

COMMON ENGLISH GRAMMATICAL WRITING ERRORS AMONG NAMIBIAN
GRADE 7 LEARNERS

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

in the

School of Social Sciences and Language Education

Faculty of Education

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

2020

Declaration

I, Hanna Monica Emvula (student number 2017345832) declare that the thesis, Common English grammatical writing errors among Namibian Grade 7 learners submitted for the qualification of Masters in Education at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.



.....
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Faculty of Education

26-Nov-2018

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Yours faithfully

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RE: CONFIRMATION CERTIFICATE FOR PROOF READING AND EDITING

This letter serves as proof that a Thesis titled

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By

Hannah-Monica Emvula

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Abstract

The writing component for English Second Language (ESL) learners is a challenge in most Namibian schools. Learning the complexity of the English grammar through writing remains a challenge for many learners in schools especially with regards to the case of the English Second Language learners. This study examined common grammatical writing errors in a corpus of 300 essays written by Namibian Grade 7 learners. The 300 learners' essay scripts were collected from three different schools in the Walvis Bay circuit, Erongo Region, Namibia. The participants for this study came from a non-English speaking background. The study used a mixed-method approach and a sequential explanatory model. Quantitative data was collected and analysed using The Error Analysis Theory (EA) to identify the common grammatical writing errors that are made by learners in their essay scripts (Corder, 1967). Quantitative findings indicated that Grade 7 learners made numerous grammatical errors in seven different error categories: tenses, articles, prepositions, singular/plurals, subject-verb agreement and word choice. The qualitative sample comprised of five Grade 7 ESL teachers from three targeted schools. The qualitative data was collected through face to face semi-interviews with ESL teachers to explore the teachers' views on grammar teaching, the causes of errors and ways to minimise the learners' grammatical writing errors. The possible causes of errors were attributed to first language (mother-tongue) interference, intralingual errors, lack of knowledge about the grammatical rules and overgeneralisation. The ESL teachers used different approaches, namely, inductive, deductive and teaching grammar in context to present grammar instructions. Error correction, corrective feedback and more practice writing on grammar exercises were used to minimise errors and enhance the learners' writing skills. The study sheds light on how the Namibian learners internalise English grammar rules. Furthermore, the study has theoretical, pedagogical and practical implications for curriculum designers, study material compilers and providers as well as for the teachers of English.

Keywords: Error Analysis, English Second Language, grammatical errors, interlingual, intralingual, mother-tongue interference.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family members, mother, father, my daughter (Daylight) and my sister Selma Emvula for all their support, love and for creating conditions which made the study possible.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to express my deep sense of appreciation to the Almighty, without whose leading, I would never have journeyed on.

Secondly, sincere gratitude goes to my principal, friends and colleagues who in their roles as teachers and administrators provided encouragement and guidance to make this research come to fruition.

I am also thankful to my supervisors, Dr Ntsala and Dr Muller, who provided encouragement and guidance when they read my research proposal, which made this project come to fruition. Finally, I am thankful to my family who were supportive during the time of this study.

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List of Acronyms

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
BETD	Basic Education Teachers Diploma
EA	Error Analysis
EFL	English as a First Language
ELTDP	English Language Teacher Development Project
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESL	English as a Second Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MEC	Ministry of Education
MoEAC	Ministry of Education, Art and Culture
NSTAs	National Standardised Achievement Tests
NIED	National Institution for Educational Development
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language
UNAM	University of Namibia

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Namibia is one of the most diverse countries in the world, linguistically, socially and culturally. This diversity, according to the Education Management Information System, poses innumerable challenges concerning education in the country, specifically when it comes to issues of ESL teaching and learning (EMIS, 2015). Being able to write in English has been thought of as a challenging factor in both English Second Language (ESL) acquisition and learning. This study focuses on common English grammatical writing errors among Grade 7 learners in Namibia. The chapter provides an overview of the study, looking at the background of study, the problem statement, research questions as well as the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the theory of Error Analysis (EA) by Corder (1967) is utilised as the framework that underpins the study. Thereafter, different aspects such as the research design and methodology, sampling, data collection and data analysis, are outlined in the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

When Namibia gained its independence on 21 March 1990, the Namibian education system underwent a considerable transformational process to ensure that the provision of quality and effective education is realised. One such change was the adoption of the new Language Policy. English became the new official language and medium of instruction in schools (Education Management Information System (EMIS), 2015). It is undeniable that the English language, being the official language, poses certain challenges in its use, especially to non-native speakers. Kandumbu (2005) notes that after the sudden switch from Afrikaans to English, many Namibian teachers had to teach in English as the medium of instruction but did not acquire adequate knowledge to make it happen. Ngololo and Nekongo (2017) agree that Namibian teachers were expected to teach in English, even though they had limited exposure to the official language in their daily lives. In implementing the Language Policy, teachers encountered a number of challenges in classroom teaching. Firstly, the Namibian school system was not ready to meet the demand for new English teachers, especially considering that at independence more schools had to be opened to accommodate the previously disadvantaged

black population (Shanyanana, 2011). Many of the English teachers were underprepared to teach the language effectively (Kandumbu, 2005). The shortage of properly qualified teachers to teach English partly resulted in a state of poor academic performance in Namibian schools. Mostert and Van Wyk (2016) identify reading and writing as literacy skills that are especially underdeveloped, adding that research in Namibia has shown that learners in primary school struggle to write and this problem even persists when they enter secondary school. They also mention that writing in English is a difficult skill which makes learners prone to committing errors. This presents the greatest challenge to the learners at all stages, mainly in writing lengthy pieces such as essays as opposed to the case of writing shorter sentences or excerpts.

In the wider sphere, English is the most frequently used language and has practically become the most effective language to communicate globally. It gives wider access to the international community and the worldwide information network. English has been made part of the school curriculum in most countries and it has been taught at all levels of education. In the Namibian curriculum context, it is reflected by the position of English L2 as being one of the compulsory subjects in the curriculum. English language learning is a phenomenon in which all the basic language skills such as writing, speaking, listening and reading are interconnected. Basically, the process of learning ESL cannot be separated from grammar. It includes the writing skill that offers opportunities for the learners to increase their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and develop their understanding on how to express their ideas in the written form. Nevertheless, writing in English has always been a difficult and challenging activity for ESL learners because writing includes many conventions that help to make writing clear and understandable (Iiping, 2018). One of the important elements of writing is the grammatical aspect that deals with observable patterns in the way people use the language. In schools, learners are expected to use correct sentence structure as this can influence the quality of writing. The English curriculum has drawn specific goals in the teaching of English at schools. Among those goals, learners should be able to write English essays/compositions that are grammatically correct and well punctuated, using effective order and organisation. Good writing skills in ESL enable learners to be successful in both their academic journey and in their working life. To ensure good writing competence in ESL (The English Second Language Syllabus Grades 4-7), the National Institute for Education Development (NIED, 2015) promotes the importance for ESL learners to communicate effectively both in writing and in speaking. The reasons advanced for this decision was that English is a global language and it has advantages in terms of business, employment, commerce and general communication (Mostert & Van Wyk, 2016). The writing

skill is one of the language skills that learners need to master both in primary and secondary school. However, according to Mungungu (2010), poor writing deficiencies coupled with lack of grammatical accuracy remain the main obstacle the Namibian learners are constantly facing. The issue of grammatical errors equates to poor writing and it is one of the reasons why many learners commit errors in their written work. In Namibia, challenges of grammatical accuracy have been reported by other researchers (Kapolo, 2013). In her study, she stressed that the use of grammar is too complex and learners' errors in writing have become a concern among teachers. This is consistent with the researcher's observation that many ESL learners make many writing errors when expressing their thoughts in English which results in the readers misunderstanding the writer's intended meaning.

Numerous studies have proven that English Second Language learners are prone to grammatical and lexical errors because of poor teaching strategies, inappropriate use of teaching styles, the dominance of mother-tongue, lack of teaching resources and underprepared English teachers (Keshavarz, 2012; Khatter, 2019; Mungungu, 2010). ESL learners are not able to apply the correct grammar rules to their actual writing despite the years of learning. In agreement with the same view, Kandumbu (2005) maintains that even though second language learners have learnt the basic skills and other conventions in English lessons, many have not fully mastered the competencies. The results from the National Standardised Achievement Tests for 2017/2018 attest to the fact that Namibian learners' writing in English is below expectation and plagued with both grammatical and lexical errors. This problem needs to be investigated as it has a negative impact on the quality of the learners' English written products. These challenges have been attributed to the learners' negative attitudes towards the language which ultimately leads to significant levels of low performance in English language assessments as well as other subjects. Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2015) assert that many learners' social background had never been exposed them to ESL learning. For them, issues such as dominance of the first language, lack of exposure to English, lack of motivation, cultural resistance, traditional teaching methods and rote learning are all considered reasons for Namibian learners' poor writing skills in English. Despite their lack of exposure to ESL, learners are not proficient in the English language and they do not have good mastery of vocabulary and grammar. In a substantial number of studies on English writing carried out by some scholars (Frans, 2016; Kapolo, 2013; Mungungu, 2010; Sichombe, 2018), in which the focus was on problems faced by the ESL teachers in the teaching of English at secondary school level, the findings revealed that most students even after having learnt English for many years

in school, still struggle to produce a coherent and fluent piece of writing. Their findings imply that the situation is not better at secondary school level. The roots of these deficiencies that secondary and tertiary level may be confronted with can be traced back to the primary level (Iiping, 2018; Iiping & Kasanda, 2013). This potentially poses a challenge at the primary level as it should be the one to lay the foundation for secondary school learning. It is harder to find ESL learners writing in English without committing errors and it takes considerable time and effort for the learners to be skillful in it (Khatter, 2019). The difficult and complex nature of writing in ESL has given rise to a growing interest in the analysis of writing errors, sources and effects of errors associated with writing.

Consequently, ESL learners continue to struggle to write in English and their writings are prone to grammatical errors. These learners always lag behind and struggle to master ESL grammar. These reasons motivated this research as to identify the common grammatical errors in English as a second language among Grade 7 learners in Namibia. The study calls for ESL teachers to have a better understanding of the types of errors learners make in their writing and try to improve the ESL learners' writing skills. Also, it pinpoints exactly which of these possible causes are most responsible for the poor use of grammar in Namibian learners at the primary school phase. As such, the current study also explores Grade 7 ESL teachers' views on how to minimise these writing errors.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Against the backdrop of the discussion in the previous section, it is evident that Namibian learners' writing has deteriorated and the challenges experienced by Namibian learners in ESL learning impacts on their performance in other subjects as well other than English. As such, English Second Language appears to be a stumbling block to many Namibian learners as they are overwhelmed by grammar rules of English in the teaching-learning process. Importantly, the understanding and applying of correct English grammatical construction rules have been singled out as a major problem hampering effective teaching and learning. Therefore, there is a dire need to address the area of teaching English writing skills among Namibian Grade 7 learners. These learners are disadvantaged because writing in English is regarded as the highest order of communicative skill and that it does not only require knowledge of the language, but also the mastery of its rules (Othman, 2015). Grammatical challenges have been reported by other researchers (Iiping, 2018; Kapolo, 2013; Mungungu, 2010), who have observed that

ESL learners exhibit weaknesses in assignment writing and their English writing is saddled with grammatical and lexical errors. The researcher, as an ESL teacher has often felt frustrated by errors in the ESL learners' writing. The grammatical errors that ESL learners make affect the overall quality of their written work resulting in poor grades in English. There is a great need for teachers to know the types of errors that ESL learners make as well as the possible causes so that remedial teaching may be developed. Despite this observation, there is scarcity of research studies that have focused on ESL common grammatical writing errors at primary school level in Namibia, especially among Grade 7 learners. This study explored the common English grammatical writing errors among Namibian Grade 7 learners in the Walvis Circuit, Erongo Region, Namibia, in order to address the learners' grammatical errors.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was aimed at exploring the common English grammatical writing errors among the Namibian Grade 7 learners.

- To identify the common English grammatical writing errors among the Namibians Grade 7 learners;
- To record the frequency of occurrence of errors in the writing of English among the Grade 7 learners in Namibia;
- To explore possible origins of the common English grammatical writing errors among the Namibian grade 7 learners;
- To explore Grade 7 ESL teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve learners' writing skills; and
- To propose approaches that can be used to reduce common English grammatical writing errors among the grade 7 Namibian learners.

The aims and the objectives were in response to the following research questions:

The main question:

What are the common grammatical errors in English writing among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?

Subsidiary Research Questions

- What is the frequency of grammatical errors among the English writing samples among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?
- What are the possible origins of the grammatical errors?
- What are the teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve the learners' writing skills?
- What strategies can be proposed to reduce common English grammatical writing errors among the grade 7 Namibian learners?

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory that underpins the present study is drawn from Error Analysis (EA). Though this theory was initiated by Pit Corder (1967) in the 1960s, numerous researchers have contributed to the extension of Error Analysis as a theoretical framework (Al-khresheh, 2015; 2010; Ellis, 2008; Hinkel, 2005; Selinker, 1972). These scholars have explored the significance of the EA theory to explain different types of second language learners' errors such as syntax, grammar and phonological errors. The theoretical framework posits that errors made by learners should not be considered as negative but rather they are beneficial to teachers and learners (Corder, 1967; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Ellis, 2008; Hinkel, 2005; Selinker, 1972). However, it was Corder (1967) who initially highlighted the importance of considering errors as a positive step in the process of language learning. According to Corder (1967), within EA, an error is conceptualised as a systematic deviation and he emphasises that ultimately both the teacher and learner draw significant lessons from the errors. The process of error analysis might determine how learners process and categorise the input data which they are exposed to and inform effective future teaching and learning practices.

EA provides information on the level of learning the learners have comprehended as well as how they learn and use a second language (Al-khresheh & Hamad, 2013; Brown, 2014; Crystal, 2003). According to Ellis (1997), errors should not be taken as unwanted forms in the process of learning or taken as signs of non-performance that should be done away with at any cost but rather, to be measured as a necessary part of the language learning process. Othman (2015)

employs EA as a method in writing classes to improve students' writing performance. Keshavarz (2012) contends that the process of error analysis is significant to researchers and involves collecting samples of the learner's language, identifying errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes and evaluating their seriousness. In the present study, English grammatical writing errors made by Namibian Grade 7 learners were identified, analysed using EA, and tackled in order to find better approaches and corrective remedial techniques to lessen and eliminate these errors.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed method design in a sequential explanatory manner (quantitative approach followed by the qualitative approach). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) define the mixed method as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. While Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) define it as a method that combines elements of two approaches for the purpose of in-depth understanding and validation, there are some limitations involved when using this design.

In a mixed method design, the quantitative method involves research techniques that gather and dissect numerical data that is measurable (Maxwell, 2013), whereas, the qualitative method approach is one that seeks to understand people's views, interpretation of their experiences and the construction of their world (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the sequential explanatory design was used whereby the collection and analysis of quantitative data from document analysis (learners' scripts) was done first. This was followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews with the Grade 7 English teachers of the selected schools. The qualitative data were collected and analysed second, in order to explain, elaborate and refine more on the quantitative results. The mixed method design allowed the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, as the two phases built on each other in a sequential explanatory design and later the two phase sets of data were integrated during data interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The rationale for choosing this design was that qualitative data refines, explains, enhances and enriches the quantitative statistical results by exploring the participants' views and responses in a more in-depth manner in addition to helping to generate new knowledge (Creswell, 2015; Mason, 2006). In the sequential explanatory design, priority is given to quantitative analysis because it comes first in the sequence and it presents the aspect of the data collection process. The

research instruments used in the study included document analysis of the learners' scripts and semi-structured interviews with the Grade 7 English teachers. The qualitative phase of this study provides a platform for further in-depth exploration of findings from the quantitative phase (Maxwell, 2013). The qualitative data assist in explaining and interpreting the data of the quantitative phase.

1.6.1 Sampling

Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007) define sampling as a method that enables the researcher to select a portion of the population for the study. This study used the convenience sampling method to select the samples and participants for the study. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), convenience sampling is defined as a process of selecting the research participants from the non-probability or non-random sampling where members of the target group population meet certain practical criteria. Sampling involves decisions concerning sample members, the settings, events and the process regarding the research topic. The researcher opted for a convenience sampling approach because it is easy and affordable. For the quantitative phase, the sample comprised of 300 learners' scripts for perusal to determine the common grammatical errors (a balanced total of 100 essay scripts from each school) of Grade 7 learners 2018 end-of-year examinations. These scripts were chosen because the examination during the end of the year targeted learners who wrote the same paper and under the same circumstances. The intention was to examine the learners' scripts because by the end of the primary phase, it is when these learners had received maximum exposure to the English language. The study considered only three selected primary schools out of the seven primary schools in the Walvis Bay circuit (two from the informal settlement and one from the suburb) because of their geographical proximity and easy accessibility. For the qualitative phase, this type of sampling provided the opportunity to interview the participants that are informative (Palys, 2008; Patton, 2002; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). The participants were selected because they were easily accessible and also that members of the targeted group were homogenous. The schools were selected based on the purpose of the study and for the following reasons: all the three schools catered for Grade 7 learners and use English as medium of instruction. The two schools (from the informal settlement) results were poor (their previous Grades 7 learners' performed below the target setting 50%) in the National Standardised Achievement Test (NSTA) compared to their counterparts. The two schools in the informal

settlement are in close proximity to the area where the researcher lives and this made it convenient to reduce travelling costs and to manage the given time-frame to complete the study. Patton (2015) asserts that for a researcher to sustain a convenience sample, the selected participants should meet the needs of the study. The strength of this type of sampling allows the researcher to obtain basic data and trends regarding the present study without the complications of using randomised samples. The population comprised of five Grade 7 English teachers. Since the pool was small, the researcher engaged all the five Grade 7 English teachers from the selected schools for semi-structured interviews because the phenomenon being studied pertained to teachers' experiences and knowledge. All the samples were selected based on the purpose of the research.

1.6.2 Data collection methods

The study used two sets of data collection. The first set of data collection applied document analysis (the learners' scripts). The rationale for document analysis is that this process can provide data on the context within which the study is conducted as the learners' language is shaped by some contextual factors and in the case Namibia in general and Walvis Bay in Erongo region in particular. Document analysis requires that data be examined, analysed and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Silverman, 2016). In order to answer the main research question, a collection of samples of learners' ESL written work / essays were examined. The collection comprised of 300 learners' scripts (essays) from the three selected schools to identify the common grammatical errors and the frequency of errors committed by the Namibian Grade 7 learners. The researcher used the examination scripts because it is only during end of the year examination when Grade 7 learners write the same examination paper under the same circumstances. The researcher collected scripts of mixed abilities that scored below 75%. This was based on the theoretical notion of Error Analysis (EA) procedures developed by Corder (1967) and extended by other researchers (Brown, 2014; Ellis, 2008; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Hinkel, 2005; Selinker, 1972). Corder (1967) proposed that EA should be executed in five sequential stages; namely, collection of learners samples, identification of errors, classification into error types, description of errors, explanation of errors and corrections and evaluation of errors. The document analysis provides a clear framework for collecting, analysing, discussing and interpreting data to address the research goals.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the Grade 7 ESL teachers to obtain further insights and gain explanatory and complementary information that had been gleaned from the quantitative phase. This was also done to explore their views on the approaches used to help learners minimise their grammatical errors and also to find out the causes of grammatical errors in the learners' written work. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), a semi-structured interview involves an interchange of views and ideas between the researcher and participants and allows the researcher to request and clarify or seek additional and specific information. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore new concepts to generate and explain the mechanisms underlying the first phase of the research in more detail (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The second phase provides a platform for an in-depth further exploration of findings from the quantitative phase (Maxwell, 2013). The teachers' views and responses were noted, audio-recorded and followed up with further questions to gain clarification and to probe (where possible) during the interview process. This is in harmony with Cohen *et al.* (2007), who posit that semi-structured interviews involve an exchange of ideas, views and rapport between the interviewer and interviewees.

1.6.3 Data analysis

The analysis in this study was divided into two phases. The data was analysed quantitatively first. The learners' scripts were analysed using Corder's framework (EA) for grammatical errors (cf: 2.7). This was informed by the work of various researches on errors analysis in learners' writings (Corder, 1967; Ellis, 1997; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Hubbard, Jones, Thornton & Wheeler, 1996). These scholars emphasise the need to collect evidence, to identify the errors and to quantify them. The study concentrated on common grammatical errors found in essay writing and thereafter the frequency of each occurrence per error-category was determined.

The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis, which, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), is the process of combining elements of organising information into categories related to the central questions of the research. It involves interpretation of the text, followed by the identification of themes and patterns. The process fostered a comparative element of the responses from the interviewees. The element ensured the pinpointing of vital constructs, patterns and themes that emerged from the data collection process (Creswell, 2013). The researcher identified pertinent information and separated it from that which is not pertinent.

Thereafter, the data were coded into emerging themes and categories to gain a broader and synthesised perspective of the results.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study aimed at providing a brief account on the common grammatical errors made by the Grade 7 learners from the three selected schools in the Erongo region. The study is significant in many ways, firstly for the ESL teachers to recognize that learners' errors are indispensable signs of learning. Secondly, the study sheds light on the nature of errors made by learners and explains the causes of grammatical errors the learners made in their written essays. In other words, the study enlightens the ESL teacher to be better equipped and be aware of the difficulties learners face with regards to grammar and be able to correct some of the grammatical flaws through innovative linguistic strategies as part of the remedial process (Hamed, 2018). In addition, the study provides empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving grammatical accuracy. To curriculum planners, syllabi designers and learning materials suppliers, it provides more incisive knowledge and in-depth understanding of the types of English grammatical errors that learners make and why learners make those errors (Corder, 1967). The results of this study will inform the English teachers on how far the learners are towards reaching their goals and how the learners have advanced and consequently, what remains for them to learn. The errors identified in the present study serve as a useful guide for English teachers in the design of effective teaching and learning strategies and to put appropriate intervention strategies into place. Moreover, this study provides evidence on how language is learnt or acquired and serves as reference material for future researchers.

1.8 DELINEATING THE STUDY

This study falls within the field of curriculum studies, which encapsulates the issue of teaching and learning. Carl (2012) views curriculum as a broad concept and official policy that comprises all planned school activities and subject courses that are offered by a school. English is one of the subjects prescribed for the Grade 7 learners in Namibia. During the teaching and learning of English, learners need to master four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, learners need to increase their vocabulary and master grammar. The study is relevant in the sense that it addresses the issues of pedagogy.

1.10 LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTERS

This study consists of five chapters.

Chapter One introduced the background information and stated the research problem under study. This chapter outlined the main aim and objectives, the significance and limitation of the study. Furthermore, it presented the theoretical framework within which the study was undertaken. A brief discussion of the research design and methodology, data collection procedures and analysis was also presented.

Chapter Two reviews existing literature concerning the study area. It presents the theoretical framework of Error Analysis (EA) that underpins the study. It evaluates the literature on English grammar teaching and outlines different challenges regarding grammar teaching and learning. Furthermore, it reviews some of the available literature that was considered to be relevant to this study.

