interviews. This was because the use of multiple data collection instruments ensures validity and reliability of data generated. According to Ary et al (2002:67), interview
and questionnaire are the two basic ways in which data are gathered in survey research. Best and Kahn (1995:9) maintained that observation offers first-hand information without relying on the reports of others.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire, according to Creswell (2002:29), is a form used in a survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researcher. He further stated that, participants mark choices to questions and supply basic personal or demographic information. It relates to the aims of a study, the hypotheses and research questions to be verified and answered. Best and Kahn (1995:20) highlighted that a questionnaire is used when factual information is desired.

As a result of the desire to collect factual information on factors contributing to poor performance in the BECE English language, a likert type questionnaire was developed to collect data for the research questions stated. According to Ary et al (2002:67), the Likert scale\(^2\) is one of the most widely used techniques to measure attitudes. Borg and Gall (1983:88) found it to be popular, easy to construct, administer and score. The researcher adopted the likert scale because it helps in determining values as well as views, attitudes and experiences of the respondents.

All the items in the questionnaire were closed-ended with the exception of one which was open-ended. Close-ended questions according to Cohen et al (2003:55) are

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\( ^2 \text{Likert scale}- \) This is a scale named after the educator and psychologist, Rensis Likert. It is a principle of measuring attitudes or opinions by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic, in terms of the extent to which they agree or disagree with them.
quick to compile, straight forward to code, and do not discriminate unduly on the basis of how articulate the respondents are. The open-ended item allowed respondents to express their opinion.

The questionnaire for head teachers (Appendix A) contained 69 items which were put under seven sections lettered A-G. Section A, made up of 2 items covered the level of head teachers’ qualification and competence. Section B focused on teacher related factors and it covered questions 3-34. Questions 35-46 which covered school environment factors formed section C and D. Section E had questions based on learner factors and it had 5 items in all. Questions 53-60 in section F covered items on social factors. Monitoring mechanisms that exist in schools were captured in section G which was made up of 8 items. The questionnaire ended with suggestions for improvement of students’ acquisition of the English language.

The questionnaire for the teachers of English (Appendix B) contained 29 items which were put under five sections lettered A- E. The first section A, made up of 2 items centered on the level of teacher qualification and competence. The next 4 items that formed section B focused on school environment factors. Learner factors made up of 8 questions were in section C. Section D covered social factors and that was made up of 6 items. Monitoring mechanisms that exist in schools were captured in section E which was made up of 9 items. The final question 29 sought the opinions of respondents on how students’ English may be improved. The questionnaire was distributed personally to the respondents on accepted dates. The questions were discussed before giving to the respondents to answer.
3.5.2 Interview

Noting the fact that questionnaires do not provide a total in-depth investigation of specific phenomenon, the researcher had to supplement the information acquired with interviews. Creswell (2002:29) defined an interview survey as a form of data collection in which the researcher records answers supplied by the participants in the study. Ary et al (2002:67) also posited that an interview is used to gather data on subjects’ opinions, beliefs, and feelings about the situation in their own words. Semi-structured interview was conducted for the students and parents in focus groups. Krueger (1998:7) as cited in Creswell (2002:29) posited that, focus groups provide for interaction among interviewees. It also aids collection of extensive data and participation by all individuals in the group. Misconceptions and misunderstanding of respondents are revealed and corrected in the course of the interaction between the researcher and the interviewees.

Students were made to understand the purpose of the interview. Students were also made to speak one after the other to make the information valid to the researcher. The parents were gathered in one classroom in each school on agreed dates for the interviews. The interviews were conducted by the researcher. Everybody in the sample population took part in the discussion which provided a diversity of views. The responses were handwritten alongside the tape recording to avoid loss of data. The circuit supervisors were also interviewed individually. The instrument used was an interview guide (Appendix C, D, & E) which outlined the kind of information required.

3.5.3 Observation

According to Amedahe (2002:16), observation is a method of data collection that employs vision as its main means of data collection. In observational studies, researchers collect data on the current status of subjects by watching them, listening
and recording what they observe rather than asking questions about them. One lesson was observed in each of the seven selected schools. Information required was obtained with the help of an observation guide (Appendix F). The information revealed some teacher related factors responsible for the poor performance of students in the English language.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

Validity is very important in the development and evaluation of research instruments (Ary et al, 2002:67). It is used to determine if an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire and the interview guides, draft copies were given to supervisors at the department of Linguistics (University of Ghana) who read through and made the necessary corrections to ensure face validity. From the responses in the pilot study, it was clear that respondents understood the questions as they were fully and well answered.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

To ensure reliability of the instrument used for the study, a pilot testing was conducted at the Sunyani Estate Experimental Junior High School on 30th September, 2013. The researcher chose this school because it was one of the schools which exhibited the same characteristics as the schools that were of interest to her.

In the pilot testing, 5 teachers of English and 2 head teachers were supplied with the draft copies of the questionnaires. There was thorough discussion on any ambiguity, doubt and incoherencies that would confront the respondents on any aspect of the draft. Respondents, were given time to complete and return the questionnaires to the
researcher. A parent, 7 students, and an officer from the Monitoring Team at the Sunyani Education Directorate were interviewed as part of the pilot study. These views were collated and studied closely. The pilot study helped to remove ambiguous statements particularly in the Likert items. Some statements were completely deleted because they had been repeated elsewhere in the questionnaire. All the necessary corrections and changes were made before the data collection.

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

According to Creswell (2002:29), respecting the site where the research takes place and gaining permission before entering a site is very paramount and ethical in research. An introductory letter was therefore obtained from the Sunyani municipal director of education and sent to the Heads of the selected Junior High Schools (JHS) where the research was carried out.

To establish a close relationship with the teachers and students, the Heads conveyed a short meeting with the teachers of English to seek their maximum support. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of their responses. They were also assured that all information obtained would be used for the intended purpose. According to Kelley et al (2003:266), these are the most important ethical issues to adhere to when conducting a survey. The questionnaires were then administered to the teachers. Respondents were given 10 days to respond to the items. All the 40 questionnaires distributed to the teachers and the head teachers were retrieved.

The students and parents were interviewed in focus groups in their respective schools. Each focus group comprised 10 members. In each circuit, three days were used for the interviews. Therefore, 21 days were used to complete the interview sessions for the students and their parents. However, the procedure for the interview of circuit
supervisors was different. They were contacted at their offices where the interviews were conducted on one-on-one basis. This was done on different dates scheduled by each of them. One lesson was observed in each of the seven sampled schools on agreed dates.

3.9 Analysis of Data from Questionnaire

The data collected were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics which allowed me to use numerical values to represent scores in the sample. Analysis of data provided me with facts and figures that enabled me to interpret results and to make statements about the findings of the study. All items of the questionnaires were coded. The coded items and their corresponding frequencies were fed into the computer using the SPSS software programme. Data were analyzed using simple mean scores, percentages and frequencies. For all the five research questions the mean scores were used to ascertain the central tendency or the averages of responses. This allowed me to make generalizations about the findings.

3.10 Analysis of Data from Interviews

Initially, the researcher studied the field notes, reduced the tapes into transcripts and carefully read through them. This was done to look for themes and similar ideas or responses to the questions posed. Where necessary, the verbatim expressions of the respondents were used within the thematic context of the discussion. The next chapter represents the results of the analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis of the data gathered from 210 students, 20 teachers of English, 20 head teachers, 172 out of 210 parents and 5 circuit supervisors in some schools in the Sunyani Municipality. Analyses are done using frequencies, percentages and mean scores.

A total of 427 out of 465 actively participated in the study. This represents 91.8% of the sampled population. The main focus of the study was to find the factors that are responsible for the poor performance of students in the BECE English Language. The analyses are presented in accordance with the five main research questions raised to guide the study.

4.1 School Environment Factors

Environmental factors considered included English Textbooks, school library, Library books, teaching and learning materials, effective use of instructional time, class size, school infrastructure and the relationship that exist between teachers and head teachers. The following tables depict the situation on the ground.
Table 2: Responses of Teachers and Head Teachers on the Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>AA</th>
<th>ANA</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English textbooks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School library</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library books</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and learning materials for teaching English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: AA-Available and adequate, ANA- Available but not adequate, NA-Not available, T-Total, M-Mean.

A total of 40 respondents, made up of teachers of English and head teachers answered the questionnaire. As shown in table 2 above, only 5 respondents, representing 12.5% admitted that English text books were available and adequate in their schools. The rest were of the view that they were either available but not adequate or not available at all.

