

Analysis of Subordination Errors in Students' Writings: A Study of Selected Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana

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Abstract

This study is aimed at examining how students of selected Teacher Training Colleges handle one important aspect of sentence structure, i.e. "subordination". Data were collected from written scripts, and tests responded to by 150 participants from three selected colleges. These were analyzed by identifying both correct and incorrect uses of subordinators to link sentences in their compositions. Findings from the tests and the written scripts showed that participants faced a significant level of difficulty in the use of subordination as well as difficulty with identifying the types and functions of subordinate clauses in sentences. This meant that the majority of the participants lacked the linguistic understanding of subordination. The study suggests that subordination be given the attention it deserves at the Teacher Training Colleges and other levels of education in Ghana since it is one of the important skills needed to form meaningful sentences in English language.

Keywords: analysis, errors, teacher training colleges, subordination, subordinators

1. Introduction

The English Language in Ghana owes its origin to the coming of the European traders and missionaries, particularly the British. The arrival of the British on the African continent marked a very important era in the overall growth of the English Language globally. With Ghana joining the league of users of the English Language, that is, the Commonwealth, the language eventually assumed an international prestige.

2. The English Language in Ghana

In Ghana, English became an indispensable medium of communication between the white merchants, mostly British, and the indigenes due to the multicultural and multilingual nature of the new found Ghanaian territory discovered by the white merchants. Primarily, the English Language was used to enhance trade relations between these merchants and the indigenes. Today, the spread of English worldwide and its position as the language of scholarship, intra and international trade, global politics and communication, science and technology, and so on, many countries like Ghana have no choice but to be strongly tied to the language so as to be counted, and also to become a significant stakeholder in the global village as the language has come to stay and has become a modern Ghanaian artefact.

It is clear that the English language has become an indispensable asset to all who want to survive in this present ever- growing world economy. Literacy in English is indeed a prerequisite to both personal and national development, and it is the recognition of this fact that drives many non-native users of English to place a premium on its study and use in all domains of national and international life.

2.1. The Standard of English Today

The importance of English today is reinforced in the many concerns raised all the world over, especially among many developing countries, about the falling standard of English, especially among non-natives and the possible consequence of unintelligibility English will assume globally if the trend is not reversed. Locally, that is, in Ghana, there have been many calls for the strengthening of the forts of English use to make education meaningful. The calls stem from the current general complaints about the standard of English in Ghana. For many people the present standard of English in Ghana is unacceptable. There is a general dissatisfaction about the English proficiency of students of all levels of our education as well as many users of English in the corporate world. Amua- Sekyi (2000) in her paper *The Status of English as a Subject in an English Medium Context: The Ghanaian Situation* states "the inability of students and graduates of our educational institutions to express themselves correctly and creatively in speech and in writing, suggests that their proficiency in English is seriously flawed". This shows that English as a subject is failing to develop the degree of operational competence in the students that the use of English as a medium of communication requires. In Ghana, it appears the standard of education is measured largely by the correctness of spoken and written English.

To this end, there is the need for educational planners, textbook writers, and teachers of English to begin to pay special attention to subordination, which is a topic under grammar and one of the essential elements in constructing sentences in the English Language. Through subordination, teachers can arm their students with the tools they need to form acceptable sentence structures and also, for them to use this concept in written discourses.

2.2. Subordination as a Veritable Tool

Subordination is one of the essential elements in constructing sentences in language. It is a way of combining clauses so as to make one part of it more important than the other(s). In Linguistics, subordination is a complex syntactic construction in which one or more clauses are dependent on the main clause. Greenbaum & Quirk (1973:309) underscore the importance attached to the acquisition of the skill. They state that “The device of subordination enables us to organize multiple clause structures.” In effect, the idea of subordination is that you can create a number of clauses one of which becomes the superordinate of another. For example: in *Kofi went to school. Ama went to the market.*

Subordination can be effected by reducing the status of one of the clauses. We use subordinating conjunction to effect subordination, like, “although” to make the two independent clauses become *Kofi went to school although Ama went to the market.* Sentences that use subordination usually have a main clause or an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses or dependent clauses in them. For instance, in the sentence above, the subordinate clause is ‘*although Ama went to the market*’ with the main clause as ‘*Kofi went to school*’. Such sentences are normally called complex sentences.

The complex nature of subordination, as well as the subordinate conjunctions, makes subordination an unfriendly topic to teacher- trainees. For instance, *because* and *since* signify consequence but their usage in joining two simple sentences is not the same. In using ‘*because*’ the second occurrence must come before the first occurrence whilst the reverse is true of the use of *since*. When one looks at the discussions so far made, one would not be wrong to say that the skill of subordination is important in the teaching/learning process with which teachers can arm the students with the necessary skills to enable them construct meaningful sentence structures. However, it appears that there is very little or no effective use of this tool that could help teachers determine how students construct meaningful sentences in a written discourse, and also help students appraise their own performance in the classroom. If teachers pay more attention to subordination, many of the problems that result in the poor performance of students, not only in English language but in other subjects as well would be solved.

2.3. The Teacher of English

The importance of the teacher as the most vital single resource in the school seems to be virtually undisputed, especially the English teacher. According to Byram et. al.(1982:1) “Nobody would deny that teachers constitute the crucial educational resource. Good teaching can compensate for many other deficiencies in a school; poor teaching can render nugatory almost any other advantages.” This statement presupposes that teachers are the backbone of our education. The English Language is the language that is used to teach all subjects across the curriculum in Ghanaian schools, with the exception of the Ghanaian Languages. Even with that, English is used alongside when teachers are teaching the Ghanaian Languages. Therefore a fall in standard in the use of English will affect performance in other subjects across the curriculum. It is therefore the responsibility of teachers to teach the use of the language in such a way that students will gain a certain level of proficiency in its use.