Chapter Three describes the research design employed in the current study. It presents details on methodology, paradigmatic perspectives, sampling, the data collection instruments and procedures, as well as the data analysis process. The issue of ethical considerations is also discussed.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study and data presentation, data analysis, and discussion concerning both sets of data. Different themes that emerged from the two sets of data are discussed. The presentation of findings is arranged according to the research objectives and research questions.

Lastly, **Chapter Five** summarises the findings, conclusions and recommendations with regard to error-minimising in written English. Recommendations for future research are also covered.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the rationale and the background of the study as well as the statement of the problem and research questions which integrated the objectives and significance of the study. It also provided a brief discussion of the research methodology, data collection procedures and the process of data analysis. Additionally, it touched on the theoretical framework of the study which is responsible for defining and presenting some of the relevant concepts applied in the Error Analysis (EA) theories. Having given the background information of the study in Chapter 1, the next section, Chapter 2, focuses on the literature review which is relevant to the present study so as to locate the study within the context of similar research studies by enriching and validating it.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts off with defining grammar and grammar related aspects under discussion. It then evaluates the literature on English grammar teaching and outlines different challenges regarding grammar teaching and learning. It sheds light on the role of grammar teaching to the ESL learners and different approaches to teach grammar. Furthermore, the chapter provides the theoretical framework of Error Analysis, which this study adopted in the analysis of learners' errors (Error Analysis) as expounded by Corder (1967). The chapter further highlights the findings which emerged from the empirical research for this study. The section casts light on the process of Error Analysis that is used to understand the common grammatical errors and their causes in the ESL learners' writings. In conclusion, the section further tackles issues surrounding the origins of Error Analysis, types of Error Analysis, benefits of Error Analysis, and the relevance of Error Analysis in grammar teaching. The review endeavours to relate similar studies on EA to the present study.

2.2 WHAT IS GRAMMAR

According to Thornbury (2008), grammar is defined as a set of structural rules governing the composition of clauses, phrases and words in a natural language. This includes learning how words are constructed in a sentence, the usage of appropriate correct patterns of grammar and how sentences can be interpreted correctly. Contrary to Thornbury's definition, grammar is not merely a set of static rules but rather a body of rules and regulations of the language that raise consciousness of the rules that accelerate the language learning process and improves the accuracy (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). He further opines that grammar is the study and the practice of the rules by which words change their form and are combined into sentences.

2.2.1 The role of grammar in ESL

Grammar plays a substantial role in governing the use and application of a language. It helps learners to discover the nature of language, to know and be aware that language consists of patterns that make up what they speak, listen, read and write intelligibly. Larsen-Freeman (2015) found that the ability to avoid confusion and convey unambiguous meaning in learners'

writing competencies can only be enhanced effectively through grammatical writing instructions. In other words, a decent mastery of grammar rules provides the learners with a better understanding of language structures and contributes to eloquent self-expression. Accordingly, the Namibian English Second Language syllabus promotes the following outcomes: to enable learners to communicate effectively in speech and writing in the second language, to express thoughts, ideas, experiences and values as an essential part of personal development and to develop proficiency in English (MoEAC, 2015). ESL learners are expected to write and make presentations (in acceptable English) that are grammatically accurate and appropriate for the purpose of context and for the readers. Also, the ESL syllabus calls the ESL teachers to teach appropriate grammar rules and vocabulary to learners in order to use correct grammatical structures in their writing. By the end of each phase, learners' ability to produce and understand sentences with good grammar shows that their level of proficiency and development of their English language skills forms the basis for lifelong learning and universal relevance. Supporting the importance of grammar, Ellis (2014) states that if grammar rules are often carelessly violated, communication may suffer, although learning its rules is extremely difficult. Grammar instruction is considered to be a prerequisite for effective communication. Taking into account that learners are expected to interact appropriately and meaningfully, express themselves clearly in a variety of genres and situations and read and critically interpret a variety of texts. Importantly, the English Second Language curriculum shares the same approach, that learning grammar usage helps learners to understand what makes the sentences and paragraphs clear and interesting and without it, language will eventually become obscured (NIED, 2015).

The Namibian ESL syllabus for Grades 4-7 requires learners to write simple sentences that have correct grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and meaning (NIED, 2015). The learners are also expected to develop and present appropriate written, visual and multi-media texts (and speeches) for a variety of purposes. This is where grammar comes handy; it serves to make the learners' written production pieces clear when contextual information is required.

The role of grammar pertains not only to writing and speaking forms but more so it exceeds that and is also an underlying component in other language skills. The targeted skills for the newly approved English syllabus for the Senior Primary phase (Grade 4-7) consists of five groups that should be acquired by all learners and they are:

- Listening and Responding;

- Reading and Responding;
- Speaking;
- Writing and
- Grammar and Language Usage.

Grammar plays a vital role in the writing and speaking process because learners cannot write efficiently without grammar instructions. Grammar makes it possible for the learners to articulate their thoughts and make them intelligible for the recipients and readers. Thornbury (1998) notes that knowing more on how grammar works also helps one to understand more about how it is used and misused. He proposes that when learners lack knowledge of grammar rules, they cannot understand the essence of the text when they read and write. Larsen-Freeman (2015) contends that teaching and learning grammar requires not only learning the rules but entails practicing meaningful sentential constructions for both communicative and writing competence free of ambiguities. This implies that as for ESL learners, grammar provides them with a sort of criterion by which they could assess and measure the accuracy of what they are writing. Learning grammar rules ensures that learners have the skills and apply the correct grammar rules required to articulate any thoughts when writing essays. Thus having knowledge of grammar is very important for learners to have good communicative ability.

2.2.2 The importance of grammar teaching in Second Language Teaching

The teaching of ESL grammar has been perceived as the most difficult skill to teach and demanding skill to learn. In order to overcome this, the ESL teachers have to do their best to make grammar teaching as non-threatening, imaginative and useful activity to learn within the English Language learning process (Ur, 2012). Since the process of writing involves generating, organising of ideas, drafting and revising and editing, it has been difficult and a challenge for the ESL learners (Khatter, 2019).

Deng and Yin (2016) validate the notion that the teachers are most critical participants in the effective teaching and learning process particularly on what goes on in the classroom. Ellis (2006) describes grammar teaching as involving practicing sentence patterns, in which learners are taught rules of the language in a way that helps them to understand, process and internalise it. Emmaryana (2010) notes that when learners know more about how grammar works, it makes it easier for them to understand more about how it can be used correctly. The teaching of

grammar should comprise language structure, sentence patterns, meaning and use. This includes learners' attention on understanding how grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly used. These expectations are not easy to meet sometimes.

Many teachers remain in a state of confusion on what approaches they should use to teach grammar. The ESL teachers are challenged to use innovative attempts to teach grammar and provide learners with an opportunity to be able to use correct grammatical rules. According to Sadat (2017), language teachers should take into consideration of what, how, when and why it is important to teach grammar. He strongly argues that ESL teachers should consider the level of the learners (when choosing a teaching approach) as grammar teaching is largely dependent upon the level of the learners.

2.2.3 Different approaches to ESL grammar teaching and improving writing skills

There are different approaches to teaching grammar, explicit and implicit and how it should be taught (Sadat, 2017). Effective language learning is the main issue that determines whether grammar should be taught inductively or deductively (Sadat, 2017). In most instances, the approaches are based on grammar rules, a difficult task on its own (Saarito, 2015). Some teachers work using an inductive approach, while others prefer the deductive approach.

The inductive approach presupposes that the rules of the second language must be acquired implicitly, through natural exposure to meaningful language use (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Learners discover grammar patterns throughout the learning process from various and relevant communication contexts. Teaching grammar from rules involves deductive or the rule-driven approach, which starts with the introduction of a rule followed by examples in which the rule is applied. According to Deng and Yin (2016), the inductive approach has a slight advantage in terms of improving ESL learners' grammar knowledge. Learners examine examples in a context to discover the grammar rule by themselves.

On the other hand, Thornbury (2008) reminds teachers of the inseparability of language learning from reading, writing, speaking and listening skills when teaching grammar in context. However, Thornbury (2008) highlights three approaches to teaching grammar: teaching grammar based on rules, examples and through texts. Teaching grammar from rules involves deductive or the rule-driven approach, which starts with the introduction of a rule followed by examples in which the rule is applied.

Contrary to the inductive approach, whereby teaching from examples or rules, the discovery approach starts with some examples from which the rule is inferred. Learners analyse examples in a context to discover the grammar rule by themselves. Learners discover grammar patterns throughout the learning process from various and relevant communication contexts. On the other hand, teaching grammar through the text approach requires learners to be exposed to the context by using texts in order to understand the grammar (Ellis, 2006). According to Deng and Yin (2016), the inductive approach has a slight advantage in terms of improving ESL learners' grammar knowledge.

The deductive approach holds that the learners should be taught explicit knowledge of grammar, through a formal presentation of grammar rules. The teacher presents and explains the rule in advance, followed by examples in practice exercises where the rule is applied (rule driven learning approach) and the grammar rules are presented in a ready-made form. The deductive approach ingrains into the learners' knowledge to think that language learning is based on remembering grammar rules. Learners are passive recipients when the teacher elicits the rule, they can memorise the rules of grammar but cannot apply it in other skills of language.

Chang (2011) believes that among the two approaches, the deductive approach has been favoured and still dominates ESL teaching. Many ESL teachers believe that this approach has met the ESL learners' expectations more because, for them the presentation of grammar rules is useful when learning the language. When the ESL teachers choose a method to develop an effective grammar instruction approach, this requires considering a number of factors such as what grammar aspects to focus on, the teacher's personal views on grammar teaching, the learners' background and the learners level of language development (Richard & Rodgers, 2014). The desired approach should include accuracy since correctness is crucial for the L2 learners. This is in line with Larsen-Freeman (2015) who proposes that grammar teaching can be consolidated through corrective feedback and remedial work sessions, which he defines as teacher responses to learner errors. He argued that if learners are not encouraged to produce formal English with acceptable and correct grammar early enough, they might not develop adequate writing skills. Therefore, it is up to the ESL teachers to make informed choices and decisions that help learners to develop competence and incorporate structural approaches in their ESL classroom.

2.3 POSSIBLE CAUSES OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

Writing is considered to be the most important skill of language learning where most ESL learners often have difficulties to write texts that are grammatically correct (Ipinge, 2018). The occurrences of errors in ESL writing are frustrating to the teachers. Ipinge (2018) assumed that many learners committing errors in ESL writing can be a result of numerous factors. He argues that an error, mistake or awkward discourse in ESL learners' written work can occur for different reasons:

- The effects of learners' first language transfer (dominance of mother tongue).
- Learners may translate from L1 or they may tend to overgeneralise the rules.
- Lack of basic knowledge of the L2 rules, ESL often attempt to apply their existing knowledge of L1 to the L2.
- Poor English background (not provided with well-developed platforms of English learning).
- Limited English proficiency, negative attitudes toward the language, lack of a reading culture and delayed essay writing instructions.
- Lack of appropriate pedagogical approach to teaching the language and outdated teaching practices.

The above factors are very relevant to the Namibian situation, seeing that certain sections of the community have to study English, when at home they do not speak English at all. Among the factors that impact language learning and writing skills are social and cognitive ones. Flognfeldt and Lund (2016) explain that when ESL learners do not have a satisfactory comprehension of the L2 rules, this hinders L2 learning and this leads to mistakes and errors. Other causes of language learners' mistakes are carelessness and simplification (when learners avoid the use of a complex structure and opt to use very simple forms).

2.3.1 Learner Competency

According to Saarito (2015), the challenge of ESL learner's level of competence complicates the contents and comprehension of their written products which results in teachers/readers misunderstanding the writer's intended meaning. Similarly, Ipinge (2018) indicates that Namibia ESL learners are facing writing difficulties in the English language at different stages and English being the L2 they have difficulties in comprehending its structures. The ESL

learners lack ability to integrate information into coherent paragraphs and texts (Ipinge, 2018; Kapolo, 2013; Mungungu, 2010).

Richards and Rodgers (2014), stress that another challenge faced by the ESL teachers is the poor standard of English of the learners. The ESL learners are ignorant of the basic rules and structural patterns which they are supposed to have learnt in previous grades and this problem results into learners committing errors in their writing. Similarly, Mungungu (2010) concurs that poor writing skills by ESL learners may result in incoherent written work which ultimately fails to communicate their intended ideas to the readers. She maintains that grammar remains the greatest obstacle for the learners to meet the writing requirements. Thus, learners make numerous English grammatical errors that include word choices and tenses. These difficulties arise from incompetence in syntax, coherence and inappropriate use of vocabulary and incorrect use of grammar rules. Writing anxiety among ESL learners is also considered to be a hindrance in the learners' production of error free and well organised texts.

In Namibia, ESL learners face various writing challenges at different stages of their learning. Their written products are often poorly organised, contain several grammatical errors, spelling problems, capitalisation and punctuation errors (Kapolo, 2013). Learners' writing errors should, therefore, be identified and learners should be assisted in achieving the basic competencies in writing. Muhammand (2016) concurs that a text of an effective ESL writer must be cohesive, logical, clearly structured, interesting and properly organised with a wide range of vocabulary and mastery of conventions in the mechanics of the language. Nevertheless, mastering good writing skills is the basic problem among the ESL learners. Often these learners do not revise and correct their pieces of writing. Hardly do they compare their writing with other learners' written work and correct their errors. Owing to this situation, learners continue to produce poor written work in school and they can even enter tertiary level without the required writing skills in English, which could affect their academic performance.

2.3.2 Teacher Competency

Another challenge observed by Kandumbu (2005) is the weakness of the Namibian ESL teachers' grammatical content knowledge. This is the reason why Namibian learners do not attain reasonable English writing skills even after learning English for many years. He argues that some ESL teachers do not seem to be clear on grammatical forms of new structural items. Therefore, ineffective teaching methods by these teachers are also influential in developing learner writing grammatical erroneousness. According to Ipinge (2018), when teachers are not

competent in grammar, their learners will deteriorate in terms of grammar knowledge and they will be exposed to serious language problems. Mostert and Van Wyk (2016) point out that many teachers are not adequately proficient to teach in English, as they cannot effectively deliver lessons using correct English. In 2016, the English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP), initiated by the University of Namibia, conducted a survey on the English language proficiency of teachers' countrywide in three phases. It was reported that, reading comprehension and grammar were the two weakest areas militating against the effective teaching and learning. Therefore, it is very crucial for ESL teachers to be knowledgeable, to know how and when to teach grammar in order to address learners' language needs. This includes procedural knowledge of the inter-relationship between grammatical constructions and how texts work to form meaning (Myhill, 2011).

2.3.3. Systemic concerns

Kandumbu (2005) states that other challenges that ESL teachers are facing include classroom environments that are not conducive to learning; congested rooms situated at noisy locations, lack of other basic facilities which hinder the process of effective teaching and learning.

2.3.3.1. Overcrowded Classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms have an effect on the quality of both teaching and learning of ESL. Large classrooms lead to teachers overloaded with school work, making it difficult for teachers to mark the learners' written activities. The learners may end up not receiving all the needed attention and desired support to promote effective learning. According to Kandumbu (2005), large classroom size has a negative impact on ESL learning as most learners find it challenging to learn to write a well organised text. In such an environment, ineffective teaching methods are influential in developing learners' writing accuracy and absence of which affects writing skills adversely.

2.3.3.2 Lack of Teaching and Learning Resources

The role of learning materials and resources is to promote effective teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, the unavailability of teaching and learning resources poses a serious challenge for ESL teaching in Namibia, especially for the newly revised curriculum of 2015. The government is to blame for the unaccountability and lack of resources at schools. The scarcity of learning materials and resources delay the opportunity of implementing the self-discovery learning approach. The disparities in Namibian schools was confirmed by Iipinge

and Kasanda (2013), as the Ministry of Education is increasingly being confronted with the problems of scarcity of basic educational resources that hamper learners from accessing quality education. They refer to lack of libraries, computer facilities and teaching and learning tools such as books and relevant teaching aids (posters). The availability and adequacy of learning materials and resources enables teachers to accommodate diversity of learners in classroom and address their different learning styles. Teaching concepts in English is imperative with concrete aids, for example things that learners can feel, touch and see. Similarly, Maemeko, Ntabi and Nkengbeza (2017) posit that educational resources impact schools' achievements by promoting or hindering the ability to develop school culture and high quality instructions. The authors alluded that the government has failed to equip schools with the necessary teaching and learning materials. The researcher contends that most of the primary schools in Namibia do not have libraries and adequate textbooks and in most cases learners are forced to share the available textbooks. Ultimately, the paucity of resources in schools further inhibits learners' writing accuracy in English. This makes it nearly impossible for teachers to pursue educational goals and to achieve the desired quality of education (Kandumbu, 2005). English as a second language is best learnt through involving learners and letting them discover more on their own with the guidance of the teacher. The sentiment portrayed here is that ESL learners from the schools with limited resources are struggling to produce written production pieces which are error free.

2.3.3.3 The effect of the National Language Policy for Schools in Namibia

In practice, the language policy for schools in Namibia recommends the use of mother tongue (L1) as a medium of instruction for the early years from Grade 1 -3 in schools. Then Grade 4 as a transitional grade until at tertiary level (MEC, Language Policy for Schools in Namibia, 2003). The rationale for this policy is that concept formation, literacy and numeracy attainment should be taught in their L1. Unfortunately, there are few key issues that have made it difficult for this policy to have its intended effects. In multilingual schools, if the numbers of learners with the same mother tongue are few to constitute a class, then the medium of learning for those learners will be the predominant local language. Schools that wish to use English as the medium of instruction as from the beginning of schooling are allowed to do that with the approval of the Minister of Education. The three targeted schools in this study are among those schools that are using English as a medium of instruction. The schools accommodate learners and teachers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The ambiguity of the language policy has led many schools not to enforce the policy in practice and this has always been a

concern for many teachers. In a multilingual society such as Namibia, the language policy has some contradictions that embrace multilingualism at national level but is applied differently in the school setting (Wolfaardt, 2010).

2.3.4 Socio-linguistic Factors

Kapolo (2013) posits that the learner's background is one of the aspects that can impact language learning. In the context of this study, the issue of background can incorporate the issue of the language spoken in the community and its impact on the target language. This raises the issue of socio-linguistics. Silberstein (2001) indicates that studies in sociolinguistics explore the actuality that human beings speak languages differently, that speech is normally altered to accommodate the audience and that speech attaches identity to members and non-members of a community. The writer further argues that sociolinguistic studies focus on social categories such as age, class, ethnicity, gender, geography and sexual identity. Nevalainen and Raumolin (2005) argue that sociolinguists have their focus on the variation and change of linguistic phenomena. This section looks into possible socio-linguistic issues; in particular, the linguistic and cultural challenges between the first language interference and L2 are complex, where the L1 and L2 turn to complicate the writing tasks. This is because in most cases there is a clash between function and form, similarities and differences between learners own language and ESL expectations and complications (Ellis & Rodger, 2014). The learners' own language (L1) plays a role in learners' English L2 development and can result in transfer into L2.

2.3.4.1 Learners' diversity and ability to use L2

Linguistic diversity creates unique challenges for any nation's education system. Even so, the ESL learners are expected to use English effectively to succeed academically. In Namibia, ESL learners from townships where more local languages are highly spoken than English, are facing various challenges in learning English, because their home environment does not provide effective support for English language acquisition (Kandumbu, 2005). In some multilingual societies, learners are only exposed and engage in English during school hours and their L2 is limited and minimal due to lack of L2 input and interaction in the communities. And for this reason learners may continue to exhibit errors in their writing. According to Khrashen (2016), the difference between the learners L1 and the target language often pose language difficulties resulting in learners committing errors. This is the case in the Namibian context where most L2 learners start learning ESL at school level while they have already become fluent in their

mother tongue. The fact that these learners have already acquired their first language can have an impact on the process of learning the second language.

The following scholars (Brown, 2010; James, 1998; Ridha, 2012) classify the two most prominent possible sources of errors in ESL learners as interlingual (first language interference) especially during the initial period of learning a second language. The second source of errors is attributed to intralingual errors which are related to the process of learning the second language. These factors or hindrances are discussed in the following sections below.

2.3.4.2 Interference of the Learners' First Language (interlingual)

Linguistic interference results in interlingual errors. According to Selinker (1972), interlingual errors are the types of learners' errors that are accounted for by interference from the first language. These errors result from the ESL learner's attempt to make use of the system of L1 in acquiring the L2 by transferring rules from their first language in the acquisition of the second language. Interlingual errors occur when an ESL learner's L1 interferes with L2 to a certain extent and obstructs them from acquiring the L2. Consequently, these errors arise as a result of automatic transfer which is as a result of the habits of the surface structure of the learner's first language that has a strong influence onto the surface of the target language. In other words, this happens when the learner's first language rules and patterns prevent the learners from acquiring the correct pattern and rules of the second language. Al-Khresheh (2010) refers to the interlingual errors as a situation that occurs when the rendering of the text is through direct translation or literal translation. This happens when L2 learners translate their thinking from their first language into English words, word for word before they write or perform a task in English. In the same vein, according to Corder (1974), interlingual errors occur when the learners' habits, patterns and rules interferes and prevents them from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language. Basically ESL learners commit interlingual errors because they transfer some form of L1 or rely or use their L1 as a tool to learn the second language. ESL learners do not master the rules of the target language and attempt to use the same rules as they obtain them from L1.

2.3.4.3 Intralingual or Development Errors

Inadequate linguistic development is the main cause of intralingual errors. According to Richard (1974) errors are rooted within the structure of the second language itself, these errors reflect learners' competencies at a particular stage and are brought forward by the strategies employed by the teachers and environment during acquisition of the language. They could

result from the process of learning the second language when the learners have not acquired the knowledge or when the learner has not fully learnt in the L2 or due to partial learning of the target language. These errors reflect the learners' competencies at a particular stage and elucidate the level of language acquired. Similarly, Richard and Schmidt (2014) classify intralingual errors as the confusion a language learner experiences when confronting patterns within the structure of a newly acquired language, irrespective of how the target language might contrast with the learners L1. Such errors may also be influenced by learning strategies used by the learner or the teaching methods in which the language was taught. Richard et al. (2012) classifies intralingual errors into four main causes:

- (a) Incomplete application of the rule which happens when L2 learners fail to apply the target language rules completely. This occurs when the learners fail to use a structure correctly within a given context despite having been taught the language item several times.
- (b) Overgeneralisation which happens when the L2 learner creates deviant structures on the basis of their experience of other structures in the target language. Learners tend to extend the rule or use one form in one context and apply it to other contexts as well as where it is not applicable. This occurs when the learner mistakenly broadens the scope of the rule to a situation where the rule is not applicable.
- (c) Ignorance of rule restriction occurs when the L2 learner applies rules to the context where they are not applicable and in the sense that a learner tends to be ignorant of the language structure.
- (d) False concept hypothesis occurs when learners have the faulty understanding of distinctions of the target language items that lead to false conceptualisations (Kaweera, 2013). This occurs as a result of learners that are unaware of the differences between the two languages and have limited exposure to the target language.