From the analysis of the interview results it was a general opinion of the students and the circuit supervisors that the students lacked English text books. A student from focus group (FG) 8 commented:

1. We don’t have English reading books. We share them three is to one [sic]. At times some of us don’t get any to read. (October 21, 2013).
Another student was not happy with the lack of dictionaries in their schools. This, according to him, renders them incapable of using the dictionaries all by themselves.

Another student complained:

2. My brother at St Mary’s private JHS, they have give [sic] him many textbooks. My mother buy [sic] them for him from the school. He have [sic] reading books and workbooks. He use [sic] them every day at home. I want the school to do the same for us. (October 23, 2013).

One of the circuit supervisors had this to say:

3. Madam, as for the books we get some but they are not enough to go round all schools. Some of the head teachers also keep the books in their offices for fear of being mishandled by the students. (October 21, 2013)

On school libraries, few of the respondents, representing 10%, indicated that they had adequate libraries. However, the majority of them said they had no libraries with 25% admitting that they had libraries but they were not in good condition.

During the interview, a student registered her displeasure at the way their head teacher had refused to make the school library, accessible to students. She commented:

4. Madam, we have a school library with some books but it is always locked. So we don’t go there to read or borrow books. They have replaced the library period with ICT. (October 28, 2013)

The next item was on the availability of library books. None of the respondents admitted that they were available and adequate. Six of them, representing 15% said they were not adequate. As many as 85% did not have library books in their schools.

A circuit supervisor had made an observation and he said:
5. In fact madam, with facilities like school libraries, we know that most schools do not have. Government cannot provide for them so we try to encourage the heads to urge the PTAs to provide such facilities for them. (November 7, 2013).

In expressing their views on the availability of teaching and learning materials, it was revealed that the majority of the respondents lacked teaching and learning materials for teaching English. A circuit supervisor also had this to say:

6. Teachers always complain about lack of teaching and learning materials. In fact it is a problem as government is unable to provide them. However we encourage our teachers to improvise (October 22, 2013).

**Table 3: Responses of Head Teachers on School Environment Problems.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>VSP</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>NAP</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F %</td>
<td>F %</td>
<td>F %</td>
<td>F %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective use of instructional time.</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>12 60</td>
<td>3 15</td>
<td>3 15</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size.</td>
<td>3 15</td>
<td>10 50</td>
<td>5 25</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School infrastructure.</td>
<td>4 20</td>
<td>13 65</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>1 5</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ good relationship with head teachers.</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>3 15</td>
<td>15 75</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key; VSP= Very Serious Problem, SP= Serious Problem, MP= Minor Problem, NAP= Not A Problem, T= Total, M= Mean*

The first item that attempted to find out whether effective use of instructional time was a problem in the schools revealed that instructional time was not effectively used as the majority of the head teachers, a representation of 60%, admitted that it was a serious problem with 10% seeing it as a very serious problem. 15% saw it as a minor problem while 15% did not see it as a problem at all. According to the majority of the
respondents as indicated in table 3, class size was a problem in their schools. Only 10% of the respondents did not indicate that class size was a problem in their schools. 50% of them saw it as a serious problem while 15% saw it as a very serious problem in their schools.

The interview with the students revealed that students in the classes were so many that assigning class exercises had become a problem. A student in FG 3 had this to say:

7. We are 63 in our class. Our English teacher find [sic] it difficult to mark the exercises he give [sic] us. When we complain he tell [sic] us that we are too many. Last term we write [sic] only one essay which is not mark [sic]. (October 22, 2013)

On school infrastructure, four of the respondents, representing 20% indicated that it was a very serious problem. 65% saw it as a serious problem with 10% seeing it as a minor problem. 5% did not see this item as a problem at all in the school.

During the interview almost all the students admitted that lack of facilities in their schools create problems for them. A student in FG10 made the following observation:

8. Madam we don’t have toilet in the school. Most of the time we go home when feel like going to toilet. (November 4, 2013).

Another student in FG 20 commented:

9. The women cook under that tree and make noise. They also make the school dirty. Smoke too came [sic] to the classroom. (October 28, 2013).

Another student from FG 21 had this to say: “
10. Rain has destroy [sic] our classroom. This class is for class six. That is why they are learning under the trees. (November 6, 2013)

4.2 Teacher Related Factors

The second research question which looked at teacher related factors considered classroom activities of teachers, teacher quality, teacher commitment, teacher absenteeism and punctuality. A report on the observation of teachers’ lessons is also given. The tables below display the finding.

Table 4: Head Teachers’ Responses to Classroom Activities of Teachers of English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech work is done in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trs. of Eng. give assignment at the end of every topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trs of Eng. use language games.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given a number of books to read per term.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trs. of Eng. mark exercises and return them on time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trs of Eng. teach to the relevance of the syllabus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trs. of Eng. complete the content of the syllabus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking is done in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trs of Eng. relate well with students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, U = Uncertain, T = Total, M = Mean
Table 4 above illustrates the responses of the 20 head teachers on teacher related factors that are likely to contribute to poor performance of students in the BECE English Language. The mean score recorded revealed that some of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the individual items with some either disagreeing, strongly disagreeing or being uncertain.

In this table, the majority of the head teachers indicated that teachers did not take their students through speech work. It was also a general opinion of these respondents that language games were not used by their teachers in their lessons. The next item sought to find if teachers of English gave their students a number of books to read in a term. On this, the majority of the respondents, representing 85% disagreed. On the use of English syllabus by teachers of English, the majority of the respondents, representing 60% disagreed with 30% disagreeing strongly. Only 10% of the head teachers indicated that their teachers followed the syllabus. The implication of this response is that most teachers in the Sunyani Municipality did not teach in accordance with the syllabus.

The lack of teaching and learning resources revealed in table 2 confirms this finding. The responses to the next item clearly indicated that teachers did not complete the content of the syllabus each year. As many as 18 out of the 20 head teachers either disagreed or disagreed strongly. On the relationship that exists between language teachers and their students, 25% of the respondents indicated that teachers of English related well with their students. However 70% admitted that the relationship between teachers of English and their students was not cordial. 5% of the head teachers were uncertain. These responses imply that most teachers of English were not in cordial relationship with their students. During the interview with students, one lamented:

11. I don’t like my English madam. She is not friendly. When we ask her questions then she is
annoyed. She always say [sic] we are dirty and dull. When we are not able to do the work she will beat us and call us names. When we have English I am not happy at all. (November 4, 2013)

One of the items that the majority of the respondents disagreed to was marking and returning exercises on time. To this, 80% of the respondents disagreed while 10% disagreed strongly. Only 10% of the respondents agreed.

**Table 5: Head Teachers’ Evaluation of Language Teachers’ Ability in Certain Relevant Areas in the Teaching of the English Language.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting new grammar.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting new vocabulary.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar practice activities.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing new vocabulary.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using dialogue for practice.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking understanding.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting students to speak English freely.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching listening.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching writing.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching reading.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching speaking.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting students’ errors.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving instructions for classroom activities.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing pair and group work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing grammar.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing vocabulary.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing spoken English.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing comprehension.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: F-Frequency*
1. My teachers of English have strong knowledge in the topic and use it in their teaching.

2. My teachers of English do not use it very much in their teaching.

3. My teachers of English need to find more about this topic so that they can use it in their teaching.

4. I do not think this topic is relevant for teaching Junior High Students.

Table 5 sought an evaluation of teachers’ ability in 18 relevant areas in the teaching of the English language. From the table it is clear that a high percentage of the head teachers admitted that their teachers of English had strong knowledge in areas such as presenting new grammar, checking understanding, teaching writing, teaching reading, correcting students’ errors, testing grammar, testing vocabulary, and testing comprehension. As a result, they used them in their teaching. With the rest of the areas either teachers knew but did not use them much in their teaching or they lacked knowledge in them. Few of the respondents too did not think the areas were relevant for teaching Junior High School students. The overall assessment is that teachers of English are familiar with 8 out of the 18 relevant areas in teaching English. This analysis portrays that many of the teachers do not have in-depth knowledge in many relevant areas in the English language.