3. Statement of the Problem

Society has high expectations of the teacher. Beside high professional conduct, the teacher is expected to exhibit a high standard of competence in their subject matter. The teacher is expected to demonstrate a strong command of language too because it is their prominent vehicle of instruction. In recent times, the English Language competence of teachers in Ghana has been the subject of discussion, with many lamenting on their command of both oral and written English. In attempts to get to the roots of teachers’ linguistic deficiencies, some researchers have turned attention to teacher education. This is ostensibly to investigate whether the training given to teachers offer the right competence they need to meet the realities and expectations of the profession today. One of the areas of teachers’ deficiency in the English Language identified is concord (Agor, 2003). Preliminary investigations which piqued the present research interest revealed that teacher-trainees also had challenges in handling subordination as an aspect of the English grammar.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out how students at the teacher training colleges handle the basic elements that go into acceptable sentence structure i.e. *subordination* and how they use this concept in written discourses as well as in communication. Through the administration of a test item on subordination, and the sampling of written scripts from the selected colleges, this study will attempt to find out how students at the Teacher Training Colleges handle *subordination* and what their attitudes are towards grammar in general. In ascertaining students’ handling of subordination, the written scripts and the test item will assess respondents’ ability to use appropriate subordinators to form the different types of subordinate clauses, and their ability to identify the various types and functions of the subordinate clauses.

This paper which is part of a larger study, and the second in the published series, analyses students’

written scripts and the test item to identify the errors students make in their use of subordination.

5. Significance of the Study

It is certain that by the end of the study, the relevant information on *subordination* would be provided for students as well as tutors involved in the teaching and learning of the English Language. This would help students to be able to present their ideas well in a written form. It will also help students and tutors at the teacher training colleges and those at all levels of education in and outside Ghana.

6. Objectives of the Research

- i. To discover how students understand and apply the skill of *subordination* at the teacher training college level.
- ii. Discover what attitudes underlie learners' approach to Grammar as an aspect of the English Language.
- iii. Suggest appropriate solutions to learner's problems in the use of subordination.

7. Research Questions

1. Can students identify the different types and functions of the subordinate clauses?
2. Can students use the various types of subordinators to construct the subordinate clauses correctly?

8. Error Analysis and Related Studies

The use of error analysis for both research and pedagogical purposes dates back to the early years of the 20th century, but became very popular in the 1960s (Agor 2003:16).

Lately, there has been a resurgence of interest in error analysis as a result of measures to streamline its procedure (Ellis 1985: 52). Originally, error analysis mainly consisted of mere impressionistic collection of common errors and their linguistic classification. This information was basically used to sequence items for language instructions or for remedial lessons (Ellis, 1985:52). However, today error analysis has transformed into a systematic procedure used by both researchers and teachers to collect samples of learners' language, identify the errors in the sample, describe these errors, classify them according to their hypothesised causes, and evaluate their seriousness.

Corder (1974), for instance, elaborated five distinguished stages in the procedure for error analysis (Lenon 1991: 181). These are:

1. Selection of a corpus of language
2. Identification of errors in the corpus
3. Classification of errors identified
4. Explanation of the psychological causes of errors
5. Evaluation of error gravity ranking of the errors.

(Ellis 1985: 52; Lenon 1991: 181)

Error analysis was used in the study to analyse the errors respondents made. It involved the five stages commonly used to analyse errors. For the purpose of this study, the stages below were adapted to suit the nature of the study.

- 1) Identification of errors: here all the errors were identified from the scripts.
- 2) Classification of errors: This was done according to types and functions of subordination. So for instance, errors on the use of subordination as adjuncts, complements, and so on were identified.
- 3) Explanation: This study attempted to explain the cause of the errors learners make on subordination.
- 4) Finally, evaluation of errors: At this stage the errors were evaluated to find out the extent to which there were and whether there was the need for intervention or not.

9. The Research Design

The descriptive survey was the research design used for the study. Doyle (2004) observes that surveys are an invaluable tool for collecting information. Descriptive surveys are appropriate for assessing current practices and conditions and to make wise decisions and plans to improve upon them. The descriptive survey was considered the most appropriate design for conducting the investigation since it is the one that deals with things as they currently are (Creswell, 2003). It is therefore useful in fulfilling the purpose of the study to investigate the errors in the use of *subordination* by teacher training college students.

9.1. Sources of Data

Teacher trainees from three Teacher Training Colleges in Ashanti Region of Ghana were used for the data collection. These colleges are Akrokerri Teacher Training College, Mampong Technical Teachers College and St. Louis Teacher Training College.

9.2. The Teacher Training Colleges

There are 38 Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana. Ashanti Region alone has 7 out of the number of Teacher Training Colleges in the country, and 3 out of 7 Teacher Training Colleges in Ashanti Region of Ghana have been selected for the study. One of these colleges, Akrokerri Teacher Training College, is in the Adansi North District in Ashanti Region. The other two colleges, which are Mampong Technical Teacher Training College and St. Louis Teacher Training College, are found in Mampong Municipal and Kumasi Metropolitan respectively. The choice of these three schools and districts was purposely selected to ensure that data collected would be diverse enough to meet the primary objective of the study.

9.3. The Population of the Study

The target population for the study was all second year students of the seven Teacher Training Colleges in the Ashanti Region. There were 2,631 second year students in these colleges.

9.4. Sample and Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was used because the study wanted to focus on single sex colleges and a mixed college. St. Louis Training College which is a female institution was selected because most female applicants choose the college as their first choice because it is located in Kumasi. For this reason it receives about one thousand applications every year and the best are chosen. Mampong Technical Teachers College is also an all-male institution which trains teachers to teach technical skills in Junior High Schools. About eighty-five percent of students admitted into the college have a background in science. The perception is that science students have a weak English language base. The third college, Akrokerri Training College was chosen because it is a mixed institution which offers both science and general courses. The college therefore has a blend of students with both science and arts background.

The random sampling technique was used in selecting the students who were used for the study. This technique was used in order to ensure equal opportunity for all the students to take part in the study. Numbers (both even and odd) were written on pieces of paper and put in a bag for students to pick. Those who picked the even numbers were selected to form the sample. One hundred students were selected from each of the three colleges. In all a total of 300 students were used for the study.

9.5. Research Instruments

The instruments used for data collection in this study were questionnaires, interviews, test item and written scripts. The choice of these instruments was informed by the fact that descriptive survey research as indicated by Creswell (2000) lends itself to questionnaires and interviews. This observation is confirmed by (Borg, Gall & Gall, 1993) as cited by Nasseh (1996) that survey research typically employs questionnaires and interviews to determine the opinion, attitudes, preferences, and perception of persons of interest to the research. For this paper, only the test item and the written scripts are analysed to find out errors students make in their use of subordination.

9.5.1 Test Item

Ten questions were designed to cover the different types and functions of the subordinate clauses. This was done to find out how the students at the Teacher Training Colleges could identify the various functions of subordinate clauses. The questions were administered to all the three hundred students.