The possible sources of errors indicated above might be reasons why ESL learners' find it hard to write clear grammatical sentences in ESL. According to Richard (1974) the most prominent sources of errors are first language interference errors, especially during the initial period of learning a second language. The second sources can be attributed to intralingual errors which are related to the process of learning the second language. These factors or hindrances are discussed in the following sections below.

2.4 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section introduces and describes the EA theory in order to review the theoretical background as the underpinning basis of the research problems. It also explains the general concept of the Error Analysis approach, error versus mistakes, sources of error analysis, and studies of error analysis, relevant theories and the guidelines on empirical processes of EA.

2.4.1 Error Analysis Approach (EA)

EA is an approach used to identify the area of learning difficulties faced by the English Second Language learners (Corder, 1967). Corder (1967) maintains that identifying errors made by learners does not only show the progress of the learners in language learning but also makes it easier for teachers to help learners to improve their writing skills. According to Corder (1967), Error Analysis is the linguistic process through which the researchers observe, analyse spoken and written production of L2 and classify learners' errors in order to obtain some information about the system operating within the learners. Corder (1967) maintains that committing errors is a natural language developmental process, because the learners' errors are first-rate indications that learners have not mastered the rules of the language or are having difficulties with certain aspects of the language. The types of errors the learners make can also be a clear indication on where the support system is required the most. James (1998) argues that learners' errors are no longer considered as red flags that need to be avoided at all cost. On the contrary, they are seen as indicators that the learning process is taking place; therefore, they need to be analysed. The researcher strongly supports Corder (1967) who stresses that it is normal for ESL learners to make errors in their writings. Corder indicates that learners' errors are significant in three ways. Firstly, they tell the teachers how far towards the goal the learners have advanced and what remains for them to learn. Secondly, they provide the researcher with evidence on how language is learnt and what strategies could be employed. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learner because making errors can be regarded as a device they use to learn from. Furthermore, the fact that ESL learners are committing these errors and that these errors can be detected, analysed and classified can lead to EA that will assist in improving their work.

Corder (1967) defines the Error Analysis approach as a process in which the researcher gathers samples of the learners' language in order to identify, describe and categorise the errors based on their sources and types. Whereas, Crystal (1999) states that EA deals with the examination of errors and the unacceptable forms produced by the L2 learners. Crystal (1999) claimed that

errors are unavoidable during the process of learning ESL. However, these errors can be durable if these errors are not corrected shortly. An ideal teaching method can avoid these errors from occurring, hence indicating flaws in the teaching strategies applied when teaching the L2. Consequently, it is very important for the ESL teachers to know and identify those errors and focus on how to deal with the errors when they occur. Once the ESL teachers are aware of these errors, it will direct teachers to the language areas that need more attention to overcome the difficulties.

Before the introduction of the Error Analysis (EA), Contrastive Analysis (CA) was the dominant approach in dealing and conceptualising learners' errors. Error Analysis originated out of the Contrastive Analysis theory (Keshavarz, 2012). The EA has been considered as a replacement or enhancement to CA. Error Analysis was adopted because CA did not provide sufficiently acceptable explanations for errors made by learners. Therefore, many linguists adopted EA to look at the errors made by the learners and locate the area in which those errors are occurring and then contrast only those specific areas. Contrastive Analysis is the systematic study of a pair of languages to identify their structural differences and similarities between the first language and the target language based on the assumption that the similarities facilitate learning while differences cause problems (James, 2001). According to James (1998), the main assumption of the CA theory was that L2 learners' errors are due to negative interlingual interference from their mother tongue. Despite its popularity, CA had some theoretical limitations. This CA approach has been questioned by many scholars for its lack of predictive power as well as the subjectivity of its interpretation of errors (Al-khresheh, 2015). Al-khresheh criticised CA stating that interlingual interference from L1 is not the only reason for the occurrence of errors in SLA and its assumptions could not be verified by empirical evidence.

Schachter (1992) asserts that not all the similarities between the L1 and the target language are easily mastered, nor were all the differences clear enough to consider CA as an alternative. Hence, EA emerged on account of the shortcomings of CA in 1967. Corder (1967) is considered as the father of EA. CA is a process which involves collecting samples of the learner's language, identifying the errors, classifying the errors according to their nature and causes and evaluating their seriousness. Within EA, an error is a systematic deviation; especially when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong (Corder, 1967). Corder (1967) affirms that "errors are significant" to the teachers informing them to undertake a systematic analysis, explaining how far that learner has progressed and consequently, what remains for him to learn. The learners' errors are important in

understanding the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. For learners themselves, errors are useful, since the making of errors provides an opportunity for identifying areas that need reinforcing and improving. Corder (1967) affirms that “errors are significant” to the teachers too, in that they inform them to undertake a systematic analysis, explaining how far towards that goal the learner has progressed and consequently, what remains for him to learn. In addition, the manifestation of errors does not only indicate that the learner has not learnt something yet, but also gives the linguist an idea of whether the teaching method applied was effective or it needs to be changed or adapted (Anefnaf, 2017). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) provided a detailed account of different steps in error analysis and exemplified the model for error analysis offered by Corder (1967). The study adopted their practical application and clear examples on how to identify and analyse learners’ errors.

2.4.2 Types of grammatical errors

Grammatical errors are systematic wrong items occurring uniformly in both the context of speaking or writing. Crystal (2009) defines them as defective sides of learners’ oral and written activities that are violating the rules of grammar as it is required in the target language. Errors in writing are deviations from a systematic order of writing by not obeying the rule governing the language used in writing. It involves faulty structures which may include prepositional errors, subject verb-agreement, wrong verbal tense, article errors and conjunction errors. This research identified the English grammatical writing errors, the incorrect forms, instances of grammar inaccuracy and faulty unconventional or controversial usage of grammar rules made by the Grade 7 learners in their writings. According to Putri and Dewanti (2014), grammatical errors occur when there are inappropriate grammatical rules applied that can make writing unsuitable. In this study, grammatical errors refer to ineffective use of grammatical competence where sentences were a jumble of words thrown together without any real direction in mind and making it difficult for the readers to interpret the intended meaning. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), linguistically errors can be classified into grammatical categories such as errors in spelling, articles, tense confusion, lack of subject-verb agreement and word forms (ordering the words in a sentence incorrectly). He further stresses that when ESL learners lack grasp of writing fundamentals, with basic knowledge of grammar, mechanics and usage, they are likely to commit errors in their writing. Duray, Burt and Krashen (1982) categorise grammatical errors into four different classes, omission, addition, misformation and

misordering. When these types of grammatical errors appear in the learner's written activities, they hinder communication and they prevent the message from being comprehended. Omission errors are the type of errors which are characterised by the presence of an item which may be left out or omitted in a well-formed utterance. Addition errors are characterised by the presence of an item which is not supposed to appear in a well-formed utterance. Misformation errors are caused by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure. Misordering errors are caused by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. Therefore, this study encourages ESL teachers to identify common errors and being consciously aware of them, would help teachers to find ways of providing remedial teaching and thus provide effective grammar instruction.

2.4.3 Errors versus Mistakes

In applied linguistics, according to Richard and Schmidt (2012), it is considered important to differentiate between errors from the mistakes in order to achieve a proper analysis of L2 learners' errors. The ESL learners tend to make errors regardless of what level they are, be it at primary, secondary or tertiary level (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). However, the distinction between error and mistakes makes it difficult to detect the errors in the text. Corder (1967) created an analytical tool called EA that can be used to identify errors and mistakes in the text. He made this distinction when he defined errors as "the result of incomplete learning and linguistic incompetence of the learners that cannot be self-corrected"; whereas mistakes are the results of the poor use of language due to many factors like fatigue and carelessness on the part of learners". In other words, *mistakes* are referred to as unsystematic errors while the systematic deviation from the set of norms is regarded as *errors*. Gazz and Silinker (2001) differentiate the two: errors occur when learners make them systematically and repeatedly without any notice while mistakes are accidental slips that can be corrected once noticed. In other words, an error is a deviation that occurs because learners do not have the correct rules of the target language and they need someone to tell or correct their errors while mistakes occur as a result of forgetfulness and insufficiently internalised rules. Errors reflect gaps in the learners' target language while mistakes are slip of lapses. Similarly, James (1998) claims that an "*error* is a noticeable deviation from the grammar of a native speaker reflecting the competence or incompetence of the learner, while a *mistake* refers to a performance inaccuracy that is either a random guess or a slip". He also emphasised that errors occur because of the gaps in the

learners' knowledge of the targeted language, whereas mistakes occur when learners have not yet learnt how to master a certain grammatical form. Mistakes are imperfections in the process of applying ESL learning and can be self-corrected. This distinction is based on the discrepancy between the learners' knowledge of language rules and their actual use of language. From the definitions above, it can be said errors are inappropriate forms and unacceptable forms of the grammar from the targeted language and this has a strong effect on a learner's mind. Errors are deficiency competencies that show that they did not master the language rules and they cannot be self-corrected. Brown (2014) defines an error as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, which reflects the competence of the learner. He states that errors occur when the learners attempt to produce the language correctly, as a result of incomplete second language rule system. For clear understanding of errors and mistakes, one should be clear about their differences and the identification of the error should be analysed contextually for effective remediation. This study aimed at providing insights into the parts of language grammar that the learners have faced difficulties in. The present study focused on identifying the grammatical writing errors only and not mistakes. These are errors that are characterised by the inability of Grade 7 learners to correct themselves and the ones they did not even realise that they had committed in their writing. The ESL learners' errors have forms that occur repeatedly. The study adopted the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by James (1998). He describes errors as they appear on the omission, addition, misformation and misordering some grammar components in the sentences. The researcher believes that when teachers are able to analyse learners' errors, this will give a clear description of the errors and locate the sources of these errors. The study helps ESL teachers to take a step to tackle the grammatical errors the ESL learners are facing.

According to Ellis (2014), the frequency of errors is the distinctive factor- errors which have a rather low frequency and thus are considered mistakes, while the one with high frequency is regarded as systematic errors (which happen repeatedly). These errors are not determined by chance, but by an inaccuracy involving either the observation or measurement process inherent to the system. After classifying the errors into their categories, the error categories were tabulated and from the tabulation, the frequency of errors for each category was calculated to see the severity (Juntha, 2013; Kaweera, 2013; Norrish, 1983; Richards, 1974). The researcher quantified the frequency of occurrence of different types of errors per school. Hsu (2013) asserts that grammatical errors are incorrect forms, poor semantics, wrong use of words and

poor meaning. Therefore, it can be emphasised that one should be aware of these differences when analysing the scripts of written language tasks.

2.4.4 Error Analysis and language pedagogy

This study is structured using the framework of Corder (1967) and numerous other researchers (Al-khresheh, 2010; Ellis, 2008; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Hinkel, 2005; Othman 2015; Selinker, 1972;), who have contributed to the extension of Error Analysis as a theoretical foundation. Ever since Corder highlighted the importance of considering errors in the language learning process, there has been a shift towards understanding of the problem learners are facing when learning the language. Corder (1974) postulates that errors are indispensable to the learners since making errors can be regarded as a device a learner uses to learn. Consequently, they reflect knowledge; they are not self-correctable but require the guidance of competent teachers.

Learning a second language (SL) is a step-by-step process where errors or mistakes are to be expected. Error Analysis is useful to locate the problematic areas of ESL learners' learning process. Corder (1967) states that errors are a sign that learning is taking place. The learners' errors help to identify the level of linguistic and writing competency of the learners. Corder emphasised that errors, if studied systematically, can provide significant insights into how a second language is actually learnt. Studies in Error Analysis provide teachers with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give them indications as to the effectiveness of the learning process. Learners usually commit errors when they lack knowledge about grammar rules, appropriate words or sentences (Corder, 1967). The investigation of errors can serve two purposes: to pin-point the problem and to make plans to solve a problem. In addition, Corder (1967) asserts that errors are diagnostic because they can tell how a learner grasps a language at any given point during the learning process. Learners' errors are also prognostic because they can tell the teacher to modify the learning material or methods of teaching to solve the learner's language problems (Ellis, 1994; Mungungu, 2010). When teachers realise the nature of their learners' errors and their possible sources, they can make better decisions which will positively affect their performance and fulfil current pedagogical and professional demands. Hence, EA is crucial in the study of the characteristics or intricacies of language errors, the patterns of the common errors and the situation in which the errors occur. These processes help to analyse errors systematically, leading to understanding and finding the causes

of such errors. Moreover, studies in EA improve the techniques of SL teaching-learning in addition to eliciting more information for enhancing the SLA theory.

Additionally, Corder (1967) stresses that errors are significant in three different ways. First to the teachers, in that they inform teachers during systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learners have progressed, and, consequently, what remains for learners to learn. Second, they provide evidence to the researcher on how language is learnt or acquired, and what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learner because the making of errors facilitates the learning process in terms of corrective work and/or remedial work. When a learner has made an error, the most efficient way to teach him or her the correct form is not by simply giving the correct form, but by letting the individual discover the error and then give reasons for applying the correct form; re-teaching a grammatical rule may be needed if the majority of the learners made this error.

Equally important is that EA can be used to improve writing skills. Studies have analysed possible sources of errors in non-Native-English writers' work and these studies provide a process-approach to writing where EA can help achieve better writing skills (Brown, 2000; Crystal, 2003; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Hinkel, 2005; Othman, 2015). These studies are congruent in that EA lessens the number of errors in students' written work. Corder (1967) agrees that even the most successful learners commit errors while learning a second language, but they improve with time through considerable effort via re-teaching or remedial teaching or corrective work. If SL learners are taught utilising innovative methods and materials, they can be hopeful and confident to continue their language learning in a motivated fashion which will lead to limit errors in writing in the TL.

2.5 STUDIES ON ERROR ANALYSIS

This section looks at different studies on EA in Africa and from other parts of the world and links them to the Namibian context. Further, it illuminates the research problem and aligns it to international trends eventually narrowing it down to studies that are on EA in Namibia.

Kashoki (1990) and Muyebaa (1998) investigated the types of errors made by 72 Grade four Zambian students in their written work. The results revealed that errors that the students committed were mostly grammatical. In a similar study, Napitupulu (2017) investigated Indonesian students' linguistic errors in English letter-writing. The *taxonomy of errors* structured by Hubbard *et al.* (1996) revealed that students committed grammatical errors,

syntactic errors, substance errors and lexical errors. A great number of these errors were due to first language transfer (language transference).

Keshavarz (2012) conducted a study by analysing the corpus of 200 Jordanian secondary school students. The aim was to examine and classify the grammatical errors that those students committed in their writing production. The results showed that students' errors were systematic and categorised into six types: singular/plural, verb tense, prepositions, word order, articles and word choices. The main sources of errors were due to ignorance of rule restrictions, interlingual interference and intralingual interference. These findings match one of the present study's aims, that is, to explore the sources of these common English grammatical writing errors.

Al-Badawi (2012) studied errors committed by grade 10 students in English essays. His study analysed phonetic, morphological and syntactic errors in English of some Saudi Arabian students. His study revealed that most syntactic errors committed by these students were attributed to the lack of adequate L2 knowledge and overgeneralisation.

Darus and Subramaniam (2009) investigated the types of errors made by Malay fourth-year students. The corpus included 72 essays written by 72 participants. The participants came from non-English speaking backgrounds. The results revealed the six categories of most common errors committed by the participants, which centred on the singular/plural form, verb tenses, word choice, prepositions, subject-verb agreement and word order. These findings are congruent with those of the present study because they share similarities (cf: table 4.2).

Abushihab, El-Omari and Tobat (2011) employed EA to examine and classify the grammatical errors in the writings of 62 students of the Department of English Literature and Translation at a Private University of Jordan. The students enrolled in a paragraph writing course in the first semester of the academic year 2009/2010. The most problematic category was prepositions, morphology, articles, active and passive voice and tenses, thus bringing their study closer to the present study.

Bhela (1999) observed the writing samples of four language groups of Arabic adult ESL learners. His study revealed that the most common error produced by those learners were articles, prepositions and plural form. He attributed the errors to mother-tongue interference, lack of grammatical knowledge and developmental errors.

Wolfersberger (2003) examined the most frequent errors made by Japanese junior high school learners. The findings indicated that students' most frequent errors were in punctuation use,

prepositions, tense and morphology. The causes were due to incorrect transfer from Japanese first language (L1) into English (L2) and lack of grammatical knowledge. These findings informed the present study on the origins of grammatical errors of L2 learners.

A Namibian study by Mungungu (2010) on Error analysis aimed at *investigating the writing of Grade 12 ESL Namibian Learners* used 360 learners' scripts. The findings revealed that learners had difficulties with English spelling, tenses, prepositions and articles. Among the four types of errors, spelling errors (419) followed by tense errors (139), preposition errors (117) and 88 article errors. The study indicated that some of the grammatical errors emanated from their L1.

Similarly, Kapolo (2013) investigated writing errors made by Namibian Grade 11 learners in ESL at two selected schools in the Omusati Education Region. Her study examined 400 essays scripts. The common errors were identified as: incorrect word choice, spelling, tenses, omitting words, singular/plural and capitalisation.

Both studies done in Namibian (Kapolo, 2013; Mungungu, 2010) have similarities to the present study because both involve EA on Namibian learners' written work. However, their studies targeted the secondary phase but not at the primary phase, as for the present study.

A study done in Namibia by Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2015) on the reasons for low academic performance in English written language tasks among Grade 12 learners in the Zambezi Region revealed that teachers were not adequately trained and they were not conversant enough to teach in English.

Despite the fact that most of the aforementioned studies were carried out in different contexts, their findings are conclusive and broadly consistent with one another. However, their objectives were different from the present study. Those few studies that have been conducted in Namibia that looked at the writing errors, none of which focused on Grade 7, thus the present study shows the gap in literature. Another issue that is clearly evident from the above discussion is that studies on Error Analysis in Namibia focused only on secondary schools. There is scarcity of studies of learners' writing errors that focused on the senior primary phase. These studies' findings imply that the situation is not better at the secondary level as well. Hence, the present study found it imperative to conduct a study that aims to explore and identify the common English grammatical writing errors among the Grade 7 learners in Namibia.

2.6 THE GUIDELINES ON THE EMPIRICAL PROCESS

When investigating ESL learners written work, there are several methods that can be used to collect data for the study. The five stages in conducting EA have been identified (Corder, 1967; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), and are as follows:

- Collection of a sample of learner’s language;
- Identification of errors;
- Classification of error types (description of errors);
- Explanation of errors; and
- Evaluation of errors.

During the collection of language samples, the researcher has to consider the purpose of the study and then collect the relevant data in accordance with the study’s aims and research questions that need to be answered (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). For this study, samples of 300 learners’ written work (essays) were collected using Grade 7 learners’ examination scripts, and this was done in the sequence suggested by Corder (1967); Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005).

2.6.1 Collection of a sample of learner’s language

When collecting data, the research has to consider the purpose of the study and collect data that are relevant for the study’s aims and research questions. For the present study, the researcher collected 300 end of the year learners’ scripts (essays) by the Namibian Grade 7 learners. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) identify factors that are significant in collecting a well-defined sample of learner language so that clear statements can be made regarding what kind of errors the learners produce and under what conditions. These factors are summarised in Table 2.1 below, which actually informed the data collection phase of this study.

Table 2.1: Factors to Consider when Collecting Samples of Learner Language

Factors	Description
Language	
Medium	Learners’ written production
Genre	Learners’ production in the form of an essay
Content	The topic the learners are writing about
Learner	
Level	Senior Primary

English Second Language	The learners' L2
Language learning experience	Classroom

(Source: Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005)

The table above illustrates factors that a researcher needs to consider before collecting samples. There was a need to decide on what best suits the study. The data in the present study were assessed from learners' writing based on the above factors and tied to the research problem under investigation. This correlated with the aim and objectives of the study (cf:1.4)

2.6.2 Identification of the errors

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) counsel that before analysing a text, it is important to know what constitutes an error and follow certain procedures to detect it. For example, when identifying grammatical errors in English learners' texts, it is imperative for the researcher to be able to clearly differentiate the learners' errors and mistakes. To compare the errors to what is grammatically correct based on grammar rules and see what is to be classified as an error from a mistake. In this study, an error is considered to be an aspect of error when the learners committed them more than once. The difference between an error and a mistake has been discussed in the previous section (cf: 2.4.3). The first one is associated with checking the consistency of the L2 learner's performance. If a learner uses the correct form of a certain structure or rule and later on uses the wrong one, then it is a mistake and can be self-corrected. However, if they always use it wrongly, then it is an error. The second way is associated with asking a L2 learner to correct their incorrect utterance. In case learners are unable to do so, then these are construed as errors; but where they are successful, they are regarded as mistakes. In this study, the model proposed by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) and Corder (1967) for identifying errors in the utterances of L2 learners was used. According to this model, every sentence is to be regarded as idiosyncratic until shown to be otherwise.

When identifying SL learners' errors, it is vital to determine the standard against which a particular item is considered erroneous. According to some researchers (Brown, 2000; Corder, 1974; Ellis, 2008), any deviation from what a native speaker would produce, is an error. They further stress that an error can be any choice, by the language learners, which drifts from its proper application. After all errors have been identified, then the process of classification of the most deviation begins and errors are grouped into error categories.

2.6.3 Description of Errors

Based on the theoretical framework of EA, errors should be identified and then described in detail (Corder, 1967). In order to describe an error one has to specify how the ESL learner's error differs from that of the native speaker. The description of errors usually employs either linguistic taxonomy (omission, addition, substitution) to describe the difference between the learner's sentence and the correct sentence of the TL. Corder (1967) states that in order to describe an error one has to specify how the English learner's error differs from that of the native speaker (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The description of errors helps in serving three major purposes. These purposes can be summarised as follows: first, would be to instinctively expound all that is unstated, so as to substantiate an individual's instinct (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The second purpose can be used as a requirement for counting learners' errors; therefore, a categorisation of the grammatical errors needs to be developed. The third purpose is to create categories and sub-categories for errors which can help in the process of developing a comprehensive taxonomy of L2 errors. Corder (1978) classified learners' ESL errors in terms of the differences between their expression and the reconstructed version. Corder (1974) makes it clear that errors are classified into various categories such as: error of omission, selection, error of addition, errors of tense, misinformation/substitution, or misordering of some elements. In the same vein, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) suggest that classifying errors in these ways can help researchers to diagnose learners' learning problems at any stage of their development including how to plot changes in error patterns over time. Therefore, this recommendation will inform this study.

2.6.4 Explaining the errors

In order to investigate the causes of errors, a researcher has to explain how these errors occur and this stage is considered as the most important in EA research. Explaining the nature of errors is a central tenet in SLA. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) affirm that when explaining errors, it must involve determining the sources of origin in order to account for why and how they were made. Accordingly, Ellis (2014) explains that errors involve an attempt to establish the processes responsible for L2 acquisition. Ellis (2014) explains that errors of competence can be caused by applying the rules of the target language wrongly, whilst the errors of performance are the result of committing mistakes repeatedly in language. This stage is crucial for this study as it attempts to explain the probable sources of the errors the Grade 7 learners made in their writing. Furthermore, it provides remedial methods of interventions that facilitate the language

learning to minimise those errors. Accordingly, errors may arise from many factors: learners' faulty hypothesis, poor learning and teaching strategies, transferring L1 elements into L2, overgeneralising L2 rules and ignorance of L2 rules (James, 2013).