Table 6: Responses of Head Teachers on Attitude of Teachers to Work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>VSP</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher commitment.</td>
<td>4 20</td>
<td>9 45</td>
<td>5 25</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher motivation.</td>
<td>3 15</td>
<td>11 55</td>
<td>4 20</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher absenteeism.</td>
<td>3 15</td>
<td>4 20</td>
<td>4 20</td>
<td>9 45</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher punctuality.</td>
<td>6 30</td>
<td>8 40</td>
<td>2 10</td>
<td>4 20</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: VSP = Very Serious Problem, SP = Serious Problem, MP = Minor Problem, NAP = Not A Problem, U = Uncertain, T = Total, M = Mean

From table 6, 20% of the respondents agreed that lack of teacher commitment was a very serious problem in their schools. 45% saw it as a serious problem with 25% seeing it as a minor problem. Only 10% of the respondents did not see this item as a problem at all. During the focus group discussion, it came to light that some of the teachers showed low commitment to work. A student had this to say:

12. My English madam bring [sic] her baby to class. So when she is teaching then the baby will be crying so she will leave and take care of the baby. (November 4, 2013)

Another student commented:

13. Our English Sir is a taxi driver. At times he will work in town and he will not come to school. (October 28, 2013)

Another student also remarked:

14. Most of the teachers sell in school. Our English madam sell chips [sic]. She will move from class to class to sell so she don’t [sic] have time to come to class. (November 5, 2013)

A student lamented:
15. Anytime we have English we will go and call our teacher. He will say ‘Go, I am coming’ but we will wait aa,[sic] he will not come. Most of the teachers are like that. Sometimes we hear noise from the staffroom. They will be doing politics and quarrelling. Because of this my brother has leave [sic] for another school in the big town. (November 7, 2013)

A parent also remarked:

16. Madam, these days my children do not bring work home to do. When you ask, they will say, they have no home work. They will play till night. The homework engages them for us. We beg them they should give the children homework for us. (October 29, 2013)

The circuit supervisors had observed that most teachers on distance learning programmes brought their modules to class and instead of teaching they would rather assign the children while they read their modules. According to one of them, some of the teachers had turned drunkards and such teachers were unable to perform.

On the lack of teacher motivation, only 15% of the respondents did not see it as a problem. The rest saw it either as a very serious problem, a serious problem or a minor problem. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that teachers were not motivated enough. A circuit supervisor commented:

17. Teachers always complain that their take home money cannot take them home. They always resort to strike actions over low salaries and unpaid allowances. But you see, government is unable to meet their demands. It is quite demotivating, you know. (November 7, 2014)

Another circuit supervisor remarked:
18. Lack of accommodation is very disturbing. Teachers have to commute from far places. They do not have teaching and learning materials to work with. All these deter them from giving off their best. (November 7, 2013).

Another circuit supervisor had this to say:

19. Madam, parents are not helping matters. Look, we are six weeks into the term and about 70% of the students in the schools I visited did not have exercise books. Once they hear ‘free’, they don’t want to contribute anything. (October 30, 2013)

The next item was on teacher absenteeism. A total of 55% of the respondents considered it as a problem with 45% not seeing it as a problem in their schools. The last item on Table 6 saw only 20% of the respondents indicating that teacher punctuality was not a problem. The rest were of the view that their teachers were not punctual at work.

4.2.1 Academic Qualification and Ranks of Head Teachers and Teachers of English.

Education is seen by many as the tool that builds the knowledge capacity of an individual. The higher a teacher’s attainment in education, the better he or she is perceived to perform. This is because education endows the teacher with an in-depth knowledge of his or her subject matter and relevant skills to be able to discharge his duties creditably. Again, the rank of an individual is closely associated with his or her level of education or experience on the job. Figure 1 and 2 depict the academic qualification and ranks of head teachers and the teachers of English sampled for the study.

**Figure 1: Head Teachers and Teachers’ Qualification**
As illustrated in figure 1, (70%) of the head teachers have Bachelor’s degree while 75% of the teachers of English have diploma awards.

**Figure 2: The Rank of Head Teachers and Teachers of English**

All teachers in G. E. S. enter the service at a certain level and with a particular rank. For instance, University graduates who have studied education enter G.E.S. as Principal Superintendents while their counterparts who have not studied education enter the service as Senior Superintendents. Other non-graduates will have to rise through the ranks based on the number of years they have worked in the service. Responses from
respondents in figure 2 show that the majority of the head teachers are Assistant Directors or above while the majority of the teachers of English are principal Superintendents.

4.2.2 Report on Lesson Observation

One lesson was observed in each of the seven selected schools. On teaching procedure 2 out of the 7 teachers gave clear aims of the lessons. Stages of the lessons were clear with transition from one stage to the other quite swift.

However, the teachers the researcher observed did not take the students through a variety of activities. The writing of few of them was quite clumsy. There were no teaching or learning materials used in the lessons with no demonstrations especially in teaching new vocabulary. Teachers preferred giving the Ghanaian Language version of English vocabulary taught. Few teachers tried using prompts to encourage the speaking of English but most of the students could not cope with the situation as they could hardly speak the English language fluently as a result of lack of vocabulary. Teachers were disciplined enough as they did not make fun of students’ errors though most of them were very amusing. However, the majority were not enthused with their lessons due to the inability of students to take active part in the lessons. Most of the teachers kept complaining about students’ inability to answer their questions in English. Most of the teachers neglected weak ones but smiled intermittently. Few students who managed to answer questions were praised or clapped for. Some teachers made basic errors such as grammatical slips, incorrect use of tenses and concord. In addition there were spelling and pronunciation errors. These cut across all the teachers. Examples of teachers’ errors are found in table 7.
Table 7: Some Errors made by Teachers of English during lesson Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pronunciation</td>
<td>1. “Municipal” was pronounced (moonissipa:l) instead of (myoonissəp′l)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “Says” was pronounced (seis) instead of /sez/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. “Assume” was pronounced /əzu:m/ instead of (əʒju:m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. “Cousin” was pronounced /kɜːsn/ instead of /kʌsn/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. “Absurd” was pronounced /əbzɜːd/ instead of /əbsɜːd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Spelling errors</td>
<td>1 “Received” was spelt “recieved”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “Poem” was spelt “peom”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Syntactic Errors</td>
<td>1. The whites, they have a small legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If I were to be your mate you would have break me into pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. If I go to the washing bay and someone teach me how to drive can I get a driving license?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. In five sentence, write what is the story about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The dog’s tail—it’s tail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Classroom Observation (October, 2013.)

4.3 Learner Factors

The largely teenage population of J.H.S. students is a very impressionistic group which can be swayed by feelings expressed by their peers and others in the society. It is therefore important to know how the learners feel towards the study of the English language. This knowledge will place us in a better position to understand the causes of their disabilities so as to help them overcome their difficulties. Table 8 looks at learner factors that hamper the acquisition of the English language.

Table 8: Views of Respondents on Learner Characteristics in the Study of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>AH</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students enjoy studying English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students find it difficult to speak English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do not understand English.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students find it difficult to read English.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students find it difficult to write English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are irregular in school.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students run away to play computer games during school hours.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messaging shortcuts creep into students’ essays</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: N=None, F=Few, AH=About Half, A=All, T=Total, M=Mean.

40 respondents made up of teachers of English and head teachers responded to the items above. The table reveals that 20 of the respondents representing 50% were of the view that few students in their schools enjoyed studying English, 17.5% ticked “About Half” while 22.5% selected “most”. Only 7.5% indicated that all their students enjoyed studying English. The analysis shows that few students in the Sunyani Municipality enjoyed studying English. Majority of the respondents admitted that their students found it difficult to speak English. Most of the respondents had also seen that few students did not understand English.
As many as 55%, had seen that their students had difficulty in reading. In the same vein, the majority of the respondents agreed that few of their students were irregular in school. A greater number of the respondents also admitted that none of their students ran away from class to play computer games. Again, a high percentage had observed that text messaging shortcuts had started creeping into students’ formal writing.

During the focus group discussion, some of the students said they did not like studying English for several reasons. One student commented:

20. I don’t like English because I am not able to write essay [sic] and my teacher beat[sic] me for that. At times when I have English, I don’t want to come to school. (October 28, 2013).

Another student had made an observation and he said:

21. Madam, most of the students don’t know what to study in English. They always say,” English dcyennsua”. (English is not to be studied) So they will be learning other subjects. (November 4, 2013).

In the course of the interview, an attempt was made at finding the number of students who read story books. Only 56 out of the 210 students, a representation of 26.7%, had either borrowed books to read or had books to read at home. One student reported;

22. Madam, they don’t do their homework. Even yesterday our Sir beat most of them because they refused to do their homework. (October 28, 2013)

In one of the schools the local language had to be used before interviewees could talk. This was an indication that the students could not speak English.
4.4 Social Factors.