9.5.2 Written Scripts

One hundred and fifty written essays, fifty from each of the three colleges selected at random for this study, were collected from the three teacher training colleges to be analysed. These scripts were looked at to find out how the students at the teacher training colleges used the various types of subordinators to construct the different subordinate clauses.

9.6. Data Collection Procedure

Personal visits were made to the colleges to seek permission from the principals to administer the data. The selected students were first briefed about the purpose of the study before the questionnaire and the test item were distributed to them. They responded to the questionnaire and test item in the presence of the researcher with the help of some of the English tutors and the questionnaires were collected at the end of the exercise. This ensured a 100% retrieval rate. In the case of the written scripts, essays of all the selected students which they had written as class assignment were presented and fifty scripts from each college were randomly selected to give a total of 150 scripts for the study. The basic tools of analysis of the data collected were item analysis, tabular and graph representations.

10. Analysis of Data

The colleges will be lettered A, B, and C for the purpose of the analysis:

College A – Akrokerri Teacher Training College.

College B – Mampong Technical Teacher Training College.

College C – St. Louis Teacher Training College.

10.1 Analysis of Written Scripts

Here, particular attention was given to how the students used the different kinds of subordinators in constructing the different types of subordinate clauses in their essays.

The use of subordinators like *which, who, that, whom, whose, etc.* by the students to form relative clauses was what was first looked at in the scripts. Of the 150 scripts analysed, the relative pronoun *which*, appeared in 92 scripts with each of the scripts using this subordinator correctly to construct the relative clause, except 15. For example, one of the scripts had a sentence like:

1) *Mr. Chairman, related to the above is huge pocket money **which** is given to boys by their parents (adults).*

In the above construction, it is seen that the student does not only use the subordinator *which* to construct the relative clause correctly, but he is also able to show that the clause (subordinate) is embedded in the matrix/main clause. Some of the wrong forms identified were:

1) *Some students destroy school furniture **which** is not good.*

2) *They chose to do **which** ever they want.*

3) *All the people **which** are witnesses must volunteer information.*

The next subordinator which was used correctly by most of the students was *who* and this appeared in 60 scripts out of the 150 scripts. For example, a student wrote:

1) *I then decided to go to join the area guys who had assembled near the stream making merry.*

In this construction, the student is able to use the relative clause to give us additional information about the noun 'the area guys' in the sentence; therefore making it easier for us to know the specific 'area guys' he is talking about. Another subordinator which was used in almost all the 150 scripts is the subordinator *that* used in constructing the relative clause. In fact, this subordinator appeared in 147 scripts and it appeared severally in each script. Examples of the use of this subordinator in some of the scripts are:

1. *'I will begin my submission by making it emphatically clear **that** corruption is becoming more alarming in recent time and the root cause of this is politicians.'*

2. *'To begin with, survival syndrome is one of the greatest problem that causes the high number of street children in our society.'*

The ability of some students to use some of the subordinators mentioned above to construct relative clauses correctly, indicates that they know what goes into the construction of the relative clauses, to some extent. However, there are a few instances where some of the subordinators used in constructing some relative clauses are used wrongly by some of the students. In fact, the majority of the students did not use these subordinators and the few who attempted using them had them wrong. For instance, the subordinator *whom* appeared in only 2 out of the 150 scripts, meaning that only two students attempted using it. However, the two who attempted to use it had it wrongly used. One of the scripts had this as it tried to use the subordinator *whom*:

1) *'It is no wonder that the president claim that any DCE or MCE whom wanted to contest for election as MP should resign.'* That of the second script is:

2) *'On the 11th day of January, 2000, thieves broke into the room of one of the tenant whom had travelled at about 2:00 p.m. and took away a lot of his precious personal effects.'*

We can see that the students cannot differentiate between the uses of the subordinators *who* and *whom* to form the relative clause. *Who* as a subordinator is used when the pronoun in the relative clause is the subject of the verb. On the other hand, if the pronoun is not the subject but the object of the verb in the relative clause, then *whom* as a subordinate is used. For instance, in a sentence like:

i. *'The boy **who** sold the pen is my brother'*, the subordinator *who* is selected because it is the subject of the verb *sold*. But in a sentence like:

ii. *'The boys **whom** we beat are crying'*, the pronoun *whom* as a subordinator is selected because it is not the subject in the relative clause, instead *we* is the subject. This information is what the students lack, therefore their use of the wrong subordinator to construct the relative clause which has made the whole structure wrong.

Students could also use other subordinators appropriately to form the various kinds of the relative clause, which is an indication that they know the rules governing the construction of the relative clauses, to some extent. The other types of subordinate clauses also looked at in the 150 scripts to find out how far the students are able to use them were: the adverbial clauses of time, place, reason, etc. With the subordinators use in forming the adverbial clause of time, the students used a lot of them in the essays. The subordinator *after* appeared in 56

out of the 150 scripts and it was used correctly. For instance, one of the scripts has it that:

1. *'It was around 10:00 pm when I left the premises of the Roxy Cinema **after** the night film show was over.'*

Another subordinator used is *while* which appeared in 16 out of the 150 scripts with one of them using it wrongly. For instance, a script has it in a sentence as:

1. *'They intend telling lies that they want to visit one of their parent **while** they go about roaming with friends.'*

Here, the construction is correct and it is easy to identify which is the subordinate clause with the subordinator *while* and which is the main clause. There is also an instance where this same subordinator has been used wrongly. For example:

2. *'**While** most cases poor parents engage their wards in hard time businesses which involve roaming on the streets of our country instead of attending school.'*

A critical look at this construction reveals that the sentence is incomplete because the student failed to add a main clause to the subordinate clause. This is a clear indication that he/she does not know how to construct sentences using the subordinate clause. Other subordinators like *before* appeared in 18 scripts, *since* in 10 scripts, *immediately* in 5, *when* in 28, and *as* in 4 scripts. All these were used correctly with the exception of *since* which one of the scripts had used wrongly. For example these subordinators appeared in the following correct sentences:

1. *'The most solution to this problem is that couples preparing for this marriage should take counselling session very seriously, **before** they go into marriage and take proper care of their children.'*

2. *'**Immediately** I stepped out of the room, I removed my mobile phone and tried to call the police.'*

3. *'**As** I walked along the streets I saw a dark blue four wheel drive packed in front of a nice building.'*