2.6.5 Evaluate the errors / correcting the errors

This stage involves determining the gravity of different errors with a view to decide which ones should receive instruction. It also involves the researcher by correcting the errors and if possible, elicits the errors through compiling the relevant teaching techniques. The last step in EA is evaluation, where a researcher evaluates and draws conclusions on the gathered information. According to Ellis (1997), correcting learners' errors is as good as giving credit to the remarkable points that learners have done well in the classroom. During this step, different types of errors are considered in order to distinguish which errors should get more attention. Ellis (1997) considers this evaluating-error-step as a crucial one as it intends to look for solutions to the identified errors. The evaluation of errors which involves an assessment of the seriousness of each error to determine the taking of accurate decisions for reducing or even preventing the same errors not to be repeated in the future, is fundamental to EA and SLA (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). This stage calls for effective strategies from ESL teachers to reinforce or address the learners' errors. The corrective strategies by the teachers can include activities using learners' errors but it should not intimidate or threaten the process of teaching and learning.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter (two) focused on reviewing the literature pertinent to this study. Most issues revised in this chapter show that there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that learning and teaching of grammar is an extremely important task which is still the focus of various researchers today. A general discussion on challenges pertaining to the teaching and learning of ESL was included in the literature on the ESL learning and acquisition. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the possible sources of errors among the ESL learners. The reviewed literature also focused on different approaches to grammar teaching. This included the different factors that may impede ESL learners' progress towards becoming competent and good writers in English. Light was also shed on the EA theory and its five stages, which guided the present study. Different findings from different countries were highlighted for gleaning rich data obtained from the use of EA theory. Furthermore, it was

emphasised that when learners' errors in English are incisively explored, it stimulates positive influence on teachers and policymakers to address challenges faced by learners in enhancing effective English teaching-learning. Lastly, the chapter demonstrated the effectiveness of EA for evaluating learners' performance. The following chapter presents the different methods used in this study to collect data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 discusses the empirical process that was followed in pursuance of the objectives of the study. The chapter presents the research design and methodology applied in this study. It further explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research and the choice of a mixed method research design within the pragmatism paradigm. Thereafter, the sampling techniques and methods of data gathering (data collection methods) and analysing data will be highlighted. Measures taken during the research process to enhance the quality of the findings such as validity, reliability, and generalizability, will also be explained. The ethical procedures that were used will form the concluding part of the chapter. This process was aimed at achieving the following aims and objectives:

Aim

The study's aim was to investigate the common English grammatical writing errors among the Namibian Grade 7 learners.

Research Objectives:

- To identify the English common grammatical writing errors among the Namibian Grade 7 learners;
- To record the frequency of occurrence of errors in the English writing samples among the Grade 7 learners in Namibia;
- To explore the possible origins of the common English grammatical writing errors among the Namibian Grade 7 learners;
- To explore Grade 7 ESL teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve learners' writing skills; and
- To propose approaches that can be used to reduce the common English grammatical writing errors among the Grade 7 Namibian learners.

The aims and the objectives were in response of the following research questions:

The main question:

What are the common grammatical errors in English writing among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?

Subsidiary Research Questions

- What is the frequency of grammatical errors among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?
- What are the possible origins of the grammatical errors?
- What are the teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve the learners' writing skills?
- What strategies can be proposed to reduce the common English grammatical writing errors among the Grade 7 Namibian learners?

3.2 MIXED METHODS AS A RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (2011), a research design provides direction in terms of research procedures. Moreover, Creswell (2014) defines mixed methods as a design in which a researcher collects and analyses data; integrates the findings and draws inferences using both quantitative and qualitative in a single study. Research designs give direction and enable researchers to follow a suitable research plan that guides the gathering of necessary data that satisfy the research objectives. The present study employed a mixed methods design which combines quantitative and qualitative (QUAN-QUAL) in a sequential explanatory design. An explanatory sequential design, according to Creswell and Plano (2014), consists of collecting quantitative and collecting qualitative data to help explain and elaborate on the quantitative results. This particular design was appropriate for this study because the data gleaned from a single approach alone would have been inadequate to respond satisfactorily to the complex research questions (Creswell & Plano, 2014). The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and results provide a general broad picture of the research problem and more analysis through qualitative data collection is required to refine and explain the research problem. It provides strengths that balance the weaknesses of a single method alone. It allows one dataset to build on the results from the other (quantitative analysis explained through a qualitative follow up) to increase better understanding of the findings' reliability and credibility through the triangulation of the results.

The design has been chosen because both approaches complement each other to ensure that all the research questions are answered (Durrheim, 2004). According to Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010), the focus of this design is complementary and it provides a complete view of the phenomenon that cannot be achieved by a single approach. Although this should happen in a complementary manner, the aim was not for each approach to answer all the questions but to have one form of data play a supportive role to the other. In this study the quantitative phase of the study resulted in answering research questions two and three in detail. The qualitative section did not only complement the discussions in research questions three, but also facilitated the answering of research questions four and five. The qualitative phase of this study provided a platform to elicit the views, beliefs and experiences of teachers which led to an in-depth exploration of findings from the quantitative phase (Maxwell, 2013). Thus, the qualitative approach was more appropriate to use in the second phase of the study (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007).

In addition, the design provides for cross-validation or triangulation combining two sources of data using the strengths of one method to enhance the other in order to gain a complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). For the present study, the interpretation of data could have become hazy if a single approach was used in isolation, therefore, the utilisation of two approaches led to a clear and expansive understanding. The findings in the next chapter outline how each approach contributed to the answering of the research questions (cf: 4.2, 4.3).

The present study began with garnering quantitative data and the analysis of data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The quantitative data was derived from document analysis. When using this design, priority is typically given to the quantitative data and the two approaches are integrated during the interpretation phase. The strength of qualitative phase builds directly on the results from the quantitative phase. For quantitative data, the researcher applied document analysis to identify grammatical errors. According to Silverman (2016), document analysis is a research method applied to written materials or visual materials for the purpose of identifying specified features of the materials. The 300 previous year's exam scripts were obtained from the three selected schools to examine and analyse the most common grammatical errors in the Grade 7 learners' written essays and for frequency counts. The criteria on which scripts were selected is spelt out in Chapter 1 (cf: 1.7.1). The document analysis focused on analysing the common grammatical errors in the learners' writing.

The qualitative method on the other hand explores issues with the aim to understand phenomena or underlying reasons (Creswell, 2014). This was conducted through an in-depth semi-structured interview with the ESL Grade 7 teachers to gauge their views on why the learners make errors, explain the approaches used to teach grammar and techniques used to minimise those errors and improve learners' writing skills. The qualitative approach explores new areas of study, build theories and examine specifically research questions four and five respectively that could not be answered thoroughly through the quantitative approach. The use of the qualitative design in the present study allowed for a thorough and careful analysis in identifying and providing more detail on the causes of errors in the sampled learners' written work.

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

According to Biesta (2010), a research paradigm is mainly characterised by its ontological, epistemological and methodological dispositions. These paradigmatic components comprise of systems such as beliefs, norms and values which a researcher uncovers and upholds. The study demonstrated the meaning of each of these philosophical positions and elaborated on how they were applied in a mixed methods research approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Crotty (2003) defines ontology as the study of being, as it is concerned with "what kind of world the researcher is investigating, the nature of existence and the structure of reality as such". When a researcher seeks answers (reality) to the research questions referring to a particular type of knowledge that exists external to the researcher, he or she is, in reality, dissecting a lived-experience. The ontological assumptions are those that respond to the question, "What is there that can be known, and what the nature of reality is?" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These assertions informed the empirical decisions in this study. The mixed-method techniques employed made it possible to identify the depth of the phenomenon of study by going through the learners' essay scripts. The inclusion of the interviews was informed by this need to ascertain the feelings and the inner thoughts of the language teachers concerning the problem under study. The interviews made it possible to explore the ESL teachers' views on the teaching of grammar and on how errors can be minimised.

In considering the epistemological element, Bryman (2004) explains that it is about the researcher's view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge. In other words, "what is the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and knowledge"? Bryman (2004) adds that

epistemology is about how the researcher uncovers this knowledge. The first assertion by Bryman (2004) is supported by Creswell (2003). The view in this study is that learners' scripts and the interview with the actual role-players provide the researcher with objective knowledge. The scripts provided the study with both unedited and raw insights shared in Chapter 4. The discussion on qualitative data (cf: 4.3) was based on the views of the English teachers. The conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5 therefore, justify, extend and modify original knowledge. Scotland (2012) defines ontological consideration as "what the nature of the knowable is, or what the nature of reality is". Similarly, Gray (2014) defines ontology as a branch of philosophy concerned with the "assumptions a researcher makes in order to believe that something makes sense or is real, or the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon. Thus, in order to explore the nature of social reality and human involvement within the scope in this study, it is useful to interrogate the truth, and offer a more holistic picture of the social phenomenon under study.

3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that the pragmatic paradigm is a set of beliefs that arise as a single response to the debate surrounding the "paradigm wars" and the emergence of mixed methods and mixed model approaches. It is "pluralistically based on a rejection of the forced choice between post-positivism and constructivism" (Creswell, 2005). Pragmatism provides a philosophical basis for research (Cherryholmes, 1992; Morgan, 2018), and many researchers, both quantitative and qualitative, follow a pragmatist approach to research by using different methods depending on the research question they are trying to answer. Unlike the interpretivists who believe that reality is built constructively and is subjective, and the positivists who see truth as objective, the pragmatists believe in finding the best approach in any given context (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This rationale informed the choice of mixed-methods as a design, which was decided upon due to the need to answer all the research questions (Creswell, 2003). This is because the research questions do not sit comfortably within a wholly quantitative or qualitative approach (Bryman, 2017). Supporting this, Morse and Niehaus (2016) note that in reality, a great number of decisions of whether to take a quantitative or qualitative research approach are based not merely on philosophical commitments, but on a belief that the chosen design and methodology are best suited to the purpose.

3.5 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This section provides the description of schools from where the data was collected. The sampled schools are all situated in the Erongo region. All the three schools are primary schools from Walvis Bay circuit, and they include learners from Pre-primary (prior to grade 1 - Grade 7) up to Grade 7. Two schools are situated in the informal settlement while the third school is in the suburb of Walvis Bay town. The researcher used pseudonyms instead of actual school names for ethical reasons.

Acacia School

Acacia is a public primary school in the informal settlement of Walvis Bay. It has a population of 1200 learners and 35 teachers. There is a general shortage of basic facilities and infrastructure. The school's vision is to deliver quality education with basic moral standards. The school's language department is geared towards embracing new methods of teaching and learning such that teachers enjoy being facilitators and learners like learning.

Mopane School

Mopane is a public primary school which has a student population of 1070 and 40 staff members. The learners enrolled are between 7 and 15 years old. The classes range from Grades 1 to 7. The school is surrounded by makeshift structures and clustered houses. Learners from this school come from disadvantaged homes. The school is also poorly resourced in terms of physical resources and infrastructure. Mopane School is also situated in the informal settlement.

Mahonga School

Mahonga is a former private primary school situated deep down in the suburb of Walvis Bay Town. It accommodates learners from all races. The school has internet access, a computer laboratory, a library and photocopying machines. The language department encourages teachers to adopt innovative ideas in their teaching and to attend staff development workshops and seminars arranged either by other schools (cluster) or by the Ministry of Education (MoE). This school made a good impression when assessed for the National Standardised Achievement Tests (NSATs).

3.6 THE STUDY POPULATION

A population is defined as a large pool from which a sample is drawn from and to which the researcher wants to generalise the findings. According to Cohen *et al.* (2011), sampling is a process of selecting research participants from an entire population and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and social processes to observe. The study was conducted in Walvis Bay circuit in Erongo Region. The population consisted of 7 primary schools with more than 20 English Second language teachers. Out of the selected schools, only five teachers were teaching ESL for Grade 7. Since the pool was small, the researcher engaged all the five Grade 7 English teachers from the selected schools using semi-structured interviews because the phenomenon being studied pertained to teachers' experiences and knowledge.

3.6.1 Sampling size

The sample strategy used in this study is convenience sampling. According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) convenience sampling is regarded as being a rational choice in cases where it is impossible to identify all the members of the population. The purpose of sampling is to acquire the richest source of information to respond to the research question (Patton, 2014). The sample used for this study included three primary schools from Walvis Bay circuit, 300 end of the year examination scripts and all the 5 Grade 7 English teachers from the targeted schools. The schools and participants for this study were selected for convenience by virtue of accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Both schools use English as a medium of instruction for all the grades. This sample allowed the researcher to obtain the richest source of information to respond to the research questions and gather information needed without using the complication of using a randomised sample. Bryman (2017) describes a convenience sample as the use of readily accessible participants in a study. The sample comprises of three schools and five ESL teachers. The schools were selected based on the purpose of the study and their previous Grade 7 learners' performance in English and the fact that they performed marginally below the set standard in their National Standardised Achievement Tests (NSATs). The two schools are relatively less endowed and they are patronised by some of the residents around the area, whereas, the school from the suburb is considered as the best performing government primary school in town. This school is located in the urban area which is well-endowed and better organised with better facilities and it is recognised as a good school. The school has been performing well in the NSATs. The researcher found it easy to obtain participants, but the risk

of bias was greater than in a random sample. The limitation of convenience sampling is that the obtained findings might not be generalisable to the entire population (Palys, 2008).

3.6.2 Selection of documents and participants

The quantitative sampling for this study comprised of 300 learners' scripts that were perused to determine the common grammatical errors (a total of 100 from each school) of Grade 7 learners 2018 end-of-year examinations, which were collected for Error Analysis (AE). These documents were requested to get an in-depth understanding of errors that the Grade 7 learners committed in their writing. The use of the end of the year's scripts was an appropriate method for this study because it is only during the end of the year examinations that the Grade 7 learners write the same examination paper under the same circumstances. The intention to examine the Grade 7 learners' scripts was based on the notion that these learners had received maximum exposure in the English language and they are expected to write a well organised essay with minimum grammar errors. It is also important to note that the analyses of errors in this study focused only on grammatical errors regardless of organisation, expression of ideas and cohesion of written work. The researcher personally visited the three targeted schools to collect the learners' scripts and to explain the main aim of the study. At Acacia and Mopane schools where there were more than 100 learners, the researcher selected learners' scripts based on mark allocation. The researcher considered taking the papers that scored below 75%. However, this proved impossible at Mahonga School because there were exactly 100 learners who sat for the 2018 examinations. Therefore, the researcher collected all the 100 learners' scripts. It has to be noted though that even at the latter school none of the learners had obtained more than 75%. All the scripts were coded with numbers and according to the schools, instead of learners' names for confidentiality purposes.

For the qualitative phase, a total of five Grade 7 English teachers from the three schools were selected to be interviewed. Turner (2010) defines a semi-structured interview as a vital data collection tool for qualitative research as it provides thick and rich information about the experiences and viewpoints of the participants concerning a particular phenomenon. The selection of teacher-participants was based on the grade and subject (English) they were teaching. The study targeted only Grade 7 English teachers. Since there were only 5 Grade 7 English teachers, the researcher involved all of them. It was done with the belief that these participants possess adequate knowledge, experience and they were the right sample to provide

rich information related to the research topic on challenges and common difficulties in English language learning (Merriam, 2009).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURES

Two sets of data were collected for this study in a sequential explanatory design using the two research instruments as well as document analysis and semi-structured interviews. In this case, the instrument used for error analysis and the main source of data were the 300 Grade 7 learners' essay scripts that were collected for quantitative data. The collection of learners' sample essays was done according to the 5 stages of the EA approach as suggested by Corder and others (Corder, 1967; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) and this was the first stage of the 5 stages of EA (cf:2.6.1). All the 300 learners' essay exam scripts were collected from the three selected schools out of six primary schools in Walvis Bay circuit. After the collection of all the sampled learners' scripts, the researcher read through the learners' essays to identify all the grammatical errors (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Mungungu, 2010). The identified errors were counted based on their frequencies. When the same error occurred twice or more, the researcher counted them as one in the tabulation. The initial quantitative phase prepared the way for the second phase (qualitative) where teachers' perspectives and concerns were further explored through semi-structured interviews from Grade 7 teachers.

The second set of data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with five Grade 7 ESL teachers from the selected schools. This was done to gain explanatory and complimentary information together with the data that had already been gleaned from the quantitative phase. The interviewing and logistical arrangements and discreet ways of approaching issues were carefully planned while efforts were made to offset concerns regarding subjectivity and bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). The qualitative approach was used to further explore the findings from the quantitative phase. Semi-structured interviews involved predetermined questions aimed at addressing the research questions. But during the actual questioning, the researcher had flexibility by allowing room for follow up questions arising from conversational responses (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative interviews consisted of open-ended questions and for this study seven questions were prepared (cf: appendix F). The questions allowed teachers to share and express their views freely without feeling intimidated. During the two-way communication, other additional questions were posed to the teachers for further clarification and to obtain deeper information on the research topic.

The researcher followed an interview guide that consisted of a set of questions to direct the interview when eliciting particular information from each participant (Merriam, 2009). This included an introduction, thanking the participant for agreeing to partake and assuring the participants of adherence to the ethical norms. The first part of the interview contained biographical questions, while the second part comprised of main questions that aimed at addressing research objectives 3, 4 and 5 to explore teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and help to minimise grammatical writing errors among learners. Also to understand their positions on how learners' grammatical errors are perceived by the ESL teachers who are actually teaching Grade 7 learners. There was also a part that further explored the possible sources of these common English grammatical writing errors (cf: 4.3.6). All interviews were conducted after school when they were free of disruptions which occur during normal school activities. During interviews the researcher created a very relaxed and positive atmosphere during the interviews by being friendly, calm, courteous and open-minded throughout the sessions. The length of the interview varied depending on individual participants and it was done in English. The interviews with participants were audio-recorded and thereafter transcribed.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Maxwell (2013), data analysis is the method in which data is collected and organised so that the researcher can derive helpful information from it. In a sequential mixed methods study, data analysis begins before the completion of all data collection. It involves the identification of patterns and trends, resulting in an in-depth interpretation. For this study, the quantitative phase was analysed before the qualitative began because the qualitative was dependent on the quantitative results. For the present study, the quantitative data were analysed using Corder's (1967) Error Analysis approach to identify the common grammatical errors. The EA is deemed was a fundamental tool for this study as it gives an insight of how language is learnt. Whereas, the qualitative data was analysed using content analysis to further explore some of the issues arising from the quantitative data.

3.8.1 Quantitative data analysis

The first phase of data collection was quantitative in nature as it gathered data from the learners' exam scripts. The techniques in analysing written texts were derived from Corder's (1967) EA model or framework. Since the quantitative approach focuses primarily on numbers, it was

applied for the identification of ESL grammar errors. Based on the guidelines proposed by Corder (in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), the first stage had already been covered during the data collection. A sample of 300 learners' written work scripts was collected from the Grade 7 learners. Firstly, those written samples were evaluated. The researcher read and re-read through 300 learners' essays/scripts to identify the errors made manually. The researcher considered deviant writing as an error when it occurred more than once. As per examination rules, learners are given ample time to read over their work before submission. Therefore, the learners' inability to correct a deviant form during writing and reading over the writing period meant they did not know the correct form and that constituted an error. In line with the model of EA Corder (1967), popularised by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), the errors were marked, classified and categorised according to their grammatical features: tense, prepositions, articles, singular/plural, conjunctions, subject-verb agreement and word choices. The process involved underlining and putting in circles all the non-standard forms of grammar usage. The learners' scripts were checked and marked by the researcher using a marking rubric with abbreviations and each type of error was given an abbreviation such as: *t = tense, sv = subject verb agreement errors, a = articles, pr = preposition, p/s = plural and single, con = conjunctions* and *wc = word choices* (cf: table 4.1). The researcher chose this rubric or marking codes because it comprehensively covers and evaluates the analytic traits of grammar usage. The errors found in learners' written work were classified into seven categories and grouped based on their nature. After this process, all errors were identified and labelled according to their types and frequency. Duray *et al.*'s (1982), linguistic error taxonomy (omission, addition and misordering) was used to categorise errors collected in this present study. This taxonomy indicates the grammar aspects and linguistic constituent elements which are affected by the error. After identification and categorising each error, the frequency of occurrence of each type of error was quantified. The learners' scripts which were used as samples were analysed according to the five EA steps as highlighted in Chapter 2 (cf: 2.6).

- identification of errors;
- description of errors;
- explaining the errors;
- evaluating; and
- correcting the errors.

The findings of the identified errors were recorded and tabulated according to error categories using descriptive statistics. The description was made after identifying the errors. The graphics database such as graphs and pie-charts were used to clarify distribution patterns. All the common types of errors identified in learners' writing were investigated and explained in detail and some examples of each type of erroneous sentences are presented (cf: table 4.2). Lastly, the cause or origin of committing each type of error explored in learners' writing was explained according to variables such as mother-tongue interference, lack of knowledge of grammar rules, transference, fossilisation and teachers' lack of competence in teaching ESL (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). This involved making a well formed reconstruction of the learners' responses in English by comparing the reconstructed sentence with the idiosyncratic sentence by the learners. Further specifics on how the last stages of evaluating and correcting the errors were executed and threshed out in detail in the next chapter (cf: 4.2.5).

3.8.2 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data for this study depended on the quantitative results because the two phases complemented one another. The qualitative data was used to explain the "mechanisms underlying the quantitative data" of the first phase in more depth, as well as make them easier to understand (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). For the in-depth analysis of common English grammatical writing errors, a qualitative approach was applied to uncover intricacies which assisted the researcher to understand why learners made such errors (Creswell, 2009).

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews was analysed using content analysis (CA) (cf: 1.7.3). The researcher listened to audiotapes and read the transcripts carefully to get a holistic understanding of the interviews and to familiarise herself with the data (cf: appendix G). Thereafter, from the transcripts, the researcher randomly picked each transcript and one-by-one, sorted them by looking for units of meaning such as words, phrases, sentences, subjects, way of thinking, events that appeared regularly and which seemed important and similar for purposes of coding (Maxwell, 2013). After coding, similar topics were grouped together into categories. The data was then coded according to identified general patterns, categories, themes and sub-themes (Hamunyela, 2008).

3.9 INTEGRATION OF THE RESULTS

This is the process of combining the quantitative and qualitative data in a study to enhance the value of using mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). By doing so, the researcher attempts to provide a convergence of evidence that breeds creditability. In this study, the data for the analysis of quantitative statistics was processed first, followed by the qualitative themes that supported or contradicted the quantitative results. The integration of data has the potential of making mixed methods superior to any single approach. This was done because the data from either qualitative or quantitative methods (each on its own) is insufficient to respond satisfactorily to the complex research questions on common English grammatical writing errors. Similarly, Creswell and Plano Clark (2014) point out that we are social, behavioural and human sciences researchers first, and as such the divisions between quantitative and qualitative research only serves to narrow the approaches and the opportunities for collaboration. The integration of the two phases was done by combining the data in the discussion of the findings. Therefore, the researcher triangulated the findings from the analysis of learners' scripts with the findings from the teachers' interviews to enhance the accuracy of interpretation. This increases robustness in responding to complex research questions. The qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews complemented and further explained or consolidated the quantitative findings from the document analysis (learners' written scripts).