Students spend just a fraction of their lives in school. Consequently factors outside the school environment can significantly influence their prospects for academic success in school. Parents’ commitment to their children’s education can make a difference in the learners’ opportunities to do well in the study of the English language. This section looks at parental involvement in students’ education. Other out-of-school factors that affect students’ academic progress are also revealed.

Table 9: Responses to Parental Involvement in Students’ Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>VO</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NAA</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents visit the school regularly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents respond promptly to school invitation. | 2 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 10 | 25 | 22 | 55 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 100 | 3.30  
PTA provides reading books for school. | 2 | 5 | 10 | 25 | 27 | 67.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 | 40 | 100 | 2.70  
Parents provide the learning materials of their wards. | 6 | 15 | 8 | 20 | 12 | 30 | 14 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 100 | 2.85  
Parents assist their wards with their homework. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 | 8 | 20 | 31 | 77.5 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 100 | 3.75  
Students skip classes during market days. | 24 | 60 | 8 | 20 | 5 | 12.5 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2.5 | 40 | 100 | 1.56  

Key: VO= Very Often, O= Often, NO= Not Often, NAA= Not At All, U= Uncertain, T=Total, M= Mean.

Table 9 above looked at how often parents involved themselves in their wards’ education. Based on the interpretation of the mean scores of the various responses, it is realized that head teachers and teachers of English responded to all the six items. 28 respondents, representing 70 %, admitted that parents did not visit the school to know the performance of their wards. It is clear from the table that even when parents were invited for meetings they came very late as 55 % accepted that parents did not respond promptly to school invitations. It is also evident that the PTA in many schools in the Sunyani Municipality had not done anything to improve the teaching and learning of English. Few of the parents provided the learning materials of their wards as a total of 14 out of the 40 respondents admitted that parents provided learning materials of their wards either very often or often. The Majority of the respondents also admitted that parents did not assist their wards with their homework. 21 respondents, representing 52.5%, observed that students skipped classes on market days very often.

During the interview, only 26 out of the 172 parents said they had been visiting the teachers to find the conduct and performance of their wards. The rest said work had prevented them from doing that. In all the schools visited it was generally observed that
parents arrived very late. With the exception of the PTA of one out of the seven selected schools that had bought few books for the school library, the rest had done nothing to improve the teaching and learning of English.

When the researcher wanted to find how some of the students managed to procure their learning items, a student explained:

23. Please, I sell Kerosene in the evening. So I buy my things from the kerosene profit [sic].
   (October 30, 2013)

From the responses of students, it was revealed that most of the students traded in the evening.

Students’ absenteeism and irregularity was evident in the interview with the students and parents. It emerged that most students from the selected schools absented themselves from school mostly on Wednesdays, the Nana Bosoma Market\(^3\) day, either to sell or to assist their parents to sell their wares. Others came to school late because they had to accompany their parents to the market before coming to school. A student commented:

24. I come to school early every day. It is on Wednesday alone that I come late. I have to go and display my mother’s items for her to come later before I come to School. (November 6, 2013).

Another Student said:

\(^3\)Nana Bosoma Market- This is a special market day in Sunyani held every Wednesday. People from almost all regions of Ghana participate. Some bring their wares to display while others come to buy.
25. I am a house girl. The woman I stay with said I have to sell water on Wednesdays so that she can get money to take care of me. So on Wednesday I go to the market to sell water. (October 28, 2013).

A Student also explained;


One Parent commented:

27. I am a single parent. The children are many so they have to help me at least once a week to sell so I can get money to take care of them. (November 5, 2013)

A circuit Supervisor had this to say;

28. Madam, most of the students in our public schools these days are house helps. Their mistresses overwork them to the extent that by the time they come to school, they are already tired. On market days, they are seen at the market selling water and others. (November 8, 2013)

On parental assistance to students’ homework, a parent lamented;

29. Madam, I did not go to school. How can I teach the children at home? (October 28, 2013)

Another parent remarked:

30. I cannot teach my child at home, so what I do is that I sit her down to do her homework. At times I look for people to help her do the work. I make sure she studies at home. (October 28, 2013)

Another parent complained;

31. In fact I don’t understand why the teachers say we should append our signature. What I know is that signatures are needed at the bank and not in school. Me, when the boy comes for me to sign under his homework, I drive him away. They have to stop that. (November 5, 2013)
4.5 Mechanisms for Monitoring Students’ Performance in English in the Sunyani Municipality.

Monitoring in schools has been of immense help in improving academic performance generally. Inadequacies in the supervision of schools undermine effective teaching and have adverse effects on students’ performance. Tables 10 and 11 look at mechanisms for monitoring the performance of students and teachers of English in the Sunyani municipality.

Table 10: Teachers’ Responses on the Supervisory Roles of Head Teachers and Circuit Supervisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>VO</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NAA</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher inspects teaching notes of teachers.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisory Roles</th>
<th>VO</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NAA</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher checks attendance of teachers.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher visits the class during English lessons.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher inspects assignment books of students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher organizes in-service training workshops.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit supervisor visits the school.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive inspection is done.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher checks attendance of students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal of teachers is done based on students’ performance in the BECE.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: VO-Very often, O-Often, NO-Not often, NAA-Not at all, U-Uncertain, T-Total, M-Mean.

Table 10 is concerned with the supervisory roles of head teachers and circuit supervisors from the teachers’ point of view. On the inspection of teachers’ teaching notes, most of the respondents admitted that their head teachers did it very often. The majority of the respondents also said head teachers inspected their scheme of work very often. Most of the teachers agreed that head teachers checked attendance of teachers often. However, most of them did not often see their head teachers visiting their classes during lessons. In the same vein, head teachers did not inspect students’ assignment books as majority of the respondents ticked ‘not often’. On the organization of in-service training workshop, most of the respondents did not see their head teachers in that activity. 11 out of the 20 teachers a representation of 55% did not often see their circuit supervisors in their schools. According to majority of the respondents comprehensive inspections are not carried out often in their schools. 75% also said their head teachers did not check the attendance of students often. On appraisal of teachers,
60% of the respondents indicated that teachers were not appraised based on students’ performance in the BECE.

**Table 11: Head Teachers’ Responses on the Supervisory Roles of Teachers and Circuit Supervisors.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>VO</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NAA</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CS inspects teaching notes of teachers.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CS checks attendance of teachers.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 looked at supervisory roles of teachers and circuit supervisors. As illustrated in the table, a high percentage (60%) of the respondents admitted that circuit supervisors inspected teachers’ teaching notes as well as their scheme of work very often. A greater number also agreed that circuit supervisors checked attendance of teachers often. However 65% of the respondents said circuit supervisors scarcely visited the classes during English lessons. The majority of the respondents admitted that circuit supervisors did not inspect assignment books of students. Many also said comprehensive inspections were not carried out in their schools. The majority of the respondents, a representation of 70% revealed that in-service training workshops are scarcely organized for teachers of English. Head teachers also indicated that their teachers checked attendance of students often. However, many of the respondents were of the view that teachers did not inspect English exercise books of their students. These findings reveal that supervision of circuit supervisors and teachers is fairly appreciable. However, much effort needs to be put in since students’ performance is still declining.
4.5.1 Comments by Circuit Supervisors.

It was evident in the comments and explanations of the circuit supervisors that they visited the schools from time to time to do comprehensive inspection of activities of students, teachers and head teachers. In an attempt to find how circuit supervisors monitor the activities of the teachers and students, one of them explained:

32. I visit the schools under me once a while to check attendance of teachers and students, teaching and learning, students’ exercises, teachers’ lesson notes and teaching and learning materials. In some cases I witness teachers’ teaching,” (October 29, 2013)

Another circuit supervisor said:

33. The schools under me are many. I normally visit two or three schools a week. I interact with the heads and members of staff to address some of their concerns. Occasionally I inspect teachers’ lesson notes and other study materials. I sometimes supervise classroom teaching and students’ exercises. (October 22, 2013)

On in-service training, one circuit supervisor remarked:

34. Madam, the relevance of in-service training cannot be overemphasized. We are aware but there are no funds to run such workshops. As for the personnel they are available but since government is unable to meet such expenses, there is very little we can do”. (October 24, 2013).

4.6 Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of data collected for the study. The data included responses to questionnaires administered to teachers and head teachers, interviews conducted with students, circuit supervisors and parents, and report on observation of lessons of teachers of English. These instruments attempted to find answers to the five research questions raised to guide the study.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of the data collected for the study. The study is an attempt to find the reasons for students’ failure in the BECE English language in the Sunyani municipality. The discussion is done based on the presentation of the results of the study in chapter four.
5.1 School Environment Factors

From the responses, it was clear that the schools lacked relevant teaching and learning resources. As Adedji and Owoeye (2002:36-45) asserted, material resources are important resources for every positive educational endeavour. They also found a significant relationship between the use of recommended text books and the academic performance of students. Etsey (2005) also hinted that the availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect teachers’ motivation and effectiveness.