4. *'**When** there is a divorce in most cases, children are not properly taken care of by the father.'*

Although, all these subordinators are used correctly, there are instances where some of the subordinators used to construct the adverbial clause of time are wrongly used and/or did not appear in any of the scripts. For instance, the subordinator *once* did not appear in any of the 150 scripts. *Till* appeared in only one script and that was wrongly done as in:

5. *'To solve these problems **till** the Government should establish a lot of job opportunities for the youth.'*

One cannot tell which part of the above sentence is the subordinate clause with the subordinator *till*. It would have been better if the student had not put in the subordinator and this would have made the sentence meaningful. As mentioned earlier, *since* is used wrongly by one student as he writes:

6. *'Most young girls in the society are not educated and **since** of them a put in a family by irresponsible men who may end up not accepting the pregnancy.'*

It is very difficult for one to make meaning out of the whole structure. One cannot differentiate between the main clause and the subordinate clause in the construction. There is a subordinator *since* alright but it does not make the part of the structure it is beginning to become a subordinate clause. Also, subordinators used in forming the adverbial clause of place are looked at in the 150 scripts. For instance, the subordinator *where* correctly appeared in 30 out of the 150 scripts. For example, in one of the scripts, it is written:

7. *'It is quite surprising that most of them were brought up in a religious home **where** moral teachings were given to them to lead a better life.'*

Wherever, as a subordinator appeared in only one script and it was used wrongly in:

8. *'**Wherever** they had shot my brother, they all went on to pick more eggs from the poultry farm.'*

The problem with this construction is that there is no link or agreement of meaning between the subordinate clause and the main clause.

The next items analysed were the subordinators for constructing the clause of reason. Here, *since* appeared in 6 out of 150 scripts and it was used correctly. For example:

9. *'**Since** I knew the poultry farm was been (sic.) guided by two strong watchmen I thought nothing could happen.'*

Because as a subordinator appeared in 21 out of the 150 scripts and it was used correctly. For example, one of the scripts has it that:

10. *'**Because** of the high taxes imposed on the goods, they might face certain financial problems.'*

With the clauses of reason, the students did not have problems using the appropriate subordinators to construct them. Regarding the clause of concession, the subordinators used in constructing it rarely appeared in the 150 scripts. *Although* and *though* appeared in 2 and 3 respectively out of the 150 scripts. One out of the 2 scripts has the use of *although* wrong. All the three scripts have *though* used correctly. For example, in one of the scripts, it is written:

11. *'**Though** this may seem unrealistic, it has worked in countries like United Kingdom and USA where there are laws which compels both close and extended relations of children in the absence of their parents to take care of the children.'*

In the above, the subordinate clause is referring to an earlier mentioned statement which is in contrast to the

main clause in the sentence. Not only does the student know how to construct the subordinate clause using the subordinator *though* but he also knows that it is used to show contrast between the subordinate clause and the main clause.

The wrong use of *although* appeared in the following:

12. *'In the first place, there should be **although** laws to track down parents or relatives or adopters who refuses to perform their duties either with ignorance or intentional.'*

In this construction, one cannot not tell which part of it is the subordinate clause with the subordinator "*although*", and which part is the main clause. If one tries to make a subordinate clause out of the construction, then it means there is going to be no main clause. In fact, the best thing one has to do to get the whole structure correct is for one to do away with the subordinator "*although*" so that the sentence will read:

a) *In the first place, there should be laws to track down parents or relatives or adopters **who** refuse to perform their duties either with ignorance or intentional.*

This will now make the subordinate clause become a relative clause with a subordinator "who" and this will make the sentence correct. With the clause of concession, the use of the subordinator **however** was attempted by few students, that is, eighteen students but most of these students did not use it to show the contrast between the subordinate and the main clauses. These students just began paragraphs with the subordinator "however" without first making any statement to show the contrast. For instance, in a sentence like:

1. *'**However** as I got nearer to the shop I was sensing danger but I did not know, when I got to the shop, I saw the car parked in front of the shop,'* by one of the students which is a sentence beginning a paragraph, there is no statement made in the previous paragraph that this particular statement is contrasting with.

The adverbial clause of result constructed with subordinators like **so that**, **as a result**, and **so** also occurred. "*As a result*" as a subordinator appeared in 15 out of the 150 scripts. Fourteen out of the 15 scripts had this subordinator used correctly. An example is:

1. *'It is **as a result** of this that I wish to bring out my views on the problem and suggest possible remedies.'*

The subordinate clause with the subordinator *as a result* is in agreement with the main clause of the sentence. On the other hand, the other script has the subordinator "*as a result*" used wrongly:

2. *'Sir, According to my own research being made about some industrial and some central business centres like Ashanti Region, for Kumasi to be precise, come to notice that **as a result** of the research most of the youth both male and females from the northern part of the country and rural or remote areas troop into the cities to seek a greener pastures to cater for their parents and also some get unwanted pregnancies which leads to abundance of their children because of single parenting, in which them alone parents the child hence streetism.'*

Looking at this lengthy sentence with unclear meaning, there is no agreement between the subordinate clause with the subordinator "*as a result*" and the supposed main clause. It is even difficult to differentiate between the main clause and the subordinate clause. "**So that**" as a subordinator appeared in 5 scripts, and it was used correctly. An example of this is:

3. *'I hired a hotel in Accra to lodge **so that** I can accompany my brother back to Kumasi the next day.'* "*If*" is a subordinator used for constructing the conditional clause of reason and it appeared in 13 out of the 150 scripts and all were correctly used. An example is:

4. *'The issue of street children can be dealt with more successfully **if** we flag up the expansion of orphanages and the building of new ones to cater for them.'*

All the students who used the subordinator "*if*" understood how and when to use this subordinator.

10.2 Summary of Findings

From the analyses so far made it is clear that some of the students can use some of the subordinators to construct some subordinate clauses correctly while some cannot. Through the analyses it was clear that the students found it easy to construct the relative clauses but when it came to constructing some of the adverbial clauses some of the students could not use the appropriate subordinators to construct them. This means that they did not understand the nature of some of the adverbial clauses. For example, the subordinators *while* and *till* could not be used to form the correct adverbial clauses as shown in the examples.

10.3 The Test

The objective of the test was to find out whether students could identify the various functions of the subordinate clauses. It was administered to students of all three colleges of education. The questions from the test are printed in italics. The correct answers are discussed before the errors are presented. The test is analysed below.