3.9.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is when the researcher uses more than one kind of method to study a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In this study, data were triangulated by using different methods of data collection and analysis. This was reinforced by integrating the quantitative and the qualitative results. To ensure greater validity and reliability in this study, the researcher's strategy to use multiple data sources and mixed methods helped to gain more insight into the phenomenon. This is in line with Creswell and Plano Clarke (2011) who argue that complementarity seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results from one method with the results from another.

3.9.2 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness is a critical element to any research in order to produce meaningful and authentic findings and results. This embraces the manner in which data is collected, organised and categorised (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011). During the process of data gathering, the researcher must at all-time be trustworthy and credible in order to ensure valid and reliable

results. This was done by verifying and validating the findings. Trustworthiness includes credibility and reliability, confirmability and transferability.

3.9.3 Credibility and dependability

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005) state that credibility in research refers to the accurate recording of the phenomena under scrutiny. Credibility lies in demonstrating that the subject was authentically described (Anney, 2014). In order to increase the credibility of this study, the duration and process of gathering data lasted for a period of time. The researcher ensured that there was a link between the study's findings to that of reality. In this study, a well-established research method included interviews such that the line of questioning used was flexible with well-established interviewing procedures. The transcription, coding and categorising of data were according to standard procedures.

More importantly, qualitative researchers use dependability as a measure of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). The study ensured that dependability is maintained by using rich, detailed descriptions of the research methodology, making available audio-recordings and transcriptions, in addition to using triangulation of the different methods of data collection. The methodology, instruments, procedures and data analysis for this study were described and recorded in detail to assist other researchers to cite the findings free from ambiguities.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Shenton (2004) refers to confirmability as the degree to which other researchers can corroborate and confirm the results of a research study. For a study to satisfy the confirmability criterion, the researcher's bias has to be cast aside such that the interpretations and conclusions of the study only emerge from authentic data collection (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, this study justified all decisions made in the interest of confirmability, for example in the selection of methods. The information collected during this research was discussed and cross-checked with participants for authentication and to eliminate any misunderstanding. The study also triangulated data from different sources to improve the confirmability of this study.

3.9.5 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Anney, 2014). For this study, with the participants' consent, the researcher requested personal information (description) from the participants and

follow up questions on their responses (probing) during the interviews. The qualitative equivalent to transferability is what the quantitative researchers refer to as *external validity*, which is concerned with the degree to which the findings of a research study can be applied to other contexts such as other regions in Namibia.

3.9.6 Validity

The validity of data was verified by having all “transcripts or reports of every interview shown to the interviewee as soon as possible” after the transcription of recorded data (Maxwell, 2013). The interview questions were carefully designed and checked for validity as mentioned by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013), that validity is a vital requirement and standard for both qualitative and quantitative study. The data collected from participants through the interviews and analysis of scripts were synthesised to ensure triangulation. This was done by comparing information that was collected from different participants and scripts for consistency and to increase the quality of the study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

McMillan and Schumacher (2001), posit that ethics are generally measured in terms of dealing with beliefs about what is right or wrong, good or bad. The researcher is accountable to ensure that ethical standards are adhered to. In this study, ethical conduct considered the avoidance of any harm to all participants during the process of conducting this study. This means that the rights and welfare of the participants in this study were protected. The UFS Ethics Committee assessed the intended study to ensure that the research procedures met all the ethical requirements. It is demanded that participants should be informed and consent in writing be given so that the interview process ensures anonymity and confidentiality, including the safe-keeping of data (Appendix A). Anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms during analysis and recording. To ensure voluntary participation, participants were asked for permission to take part in the study and were also given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time during the process without being disadvantaged and with no questions being asked (appendix B). All these ethical principles are clearly reflected on the consent form, which participants were asked to read and understand before signing.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the methodological steps followed in executing the study. The philosophical assumptions underlying the choice of the pragmatic research methodology were

explained. The chapter presented a sequential pattern by using the two approaches in an integrated pragmatic paradigm to address the research questions of this study. Justifications on the methodology choice were also addressed. Moreover, the chapter explained and outlined data collection methods and instruments utilised in obtaining data to inform the current study. It also explained the population and sampling procedures, the methods of data collection and analysis and how the researcher ensured validity, reliability and credibility of the findings. In addition, this chapter explained how quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to collect and analyse data. The chapter concluded with the explanation of ethical considerations relevant to the study. The next chapter (4) discusses data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology that serve as a backbone for this study. This chapter presents the findings of the present study according to the research questions and data analyses. Firstly, this chapter presents the results of the quantitative phase followed by the findings from the qualitative phase. Finally, the integration of both findings are discussed and a concluding part brings this chapter to a close.

Main question:

What are the common grammatical errors in English writing among selected Grade 7 learners in Namibia?

The following subsidiary questions gave more meaning and depth to the main research question:

- How can grammar errors be contextualised?
- What is the frequency of grammatical errors among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?
- What are the possible origins of the grammatical errors?
- What are the teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve the learners' writing skills?
- What strategies can be proposed to minimise the English grammatical writing errors of Grade 7 Namibian learners?

The quantitative results are explained qualitatively and presented through the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and bar graphs. Qualitative data, which was collected from the interviews, was analysed using content analysis (CA) resulting in themes and sub-themes. These themes were presented in tabular form (cf: table 4.5).

4.2 RESULTS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

As indicated in chapter 3, the quantitative analysis was informed by the framework suggested by Corder (1967), which includes the five steps in analysing errors: collection of sample scripts, identification of errors, classifying the errors, description of errors and explaining the errors and evaluating and correcting the errors. The findings of the identified errors were recorded and tabulated according to error categories using descriptive statistics. The description was made after identifying the errors. The graphics database such as graphs and pie-charts were used to clarify distribution patterns. All the common types of errors identified in learners' writing were investigated and explained in detail and some examples of each type of erroneous sentences are presented (cf: table 4.2). The cause or origin of committing each type of error is explored in the learners' writing and is explained according to variables such as mother tongue interference, lack of knowledge of grammar rules, transference, fossilisation and teachers' lack of competence in teaching ESL (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

This involved making a well formed reconstruction of the learners' responses in English by comparing the reconstructed sentences with the idiosyncratic sentences by the learners. The following themes emanated from the quantitative data resulting in the discussions being categorised as follows: types and examples identified from learners' scripts, the total number of errors recorded from an individual school, frequency of error types, the total number of errors recorded from all three schools and the description of different categories of grammatical errors in total. Pseudonyms are used for the schools' names. The entire discussion in this section addresses research questions two and three fully, while research question four is partially answered. The questions that are partially answered gain further attention during the analysis of the qualitative data. This entire process covers stages two to five of the analysis process as suggested by Corder (cf: 2.6).

4.2.1 Types of errors and examples identified from learners' scripts

This section provides the identification and analysis of errors as per the learners' scripts. The learners produced written texts based on the following essay topics. These essays applied to all the learners in the sampled schools.

Task 1: I never laughed so hard

Task 2: The day your parents forgot to pick you up from school

Task3: The best vacation ever

Task 4: Describe a farm you visited recently

Key for the classification of errors. The following key was used for the classification of errors and it is a rubric which was used to identify different types of errors.

Table 4.1: Key for the classification of errors

Tenses -	WVF – Wrong Verb Form
	Pr – P - Present tense and Past tense
Articles -	WS - Wrong Substitution
	OA - Article Omission
	UI - Unnecessary insertion
Subject – verb agreement	
Singular and Plural	
Prepositions	WS - Word substitution
	PO - Preposition Omission
	UI - Unnecessary insertion
Conjunctions	
Word choice	Errors in apostrophe usage and Pronoun Errors
Key: * =frequency of occurrence	

After the first two stages of identifying and classifying the errors, the researcher determined the common dominant grammatical writing error. The researcher made a clear distinction between the systematic errors and mistakes (“slip of a pen” or unsystematic errors). The grammatical errors were placed into seven categories: tenses errors, articles, prepositions, singular and plural, subject-verb agreement, conjunctions and word choices. Two of the error categories (pronouns and apostrophe errors) were few and conflated, that is, combined into

word-choice category, because it was more useful to consider them as one category. The grammatical errors are presented below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Classification of error types and example of errors

Example of errors identified	Definition of error type
Tenses	
We <u>plans</u> a lot of activities. [have planned]	tense: WVF
I <u>were</u> visit this market last holiday.	Wrong verb form used.
Our team successes to <u>came</u> up with good development. [come]	The correct tense used but the verb form is wrong.
We were happy to <u>heard</u> about it. [to hear]	
I <u>felted</u> well because..... [felt]	Wrong verb form.
We entered the mall and <u>walk</u> around. [walked]	Tense: Pr-P
I have <u>learn</u> more about ...[learnt]	
We felt so sad and even some of us <u>are cry</u> . [were crying]	The present tense form used where the past tense form was required.
When I was in Windhoek, I <u>have been visit</u> the market. [visited]	Tense Pr-P
The teacher <u>catched</u> a bird. [caught]	
Articles	
It was <u>an</u> happy day for us... [a]	Article:
It took us <u>a</u> hour to get home. [an]	WS =Wrong Substitution
Our school has planned to have <u>△</u> tour. [a]	AO = Article omission
Betty was best student in our class. [the]	
It was just for <u>the</u> fun. [Ø]	Article: UI Unnecessary Insertion
It's not good to cancel <u>△</u> tour like that. [a]	Article: AO
We went to <u>△</u> Zoo to see different animals.[the]	Article Omission
Prepositions	
Learners could benefit <u>about</u> the trip. [from]	Prepositions: WS
We went <u>in</u> a trip to South Africa. [on]	Wrong Substitution
I would like to describe <u>about</u> the market. [Ø]	Prepositions: UI Unnecessary Insertion Prepositions omission

I was not happy Δ way my parents forgot about me [with] Wrong preposition

We crossed the river with a boat. [in]

We don't agree Δ your decision. [on] Prepositions: PO

Singular and Plural

He was working for 15 year old. [years] Singular error instead of plural

The childrens were eating food. Wrong plural usage

Many activity was happening at the show. [activities] (irregular plural noun)

Pronoun error

Everyone must bring their school bag [his or her book] The wrong pronoun in the sentences

My parents and myself drove to the North. [My parents and I

Conjunction

My friend Anne is brilliant she still cannot read on her own. [Use coordinating conjunction *but*] A run - on sentence without an appropriate Conjunction.

My parents are always working hard we could afford to go back on a trip. [*so that*] [missing conjunction]

Wrong subject /verb agreement

His house are next to our house [is] The subject is singular and the verb is a plural of the subject and verb, a large number refers to more than one person, plural subject and requires a plural verb 'are':

A large number of students is sick. [are]

They need to extra careful because the experiment dealing their health. [deals] The wrong combination of the subject and the verb

Apostrophe errors

Our farm is next to their's farmer. [their] Never use an apostrophe after a possessive noun

Word choice

Not washing and sweeping every day make the *flour* Wrong word choice
dirty. [floor]

The workers should keep the classroom wrong word choice[healthy] instead of [safe]
clean and *healthy*. [safe]

A total of nine error categories were identified and analysed on their relative seriousness and frequency of occurrence for the different grammar categories. These included tenses (wrong verb form; present tense instead of past tense), articles (wrong substitution, unnecessary insertion and omission), prepositions (wrong substitution, unnecessary insertion and omission), singular and plural, wrong subject-verb agreement, conjunctions, pronoun errors, apostrophe errors and word choice. The pronoun errors and apostrophe errors were combined and placed under the word-choice category because of their frequency of occurrence. The seven categories of errors were found to be the ones where learners struggled the most. It is evident that lack of grammatical competency leads to the incorrect usage of grammar in writing.

4.2.2 The total number of errors recorded per school

This section shows the total number of errors recorded from individual schools, which are shown in Figure 4.1 below.

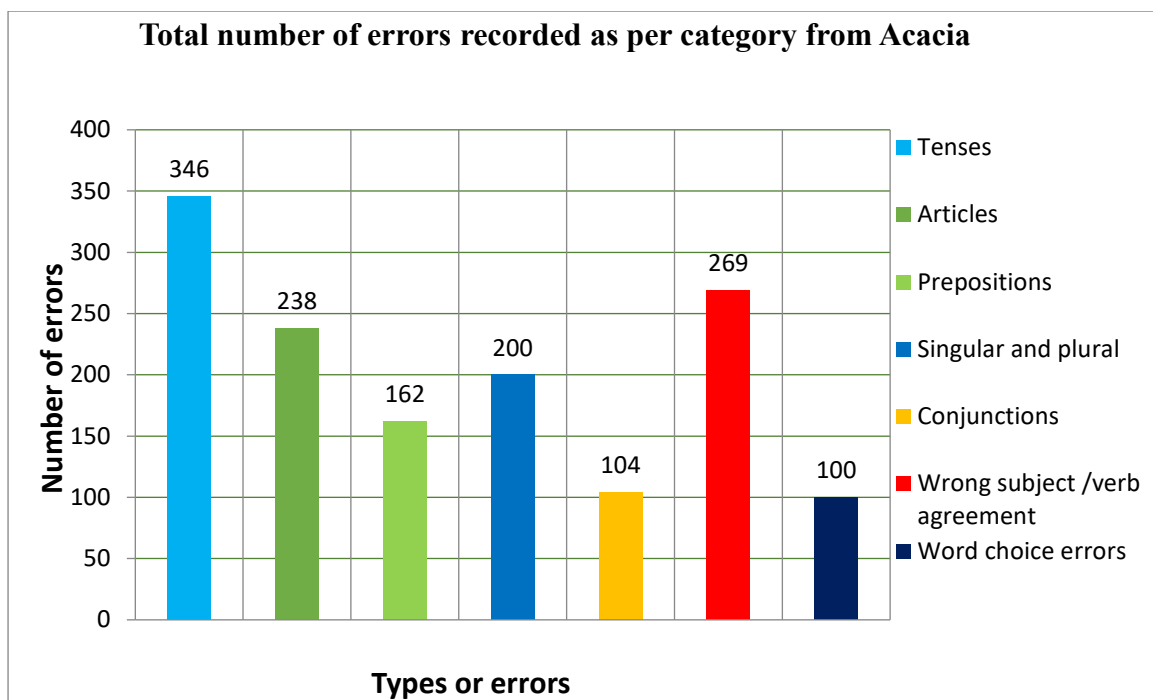


Figure 4.1: Total number of errors per category for Acacia School

The graph above (figure 4.1) displays the findings of Acacia School, the second school with the highest number of grammatical errors. The total number of all errors recorded from this school is 1437. The highest category with the most number of errors (346) related to tenses, followed by concord or subject-verb agreement (269), articles (269), singular and plural (200), prepositions (162), conjunctions (104) and word choice with 100 errors. These findings prove that the teaching and learning of grammar and its effects on English writing skills at this school needs urgent attention as the learners from this school did not fully grasp the rules of basic grammar.

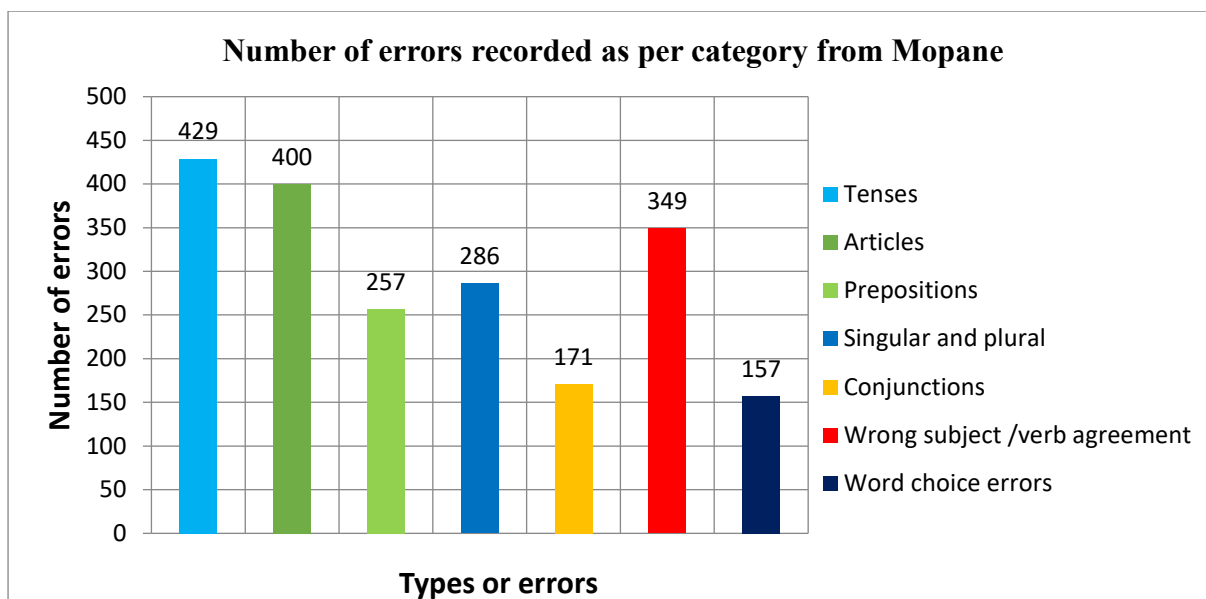


Figure 4.2: Total number of errors per category for Mopane School

According to the findings, Mopane School is the second school with the highest number of grammatical errors, that is 2049 in total. Learners from Mopane School committed the highest number of errors in all categories. Learners' errors were identified and recorded and the category with the highest number of errors was tenses (429), articles (400), subject-verb agreement (349), singular and plural (286), prepositions (257), conjunctions (171) and word choice (157). This reinforces Darus and Subramaniam's (2009) findings that learners usually commit errors when they lack the understanding of grammar rules to use appropriate words or construct meaningful sentences. The errors committed by the learners from this school are related to inadequate learning or poor grammar usage as some of the learners' sentences were incomprehensible.

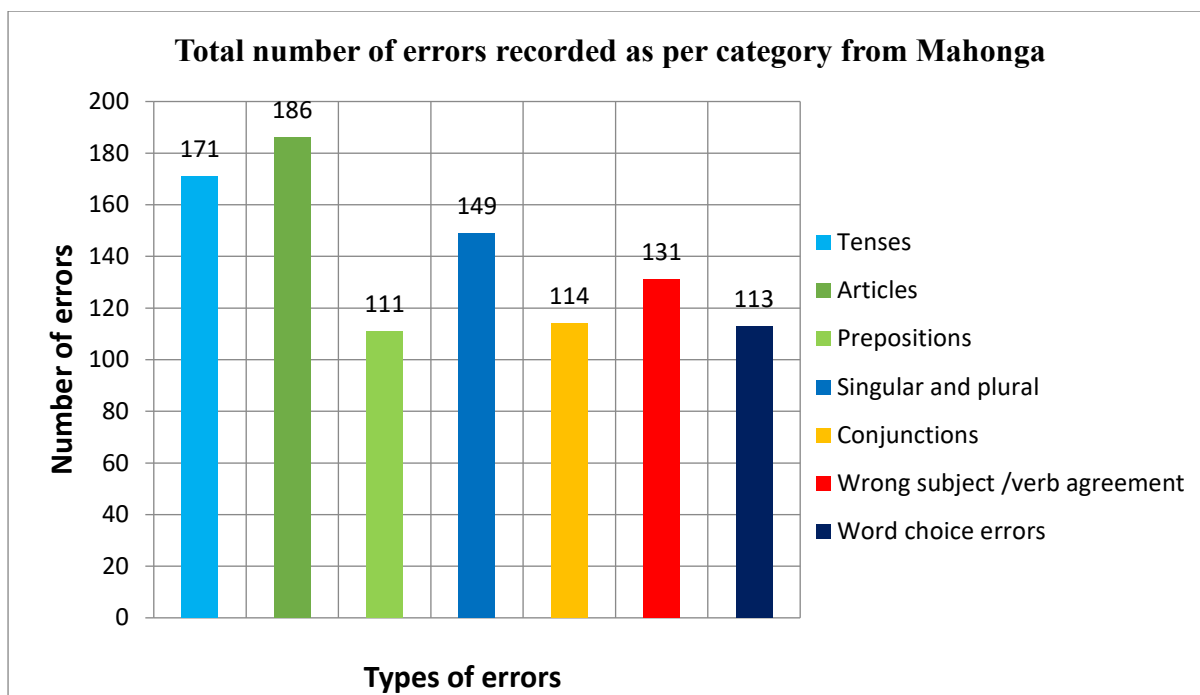


Figure 4.3: Total number of errors per category for Mahonga School

The graph above (figure 4.3) shows that Mahonga School is the school with the lowest number of errors. This school had the lowest numbers of errors in all categories. This could be because the teaching approach used to teach grammar meets these learners’ needs or learner’s come from home environments where both parents are educated or exposed to English at home. The total number of errors recorded was 975, with the errors in the article category being the highest (187), followed by tenses (171), singular and plural (149), subject-verb agreement (131), conjunctions (114), prepositions (111) and word choice (113). The learners from this school did much better in terms of error-committals compared to the other schools.

4.2.3 Grammatical error Frequency analysis

As mentioned in the methodology section, the grammatical errors per school were categorised under the following categories, tenses, articles, prepositions, singular and plural, conjunctions and subject-verb agreement and word choice. After setting different grammatical error categories, Table 4.3 is a representation of the total number of error types frequency recorded per school.

Table 4.3: Total number of errors and their frequency of occurrence

Types of error	Acacia School		Mopane School		Mahonga School	
	Total no. of errors recorded	Frequency of occurrence	Total no. of errors recorded	Frequency of occurrence	Total no. of errors recorded	Frequency of occurrence
Tenses	346	132	429	130	171	70
Articles	238	101	400	120	186	82
Prepositions	162	84	257	108	111	75
Singular/plural	200	60	286	54	149	45
Subject/v agreement	269	104	349	109	131	67
Conjunctions	104	70	171	80	114	54
Word choice	100	40	157	55	113	38
Total	1419	591	2049	521	975	431

From table 4.3 (above), the most severe errors regarding occurrence are related to tenses with a total frequency of 1874. The analysis of the occurrence of this type of error revealed that the wrong application of verb tense was evident in all three schools, followed by the incorrect use of the article and subject-verb agreement errors. The occurrence of errors does not only indicate that the learners have not learnt anything yet, but it gives an idea whether the teaching strategies applied were effective or needed to be changed (Anefnaf, 2017). All these errors appeared frequently in their essay writing. Mopane School had a total of 429 errors which had the highest rate in comparison to Acacia and Mahonga which had 346 and 171 tense errors respectively (cf: table 4.3). The total number of tense-error frequency for all schools was 332. Of these, Acacia had the highest number (132), followed by Mopane (130) and then Mahonga (70). The second most frequent error made was related to articles (824 errors). The learners from Mopane School made the highest number of tense errors (400), followed by Acacia (238) and Mahonga (186). The frequency of article errors was 303 (Mopane (120), Acacia (101) and Mahonga (82). The total error frequency of occurrence on subject-verb agreement was 280, followed by prepositions with 267, then conjunctions with 204 and singular and plurals which had 159 cases. The exception was in the word choice category which had the lowest number of errors and frequency of occurrence (139). The occurrence of frequent errors is generally related to the

inadequate use of effective teaching methods. The findings suggest that tenses, articles and subject-verb agreement categories were the main ESL error-prone areas for all the schools. However, some errors appear to be as a result of lack of exposure to the TL, mother-tongue interference and overgeneralizing of the grammar rules.