Broom (1973:69) pointed out that the creative use of a variety of media for learning increases the probability that students would learn more, retain better what they learn and improve their performance on the skills they are expected to develop. Smith (2006:10) too opined that the school library is the backbone of functional education without which academic excellence cannot be achieved. Therefore, lack of school libraries, English text books, story books and teaching / learning materials in Junior High Schools in the Sunyani Municipality, as revealed by the study, contribute immensely to the low performance of the students in the English Language.

5.1.1 School Environment Problems

The first item that sought to find whether effective use of instructional time was a problem in the schools revealed that instructional time was not effectively used as the majority of the head teachers indicated that it was a serious problem. This finding confirmed a study conducted by Koomson et al (1999:30-40) on the management of instructional time. Since academic excellence thrives on effective management of time the finding provides a probable reason for the poor performance of public school students in the BECE English Language.
In his study of an ideal class and its effects on effective teaching and learning in Ghana, Kraft (1994) concluded that class sizes above 40 have negative effects on students’ achievement. Freire (1987:7) asserted that language teachers of larger classes are more likely to spend less time with each student’s paper and just concentrate on the mechanics rather than on style and content. Individual attention also suffers in such classes. It could therefore be said that large class size in the Sunyani municipality, as revealed by the analysis of the data, is a contributory factor to the poor performance of students in the English Language.

Adjedji and Owoeye (2002:36-45) found that the physical structure is significantly related to academic performance and therefore stressed that there should be a serious effort to acquire and maintain resources for better academic performance. It could therefore be concluded that lack of school infrastructure is one of the probable causes of the low performance of students in the BECE English language.

Responses to the last item clearly indicated that teachers and their head teachers worked in cordial relationship. However few respondents saw it as a problem in their schools. To the researcher, the best thing for students is a happy motivated staff. By putting the staff first, the head teacher succeeds in making teachers feel they work in a profession. This is a motivated factor that can enable teachers to work tirelessly. Findings showed that was not a problem in the Sunyani Municipality and therefore might not contribute to the poor performance of students in English.

5.2 Teacher Related Factors

The second research question looked at teacher related factors. This included classroom activities of teachers of English, teacher quality, teacher commitment, teacher absenteeism and punctuality.
5. 2. Classroom Activities of Teachers of English

As shown in table 4 the majority of the head teachers admitted that teachers did not take their students through speech work. This is an unfortunate situation. Sheir and Dupuis (1987:103) argued that, becoming native-like in pronunciation is one of the aims set for L2 learning. Therefore acquisition of the prosodic features of the language and becoming familiar with the sound system of the L2 should be one of the objectives of second language acquisition. Richards et al (1992:45) defined prosody as variations in loudness, pitch and speech rhythm and these phenomena are also referred to as intonation. Pronunciation, stress and intonation are therefore identified as important constructs of oral proficiency.

The importance of studying the sound system of the English language cannot be over emphasized. An experiment carried out by Kuhl et al (1992) revealed that infants at six months old had already learnt and retained the sounds they would need in their linguistic environment. So by the time the child is in preschool, their language sound system had been well in place and this makes second language acquisition challenging. This is because the speaker is not aware that a different phenomenon is taking place. He might therefore think that he is producing sounds of the second language as he is expected but in actual fact he is not. A well-known example of this kind of language interference is how an African may pronounce English (th) as /d/ or /f/. It is therefore common to see words like “they” spelt as “dey” and “death” spelt as “deaf” in students’ essays.

Again, there is a relationship between pronunciation and spelling. Even though there is not a one-to-one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation in English, some of the English words are spelt according to regular patterns. The
implication is that if the child learns how to pronounce words correctly, the probability of spelling the words correctly is very high.

More so, the complex nature of the sound system of other irregular English words requires intensive study. For example many letters can represent more than one sound. For instance, the letter /a/ can represent /æ/ as in ‘man’ or /a:/ as in ‘ask’ among other possibilities. With consonants too, letter /c/ can be pronounced as /k/ as in ‘can’ and as /s/ as in ‘cinema’. One sound can also be represented by different letters. For example /u/ appears in ‘put’, ‘book’ and ‘could’. It is therefore very important for teachers of English to engage their students in speech work to expose them to the sound system of the language. This undoubtedly can improve students’ reading and writing proficiency.

Larcabel (1992:28) saw language games as very much in place in a language classroom. He also affirmed that the situation that brings a foreign language to life in the classroom is provided by gestures, actions, pictures, dramatization, interesting contests and other language games. The researcher considers language games as providing an enjoyable atmosphere and a situation in which communication is essential. It could therefore be said that the inability of teachers of English to appreciate the importance of language games in their teaching might have led to the poor performance of students in the BECE English Language.

The next item was an attempt to find if teachers of English gave their students a number of books to read in a term. On this, the majority of the respondents, a representation of 85% showed that there was nothing of that sort in their schools. According to Protacio (2012:69), when students are motivated to read, they tend to read more. The more students read, the more their comprehension and vocabulary level
increase. It is clear from the above that one of the reasons for students’ failure in English examinations is teachers’ inability to motivate their students to read.

On teaching according to the English syllabus, responses revealed that most teachers in the Sunyani Municipality did not teach in accordance with the syllabus. The lack of teaching and learning resources revealed in table 2 confirms this finding. Habanek (2005:63) stressed the importance of the syllabus as a vehicle for expressing accountability and commitment. To the researcher, the syllabus serves many purposes for both the student and the teacher. It ensures a fair and impartial understanding between the teacher and the student so that there is minimal confusion on policies relating to the course. It also sets clear expectations, materials to be learnt and effort students need to put into the course and final examination. Therefore teachers who teach without the syllabus might lose focus which can adversely affect students’ performance in their final examination.

The responses to the next item clearly showed that the majority of the teachers did not complete the content of the syllabus each year. Completion of the English teaching syllabus each year provides the foundation for the next class to be built upon. Etsey (2005), in a study conducted in schools in the Shama-Ahanta district noted that when the syllabus is not completed, content that should be taught in the next class based on the previous class cannot be taught. This leads to a back log of content not taught thereby affecting students’ achievement. According to Kraft (2003) the English syllabus shows evidence of overloading of content to be taught in each grade level. That is why most teachers of English are unable to complete the syllabus as well as the reading text assigned to each year. This revelation, coupled with the misuse of instructional time could put students’ academic progress in jeopardy.
On marking in class, the responses showed that most of the teachers did not mark in class as 40% disagreed with 35% strongly disagreeing. This is a good attitude as it confirmed Drucker’s (2003) assertion that time is one of the scarce resources that administrators must manage other than that nothing can be managed. To Watkins (1986), time lost is lost forever. So in addition to teachers’ attending meetings during contact hours and others as revealed by Koomson et al (1999) on page 44, if teachers had been marking in class instead of teaching then that would have been very unfortunate.

The item on teachers’ relationship with students revealed that most of the teachers of English were not in cordial relationship with their students. The interview of the students also revealed that some of the teachers of English were unfriendly especially the women. Their attitude contradicted Krashen’s (1982) recommendation that second language classroom atmosphere should be void of threats and intimidation from the teacher. The unfriendly attitude of teachers of English raises the affective filter which would not provide the necessary condition for acquisition of second language. Trifonovitch (1981:213) noted that the student is automatically placed at a disadvantage when he already has a language of his own and is asked to learn another language. As a result, good teachers are adaptive rather than rigid in their approach to teaching children the English language. Cazden (1985:595) also asserted that second language educators need to encourage positive interaction patterns between students and teachers. This promotes achievement and productivity. The language classroom that is full of threat and intimidation could scare students from acquiring the second language. Teachers of English must therefore ensure cordial relationship so as to arouse and sustain the interest of students in studying the English Language.
On the issue of assignments 55% of the respondents admitted that class assignments were not given at the end of every topic. Yankson (2006) pointed out that the competent language teachers need to develop their students’ power of recognition, identification and discrimination to be able to overcome certain language learners’ errors. This can be done through constant practice. If teachers of English would give exercises that are directed at achieving the goals of language development often, learners would excel in their learning of the English language. Therefore one of the reasons for students’ low performance in the BECE English language, as revealed by this research work, is teachers’ inability to give assignments regularly.