Questions 1&3: *underline the subjects in the sentences.*

The type of subordinate clause that can function as a subject in a sentence is the nominal clause. The subject normally occurs before the verb in declarative clauses and after the operator in yes-no interrogative clauses. It also determines the number and person, where relevant, of the verb. In finite clauses, the subject requires the

subjective form for pronouns that have a distinctive case. The sentences which were given to the students to identify the subjects were:

1) *What I hate most is your dishonesty.*

3) *The car that was stolen has been found.*

For one to be able to identify the subjects in these sentences, one must first identify the subordinate clause in the sentences and the type of subordinate clause so that it will be easy for one to know the subjects of the sentences. Also, one must know that the position of the subject is before the verb in the sentence. When one looks at the above sentences, there are two types of verbs in each of the sentences and anytime a clause is mentioned, there must be a verb in its structure. Therefore, as a subordinate clause, the nominal clause must have a verb in it hence, the structure:

a) *'what I hate most'*

is the nominal clause functioning as the subject of the sentence (1) and it comes before the verb 'is'. Any answer apart from this is wrong. Also, sentence (3) has the structure:

b) *'the car that was stolen'*.

Questions 2&9: underline the objects in the sentences.

Respondents are required to underline the objects in the sentences:

2) *I heard that you were leaving.*

9) *I noticed that he spoke Akan with an Australian accent.*

Like the noun phrase, the nominal clause functions as an object in a sentence. The object normally follows the subject and verb and if both objects are present, the indirect object normally comes before the direct object. It may generally become the subject of the corresponding passive clause, and in finite clauses, it requires the objective form for pronouns that have distinctive case forms. The position of the object is after the verb in the sentence. There are two verbs in the first sentence above; 'heard and were leaving'. The ability of the trainees to identify the nominal clause by knowing that as a clause, it must have a verb, and also knowing that a subordinator must begin the nominal clause which is a type of subordinate clause, would make it easier for them to underline the object of the sentence which begins with the subordinator 'that'. Therefore the object of the sentence (2) is:

c) *'that you were leaving'*.

and that of sentence (9) is:

'that he spoke Akan with an Australian accent.'

Questions 4,8 & 10: underline the Adjuncts in the sentences.

The type of subordinate clause that can function as an adjunct in a sentence is normally the adverbial clause and the prepositional clause. The adverbial clause is capable of occurring in more than one position depending on the type and form of the adverbial. It is optional, except in the case of SVA and SVOA clause type. Adverbial clauses normally begin with subordinators like: *when, where, as soon as, because, as a result, etc.* For subjects to be able to underline the adjuncts, they must first of all know that there are different types of the adverbial clauses, and also know the subordinators that begin each type, including all that have been said about the adverbial clause. For instance, question (4):

"We arrived when they had closed,"

has the type known as adverbial clause of time with the subordinator 'when' and it is positioned final. With question (8):

"He lent her the money because she needed it,"

the type is adverbial clause of reason, giving reason for his action. The subordinator 'because' is introducing the adverbial clause and it is also positioned finally. The last question for this discussion is question (10):

"If you see them, give them my best wishes."

The adverbial clause of condition with the subordinator 'if' is what is to be identified here. It means that the action in the matrix or main clause can be carried out only when 'you see them'. In this sentence, the adverbial clause is positioned at the beginning of the sentence. Since we know that adverbial clauses function as adjuncts, then the following answers are correct for questions 4,8&10:

e) *'When they had closed.'*

f) *because she needed it.'*

g) *'if you see them'*.

Questions 5,6&7: underline the complement, object complement and the complement of a preposition in the sentences.

Complement clauses, nominal clauses and adjectival clauses function as complements in sentences. Depending on the element the complement is relating to in the sentence, we have 'complement' if it follows an intransitive verb, 'subject complement' if it relates to the subject of the sentence, 'object complement', if it relates to the direct object of the sentence, and complement of a preposition if it relates directly to a preposition in a sentence. Complement clauses are introduced by complementizers such as; *that, whether, for, etc.* The complementizer

'that' goes with specific verbs like *say, request, tell, ask, demand, assure, state*. Trainees were expected to know all these before they could identify the various functions stated in the questions. In question (5):

How you think is what you are,

the complement is relating to the verb 'is' which is an intransitive verb, therefore the complement of the sentence is:

h) 'what you are.'

In question (6):

We made John who he is today,

the complement is relating to the object in the sentence, therefore the subjects must first of all be able to identify the object of the sentence before they could identify the complement relating to it. The correct answer is:

i) 'who he is today.'

In question (7):

Our success depends on how we play,

the complement is relating to the preposition in the sentence, the subjects must identify the preposition in the sentence so that they could easily identify the complement of that preposition. The answer to this question is:

'how we play.'

10.3.1 Trainees' Responses

Below is an analysis of trainees' responses from all three colleges on the test item. There is a tabulation of the number of correct and incorrect responses. Then there is a description of the error types and their frequency.

Table 1: Tabulation of Responses from All 3 Colleges

QUESTIONS	CORRECT	INCORRECT	TOTAL
1	77	223	300
2	21	279	300
3	90	210	300
4	111	189	300
5	130	170	300
6	96	204	300
7	45	255	300
8	108	192	300
9	11	289	300
10	93	207	300

From the table it is clear that question 9 has the greatest number of incorrect responses, that is 289 representing 96.3%, with question 2 following with 279 representing 93%. Question 7 follows with 255 incorrect responses constituting 85%. This is followed by question 1 with 223 incorrect responses constituting 74.3%, then question 3 with 210 constituting 70%, question 10 with 207 constituting 69%, question 6 with 204 representing 68%, question 8 with 192 representing 64%, question 4 with 189 representing 63%, and question 5 having the least number of incorrect responses of 170 also constituting 57%.

With the correct responses, question 5 has the greatest number of correct responses of 130 and this represents 43%. This is followed by question 4 with 111 correct responses representing 37%, question 8 with 108 representing 36%, question 6 with 96 with 32%, question 10 with 93 constituting 31%, question 3 with 90 constituting 30%, and question 1 with 77 correct responses representing 26.3%. The rest are question 7 with 45 correct responses representing 15%, followed by question 2 with 21 representing 7%, and question 9 with the least number of correct responses of 11 constituting 4% of the 300 responses. Questions 9 & 2 are the questions with the highest number of incorrect responses although the other questions also have high numbers of incorrect responses.