4.2.4 Total number of errors recorded from all three schools

This section gives an overview of the total number of all the common grammatical errors for each school. It displays seven classified error categories and an overall number of errors of each school obtained from the (scripts) written tasks. Table 4.4 below provides a summary of grammatical errors per school.

Table 4.4: Summary of grammatical errors per school

Schools	Tenses	Articles	Prepositions	Singular and plural	Conjunctions	Wrong subject /verb agreement	Word choice errors	Total
Acacia	346	238	162	200	104	269	100	1419
Mopane	429	400	257	286	171	349	157	2049
Mahonga	171	186	111	149	114	131	113	975
Total	946	824	530	635	389	749	370	4443

Table 4.4 above displays the analysis of errors based on the type of grammatical errors and the total number of errors made by the learners from the three different schools. Mopane School fared the worst with the highest overall total of 2049 errors, followed by Acacia School with a total of 1419 errors and Mahonga with 975 errors. The total number of all errors recorded from the three schools totalled 4443. These results reveal that tenses were the most problematic category with the highest total of 946 errors. The second category with the higher number of errors was articles (824), followed by subject-verb agreement (749), then singular and plural (635), prepositions (530), conjunctions (389) and lastly word choice with 370 errors.

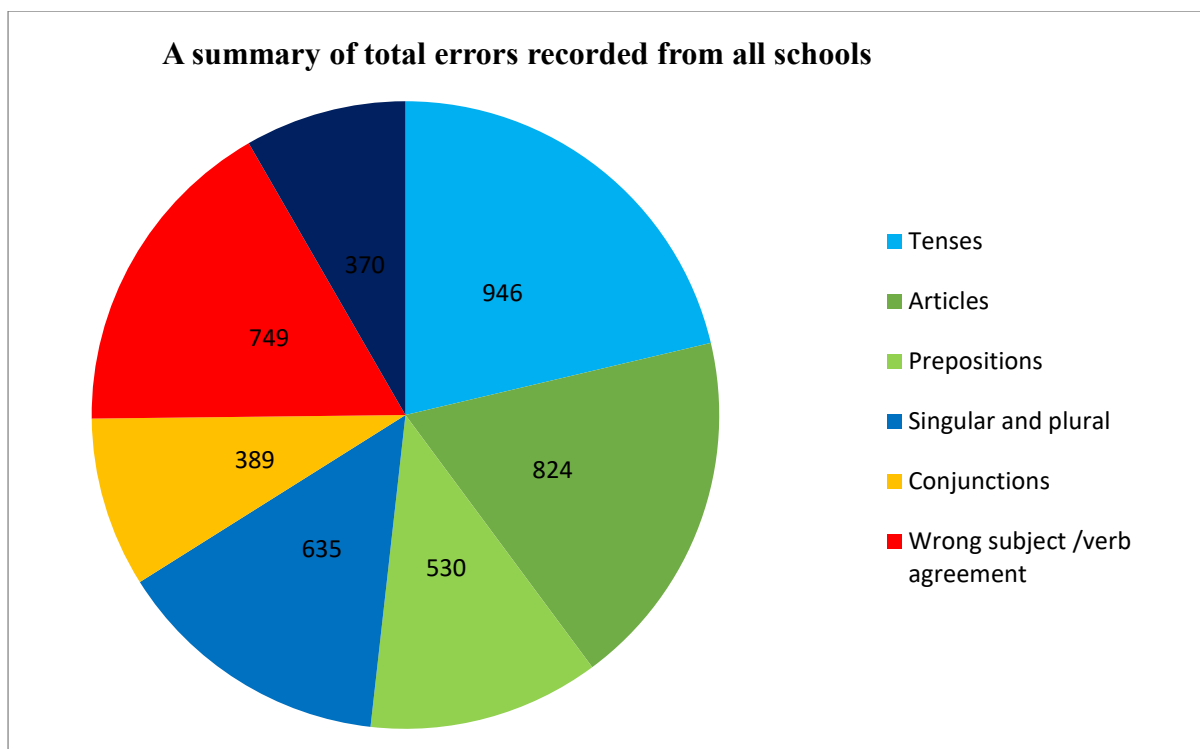


Figure 4.4: *A summary of all common grammatical errors from the three schools*

The findings in figure 4.4 show the summary of total errors per category identified from learners' scripts of the three schools. The results are in agreement with Mungungu (2010), who found out that the most prominent errors by the Namibian learners were tenses, subject-verb agreement, articles, word choice and prepositions. The complexity of the English syntactic rules brings difficulties to ESL teaching-learning leading to many errors in writing. It is evident from the above figure that tenses are the most predominant error occurring category where learners committed the highest number of errors. This category comprises of 947 errors in total, followed by the use of articles (824), then subject-verb agreement (749), singular and plural (635), prepositions (530), conjunctions (389) and lastly the word choice category with 370 errors.

The findings above are in line with the findings of Flognfedt and Lundi (2016) who also found that learners faced difficulties in learning the grammatical aspects of a Second Language (SL) such as subject-verb agreement, correct tense usage and prepositions.

This section which related to the quantitative phase looked at the common grammatical errors and the frequent occurrences of errors made by Namibian Grade 7 learners. The errors were categorised into seven categories: tenses, articles, subject-verb agreement, singular and plural,

prepositions, conjunctions and word choice. Al-khresheh (2010) claims that learners' errors should be seen as evidence of their learning. This suggests that most of the learners had not yet reached a stage where they would possess fluent English grammar skills; they were still in the process of learning the correct English grammar.

4.2.5 Description of different categories of grammatical errors

This section describes the different categories of grammatical errors gathered from learners. Each type of error category received a detailed description analysis. The errors include tenses, articles, subject-verb agreement, singular and plural, prepositions, conjunctions and word choice errors. In line with this, Ellis (1997) points out that the description of errors helps to diagnose learners' learning difficulties at any stage of their development and also to plot out how changes in error patterns occur over time. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to describe the different categories of grammatical errors in order to identify and diagnose learners' learning problems in ESL.

4.2.5.1 Tense Errors

The tense makes the reader aware of when the action expressed in a sentence takes place. The verb tense tells the reader of when the action is taking place (present tense), or when the action took place (past tense) or when the action will take place (future tense). Learners presented many errors in this aspect, it was noticed from their essays that there was no consistency between when the action occurred and the type of verb used. Two types of verb tense errors that were identified in learners' scripts were, namely, wrong verb form (WVF) especially in the usage of the present and past tense. According to Ellis (1997), the WVF occurs when learners use the verb to communicate an action. Hence, it was noticed that learners failed to change the verbs into the past tense as the essay was reporting about an event that had taken place. Many learners used the present tense instead of the past tense (and vice-versa). This is termed by Richards and Schmidt (2002) as "ignorance of rule restrictions". In other words, it refers to the application of a language rule to an inappropriate context known as overgeneralisation. This could be an indication that learners are not aware of the different rules concerning the use of verb tenses. The sentences in the following excerpts contain errors in application of two types of *incorrect verb forms* extracted from the data.

My mother *callen* the fire brigade. [My mother *called* the fire brigade]

We *goed* to the beach, and it was cold. [We *went* to the beach, and it was cold]

The examples above indicate the type of errors where learners confuse regular verbs and irregular verbs. A learner substituted the past tense of “*call*” with “*callen*.” Another example is where a learner used the verb “*goed*” instead of using the correct verb form “*went*” which describes the past tense. The learner added *-ed* to the irregular verb.

The data revealed that learners would use the present tense form of the verb in contexts where the past tense form is required. Thus, the learner either omits the suffix *-ed* or sticks to the present form of the verb. In the English language, some verbs have certain matching forms for the categories of present tense and past tense, for example, *call – called* (*called* – this verb is called the regular verb). Learners commit such errors because they apply the same pattern of the regular verb to irregular verbs. The learner applied the same rule to the irregular verb “go” for “*goed*” while the correct form for the irregular verb was supposed to be “*went*”, for example, *go (present) – went (past) – will go (future) - gone (past participle)*. This finding concurs with Richards and Schmidt (2002) who state that such errors are caused by the (transfer hypothesis or interlanguage) extension of the target language rules to inappropriate contexts. These errors might occur because the learners applied incorrect grammatical rules while in some cases they did not apply the rule at all (simplification error); or they used one form in one context and extended it further to another context where it is not applicable.

Present tense instead of Past tense (Pr –P) or vice versa

The learners seem not to have a clear understanding of when to use the present tense and the past tense. They demonstrated their inability to understand the difference between the two tenses. According to Flognfedt and Lundi (2016), present tense expresses an action or a situation that generally exists or that is currently happening at that time, while past tense expresses an action or situation that began and finished in the past. In their scripts, learners seem not to be aware that an event or story that happened in the past has to be communicated in the past tense. In their written work, most of their verb forms were in the present tense, while the verb was supposed to be in the past tense or (vice-versa). Also, the learners were not consistent with the usage of past tense in their compositions. The following are some examples:

The children *are* so happy to *saw* different kinds of animals.

[The children *were* so happy to *see* different kinds of animals.]

The best part of my vacation *is* when my friend and I *go* shopping.

[The best part of my vacation *was* when my friend and I *went* shopping.]

We *have* good times with my friends at the show.

[We *had* good times with my friend at the show]

Seen from the examples above, learners have poor understanding of the correct use of the past tense form. This may be an indication or a sign that learners did not acquire sufficient knowledge or understanding of writing correct tenses. The influence of L1 on L2 (mother tongue interference) was clearly evident in the use of tenses because learners made direct translations from L1 to L2.

Example: We *have* good times with my friends at the show. Instead of: We *had* good times with my friends at the show.

I *visit* my grandmother during the last summer holiday. Instead of: I *visited* my grandmother during the last summer holiday.

The sentences in the preceding example shows that the learner tried to get the message across but the learner was not aware of the correct grammar rules being applied to the verb “*have*” to become “*had*”. This happens as a result of directly translating the tense from the first language to ESL. “*I visit my grandmother during the holiday*”, instead of “*I visited my grandmother during the holiday*” is a translation interference from the Oshiwambo version “*Mefudho onda li nda talele po kuku gwandje*”.

This could be because of L1 interference as Oshiwambo tenses are not used as there are used in the case with English. There is no relationship between the formation of the Oshiwambo past tense and the English past tense. The Oshiwambo-speaking learners struggled to convert the present tense verb form into the past tense which requires them to add the suffix “*-ed*”.

In other examples such as “*We goed to the beach and it was cold*”, this clearly indicates that learners are not adequately exposed to English and they struggled a lot with tenses. Since the majority of the verbs were misused, this type of writing error is blamed on having incomplete knowledge on how to use irregular verbs when constructing a sentence or the incomplete application of correct grammar rules.

4.2.5.2 Articles errors

The Grade 7 learners clearly revealed that they had difficulties in using articles in English which is actually a common problem. Findings by Alkhresheh (2015) indicate that the articles are one of the most common areas where second language learners get challenged especially those learners whose mother-tongue does not have articles. The basic rules regarding the use of articles were unnoticed by the learners. The learners confused the use of “a”, “an”, and “the” and inserted articles where they were not needed. The errors in the usage of articles were analysed into three categories: article omission, unnecessary insertion and the use of the incorrect article. In line with this, Corder (1974) agrees that errors fall into four main categories that are omission or addition of extraneous or incorrect articles, selection of an incorrect article and disordering of articles. This study reveals various errors the learners made in the use of articles in sentences. The examples of errors concerning articles are discussed below.

Omission of Article (OA)

Flognfeldt and Lund (2016) assert that the basic rule of articles in English entails that the singular common noun must have an article, whereas common nouns can be used without an article. Learners overlooked this basic rule. The analysis below agrees with a study by Ellis (2008) that articles are the most frequently committed grammatical errors among the ESL learners. Furthermore, the learners left out the article where it was required. This omission of error can occur due to language interference because there are no articles used in their first languages.

Examples of article omission selected from the data:

There was *A* man standing behind me. [There was *a* man standing behind me]

I picked up *A* apple. [I picked up *an* apple]

Unnecessary insertion (UI)

The following examples show the addition of articles where they are not necessary.

We have *a* dinner. (We have dinner.)

My sister and I go to *the* bed. (My sister and I go to bed.)

The learners might wrongly apply the rule of the TL. These errors could be attributed to the learners' limited experience in L2 such that they fail to grasp and apply the correct rule of L2.

Wrong substitution of articles (WS)

According to Ellis (1997), the wrong substitution of articles is a situation in which a learner confuses the use of the correct article and includes the wrong one. For example, the use of “a” was used instead of “the,” or vice versa. Article “the” is used to describe a specific noun, whereas “a/an” is used to describe a more general noun. For this reason, “the” is also referred to as the definite article, and “a/an” referred to as the indefinite article. The definite article, “the” is always used before both singular and plural nouns when the noun is specific.

He had *the* banana for lunch. [He had a banana for lunch]

We jumped into *a* swimming pool. [We jumped into the swimming pool.]

The learners have demonstrated their inability to differentiate between indefinite articles and definite articles. The number of omitted indefinite and definite articles was approximately the same. The learners seemed to have difficulty with the countable use of abstract nouns, as there were a great number of omissions with words that refer to events, non-specific nouns and phenomena. In line with Chen (2000), who considered that English articles could be one of the most difficult grammatical parts of speech for second language learning, as there is no equivalent syntactical device to the English article system. Therefore, both definite and the indefinite article leads to one of the most challenging problems as it is commonly omitted or misused with singular countable nouns.

4.2.5.3 Subject-verb agreement errors

Flognfedt and Lundi (2016) explain that subject-verb agreement is the correspondence between a verb and its subject. Based on these research findings, subject-verb agreement errors prevailed with the highest number of errors with a frequency of occurrence of 749 in total. It was observed from their written work that learners’ errors were due to their inability to include the suitable subject-verb agreement or difficult to form sentences correctly. The majority of learners could not make the subjects and the sentences agree when the verbs were supposed to follow their subjects closely. Without considering the tenses (past tense or present tense) for subject-verb agreement, they wrongly matched a singular subject which is always linked to a singular verb and a plural subject which is always linked to a plural verb. This is in line with Chomsky (2007), who states that sentence structure is a collection of words that convey meaning and is supposed to be formed according to the logic of grammar. And for the sentence

to be complete, it needs a matching (or agreeable) subject and verb); otherwise, it would not make sense.

Examples of errors

Dad and I *walks* to the mall. [Dad and I *walk* to the mall]

The *children* in our class *is* very naughty. [The children in our class *are* very naughty]

My grandmother *like* sleeping a lot. [My grandmother *likes* sleeping a lot]

There *were* no food to eat. [There *was* no food to eat]

The examples above show that learners have little knowledge of how to use the correct form of the English grammar pertaining to subject-verb agreement. It is noticeable that the sentences fail to convey the writers' messages. This concurs with Corder (1974) who distinguishes between performance errors which are once-off violations of grammatical conventions and competence errors which are consistent in an individual's speech or writing and indicates an internalised system different from that of the TL. Corder (1974) argues that errors are 'signals' that indicate that the actual learning process is taking place and that the learner has not yet mastered or shown a well-structured competence in the TL. The examples of errors above show that these learners faced difficulty in using the correct subject-verb agreement forms to generate meaningful sentences. The subject-verb agreement could be incorrectly applied because of inadequate teaching and learning of this aspect of grammar.

4.2.5.4 Singular and plural errors

Learners made no distinction between a singular object and plural objects, as the examples below indicate. Conversely, the learners erroneously omitted the plural morpheme "s" or they tend to add it where it is unnecessary especially on irregular verbs. The following examples are proof that learners are struggling to deal with singular and plural forms of the English language.

Before we go on vacation, we packed our foods in the *boxes*. [boxes]

The two *gentleman~~s~~* were guiding us. [gentlemen]

The *childrens* in our class are very naughty. [children]

At the farm, we have picked up many *orange, lemon, and tomato*. [oranges, lemons and tomatoes]

It is interesting that in their effort to apply the grammatical rules that they know, there were times a learner uses the plural markers incorrectly. Again, this may be attributed to content overgeneralization and incomplete knowledge of countable and uncountable nouns. Al-khresheh and Hamad (2013) argue that content overgeneralization occurs when the learner incorrectly widens the scope of the rule to a situation where the linguistic rule cannot be applied. Based on the above examples, learners overgeneralized the rules, thinking that every word which is already in the singular form should have a plural suffix “s”. The learners had an idea that English nouns have plural and singular forms. Despite that, they could not differentiate the singular form from the plural forms (*box - boxes, gentleman – gentlemen, child - children, orange - oranges, lemon – lemons, and tomato – tomatoes*).

4.2.5.5 Preposition errors

Errors in prepositions also caused a great difficulty in the learners’ essays. According to Ellis (1997), prepositions are words that usually precede a noun or pronoun. They link or connect a noun or pronoun to a verb or adjective in a sentence. They inform a reader where and when the action occurred and how it occurred. Without the correct prepositions, the sentence would not make sense. The examples below show that this learner used the incorrect preposition of time (*from* instead *at*).

The bus will depart *from* 10:00 am instead of

The bus will depart *at* 10:00 am.

Errors of this type reveal that learners made errors in choosing the inappropriate prepositions trying to describe the exact time the bus is departing. In the Oshiwambo dialects, both prepositions (*from* and *at*) are used in such sentences, which indicates the time the bus is leaving. These types of errors often happen as a result of the mother tongue interference / L1 interference; as such, learners directly translate from the mother-tongue into English (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). This concurs with Richards and Schmidt (2002) who state that the different types of prepositions used in the English language are not only adding detail to the sentences, but they complete a sentence. Therefore, prepositions are used to show location, time, direction and possession. The frequency of prepositional errors ranked the fifth among all common grammatical errors.

Wrong Substitution (WS)

The wrong substitution occurred when the learners selected the wrong prepositions to use in their writings. In their compositions, the learners demonstrated confusion concerning the correct usage of prepositions, for example, *in* instead of *at*.

Are you *in* home? [Are you *at* home?]

We visited my grandparents *in* the farm. [We visited my grandparents *at/on* the farm.]

We have been waiting *of* you. [We have been waiting *for* you.]

I will help you *by* your work. [I will help you *with* your work.]

Our class went *to* a trip to Etosha National Park. [Our class went *on* a trip to Etosha National Park.]

We crossed the river *with* a boat. [We crossed the river *by* boat.]

Education is the key *for* happiness. [Education is the key *to* happiness.]

The above examples indicate how the choices of correct prepositions are very crucial and need to be carefully made to convey explicit messages. The preceding examples suggest that specific words should always be used with certain prepositions to form phrases that express particular meanings. From the examples above, one can see that learners demonstrated some confusion in the use of the correct prepositions. This may be an indication of carelessness and inadequate learning, which appears to be the root cause that the learners have not yet fully mastered the language rules.

Unnecessary Insertion (UI)

The examples below highlight learners' errors concerning the unnecessary insertion of prepositions.

In Tuesday we went to see grandmother.

[*On* Tuesday we went to see grandmother.]

When we arrived at the farm, grandmother made *for* me a cup of tea.

[When we arrived at the farm, grandmother made me a cup of tea.]

It was nearly *by* eight o'clock in the evening when we arrived back from Windhoek.

[It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when we arrived back from Windhoek.]

The sentences above show the incorrect application of prepositions including unnecessary insertions. Most ESL learners make such grammar errors because they have not mastered the art of learning prepositions in combination with nouns or verbs or adjectives as they rely on their native language to “carry” them.

For example, the first sentence extracted from the essays: “*In Tuesday we went to see grandmother*”. This error is caused by literal translation. The learner tried to get the message across by directly translating. This is a direct translation of a common phenomenon in the Oshiwambo language version of “*Metiyali otwa yile ku kuku*” which is supposed to read as, “*On Tuesday, we went to see grandmother*”. Such an error can be as a result of the transference of literal translation from mother tongue into the TL because the two prepositions “*in* and *on*” have different meanings in writing, like “*in March*” while “*on*” means in a phrase like “*on the table*”. The confusion among Oshiwambo native speakers for both prepositions “*in*” and “*on*” mean “*mo*”. Such learners should have used the preposition “*on*” instead of *in*. These errors are attributed to mother tongue interference or L1 interference.

4.2.5.6 Conjunction errors

According to Ellis (1997), conjunctions are words that connect clauses or sentences. Some examples of conjunctions are: *but*, *because* and *if*. Based on this study’s findings, conjunction errors were 389 in total. The findings reveal that most of the learners made several errors in the use or omission of conjunctions. Learners face the problem of using proper conjunctions under the given context.

My grandmother could not come with us *but* she was sick instead of

[My grandmother could not come with us *because* she was sick].

Examples of conjunction-omissions:

Many things in the shop burned down seven workers *are* injured.

[Many things in the shop burned down *and* seven workers were injured.]

I *were* so happy to see the elephant live because I have only seen an elephant *in* TV, not in real life.

[I was so happy to see the elephant live because I have only seen it *on* TV, *but* not in real life.]

We could not stay longer at Windhoek my little brother was sick.

[We could not stay longer at Windhoek *because* my little brother was sick]

The examples above show that learners did not only omit conjunctions in their sentences but also used the incorrect ones. These learners do not understand sentence structure. This could be because of teachers' incorrect teaching practices or ignorance of rule restriction. Some teachers put more effort into teaching the use of the conjunction, while others might not. This concurs with Wolfaardt (2010) who supposed that when learners are taught through the medium of English to use grammar incorrectly, it is potentially challenging to the learners' language development. Therefore, it is possibly due to the complexities of grammatical rules in L2 or incomplete learning that leads to these errors being made. It could also be that learners had not applied what they had been taught by their English teachers, especially at their present stage of learning.

4.2.5.7 Word choice errors

Errors with poor word choice were 370 in total and it is the last category with the least errors. Even though the researcher tried to combine the three types of errors (i.e. adding errors in the use of pronouns and errors in the use of the apostrophe) into the word choice category, it remained the category with the least number of errors. These errors are caused by language transfer whereby, two languages (L1 and TL) have similar language patterns in terms of these three aspects. Word choice errors occur when learners confuse words that sound similar and place them wrongly. These errors show how languages can express the same idea and show the complexities of getting words with similar sounds from L1 and use them in the second language to create meaning. The examples below show that learners lack the vocabulary or they used inappropriate or inaccurate vocabulary choice in their sentences repeatedly because they only consider words with similar pronunciation that sound the same without considering their meaning (e.g. *no* for *know*, and *think* for *a thing*). Consequently, this can deviate the meaning of the written text from the learners' original intentions.