5. 2. 2. Teachers’ Ability in Certain Relevant Areas in the Teaching of the English Language.

The analysis portrayed that many of the teachers of English did not have in-depth knowledge in many relevant areas in the English language. Agyemang (1993) reported that a teacher who does not have both the academic and professional knowledge would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. Stander (2001:108-110) affirmed that where the language teacher’s own knowledge in the L2 is not of an acceptable standard, his/her poor usage and knowledge are transferred to the learners. From the above discussion it can be said that lack of teachers’ knowledge in relevant areas of the language is a possible cause of students’ poor performance

5. 2. 3. Teachers’ Attitude to Work

The majority of the respondents (65%) saw lack of teacher commitment as either a very serious problem or a serious problem. This revelation confirmed Etsey’s (2005) study
on the causes of low academic performance of primary school pupils in the Shama-Ahanta East Metropolitan area in Ghana which revealed that poor teacher habit and commitment are some of the main causes of poor academic performance of students. According to him, this attitude makes the pupils unable to learn well and acquire much classroom content and knowledge resulting in the poor performance in the BECE.

70% of respondents indicated that lack of teacher motivation was either a very serious problem or a serious problem. This is quite disturbing. According to Asamoah (2009:43), a teacher whose needs are not met may be psychologically unstable and consequently not productive. In line with this, Cook (1980:61-69) observed that the key to improving performance is motivation. The implication is that teachers of language in the Sunyani Municipality are not motivated enough to offer their best.

In an era where the ministry of education has declared zero tolerance for absenteeism, 35% of the respondents admitting that absenteeism is either a very serious problem or a serious problem in their schools is unfortunate. The majority of the respondents also said they had serious problems with punctuality meaning teachers either came to school late or left school earlier than the time for closing. In addressing all public school teachers and head teachers in the Asunafo North Municipality, Honorable Alhaji Mohammed Doku, the Municipal Chief Executive noted with passion:

The canker of absenteeism, lateness, drunkenness, lackadaisical attitude towards work, non-commitment, sabotage, laziness, disrespectful conduct, apathy, dirty politicking and non-supervision on the part of education directorate has bedeviled our public educational sector. (Daily Guide, 02\10\2013).
Similarly, Etsey (2005) stressed that lateness and absenteeism of teachers reduce the amount of instructional time and these results in the syllabi not being completed. As a result, students are likely to perform poorly.

Experience is perceived to be closely related to ranks of people. Therefore, one would have expected a remarkable performance of students who are taught by teachers of higher ranks as revealed by the analysis of the data collected. Since this is not the case on the ground, one can conclude that the rank of a person is not a necessary condition for output of work.

As illustrated in figure 1, the majority of the head teachers had a bachelor’s degree while the majority of the teachers of English in the Junior High Schools had diploma certificates. Therefore the findings of researchers such as Darling-Hammond & Young (2002:13-25) and Fuller (1987) that the teachers’ credential is a factor in determining students’ achievements may not be applicable in this situation. This is because if the higher education a teacher has, the better his students will be, then one will be baffled as to why students in the public schools have been performing poorly when graduate and diploma holding teachers are teaching them. In an emergency stakeholders meeting over the falling standards of education and poor academic performance of pupils in the Asunafo North Municipality on 2nd October, 2013, Honorable Alhaji Mohammed Doku, compared Bright Star Preparatory J. H. S., a private school to that of Fawohoyeden L/A J. H. S., a public school. He did not understand why teachers of that private school who were non-professionals, not trained with the tax payers money and earning a monthly salary of hundred Ghana cedis (GH¢100.00) without any benefit should produce good results between aggregate 7 and 32 while public school teachers who were trained with tax payers money and earning an average of GH¢944.00 in addition to Retention premium of GH¢123.88 were
ineffectively producing a zero percent pass. According to him, this appalling situation called into question the integrity of both teachers and officers of the Municipal Education Directorate. It therefore stands to reason that the level of education of teachers may not always be a reason for better performance.

5.2.4 Remarks on Lesson Observation

The observation revealed that some teachers of English had problems with pronunciation. Most of the time, teachers failed to read what they wrote on the board to correct their mistakes. Syntactic errors made by teachers included the deviant usage of countable nouns. Plural countable noun “legs” was preceded by the indefinite article “a”. Other syntactic errors were subject – verb concord problems, the use of copy pronouns, wrong ordering of words and wrong tenses.

Aikings (1990) as cited by Ofosuhene (1997) thought that students who pass through the hands of incompetent teachers, who cannot speak and teach the English language well, internalize their mistakes. These mistakes are carried into their future lives since language, like habit, once formed becomes difficult to shed off. It can therefore be concluded that teachers of English are generally responsible for inadequate language input due to their own limited English proficiency.

5.3 The Learner Factors.

Students’ inability to construct good sentences as revealed during the focus group discussion confirmed Amable’s (1990) admission that spelling mistakes, wrong use of idioms, tenses, and pronunciation as well as ambiguous statements all lead to failure of students in English examinations. The writer therefore declared that the earlier teachers
began to build students’ competence and proficiency in the English language the better their performance would be. Students’ general weakness may be attributable to weak foundation. Marcon (1992:517), a developmental psychologist, traced the poor performance of fourth graders to inappropriate early child learning experiences. According to Kochhar (1985:32) it is important to lay a strong foundation in the education of the child since the beginning decides the manner of progress in the end. If the foundation is not strong, all that follows in later years may also not achieve much. It is clear from the above that lack of good foundation is a contributory factor to the poor performance of students in the BECE English language.

The general attitude of students towards the study of the English language leaves much to be desired. Most of the students interviewed were of the view that English language is not to be learnt. The majority of them also felt that English should be taught but not examined. Since attitude is a major determinant to proficiency in language acquisition, it could be concluded that the negative attitude of students to the study of the English language has also contributed to the low performance in the subject.

It came to light during the interviews that most of the students absented themselves during Nana Bosoma Wednesday market in order to assist their parents to display their wares. Some of the parents also confirmed that they needed their children to help them on such market days so they could get money to take care of them.

According to Paaku (2008) absenteeism and lateness are likely to affect student’s ability to perform well especially in topics that were started on the days of their absence since learning takes place from known to unknown. Absenteeism may have negative effect on the academic performance of students since valuable school contact hours are lost.
5. 4 Social Factors.

From the analysis of the data, it was evident that parental support for students was not encouraging. This confirmed why students had to do menial jobs to support themselves with their school needs. Parental support is a crucial aspect of the school system. In view of this, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) included in its policy that a drive for educational decentralization with greater recognition of the important role of community participation in school improvement be given attention. Dampson and Dominic (2010:18) opined that the unrelenting parental courage and determination to persevere despite all odds has a ripple effect on children’s attitude towards education. The concern shown in children’s education propels them to study hard. On the other hand, when parents show no concern and support towards their children’s education, students may turn to be careless about their own school activities which may adversely affect them.

A survey conducted by Asiedu-Addo (2009:5) on why many students in the Central Region fail in the BECE revealed that most of the students just refused to prepare adequately for the final examination because of lack of supervision by parents. Therefore parents’ neglect in such a vital role in their responsibility might be detrimental to the poor performance of students in the BECE English Language.

One area that needs serious attention is the way text messaging shortcuts are creeping into formal writing. Analysis of the data revealed that 90% of the teachers of English and the head teachers had observed that text messaging shortcuts had started creeping into students’ writing. Out of this, 67.5% had seen text message language creeping into the writing of few students. 20% had observed such writings in about half of the student population. 2.5% said they had seen such text message language in most of their students’ writing. Carrington (2005:163) asserted that language shortcuts and
colloquial language are reinforcing bad habit in writing. According to this writer, the students seem to have become more dependent on the shortcuts which may have adverse consequences on the students’ formal writing skills.

The interview also revealed that a high percentage of the students, preferred computer games and television viewing to reading. This meant that computer games and some television programmes were gradually taking the place of reading in the lives of the students and this could play a part in the phenomenon of the dismal performance of students in the English language.

5.5 Monitoring Mechanisms

The data analysis showed that the overall supervision of head teachers and circuit supervisors had not been very encouraging. Neagley and Evans (1970) cited in Etsey (2005) were of the view that effective supervision of instruction could improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Mayer (2001) reported that effective supervision is necessary for efficient work. Etsey et al (2004) in a study of 60 schools made up of public and private schools in Ghana found that academic performance was better in private schools than in public schools because of effective supervision of work. A research conducted by Agbadey (2002) in the Effutu Municipality on Job satisfaction of teachers revealed that the teachers attached importance to their superiors’ supervision and assessment and therefore could be an important determinant of better academic performance.