The error types that occurred determine the frequency of occurrence, since a prevalence of a particular error type would be an indication of the degree of difficulty students have in the particular area of *subordination*. This is made manifest when as many as 97% of the total responses from College A for question 2 were incorrect.

10.3.2 The Errors

In this section the errors manifested in the answers provided by the students are listed and explained by adapting Corder's (1974) model of analysing students' errors. There is an identification of the corpus, followed by classification and description of the error type. Lastly, there is the evaluation of the errors.

Error Types (Item 1)

As to the errors in question 1, most of the students underlined a word in the structure that constituted the subordinate clause functioning as the subject in the construction. Instead of the answer:

a) 'what I hate most',

the answer:

'I'

was provided as a clause. There must be a verb in the answer provided and this is absent in the students' answer. Rather, a pronoun has been picked out of the structure that forms the nominal clause functioning as the subject to represent the answer. For college A, there were as many as 66 such responses. College B had 59 and College C had 41. There are responses that are made up of the pronoun plus the verb, which also shows that the students picked some elements out of the whole structure to represent the answer and this is: 'I hate'.

This structure has a verb but what is absent is a subordinator which always introduces the subordinate clause. Therefore, it cannot be taken as the correct answer. This appeared in a number of the scripts. For College A, there were 2 of such responses, 5 responses from students of College B, and 4 responses from College C. Another error identified is where only the subordinator:

'What'

is underlined. Only a subordinator does not form the subordinate clause but it rather introduces the subordinate clause, therefore in the case of the answer to the question, there should be an element of a pronoun, a verb and an adverb with the subordinator 'what' beginning the structure. College A had 5 of this kind of error type with College B having 4 and College C also having 4.

Another error type identified is:

'What I hate'

Regarding this error, almost all the elements needed to form the subordinate clause are present with the exception of 'most' which cannot be ignored, because it forms part of the construction. For this error, College A had 2 of this error type, College B had 4, and College C had 8. The last error identified in question 1 is the type where students underlined some elements that were rather part of the matrix or main clause. That is:

'your dishonesty'

About this error, College A had 5 responses, College B had 7 responses, and College C also had 7 responses.

By far the more prevalent error is where the students just underlined a word out of the whole structure constituting the subordinate clause (nominal clause). A greater number of students in all the three colleges underlined the word 'I' as their answer to question one.

Error Types (Item 2)

Question 2 has errors that are similar to that of question 1. What the students were expected to do was to underline the object in the sentence. Most of the students provided:

i) 'you'

as their answer to the question. The problem with this answer is that, there no subordinator to introduce the subordinate clause. Also, there is no verb which is an important element in a clause. College A had 81 of this type of error and Colleges B and C had 62 recordings each of such error. Another type of error recorded was where students provided the answer:

ii) 'you were leaving.'

The subordinator 'that' which makes the structure a subordinate clause is eliminated; therefore the structure cannot be taken as a subordinate clause (nominal clause). Such an error appeared in 3 of College A responses, 9 of College B responses, and 13 of College C responses. There is also another error type as:

iii) 'leaving'

Here, there is the elimination of the subordinator 'that', the pronoun 'you', and the auxiliary verb 'were' in the structure. For this, Colleges A, B, and C had 12, 17, and 10 of this error type. Another type of error recorded is:

iv) 'that you'

What is wrong with this answer is that there is no verb that makes the structure a (subordinate) clause. College A recorded no such error, College B recorded 6, and College C recorded 1 of such error.

There is also the response that is not part of the subordinate clause; instead, it forms part of the main or matrix clause that has been lifted as an answer to the question and this is:

v) 'I'

For this type of error, only College A recorded 1 instance. There is also the type of error recorded as:

i) 'I heard that'

For this response, there is the lifting of elements from the main or matrix clause plus the subordinator 'that'. This cannot be accepted as the answer to the question. This was recorded in the responses of only College C.

In the responses given so far, the type of error common to all the three colleges is the elimination of a subordinator, and the verb element in the structure of the subordinate clause by providing "you" as the answer.

Error Types (Item 3)

Regarding the sources of errors in Question 3, the most common is the elimination of elements from the subordinate clause (nominal clause) as the responses to the question. The answer expected from the students is:

b) 'The car that was stolen'

The most common error type recorded is:

i) 'The car'.

There is the elimination of the subordinator 'that', and the verb 'was stolen' from the structure that makes up the subordinate clause. Colleges A, B, and C had 48, 58, and 80 responses respectively of such a kind of error. There is also the response that states the type of error as:

response that states the type of error as:

ii) 'The car that'

In this error type, there is the absence of the verb element which is crucial in the structure of the clause, and for this type, College A recorded 2, B recorded 6, and C recorded no such error. Another type of error recorded is the type where just the verbal element in the subordinate clause structure has been provided as the answer to the question as:

iii) 'was stolen'

Here, the noun element 'the car' and the subordinator 'that' are absent in the structure. For this, Colleges A, B, and C recorded 1 each. There is also the error such as:

iv) 'car',

where the article 'the', the subordinator 'that', and the verb 'was stolen' are absent. Colleges A, B, C, had 4, 5, and 2 respectively of such response.

Error Type (Item 4)

The response which the students are expected to provide is:

c) 'when they had closed'

There is the error of elimination of some elements from the structure of the subordinate clause. A response like:

i) 'they had closed.'

has eliminated the subordinator 'when' from the structure. College A had 6, and Colleges B and C had 4 each this error. Another type of error recorded for question 4 is the absence of the pronoun and the verb elements in the structure of the subordinate clause and this response is:

ii) 'when'

This appeared in 27 responses of College A, 9 in College B, and as many as 45 in College C. There is also the situation where only the verbal element in the structure of the subordinate clause is presented as the answer to question 4 as:

iii) 'had closed'

Colleges A, B, C, recorded 24, 34, and 5 respectively. There were responses with elements from the main clause like:

iv) 'We arrived'

Colleges A had 5, B had 13, and College C had 1. In some responses, only the verbal element in the matrix or main clause is recorded as:

v) 'arrived'

About this, College A had 7, B recorded no such error and C recorded 5 of such an error.

Error Types (Item 5)

Question 5 has many error types. The response expected is:

d) 'what you are.'