Other examples:

I was terrified so I *run* faster *then* ever. [I was terrified so I ran faster *than* ever.]

The birds were *crying* loud during the night. [The birds were *singing* loud during the night.]

Its my *pressure* to write this letter to you. [*It's* my *pleasure* to write this letter to you.]

Mr Damased was very upset, so *she* left us *their*.

[Mr Damased was very upset, so *he* left us *there*.]

Learners made these errors repeatedly as they only considered the sounds of these words with “similar-sounding” instead of their meanings and correct usage. Learners tend to over-generalize the rules when acquiring new discourse structures. Also, errors in the usage of pronouns and apostrophes were also made.

4.2.6 Conclusion

The discussion and analysis of quantitative data was informed by the framework of EA by Corder (1967) which followed the five steps: collection of the sample of learners’ scripts, identification of errors, classifying the errors, description of errors and explaining the errors, and evaluating and correcting the errors (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Since making errors is part of the learners’ learning process, it was not a surprise that learners made these errors at this stage of learning. Errors are expected in the process of learning and it is vital to identify the sources of their occurrence. The presentation of errors in this section underlines grammatical difficulties encountered by the target learners in the learning of ESL. As presented in the first phase findings, there are seven categories of grammatical errors made by the Grade 7 learners including errors in tenses, articles, subject - verb agreement, prepositions, conjunctions and word choices. The analysis revealed that in most cases, errors occurred because the learners have a poor command of the English language, mother tongue interferences, overgeneralisation and ignorance of the rules of restrictions. The researcher tends to hold that these errors are caused by the linguistic backgrounds of the learners. The results revealed that the Grade 7 learners in Namibia were not able to apply the correct tenses to the verbs in the sentences. The findings indicate that learners’ lack of adequate bank of vocabulary in the TL hampered their smooth acquisition of ESL skills in writing. The study further discovered that many learners face difficulties and misconceptions about the rules and concepts of morphology in their writing. This section attempted to highlight all the common grammatical writing errors as they manifested in the English essays of the Namibian Grade 7 learners from the three primary schools.

4.3 RESULTS FROM THE QUALITATIVE DATA

The previous section presented findings extracted from learners' essay scripts on common English language errors. This section focuses on exploring the teachers' views on the approaches to help the learners minimise writing errors and improve their writing skills. Also to hear from the ESL teachers on what are the specific English grammatical challenges facing the Grade 7 learners and how such can be addressed. It complements findings from the learners' scripts and explains the possible origins and reasons for the occurrence of the English grammar errors among Grade 7 learners. The discussion in this section helped to answer the research questions three, four and five.

- What are causes of grammatical errors?
- What are the teacher's views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve the learners' writing skills?
- What can be done to minimise the English grammatical writing errors of the Grade 7 learners and how can such be used to bring about improvement?

Teachers' views are important in this study as they are responsible for teaching the learners the English language. The rationale was that their views would illuminate the nature and the extent of their challenges. The objective was that the discussion would offer detailed insights on their views on the teaching approaches used to help learners minimise their writing errors and the origins of the English writing errors among the Namibian Grade 7 learners. This is also informed by the belief that contextual factors may contribute to the English writing problems. The focus cannot be on the learner alone.

To give context to the results, a brief background of the participants and the schools is outlined. The qualitative data is extracted from interviews conducted with five teachers from the three schools; namely, Acacia, Mopane and Mahonga (pseudonyms). Through interviews many themes were elicited, thus providing greater validity to the findings of the quantitative phase.

4.3.1 Emerging themes and sub-themes

The data was analysed using content analysis (CA) techniques by providing codes to phrases and sections in the texts (cf: appendix G). The process of coding reduced the amount of raw data to that which is relevant to the research questions. This dissects the data down to manageable sections and guides the researcher through transcribing of raw data to gain a high level of insight or conceptual understanding to categorise into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Themes were generated from collected data by grouping similar codes together (cf: appendix G). After looking at each interview transcript several times, the following key themes were identified: Teachers' perspectives regarding educational policies, teachers' training, learners' English proficiency and teachers' strategies/approaches used in the teaching of an English grammar lesson and different types of grammatical errors encountered during the English lessons. The data were also divided into sub-divisions to obtain a more comprehensive view.

Table 4.5: The themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Teachers' views on educational policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ESL curriculum• English Language of learning and teaching (LoLT)
Teachers' views on teacher preparation to teach ESL grammar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-service teacher training• In-service development
Teachers' views on the possible sources of grammatical errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unmanageable classrooms size• Lack of availability of Teaching and Learning Resources.• Language spectrum in the community• Learners' attitudes and lack of motivation'• Learners' low English proficiency and lack of writing practice

Teachers' views on the approaches to help learners minimise errors and improve their essay writing skills.

- Inductive approach
- Deductive
- Teaching grammar in context
- Teaching through stories & role-play
- Co-operative learning approach
- Constructive feedback

The grammatical errors encountered by the teachers in the learners' written work.

- Tense, spelling, articles, subject/verb, run-on sentences, concord and sentence fragments.

4.3.2 Biographical information of the participants

As indicated in chapter 3 (cf: 3.10), ethical considerations were adhered to, for instance participants were not required to reveal their real identities. In this section, all the names used are pseudonyms for anonymity. During the interview, the participants were asked about their highest qualification(s) and their years of experience in teaching.

Table 4.6: Participants' qualifications and their teaching experience

Participants' names	Gender	School name	Years of teaching experience	Qualifications
Ruiter	Female	Acacia	12	Honours degree in English
Stella	Female	Acacia	11	BETD+ACE
Tuli	Female	Mopane	9	BETD+ACE
Una	Female	Mopane	13	BETD+ ACE
Viena	Female	Mahonga	13	Honours degree in English

Table 4.4 (above) tabulates the demographic information of participants for this study and attention was given to gender, years of experience and professional qualifications. All the participants had basic qualifications and adequate experience to teach ESL as all had been teaching for more than 8 years

4.3.3 Teachers' views regarding the origins and causes of errors

The researcher probed to find out from teachers if the two policies (the newly revised curriculum and language of learning and teaching) are indeed contributing in any way pertaining to the learners' writing errors in the English subject. It was aimed at re-enforcing the discussion on the origins of grammatical problems, thereby answering research question two.

4.3.3.1 The newly revised 2015 English curriculum

The Grade 7 English teachers were asked about their views regarding the content of the English language syllabus, particularly grammar teaching in the newly revised curriculum. Teachers' views on the curriculum were varied. One teacher indicated that the new curriculum was expansive as it incorporated the aspects of grammar teaching. Some changes in the curriculum were identified as positive as can be seen by participant Viena who expressed that:

I am happy that the newly revised curriculum expanded the aspect of grammar teaching, which was not the case in the old curriculum. In the current one, there are more activities that are aimed at developing all the English skills that help learners to develop comprehensively.

The teacher expressed a positive view on the newly revised curriculum in that it provides enough opportunities for learners to learn more grammar components compared to the old curriculum. In line with this, Ellis (1997) argues that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to embrace new ideas and try new strategies to meet their learners' needs. Teacher Ruitter had the same view on the new curriculum:

I do not have a problem with the English curriculum. The English language subject is a compulsory subject and is based on a rigorous curriculum typically with different textbooks which contain practical activities in all areas of learning. Learners' activities in the new curriculum are revised and the grammar content is well sequenced and newly designed activities and competencies were added to suit learners' needs.

The above extract indicates that the teacher is happy that the grammar is well sequenced. The policy cannot be blamed in this regard.

Even though there are positive sentiments around the sequencing, there are concerns around the issue of workload. Teachers felt that the ESL syllabus content expansion came with a heavy

workload which includes many extra hours of marking. Consequently, this workload may delay teachers as they spend more time marking than attending adequately to grammar teaching and the writing skills and ultimately, this will contribute to learning difficulties among learners. On the contrary, Tuli mentioned that:

The newly revised curriculum brought many challenges. A lot has been added... I mean an extensive syllabus to cover. If you take a look at the English syllabus for Senior Primary Grades 4 -7, one will see how lengthy it is. It's safe to say it's impossible to cover all this material, comprehensively, in two terms. The first two terms of school are meant for us to cover the syllabus and then the third term is meant for revision or review to prepare learners for end of the-year exams which counts the most.

From the extract above, it is obvious that the teachers seem to be working under pressure. She explained that learners are disadvantaged because of the workload; the teacher has to rush and adhere to the programmed curricular schedules, which eventually hinders effective classroom teaching as there is no time left for reviewing the content. The teachers may be struggling to put enough emphasis on grammar instruction. This may be the reason why learners are struggling with basic grammar rules, as explained in the quantitative section of this study (cf: table 4.2).

4.3.3.2 Teachers' views on the language of learning and teaching (LoLT)

The three schools that participated in the study are all using English as a medium of instruction because they accommodate different learners from a multilingual society with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This situation on its own can be a disadvantage to the teachers and the learners. This is in line with Simasiku et al. (2015) who argues that teachers and learners struggle to teach and learn school subjects through the medium of English.

Teachers were asked their views on the current situation regarding the effect of LoLT in schools; there was overwhelming evidence that most of the teachers have no problem with English. Teacher Ruiter had the following sentiment.

I fully support the use of English throughout schooling as a medium of instruction from the first year of primary school onwards. The earlier our children are exposed to English, the more competent they will become in English. I believe that people who do not know English are unable to contribute to society.

The above sentiment is supported by Teacher Una, who postulates as follows:

The language policy is fine. English is recognised and regarded as a unifying language for all Namibians, irrespective of race and culture.

Teacher Una strongly supports the use of English as a medium of instruction in school since Namibia is a country with different ethnic groups with multiple languages. She thinks that having English as a common language was thought to unify the country. Similarly, Tylor (2002) asserts that teachers' positive attitudes towards the English language can create positive attitudes and enthusiasm in all teaching-learning situations.

It can be inferred from the findings above that many teachers seemed not to question the LoLT policy. They indicated their preferences for English as a medium of instruction because all ministerial policies (the Curriculum and Syllabus) are in English. Most teachers reported that they are comfortable to teach in English even if their English proficiency level is somehow insufficient; they are willing to teach in English. Teacher Viena stated:

English is a global language. So, I think it is a very good idea for our learners to be taught in English than Afrikaans and be able to communicate with everyone within the globe in every situation they will find themselves, be it travelling, studying in different countries all over the world and most importantly for the job market. I am so proud to be an English teacher.

The teacher recognises the importance and value of English in their daily lives. Her level of confidence and knowledge about the value of the English language suggests that she has either mastered the English language or has seen the benefits of English for the learners' future in a very positive way.

Although most teachers' views were in favour of English as a medium of instruction in schools, Stella holds a contrary view towards the language policy:

I do not even understand why our country has adopted the monolingual policy that fails the learners a lot. English is not part of our community and teaching the English language to non-native speakers is not an easy job. There are differences between L1 grammar and ESL grammar. The exceptions in English grammar make it difficult for ESL learners to learn the English grammar. When learners are writing, they have to think in their L1 and write in English.

This teacher seems to believe that the learners are still weak in ESL writing because English grammar rules are totally different from L1. She reasoned that there are differences between L1 and L2, which also contributes to their poor writing. This is in harmony with Khrashen

(2016) who asserts that there are differences between L1 and L2 in terms of phonics, syntax and morphology. The differences often pose language difficulties resulting in learners committing errors. This may explain why the learners committed errors such as articles and prepositions in their examination scripts (cf: 4.2.5.2 and 4.2.5.5).

4.3.3.3 Pre-service training

The inadequate training of teachers is also viewed as an obstacle to the teaching of grammar among the ESL learners. The quality of the teachers' initial training did not equip teachers to teach English or teach in English and the support given to teachers in the classroom was inadequate. Some teachers felt apprehensive to teach in English and this is likely to transfer their language errors to the learners.

The interviews also revealed that the initial training for primary school teachers was ineffective. Although teachers were expected to have a sound knowledge across a range of subjects (taught through the medium of English), as proposed in the national curriculum, the teachers' pre-service training did not to equip them adequately with the required skills. Teacher Stella, who considers herself not adequately prepared to impart grammar knowledge, had this to say:

I went through the old schooling system. I was trained at college level for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma, a three-year qualification. I never had the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to teach in the English grammar class and I sometimes do not know where to start regarding how to provide effective feedback on learners' errors because there are too many errors.

This demonstrates the powerful impact of a teacher's initial training on teaching which might be considered as one of the factors contributing to the grammatical errors and poor writing in ESL. Stella highlighted that there is a disparity in her initial training and what is expected of her when dealing with modern methods of teaching English, despite teaching the subject for a long period. This significantly hinders the process of teaching and learning and contributes to learners' writing errors in ESL. This concern is supported by Mostert and Van Wyk (2016) who point out that part of the challenge in the education sector in Namibia is due to poor or inadequate teacher-training to teach competently in English.

4.3.3.4 In-service development

For most teachers, teaching writing to the ESL learners is a process that requires dedication, motivation, training and knowledge of specific skills. Therefore, for the teachers it requires employing teaching strategies which assure competence in writing. They revealed that schools rely on professional development workshops as a critical component that aims at improving teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Lack of support from school administrations and district offices was another factor that contributed to numerous errors and poor writing skills among learners. According to Namupala (2013) workshops have proven to be a significant opportunity to help teachers improve their teaching and orientate teachers on how to handle errors but this was not the case with Teacher Ruiter who commented that:

I would say that workshops are supposed to provide opportunities for teachers to share knowledge and showcase their expertise. English teachers are supposed to meet at a cluster school to share knowledge and experiences related to English teaching and learning; or visit a resourceful and innovative teacher at another school and observe good practice in action but, this is not happening at all.

The above extract demonstrates that there is a dearth of professional development at cluster level that provides teachers with the opportunity to develop themselves through different programmes. Larsen-Freeman (2015) cautions that English teachers need professional development initiatives where they share information with their peers in order to increase their competencies. This indicates that teachers and schools ought to organise their own development platforms to share knowledge and skills.

Contrary to the above, teacher Vienna opines that she appreciates the fact that professional development is very useful in that teachers collaborate in working towards good grammar teaching.

At my school, the English language teachers get together every Thursday for at least two hours to do collaborative lesson planning concerning learning activities. We discuss pedagogical issues, including discussing teaching approaches, defining the teaching purpose for each lesson, selecting content to be covered in English lessons and creating teaching and learning aids to be used during lesson presentations.

From the quotation above, it appears that teachers at this school seem to view sharing knowledge as transferable; therefore, they tend to share information amongst themselves. This

indicates that teachers at this school organise their own development platforms to share knowledge and skills.

Lack of adequate content knowledge may have a significant impact on the teachers' teaching methodologies. The initial teacher training programmes were not helpful in preparing them for teaching ESL. Some teachers believe that they lack adequate knowledge to teach grammar because the initial training programme focused on pedagogical knowledge but not on content knowledge. One of the teachers suggested that there is a need for professional development programmes that will help them upgrade their knowledge and skills and improve their teaching methodologies. Teacher Stella stated:

I think my initial teacher-training should have complemented me by on-going professional development workshops. I actually realised that I need to update my skills and knowledge and improve my English teaching methodologies.

This extract points to a perception by a teacher that there is need to have in-service training programmes to equip her with relevant skills to cope with the methods of teaching English. This concurs with Enos (2007) who suggests that there is need for in-service training for older teachers to equip them with necessary innovative skills and knowledge that could make them more competent.

4.3.3.5 Unmanageable classroom size

What also came out from the interviews is the high student-learner ratio in English classes (cf: appendix G). Teachers highlighted that overcrowded classes present challenges such as poor class control. The high number of students that exceed the optimal level also hinders the teaching-learning process when it comes to the workload. Stella (frustrated) had this to say:

Imagine teaching in such an environment where the number of students exceeds the acceptable limit, 40 plus children; it is not even easy for me to move around and reach out to every learner in the class so it is impossible to provide effective teaching in such a classroom, especially marking, plus marking learners' tasks daily is tiring and not so easy to attend to every mistake and error.

So, teachers felt that their classrooms were fully packed and the teaching of grammar was difficult for both teaching grammar and marking written tasks. The feeling is that this will impede the effective error identification and proper feedback to individual learners on how to

improve their writing skills. Often teachers struggle to render effective support and assistance to the individual learner. Another obstacle pertaining to class size was mentioned by teacher Ruiter:

It is not possible for a teacher to control and successfully engage more than 40 learners to participate in an English lesson within a period of 40-minutes. It is a challenge for the teacher to give individual attention..... read through and mark 40 plus essays and highlight all the errors identified.

The large class sizes make it impossible to impart grammar lessons adequately and give individual attention because time is limited. The teacher lamented that the packed classrooms were a salient challenge that hinders the quality of teaching grammar. The quality of teaching and learning is reduced and the whole essence of engaging all the learners is jeopardised. These claims are supported by Kandumbu (2005), who argues that congested classes create problems for effective teaching and learning as well as development of language skills. This implies that teachers are working under considerable pressure to improve the teaching and learning of English.

4.3.3.6 Lack of availability of Teaching and Learning Resources

Another issue raised was the resource-constraints that appear to be the most serious problem teachers have experienced when presenting their grammar lessons. Teachers attributed the making of grammatical errors to a lack of teaching materials and resources in the schools. They consider the lack of teaching materials as a major issue that hinders the effective teaching and learning of grammar. Kandumbu (2005) identified the same issue as one of the challenges facing the primary education sector in Namibia. He argued that without proper teaching and learning resources, teachers cannot progress effectively and efficiently with the planned learning activities in class. The lack of resources influences the attitudes and perceptions of both teachers and learners. Teacher Una expressed her disappointment on having inadequate textbooks:

The Government is failing us here.... How do you expect the poor kids to excel in English second language if the number of English textbooks in my class is way too few for the number of learners in the classroom? Learners have to share ESL textbooks because the Government fails to provide enough textbooks for the learners.

The teacher claimed that learners are more likely to learn and perform below the expected standard at school where there are not enough teaching and learning resources. The teaching resources are designed to stimulate and contribute to a pleasant learning environment; they offer a reality of experiences, opportunities to enhance learners' self-activity and imagination (Hubbard et al, 1996). This means that the process of teaching and learning may be ineffective if there is a lack of teaching and learning materials. Teacher Viena also mentioned that the lack of instructional materials hinders the transmission of content in the English language:

English lessons need visual aids to catch learners' attention. Learners learn better as visual aids promote learners' level of participation and they draw their attention and interest to the topic under discussion. Students' learn as aids draw students' attention and interest. Examples of visual aids such as colourful posters with pictures draw learners' attention and make it easier for them to grasp the lesson content.

The excerpt above indicates that visual aids and other appropriate resources are invaluable and could be used by teachers to help learners understand the English lesson content. The teacher mentioned colourful teaching aids with pictures which in turn reinforce teaching and learning. The discussion highlights the fact that the participants believe that they cannot teach grammar effectively due to lack of much needed resources.

4.3.4 What are the possible causes of errors among learners?

Teachers were asked about their views with regard to different challenges experienced when teaching English grammar lessons in their classrooms. This was still in pursuance of research objective number three. The researcher wanted to get a deeper understanding into causes that may be contributing to writing errors in English. The findings were presented under the following headings: learners' low English proficiency, lack of motivation and emotional issues, lack of teaching and learning resources and classroom overcrowding.

4.3.4.1 Language spectrum in the community

It also emerged that a lack of exposure to English contributes to learners' poor English language writing. The strong impact of exposure to English on grammar teaching and learning is a challenge.

Teacher Ruiter adds:

There are no English native speakers who reside in our communities whom these learners can interact with to support their acquisition of English; nor is there any English language support at home. At home and around the wider community, Afrikaans and other native languages are regularly spoken rather than English. Even at school, learners speak Afrikaans when they are playing outside with others.

The teacher lamented that learners have limited exposure to the TL outside the classroom. The above extract suggests that effective grammar teaching and learning can be handicapped by the environment they live in. This implies that lack of exposure plays a major role in the learners' language production. Results from the quantitative analysis indicate that the main source of grammatical errors was the interference of mother tongue. Examples of sentences with grammatical errors were identified of which learners directly translated sentences from their first language into L2.

Moreover, teachers highlighted that learners manifest negative attitudes toward writing in English because they find it difficult and hard to write in English. Learners' attitudes toward the language have an impact on writing errors. Teacher Viena states:

Learners say weird things about English. English is not their mother-tongue and they do not see the need to write accurate in English that is why some Grade 7 learners cannot read and write well in English because they fear making mistakes.

The teacher indicated that some learners have no interest in learning English. The learners do not want to learn the language. Learners do not value the opportunity they get in school to practise English. Instead they seem to prefer their own L1. Therefore, such learners who do not believe in the importance of mastering a second language are likely to suffer when learning that particular language. Brown (2001) asserts that learning occurs more easily, when the learners have a positive attitude towards the language they are learning, unfortunately this is not the case among these learners. Often, their attitudes reflect how haphazard they perform in their school work and shows lame excuses they are making for not being interested in the language. It can be seen from their written scripts that many grammatical errors they made can be attributed to their negative attitudes towards the language.

4.3.5 What are the Grade 7 teachers' views on the approaches to help the learners minimise errors and improve their essay writing skills?

In order to address research question four, the participants were asked about the approaches that can be employed in the ESL classroom. In order for the ESL teachers to meet learners' different needs and to master grammar rules, they need to understand the level of their learners, focus on how to apply innovative approaches, methodologies and strategies to teach grammar and improve the learners' writing skills. Ellis (2014) affirms that the acquisition of the grammatical system is a complex process; therefore, different teaching strategies can be employed when approaching grammar. When teachers were asked on the different approaches they used to teach grammar and develop learners' writing skills, they mentioned different approaches such as inductive, deductive, integration and the teaching of grammar in context.

Ruiter mentioned the inductive approach (the discovery approach) as one of her teaching methods that gives learners more exposure to the English language:

I pay attention to learners' writing skills during the assessment tasks as they direct and guide me on what learners are capable of and what is lacking. I also provide teacher commentary feedback. I use the inductive approach where learners find out rules through the presentation of adequate linguistic forms in the target language; thus learning concepts and vocabulary through pantomiming real-life objects, and other visual materials. Then learners use the examples given to figure out the rules. It works well for my learners.

The teacher seemed to favour the inductive approach where learners examine many examples to find out patterns. She clearly elucidated how the method works – with learners presented with concrete examples of a given rule and in return, learners work out to discover the rule for themselves.

The above quotation highlights amongst others, the use of the inductive approach. Ellis (2012) confirms that learners who have received explicit grammar arrive at a high level of accuracy in grammar than those who have not received explicit instructions. Despite the benefits associated with the use of this approach, the findings from the quantitative data attests that learners' writings are below standard and plagued with grammatical errors. This implies that it is either the learners are the ones who are not paying attention to grammatical features during their writing or the inductive teaching approach used is not working for the learners. Another possibility could be that the rules were not made clear or were not explicitly explained.

Teacher Una comments that she uses a rule driven approach where she presents the rules followed by the examples on which the grammar rules are applied.