The analysis of the data collected revealed that most teachers of English were not appraised based on students’ performance in their final examination. In his address in an emergency meeting of stakeholders over poor performance of pupils in the BECE, Honourable Alhaji Mohammed Doku, the municipal chief executive of Asunafo North
in the Brong Ahafo region, warned that he would personally call for the dismissal of teachers in the municipality who fail to teach their pupils effectively to pass the BECE. He stressed:

If the performance of school children in the BECE is to be used as a yardstick to measure the performance and competence of the teachers then I dare to say that recent results of the children in the BECE had seriously indicated the professional competence of the teachers, especially those in the public schools.

He was very displeased with how most public schools within his municipality had scored zero percent pass in the 2013 BECE. He therefore suggested that, to make teachers work effectively, promotions and any other benefit of the teacher should be tied to the performance of students in the BECE. The fact that most teachers of English are not appraised based on students’ performance in their final examination could prevent such teachers from being result-oriented. This could breed laxity which could affect the performance of students.

The result of the study revealed that effort was being put in with regard to supervision and monitoring. But as Atakpa and Ankomah (1998:1-20) had observed, supervision helps to develop an individual professionally and therefore no matter how it is viewed, it should focus on ensuring growth and development in the teaching and learning process for good performance. Since effective supervision of schools is best identified by performance of students, there is still much to be done.

5. 6 Summary

In this chapter, results of the study have been discussed. The questionnaire, interviews and the observation as instruments for the study have revealed possible causes of the low performance of students in the BECE English language in the Sunyani
municipality. These findings are outlined in the next chapter. It is hoped that the findings will inform the recommendations and suggestions for further research work in this area of study.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter contains the summary of the study, conclusions drawn and recommendations made. The primary objective of the study was to identify the factors that had contributed to the poor performance of public school students in the English Language at the BECE level in the Sunyani municipality. The study concentrated on
school environment factors, teacher related factors, learner factors and social factors. The supervisory roles of head teachers and circuit supervisors were also assessed. It was from the above factors that research questions were raised to guide the study. This was because the factors were indicators of academic performance in the education system in Ghana.

6.1 Summary of Major Findings

The findings made so far from the study suggest several important conclusions. Firstly, it was apparent from the data collected that school environment factors that contribute to the poor academic performance of students in the BECE English language in public schools in the Sunyani Municipality include the following:

- Insufficient teaching and learning resources such as English textbooks, English syllabi, students’ dictionaries, library books and other audio/visual teaching aids
- Large class sizes
- Misuse of instructional time
- Inadequate school infrastructure such as school libraries, classrooms, places of convenience, accommodation of teachers and school kitchen
- Incompletion of the English syllabus

Secondly, this study has established the under-listed as some of the teacher related factors that are responsible for the poor performance of students in the BECE English language in the Sunyani municipality

- Teachers’ inability to take students through the sound systems of the English language
- Teachers’ inability to use language games in teaching English
• Lack of cordial relationship between teachers of English and their students
• Teachers shirking their responsibilities such as giving exercises, marking and providing feedback
• Low teacher commitment and bad work habit
• Language teachers having challenges in areas like grammar practice activities, practising new vocabulary, using dialogues for practice, getting students to speak English freely, teaching listening, teaching speaking, and giving instruction for classroom activities
• Teachers of English having limited English proficiency
• Teachers of English lacking the professional skills to teach English
• Teacher absenteeism and lateness

Additionally, learner characteristics that have been found by the study as contributing to poor students’ performance in the BECE English language are the following:

• Computer games and television have taken the place of reading in the basic schools
• Most students have weak foundation in English, hence their inability to speak, write or read English
• Negative attitude of students to the study of English
• Bad reading habit of students
• Students’ absenteeism and lateness

Again, some of the social factors revealed by the study to be contributing to the poor performance of students in the BECE English language in the Sunyani municipality are:

• Lack of provision of the basic needs of students by parents,
Lack of parental involvement in students’ education,

Inability of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) to fund school projects,

The uncooperative attitude of parents to school improvement plans,

Lack of parental support and supervision and

Problems with monitoring mechanisms established by the findings include lack of intensive supervision and lack of in-service training workshops for teachers of English.

However, it can be emphasized that these factors generally do not operate in isolation. Teacher absenteeism and lateness for example result in incompletion of the syllabus and also affect students’ motivation, enthusiasm and zeal to learn. Therefore, to improve students’ performance in the BECE English language in the Sunyani Municipality, there is the need to look at all these issues in totality.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Government needs to be very aggressive on the issue of improving basic school libraries. Each constituency should have a library well stuffed with quality literature made accessible to students.

2. Communities and schools should establish reading clubs with people carefully selected and motivated to supervise the reading clubs. Students who read extensively should be rewarded both in schools and in clubs.

3. Government and G. E. S. should as a matter of urgency provide schools with the needed teaching and learning resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process.
4. Regular sensitization meetings and community non-formal education classes should be organized within the communities in the Sunyani Municipality to educate parents about the importance of reading to children, the community and the nation as a whole.

5. PTAs should be viable. Administrators should take the opportunity during such meetings to encourage parents to be actively involved in their children’s education.

6. Special attention should be given to the teaching of phonetics and phonology in the colleges of education.

7. Students in the colleges of education should be given the opportunity to major or minor in English language as it is done in the universities. This will give them an in-depth knowledge into the teaching of the English language.

8. Teachers of English at the basic level should form an association that can meet from time to time to share ideas.

9. Promotions in the G. E. S. should be tied to students’ performance in external examinations.

10. The number of students in a class should not exceed forty.

11. Supervision of schools should be aimed at enhancing professional development.

12. Head teachers should be relieved of classroom responsibilities to enable them have enough time to do effective supervision.

13. Head teachers should be asked to submit annual confidential reports on the performance of their circuit supervisors.

14. Circuit supervisors should be adequately motivated and given the necessary input materials in order to carry out their duties effectively.
15. Salaries, allowances and other benefits of teachers of English should be paid by the government on time.

16. Parents should create an environment that would promote the acquisition of the English language at home. This could be done by creating a small home library and setting time for children to study.

17. Parents should show interest in their children’s education by providing their school needs on time and by visiting their schools regularly.

The study was an attempt to find why J. H. S. students fail in their end of course English examinations. The analysis of data presented in the study revealed major causes of students’ low performance in the English Language as stated in 6.1. Some of the findings confirmed what researchers like Etsey (2005), Kraft (1994), Freire 1987, Adjedji and Owoeye (2002) Protacio (2012) and others had found.

However, the findings of Darling Hammond & Young (2002) and Fuller (1987) that the teacher’s credential is a factor in determining students’ achievement was not applicable in this research finding. This is because even though teachers of English and head teachers who taught in the public schools selected for the study were diplomates and graduates, students were performing poorly. This poor output of work is due to low teacher commitment, poor teacher motivation, negative attitude of students, parental neglect and other social problems. We would be doing our future generation a world of good if the recommendations made based on the findings of the study are fully implemented.
6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The study of factors responsible for the poor performance of students in the BECE English language was restricted to the Sunyani Municipality. Conditions prevailing in this municipality may be different from other areas. There will be the need therefore to conduct similar studies in other parts of the country to establish a holistic trend of affairs. In addition, an experimental study into the effectiveness of speech work to second language acquisition at the basic level of education is recommended. Lastly, since teachers are transmitters, transformers and facilitators of knowledge, a research into the effect of the teacher’s attitude on students’ performance in the English language is also recommended.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEAD TEACHERS

This questionnaire has been designed to form part of a research which seeks to find factors that are likely to influence performance of Students in the BECE English Language in the Sunyani Municipality. The responses are for research purpose only and shall be treated confidentially.

Kindly answer the questions that are in this questionnaire. Please provide appropriate information to complete spaces provided or tick [ √ ] the correct response in the boxes provided.