The first type of error recorded is where the main verb in the matrix or main clause is added to the structure of the subordinate clause (complement clause) as in:

i) 'is what you are.'

About this error, the three Colleges recorded 21, 20, and 40 of such an error. There is also the response of the auxiliary plus the main verb in the matrix or main clause which is added to the subordinate clause as the structure for the subordinate clause, like:

ii) 'think is what you are.'

College A recorded 2 of this type of error, College B recorded no such error and College C recorded 1. Another type of error recorded is the response that forms part of the matrix or main clause and therefore has got no link with the subordinate clause and this is:

iii) 'How you think'

This appeared in 4 responses of College A, 13 responses of College B, and 3 responses of College C.

There is also the situation where only the auxiliary verb in the matrix or main clause is selected as the response for the question:

iv) 'think'

For this error, College A had 13 responses, College B had 4, and College C had no such error.

In another situation, only the main verb in the matrix or main verb is selected as the response to the question and this does not fall within the structure of the subordinate clause. This is:

v) 'is'

For this error, College A had no such response; College B had 9, with College C having 3. An error of the type that has only the subordinator:

vi) 'what',

as the response to the question also appeared without other elements. For this, College A had 4, College B recorded no error of such a type and College C recorded 10. There is also the elimination of the subordinator 'what' from the structure given as a response to the question, therefore producing the structure:

vii) 'you are'

The Colleges had 13, 4, and 2 respectively of this error. The last error type that appeared in the responses to question 5 shows elements from the main clause that are not related to the elements in the subordinate clause structure as:

viii) 'you think'

For this type of error, only College B had 4 responses.

Error Types (Item 6)

Question 6 requires respondents to underline the Object Complement in the sentence and the answer is:

e) 'who he is today.'

As usual, some responses had errors in them. One of such is where only the subordinator is provided thus:

i) 'who'.

College A had 13, College B had 10, and College C had no such a response. In another response, the subordinator 'who' is eliminated from the subordinate structure, therefore making the response not a subordinate clause because it has no subordinator beginning it. This is:

ii) 'he is today'.

For this type of error, the Colleges recorded 25, 28, and 55 respectively. Another error type recorded is where the response provided has only the object of the sentence as:

iii) 'John',

so there is a total absence of the subordinate clause. For this type of response, College A had 8, College B had 4, and College C had 1. There is also the response where there is the elimination of the subordinator 'who', the verb 'is' and the adverb 'today'. Only the pronoun

iv) 'he',

which is an element in the structure of the subordinate clause is given as a response. College A had 10, College B had 8 and College C had no such response. There is again the situation where an element such as the object of the sentence is added to the structure of the subordinate clause, giving the response:

v) 'John who he is today.'

The responses recorded for this error were; College A- 5, College B- 14 and College C- 5. Another error is that, the response provided has no element of the subordinate clause but rather elements of the main or matrix clause as in:

vi) 'We made John'

College B had 3, and College C had 2 while College A had no such response. The object 'John' and the subordinator 'who' are also put together as the response to the question, giving:

vii) 'John who',

which shows the absence of elements in the subordinate clause apart from the subordinator 'who' with an element from the main clause- 'John'. College A had 1 of this type of error, College B had 5, and College C had no response. As a type of error to the response to question 6, there is the elimination of the verb 'is' and the adverb 'today' from the structure of the subordinate clause. So the answer provided is:

viii) 'who he'

Only Colleges A and B had 3 and 1 respectively of such a response. Three instances of a response peculiar to only College A, contained an element from the main clause that is not part of the subordinate clause. That is:

ix) 'We'.

Error Types (Item 7)

Question 7 also has some errors displayed by the subjects. There is the error where subjects added the preposition in the sentence to the elements that form the subordinate clause; therefore providing the answer:

i) 'on the way we play.'

College A had 51 answers of this kind, College B 38, and College C provided 87. Another type of error is where the response has a verbal element lifted outside the structure of the subordinate clause and added to the preposition which is also outside the structure of the subordinate clause to provide the answer:

ii) 'depends on'

College A had 9, College B had 5, and College C had 1. Some subjects also provided only the preposition:

iii) 'on'

which has nothing to do with the subordinate clause in the sentence as the answer. There is a total elimination of

the elements in the structure of the subordinate clause. For College A, 9 of such a response occurred, College B, 12, and College C no response indicating such an error.

iv) 'We play'

is also a response provided by some subjects and that is an error. These are parts of the subordinate clause without the subordinator. College A had 5 of such a response, College B had 8, and College C had 1. There is also the error type where elements from the matrix clause are provided as the answer to the question:

v) 'Our success'

Colleges A and B had 13 each of such a response, with College C recording none. Another response that is also an error is where some subjects provided only the subordinator:

vi) 'how'

as the answer to the question. College B had 1 of this kind of response, with College A and C having no response to that kind.

The last error type as a response to question 7 is where in College C 2 respondents have added elements outside the subordinate clause to the subordinate clause as the answer to the question and this is:

vii) 'depends on how we play.'

Error Types (Item 8)

A lot of the errors that appeared in question 8 are of the type where students eliminated the pronouns 'she' and 'it', and the verb 'needed' that add to the subordinator 'because, to form the subordinate clause. They therefore provided only the subordinator, 'because', as the answer to the question.

College A had 22 of this type of error, with College B, 10 and College C, 20. Another type of error is where the main or matrix clause is provided as the answer to the question as:

ii) 'He lent her the money.'

College A gave 2, College B 10, and College C 1. Another response;

iii) 'she needed it'

shows all the other elements in the subordinate clause with the exception of the subordinator. For this response, College A gave 36, College B 34 and College C 36. Also, a response using the verb, 'lent' only from the main clause is provided as the answer to the question and this has no link to the subordinate clause. There were 9, 4, and 5 responses from colleges A, B, C respectively.

College B provided a type of error which the other two colleges did not provide. Here, an element;

v) 'the money',

is lifted from the main clause and added to the subordinate clause as the response to the question. There were 3 of this type of error.

Error Types (Item 9)

Two of the errors for this question is the lifting of elements out of the elements that form the structure of the subordinate clause as responses as:

'Akan'. 'Australian accent'.

College A had 17 of this kind of error, College B had 10, and College C had 7 for the former error, while 22, 32, and 50 were recorded by the three colleges respectively for the latter error. Another type of error is the lifting of an element from outside the subordinate clause as the response to the question as in:

'I'

which is part of the main clause. For this, College A provided 5, College B provided no such error, and College C provided 1. There is also the type of error where there is the absence of the subordinator 'that', the pronoun 'he', and the verb 'spoke' from the structure that forms the subordinate clause, therefore the answer provided is: 'Akan with an Australian accent.'

College A provided 7 of this answer, College B 7, and College C 21. In another response the subordinator 'that' is present with the pronoun 'he' and the verb 'spoke' giving an incomplete answer as:

'that he spoke Akan'

Only College A gave 1 of such a response. In another case, only the pronoun: 'he', in the subordinate clause is provided as the answer to the question. This means all the other important elements forming the structure of the subordinate clause are absent. For this, College A provided 46, College B 23, and College C none. Another type of error is the lifting of the main clause and adding it to some part of the subordinate clause as the response as in: 'I noticed that he spoke Akan'.

Only College B recorded 11 of such response. The last error type to question 9 is provided by Colleges B and C with B providing 15 and C providing 14 responses. The error is the absence of the subordinator 'that' from the answer provided to the question:

'he spoke Akan with an Australian accent.

Error Types (Item 10)

The last type of error types to be discussed in this section is found in question 10. The first error is where only the subordinator; *If*, is provided as the answer to the question. This means there is the absence of parts of the elements that constitute the subordinate clause. College A provided 39 of such a response, College B, 18, and College C, 43. Some elements from the main clause were lifted in response to the question and these are:

i) 'best wishes.'

This response is not associated with the structure of the subordinate clause. College A had 29 of this type of error, College B had 32, and College C had 11. Another type of error is the response:

ii) 'see them'.

Colleges A and B provided 2 each, and College C provided 1. There is also the situation where the main clause is provided as the answer to the question. There is no element in the structure of the subordinate clause present. The response provided is:

iii) 'give them my best wishes.'.

College A provided 10 of the response, College B provided 13, and College C provided 7.

It is seen from the discussions so far made that question 6 has the highest number of error types, that is, 9 different types of errors. This is followed by questions 5 and 9 with 8 error types. Question 7 has 7 error types, question 2 with 6, questions 1, 3, 4, and 8 with 5 different types of errors each. Question 10 has the least number of error types and that is 4. Clearly, these indicate a significant level of errors, thus suggesting that respondents' knowledge or understanding of subordination was generally poor.

11. Summary of Findings/Error Types and the Teaching of Subordination

The errors manifested in the discussions are clear evidence that the students clearly do not understand the nature of the clause, i.e. what constitutes a clause. Clear examples are the responses given to different questions where respondents provided only the subordinators *when, if, that, etc* as answers. The important constituents of the clauses were eliminated. They do not also understand clause function- subject, object, complement and adjunct as in question 6 where respondents were to underline the object complement in "*We made John who he is today.*" Students' responses included *who, he is today, John, he, etc* when the correct answer was *who he is today*.

Another problem identified is that they do not understand the subordination device. In constructing a subordinate clause, one key element is the use of a subordinator that clearly identifies one part of the sentence as the subordinate clause and the other as the main clause. Students from all the three colleges were seen to lack the basic knowledge of subordination. For example, in question 2 a response like '*you were leaving*' instead of '*that you were leaving*', was registered. Generally, the errors were based on elimination and lifting of elements from the structure of the subordinate clauses and the main clauses. What could be realised was that most of the students did not know what actually went into the structure of a clause in the first place. That was why a lot of the students eliminated the verb which is an important element in the clause structure. If the students were aware of this there was no way they would omit such an important element. Apart from this, some students did not know that subordinators are the markers of the subordinate clauses. That was why some left out the subordinators which began the subordinate clauses, thereby getting the answers wrong. The recorded errors indicate that a significant number of students at the Teacher Training Colleges could not handle *subordination* as one important aspect of sentence structure in the English Language.

The evaluation of the errors reveals that the range between the correct and incorrect responses is very wide. The frequency of errors outweighs that of the correct responses provided. This is seen in all the responses given to all the questions administered. For question 2 for example, the range between the correct and incorrect answers cuts across the three colleges. In College A, 3 respondents constituting 3% had the answer correct while 97% had it wrong. In College B, 6 respondents (6 %) had it correct as against 94 wrong responses (94 %) and College C, 12 respondents (12%) had it correct while 88 (88%) had it wrong.

12. Pedagogical Implications of Findings

Teachers are the trainers of the trainees. They equip the trainees with all the necessary skills that the trainees need before they go out into the classrooms to teach. It is therefore important that these teachers become more proactive in helping to find solutions to the trainees' problems. I suggest that subordination should be given all the needed attention it deserves at the Teacher Training Colleges as it is the skill needed to form meaningful sentences in the English Language. Not only must subordination be given the needed attention, but all the other aspects of the English Language require attention.

The functions of all grammatical elements should attract the interest of language teachers so as to plan their teaching. Teachers of English at all levels of the educational ladder should teach the constituents of clause structure because the English syllabus includes the clause even in the junior secondary school syllabus. This will equip their students with all the necessary skills needed to construct the different types of subordinate clauses and complex sentence structures in their essays.

There is also the need to restructure the course of teacher trainees such that they do not only know

about subordination but that they are conversant with the practical applications of subordination. Apart from the students knowing the practical application of the skill of subordination, they must also be tested directly in the grammar section of their end-of-semester examinations by the Institute of Education. This will help the students to understand, and be able to put the skill into practical use. The skill of subordination is an important tool for the construction of meaningful sentences. It must, therefore, be included in the syllabi of all levels of education, especially from the junior secondary school through to the university so that students would be competent in its use.

13. Suggestions for Further Studies

This study cannot be said to have covered all the issues concerning the difficulties students face in their understanding and using of “subordination”. It is therefore necessary for further investigation to be done in order to discover how various attitudinal factors impact on the teaching and learning of grammar, as well as the English Language. There is the need for further research that will take a closer look at all the factors that motivate or hinder students with regard to the acquisition of all grammatical forms and structure, as this work is not conclusive on the issues of difficulties in “subordination”. It is important that future studies include lesson observation in the instruments used for data collection so that the techniques used by tutors in the classroom could be assessed to find out how far their teaching contributes to students’ acquisition of the skill of subordination and other aspects of grammar. More studies on difficulties and solutions on “subordination” would help to make issues clearer.

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