SECTION “A”

1) Highest Academic/Professional Qualification.
   a. SSCE/WASSCE/GCE “O” Level [ ]
   b. GCE “A” Level [ ]
   c. Cert “A” 4 – year [ ]
   d. Cert “A” 3 year [ ]
   e. Diploma [ ]
f. Bachelor’s Degree [ ]
g. Master’s Degree and above [ ]

2) Rank

a. Superintendent [ ]
b. Senior Superintendent [ ]
c. Principal Superintendent [ ]
d. Assistant Director and above. [ ]

SECTION “B”

Please tick [✓] the appropriate option that corresponds with your answer to

the following questions on the extent to which you agree or disagree with

the following teacher related factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students are taken through Speech work.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Trs. of Eng. speak clearly in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers of English write clearly on the board.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Teachers of English give assignment at the end of every topic.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Teachers of English use relevant Teaching and learning materials to teach English.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Teachers of English use language games in Teaching.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Students are given a number of books to read per term.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Teachers of English mark exercises and return them on time.</td>
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</table>
Teachers of English teach to the relevance of the syllabus.

Teachers of English complete the content of the syllabus each year.

Trs. of Eng. are appraised based on students’ performance in the BECE.

Marking is done in class.

Teachers of English relate well with students.

Teachers of English invite parents to discuss performance of students.

PART 2 - Use the following scale (1, 2, 3, 4) to evaluate your teachers’ ability in the areas indicated in the table below.

**The scale**

1) My teachers of English have strong knowledge in this topic and use it in their teaching.

2) My teachers of English do not use it very much in their teaching.

3) My teachers of English need to find more about this topic so that they can use it in their teaching.

4) I do not think this topic is relevant for teaching Junior High Students.

**Ability Areas**

Please tick [✓] where applicable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Presenting new grammar.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Presenting new Vocabulary.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Grammar practice activities.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Practicing new Vocabulary.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Using dialogues for practice.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Checking understanding.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Getting students to speak English freely.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Teaching listening.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Teaching Writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Teaching reading</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Teaching speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Correcting students errors</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Giving instructions for classroom activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Organizing pair and group work</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Testing grammar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Testing Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Testing Spoken English</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Testing Comprehension</td>
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SECTION “C”

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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>School Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Library books</td>
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</tr>
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<td>38</td>
<td>T/L Materials for teaching English</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION “D”**

Please tick [✓] the appropriate option that corresponds with your answer to the following problems.
46 Teachers having good relationship with head teacher.

**SECTION “E”**

Please tick [√] the appropriate option that corresponds with your answer.

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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Students enjoy studying English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Students find it difficult to speak English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Students find it difficult to read English.</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Students find it difficult to write English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Students are irregular in School.</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Students run away to play computer games during school hours.</td>
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**SECTION “F”**

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<tr>
<td>performance of their wards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>54 Parents respond promptly to school invitations.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 The PTA does something to improve the teaching and learning of English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>56 Parents provide the needed learning materials for their wards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>57 Parents assist their wards with their homework.</td>
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<tr>
<td>58 Students skip classes during market days to assist parents to sell their wares.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59 Students play computer games instead of doing homework given.</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 Text message creeps into students’ essays.</td>
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**SECTION “G”**

*Please tick [✓] the option that corresponds with your answer*

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Circuit supervisor inspects scheme of work of teachers.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Circuit supervisor inspects attendance of teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Circuit supervisor visits the class during English lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Circuit supervisor inspects assignment books of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Comprehensive visits to the school are done.</td>
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<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Teachers check attendance of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Teachers inspect students’ English Exercise books.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

69. In your own view how can students’ performance in the English language be improved?

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Thank you.
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

This questionnaire has been designed to form part of a research which seeks to find factors that are likely to influence performance of students in the BECE English Language in the Sunyani Municipality. The responses are for research purpose only and shall be treated confidentially.

Kindly answer the questions that are in this questionnaire. Please provide appropriate information to complete spaces provided or tick $[\checkmark]$ the correct response in the boxes provided.

SECTION “A”

1) Highest Academic/Professional Qualification.
e. SSCE/WASSCE/GCE “O” Level [ ]
f. GCE “A” Level [ ]
g. Cert “A” 4 – year [ ]
h. Cert “A” 3 year [ ]
i. Diploma [ ]
j. Bachelor’s Degree [ ]
k. Master’s Degree and above [ ]

2) Rank
l. Superintendent [ ]
m. Senior Superintendent [ ]
n. Principal Superintendent [ ]
o. Assistant Director and Above [ ]

SECTION “B”-

Please tick [✓] the appropriate option that corresponds with your answer on teaching and learning resources available in your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Resource</th>
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<td>School Library.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Library books.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teaching and learning Material for teaching English,</td>
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</table>
Please tick [✓] the appropriate option that corresponds with your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Few</th>
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<th>Most</th>
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<th>Uncertain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Students enjoy studying English</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Students find it difficult to speak English</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Students do not understand English</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Students find it difficult to read English</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students find it difficult to write English</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students are irregular in School</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students run away to play computer games during school hours.</td>
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SECTION “D”

Please tick [✓] the appropriate Option that corresponds with your answer.

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<th>Variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Parents visit the school to know the performance of their wards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Parents respond promptly to school invitations.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>The PTA does something to improve the teaching and learning of English.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Parents provide the needed learning materials for their wards.</td>
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### SECTION “E”

Please tick [✓] the Option that corresponds with your answer

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<tr>
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<td>Head teacher inspects teaching notes of teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Head teacher inspects attendance of teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Head teacher visits the class during English lessons.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Head teacher inspects assignment books of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Head teacher organizes in-service training workshops for teachers.</td>
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</table>
140

26 Circuit supervisors visit the school.
27 Comprehensive inspection is done.
28 Head teacher checks attendance of students.

29. In your own view how can students’ performance in the English language be improved?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
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Thank you.

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS’ LESSONS

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>TEACHING PROCEDURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Is the aim of the lesson clear?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Are the stages of the lesson clear?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Is the transition from one stage to the other swift?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Does the teacher do a variety of activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Does the teacher use a warmer to begin the lesson?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>USE OF TEACHING AIDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Does the teacher write clearly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Does the teacher use pictures to elicit vocabulary?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Does the teacher use prompts to encourage speaking of English?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MANAGEMENT OF THE CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Do the students participate actively in the lesson?</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

A. Teacher Related Factors

1) How do you see your teachers of English?
   a. Are they helpful towards your studying of English?
   b. What are some of the things they do to help you study English?
   c. How often do they give exercises and homework?
   d. What about class Tests?
   e. Are you able to do your exercises?
f. Are your teachers friendly?

2) How regular are your teachers to School?
   a. Are they punctual?

B. School Environment Factors

1) How favourable is your school environment towards the teaching and learning of English.
   a. Are you made to speak the English language in school?
   b. Do you have a school Library?
   c. How often do you visit the library
   d. Are you given a number of books to read a term?
   e. Are you rewarded for reading more books?

2) How large is your class?
   a. How does it affect your English lessons?

C. Learner Factors

3) How regular do you go to school
   a. How punctual?
   b. Do you enjoy studying English?
   c. Giving the Option to drop one subject, which of the subjects would you like to drop?
   d. Why?
   e. How often do you read?
   f. Which of these two do you prefer?
      Reading or Playing Computer game?
   g. Do you find it difficult to write English? (If No why, if Yes why)

C. Social Factors
4) How helpful are your parents towards your studying of English?
   a. Do they assist with your homework?
   b. Do they provide your school needs?
   c. Do they buy story books for you?
   d. Are you given sufficient time to read?
   e. If No, why?
   f. How often do your parents visit your school?

5) What are some of the effects of text messaging on your essay writing?

D. Monitoring Mechanisms

6) Does your head teacher visit your class during lessons?
   a. How often?
   b. Do other officers come round to check your school work?

7) Do you lack anything that helps in studying English?
   a. Mention two or three?
   b. What do you think can be done to help the situation?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CIRCUIT SUPERVISORS

A. Monitoring Mechanisms

1) Are teaching and learning Materials available in schools in your circuit?
2) Do the schools have school libraries?
3) Are the libraries stuffed with story books?
4) How do you supervise the work of the teachers and students?
5) Has there been any comprehensive inspection of school work this year?
6) How often do you visit to interact with teachers of English in your Circuit?
7) How often do you organize in-service training workshop for teachers of English at the JHS level?

8) How often do you organize any form of examination to monitor academic performance of students in the English Language?

9) What has been the outcome?

10) What in your view is contributing to the poor performance of students in the BECE English Language?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1) How punctual is your child at school?

2) How regular?

3) How often do you visit the school?

4) Do you think homework is relevant to learning?

5) How do you assist with your child’s homework?

6) How do you take care of your child’s extra studies at home?

7) Do you buy reading materials for your child?
8) How do you encourage your child to study English?

9) Which of these does your child prefer?

   Reading, viewing television or playing computer games?

10) What do you think can be done to improve your child’s performance in the English Language?