I teach grammar through meaningful short exercises or use worksheets that focus on grammar points. First, I explain the grammar rules with examples for the whole class to practise. I prepare learners' activities in the form of sentence-completion exercises, sentence rewrites, and error correction concerning grammatical structures. This can be done in groups, pair-work or individually. It depends on how I plan my lesson for the day.

The excerpt above indicates that the teacher taught grammar rules based on learners' needs and thus drawing from the deductive approach. This approach is useful in helping learners to practice and learn from their errors. She taught grammar using multiple short exercises such as sentence-completion exercises as guidelines for the learners to practise grammatical structures and identify or correct errors in sentences by rewriting them. This approach allows learners to become aware of how different "prototypes" of correct sentence structures influence them to write better sentences. Short exercises also provide the opportunity for constant assessment, making it easy to identify and correct the errors. This method helps learners to memorise and internalise grammar rules easily, then apply these learnt rules by structuring new sentences without errors. This method is equivalent to that of Thornbury (2008) who believes that the deductive method is related to conscious learning because it teaches rules explicitly; this method produces transient knowledge that the learners are not able to apply if the rules had been gleaned from their own writing.

Teacher Vienna alluded that:

I present grammar lessons with examples that are familiar to them which contain bad grammar so that the learner can feel how one can be misunderstood when using wrong grammar. I always encourage learners to work in groups or pairs to guess the correct form. Then later I ask them to write the correct rules individually using their own sentences for assessment purposes.

The teacher claimed that she used error identification exercises based on the identified grammatical aspects that are reflective in nature and most learners' lacked the mastery in certain grammatical aspects. The excerpt above promotes teamwork, because the learners learn and share knowledge in groups and in pairs. Group work has been regarded as a teaching method that benefits learners in various disciplines as it contributes to effective learning processes (Kaendler, Wiedmann, Rummel & Spada, 2015). The need for the learners to support one

another is supported by teacher Ruiters, who reported that learners work together cohesively, share new knowledge and learn from one another.

Teacher Ruiters believes that writing exercises and other written activities help learners to acquire the vocabulary and grammar of the lesson. Moreover, teacher Ruiters reported that learners work together cohesively, share new knowledge and learn from one another.

I prefer creative writing, whereby I give learners at least three essay topics to choose from. I always ask my learners to draw a mind map (main ideas/ points) on how they are going to present their ideas in writing...

Mind map strategies may help learners to visualise their thoughts and enable learners to generate key points, draw more ideas to understand a particular topic assigned for essays and enhance their writing skill. It also enhances the quality of essay writing and guide learners to focus on the main points they want to include.

Similarly, in the following excerpt, teacher Viena involves the learners in writing tasks by giving them topics of their interest. She also introduces the aspect of teaching grammar in context:

Due to grammar complexity, its rules cannot be learnt by rote learning. I teach my learners to understand that grammar is a system of rules that specifies the order in which words can be used in a sentence (syntax) and the law of words used to convey meaning. For sentence structure, I ask learners to write about any interesting story and during marking, I point out all the errors and sometimes correct them during marking. The focus is to practise the correct usage of prepositions, conjunctions, tenses and direct/indirect speech. I do not teach grammar in isolation, but I teach grammar in context - this helps my learners to improve both grammatical errors and enhance their writing skills.

The above account emphasises that grammar makes sense when taught in context as this allows learners to see how the rules can be applied in sentences logically. Weaver (2001) advises that teaching grammar in isolation will not benefit learners and concluded that it is useless and impractical. He argues that once learners have internalised the language structure through repeated exposure, learners will use that knowledge to monitor their language use. This is in line with one of the English writing teaching approaches adopted by the Ministry of Education in which ESL teachers should encourage their learners to brainstorm, plan, revise and edit their work before they produce their final text. Another aspect raised by Una is the use of stories:

I always teach grammar through story writing. Learners naturally like to listen to stories and most of these stories are remembered long after the lesson is over. I introduce my lesson with stories for both eliciting and illustrating grammar points. I also encourage learners to do a lot of practice writing by using different stories to widen their vocabulary and enhance their writing skills and grammar usage elicited from the texts.

What can be emphasised from this teaching method is that story writing is a one of the most versatile techniques - a convenient and natural teaching grammar tool. Learners like stories as they are fascinating and hold attention. Larsen-Freeman (2001) agrees that teaching grammar through stories is useful and makes learning easier as it is captivating and culturally rich and sometimes humorous. This method presents learners with opportunities to practice their writing skills. This method can enhance learners' understanding of grammatical conventions such as word choice errors, tenses and subject verb agreement errors as identified in their scripts.

Teacher Viena demonstrated a high level of creativity and competence for working with learners. This might be because of her qualifications and experience or she has been exposed to some form of advanced training regarding English language teaching. She says that:

I incorporate various interactive activities in grammar lessons by using games, sentence strips for reading, journal writing, letter writing and role-plays. These activities are very good to teach grammar and help learners to improve their writing skills. My teaching methods are inspired by this phrase "when I hear ...eh...I forget. When I see, I remember, and when I do, I learn" not only to engage learners but help learners to remember what they have learnt. The method allows me as a teacher to deliver my lessons well and accommodate all different learning styles. This approach requires me to understand what learners need right away, focus on that, and then expand learners' horizons as their English communication and writing skills develop.

The teacher uses the integration of the four language skills to boost up the understanding of grammar rules. This approach exposes learners to a variety of both language skills and grammar learning activities through conversations and writing, which are beneficial for the improvement of English writing skills and grammar usage. This finding is in line with Flognfedt and Lundi (2016) who contend that in order to improve learners' grammar, the ESL teacher should integrate all the four skills within a single activity in a meaningful context.

Findings regarding teachers' teaching approaches indicated that they employed different teaching grammar methods but they seemed not to be effective because the findings from the quantitative phase show a total of 2049 grammatical errors. This is a clear indication that learners are facing difficulties regarding grammar instruction and learning. It might be that the learners are not interested in learning the language or they resist, or they ignore the methods employed by the teachers. On how to minimise learners' errors, teachers opined that giving learners more exercises in grammar and sentence construction through story writing and journal keeping can enhance learners' writing skills.

While teachers shared information about methods and techniques they applied to present grammar in their classrooms, they were also asked to discuss or pinpoint the common and frequent grammatical errors they have encountered among their learners and how they addressed these errors for improvement.

4.3.6 Common grammatical errors in learners' English written activities

While the teachers were giving information about methods, techniques and strategies that they implemented in teaching English, it is useful for teachers to know the errors learners make. Errors can be minimised only if they are identified. That is why the participants were also asked to pinpoint specific errors that they have problems with. This was in pursuance of research questions four and five. Varied responses were provided by the teachers.

Teacher Viena said:

I can say learners make errors in all grammar aspects: spelling errors, articles, missing punctuation marks, poor pronunciation, sentence structure/fragments, subject-verb agreement, wrong word usage, incorrect use of tenses - and this stems mainly from their mother-tongue interference.

The teacher revealed that learners have learning difficulties and made many errors in different grammar aspects such as spelling errors, articles, punctuation, tense and subject-verb agreement. The teacher's view is in agreement with the findings from the quantitative analysis (cf: 4.2.5.2). The teacher thinks that the learners' errors are influenced by mother tongue interference. When asked to pinpoint the problematic areas, Teacher Una commented:

Teacher Una commented:

My learners are struggling a lot with grammar because their grammar is bad; they make a lot of grammatical mistakes in their sentence structure during writing. They commit errors related to incorrect use of tenses, punctuation, capitalisation, spelling and mostly subject-verb agreement. I can say they have a problem with almost everything relating to English writing. Some learners cannot formulate grammatically accurate sentences.

The teacher ranked grammar as the weakest aspect among learners. The teacher identified errors regarding the incorrect use of tenses, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, capitalisation and spelling in learners' sentences. Her findings are in accordance with the findings from the quantitative analysis where 946 errors were in the incorrect use of tense and 749 errors were related to subject-verb agreement. The findings of Mohammed (2016) who explored the problem of grammatical errors among EFL learners and his findings were that tenses, punctuation, spelling and wrong verb forms were prominent.

Responding to the same question, teacher Una expressed similar sentiments, and she vented her frustration that:

Yoh! There is no specific grammatical error to start with: our learners write everything in "Namlish" You sometimes cannot make head or tail of what they have written. The Grade 7 learners' grammar accuracy is below standard ranging from incorrect tenses, spelling, the usage of slang words and direct translation from their first language. These kids cannot write, spell and they do not know the parts of speech. Their writing is full of run on sentences ...Eish, both learners' written and oral grammar sucks.

The above excerpt points out that learners have problems with grammatical aspects such as wrong register, poor spelling, direct translation, language mixing, incorrect sentence structuring and generally apply incorrect grammar rules and patterns in their writing. However, the evidence is clear that even the findings from the quantitative analysis concurs with the teachers' findings that the learners' language samples (scripts) were confusing to read and hardly conveyed meaningful messages to the reader. The quantitative findings show that many errors were made by the learners and these errors were attributed to mother-tongue interference.

4.3.7 Error correction and corrective feedback

This section reports on how teachers solve the problem of errors, and it addresses research question five. Error correction is considered as one of the major tasks of the ESL teacher in order to identify errors and correct them and to assist their progress in ESL development. The participants were prompted to provide insight on what they do to correct learners' errors. This is in accordance with the last stage of error analysis, which is the correction of errors. Brown (2000) alluded to the fact that it is important for teachers of English to consider all the errors that hinder learners' writing, especially when comprehension of the message leads to misunderstandings (or is ambiguous) which must be corrected immediately to avoid learners fossilising the error. At some point in the interview, teachers indicated that they were aware of some of the learners' errors but little was done in detail to address these errors except revising their teaching methods and pointing out some errors (cf: Appendix G).

Teachers indicated that it is very important for them to correct their learners' grammatical writing errors as early as possible to know what is wrong and what is right (cf: Appendix G). With regards to how, when and where these corrections should take place, their responses were reflected by Ellis (2006) who suggests that grammar can be taught through corrective feedback, which he defines as "teacher responses to learner errors". Teacher Tuli mentioned in her response that timeous (or "on the spot") constructive feedback deals more effectively with learners' errors. This involves providing comments, rewards and guidance during or after any grammar exercise. Teacher Tuli explains:

I encourage good writing among learners and penalise poor writing. Learners with good, thoughtful and clear writing will be rewarded. I allow learners to write copiously, beginning with a short and simple essay. I collect their written pieces to mark them, after which I underline the erroneous grammatical forms and provide corrective feedback and guidance to the learners through class remedial discussions.

The teacher raises an issue on how she corrects learners' errors on short written pieces. She encourages learners to practise good writing and she rewards them at the end. She also uses corrective feedback and provides remedy for her learners' grammatical writing errors through class discussions. James (1998) believes that designing techniques for boosting writing skills as well as effecting innovative strategies to correct learners' writing errors are the main

concerns of the ESL teacher as it will enhance learners' writing skills and general English proficiency.

Adding to the above discussion, teacher Stella stated:

Sometimes when it's some short regular class activity, I prepare error identification exercises for learners to work in pairs and in groups. I also ask them to do peer marking and peer correction, as this will allow learners to see similar errors in their writing. During marking, I ask them to focus more on grammar concepts because most of the errors made are due to a lack of grammar mastery. They share knowledge and learn from one another.

The teacher allows learners to read through their peer's written activities, then mark and carry out the correction process. Coit (2004) agrees that peer-correction through a learner-centred environment is beneficial because it expands learners' writing skills. However, teacher Viena deals with learners' errors differently:

It depends on the nature of the error made. If it is a simple spoken grammatical error, I will ask that particular learner to repeat the phrase to give him or her chance for self-correction. In some cases, I write sentences containing faulty grammar on the chalkboard for learners to feel how one can be misunderstood if using incorrect grammar. Then see if learners can figure out those grammar errors on their own.

This teacher employed an optimum level of oral error-correction among learners in a way that can maximise learners' input and yet minimise learners' errors. This is in line with Corder (1967) who states that errors are visible proof that learning is taking place. He considered error-correction in the form of negotiating for meaning as it helps learners notice their errors and thus focus on correcting them, and this aids SLA. This teacher's strategy is useful for learners to pinpoint their own grammar errors and then correct them with assistance from meaningful and constructive feedback.

4.4 INTEGRATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The research summarised both the quantitative and qualitative results, with the quantitative analysis preceding the qualitative analysis. The study aimed at identifying the common English grammatical writing errors made by Namibian Grade 7 learners. The theory of EA by Corder

(1967) guided the researcher to systematically identify all the common English grammatical writing errors from the Grade 7 learners' essay scripts. A mixed-method approach was used to elicit data for this study. The findings from the quantitative analysis indicated that learners imbibe English grammar rules by making grammatical errors.

The findings from the quantitative analysis indicated that the seven categories of grammatical errors where the greatest number of errors occurred had been identified as:

- Tenses;
- Articles;
- Subject-verb agreement;
- Singular and plural forms;
- Prepositions;
- Conjunction; and
- Word choice.

The major finding from both analyses indicates that the dominance of learners' L1 habits interferes with L2 learning. The ESL learners used L1 for reference and assistance in most cases, even though the element of L1 interference comes into play during L2 learning. The general finding from the quantitative analysis revealed that all learners from the three schools presented similar English grammar errors. Many grammatical errors were identified, classified and explained under the two major sources of interlingual and intralingual errors. Another finding from both analyses indicated that a number of grammatical errors have been ascribed to more than one source. There were multiple sources of errors arising probably from learners' inability to comprehend grammar rules, incomplete application of the rules, outdated teaching styles, inappropriate teaching and learning methods. Other sources of grammar errors were attributed to overgeneralisation, lack of grammar knowledge and the ignorance of rule restrictions. The qualitative findings on the teachers' teaching approaches indicated that they employed different teaching grammar methods but they were not effective because the findings from the quantitative phase show a total of 4443 grammatical errors.

During the interviews, some teachers mentioned that they are still struggling to cope with the workload as it may delay teachers to spend adequate and quality time to focus on grammar teaching. The issue of overcrowded classrooms was also highlighted as a contributing factor to the writing errors and poor writing production. Both findings indicated that the Grade 7 learners

made numerous grammatical errors in seven different types of error categories: tenses, articles, prepositions, singular/plurals, and subject-verb agreement and word choices.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter identified the seven common English grammatical writing errors and explained the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English grammar. The results showed that most of the learners' errors were related to mother-tongue interference and a few cases were attributed to intralingual factors. What can be highlighted is that learners commit errors due to many factors such as negative transfer or interference from the learners' first language, developmental errors caused by interference within the learners' second language itself, poor teacher-training, lack of competence in the English language and lack of the understanding of the rules of the language. The chapter also explored the teachers' views concerning the strategies employed by teachers when teaching grammar. Although teachers employed various strategies in the teaching of grammar, they were often constrained by overcrowded classrooms, workload and limited materials to support the teaching of English grammar. The interviewed teachers reported that grammar is important for a learner's language development. Effective and appropriate grammar writing is teachable and learnable, but before these two can be achieved, both parties - teachers and learners - have a major role to play in improving the usage of correct grammar. Importantly, teachers are aware of the different grammatical errors of their learners and employed corrective feedback techniques to address the errors.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the concluding chapter of this study, which is informed by the empirical process stretching from Chapter 1, which presented the background information and stated the research problem. The chapter outlined the main aim and objectives, as well as the significance and limitation of the study. Furthermore, it presented the theoretical framework within which the study was undertaken. In chapter 2, the concept of grammar was explained, the importance of teaching grammar to ESL learners and different approaches to teaching grammar were elucidated. The study reviewed literature and other research studies that are considered to be relevant to the current study in order to place the investigation within the context of existing similar literature for greater validity. Chapter 3 presented the methodology and the research design that guided the study, including the philosophical underpinnings that informed the empirical decisions. It presented the study area, sample size, data collection procedures and instruments as well as data analysis procedures. In Chapter 4, the findings and discussions of the study (according to the research objectives and questions) were presented. This final chapter presents the summary of findings in line with the objectives. The chapter draws conclusions, implications and suggests some recommendations with regards to the errors made and lastly suggestions for further research. The discussions are done according to the order of the research questions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The summary of the findings, together with the associated conclusions and recommendations, address the main aim of the study, which was to explore the common English grammatical writing errors among the Grade 7 Namibian learners and their frequencies of occurrence. The discussion also addresses the following five formulated research questions:

- What are the common English grammatical writing errors among the Namibian Grade 7 learners?

- What is the frequency of grammatical errors among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?
- What are the possible origins of the grammatical errors among the Grade 7 learners in Namibia?
- What are the teachers' views on the approaches used to teach grammar and improve the learners' writing skills?
- What strategies can be proposed to reduce the common English grammatical writing errors among the Grade 7 Namibian learners?

5.2.1 What are the common English grammatical writing errors among Grade 7 learners in Namibia?

This section highlights the types of errors and the frequency of the errors identified. The quantitative findings indicated that learners commit a considerable number of errors in their essays. The data in Chapter 4 showed 4443 errors in total (cf: Table 4.4). Thus, it emerged from the results that there is a lack of foundational English communicative skills to support good writing skills and knowledge of grammatical conventions which was the main factor facing Grade 7 Namibian learners.

The teachers' interviews ranked some grammatical areas that were more problematic, namely: tenses, articles, prepositions, singular/plural, word choice, subject-verb agreement and word choices (cf: table 4.2, appendix G). Teachers also highlighted a number of errors they have observed in their classrooms. With respect to the number of errors, a variety of errors occurred in the learners' essay writing in the areas of tenses, which were the most frequent in their writing. Most learners committed errors in this category which resulted in poor writing. Both sets of data (qualitative and quantitative) revealed that grammatical errors are trouble-spots in language learning among the Namibian Grade 7 learners. The investigation revealed that frequency counts of errors showed that tenses and articles were more frequent in the learners' essays (cf: Table 4.3). Many learners made errors in these categories in their writing. This is echoed by the findings of Kapolo (2013); Mungungu (2010) in their studies. It appears that some types of errors that the teachers frequently identified comprised of phonological, syntactical and lexical errors, although only few teachers mentioned these.

Conclusions

The findings from the present study provide feedback to ESL teachers and also inform them about their effectiveness in teaching. The pedagogical truth that could be drawn from this study is that the issues of grammatical errors are serious in certain sections of the Namibian population. If this is left unabated the problem will persist. In some instances, the learners may fail due to poor grammar.

Recommendations

Corder (1967) advises teachers to view learners' errors positively and as such they should not regard them as the learners' inability to grasp the rules and structures of the English language, but they should view the errors as a process of learning and work in progress. In pursuance of this advice, English teachers should understand that learning a second language is a step-by-step process, where errors or mistakes are to be expected. English teachers should not only detect and describe the errors from a linguistic point of view, but spend more of their teaching time focusing on the error prone areas. The use of dictionaries must be made compulsory to help learners to understand the meanings of the words and to build up a general bank of vocabulary.

5.2.2 What are the possible causes of the English grammatical writing Errors in Grade 7 learners' essays?

Based on the quantitative results, it was found that the types of grammatical errors commonly made by the learners were due to the following: Interferences of the first language (interlingual), intralingual (language development errors), overgeneralization of grammar rules and lack of knowledge of grammatical rules (cf: 2.3).

5.2.2.1 Interlingual errors

The findings from the qualitative tool portray that mother tongue interference /L1 interference was a major aspect of grammatical errors made by the learners. It was noted that when ESL learners write, they are engaged into a cognitive process of formulating ideas in their mother tongue (MT) structure and then translating them into English when writing. The teachers revealed that the difference between the learners' first language and English made it difficult

for learners to learn grammar. This concurs with Corder (1973) who explains that interlingual errors occur when the learners' habits, patterns and rules interfere and prevent them from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language.

The findings from both sets of data revealed that the main cause of a large number of learners' grammatical errors are due to the dominance of their mother-tongue (L1 interference) as these errors reflect the structure of learners' first language (cf: 2.3.10). Most writing errors arose due to differences between learners' L1 and L2 grammatical structures. Most of the learners rely on their mother tongue to express their thoughts and the overt influences of L1 transfer have a negative effect on learners' writing skills. The learners incorrectly manipulated the linguistic system of their mother tongue to create new grammatical structures in the target language (cf: 4.2.5.1). Those errors occurred because second language learners used direct translation from L1 and applied it to the TL without considering its correctness or appropriateness. The ESL learners think in the first language before they write, therefore they translate word by word. The findings are consistent with Corder (1967) who explains that learners' L1 underline the repeatedly recurring errors in the learners' writing.

Conclusions

It is clear that socio-linguistic factors are a problem in Namibia. There is direct or negative transfer because of the differences between L1 and the TL (Ellis, 1994). This is probably due to the tendency of learners thinking in their first language before writing. When learners are faced with difficulties to write in English, they fall back on their L1 to draw some words and make up for their lack of knowledge of English. Drawing from the first language is not necessarily wrong but the problem is when it is not done the right way. This will continue happening until the teachers employ different strategies.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the study recommends that teachers should highlight the differences between L1 and L2 for the learners to be aware of the differences in their grammatical structures. They need to provide direct support or scaffolding skills in order for them to transfer learning correctly from their first language to their second language (Ellis, 1994). Learners should be encouraged to think in the target language rather than in their native language when writing. This has to happen regularly in order for the learners to master the competency. Teachers can only do this if they understand their context. They need to know the languages in

their vicinities and be aware of the structure of the languages in the immediate community. This means the teacher should be pro-active and passionate.

5.2.2.2 Intralingual errors

Another finding indicated that the cause of errors committed in learners' writing was intralingual errors or lack of knowledge. Intralingual errors (also known as developmental errors) occur during the learning process of the second language when learners did not yet acquire the requisite knowledge in the second language itself. The study revealed that learners had low English proficiency, incomplete/inaccurate application of grammar rules, failed to interpret conditions under which the rules apply and were deprived of exposure to the English language (cf: appendix G). Juntha (2013) agrees that intralingual errors are derived from having inadequate exposure to the TL. Examples of intralingual errors made by the learners include substituting English words with other words; for example, "*pressure*" for "*pleasure*" as they thought that two words had the same meaning (cf:4.2.5.7).

Conclusions

These learners may have made these errors in English because of the incomplete application of the English grammar rules, not being exposed to the target language, or simply because their English language proficiency is limited (cf: 4.3.5.1). This could be the reason for learners often generalising the TL rules. This concurs with Corder (1974) who states that intralingual errors occur when learners apply the wrong principle or rule of the target language

Recommendations

The study suggests that teachers should accord learners more time to practice all the four skills of English (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as learning English is a continuous activity and it takes time to be good at it. The learners should practise using their English knowledge and skills in everyday life as much as they can. The study further suggests that English teachers should model appropriate English structures and conventions in their speech and writing, for the learners to emulate. Seeing that there is gap in knowledge, it may be useful to invest time in extra classes, especially for those learners who seem to be at risk. Teachers should also familiarise themselves with prescripts of explicit instruction during contact time and during extra classes.

5.2.2.3 Overgeneralisation

Findings indicate that some of the grammatical errors made by the Grade 7 learners might be caused by overgeneralisation. The learners produce errors by extending a grammatical rule where it is not applicable and such an error becomes a habit. This is supported by Richards (1974), who states that learners tend to overgeneralise one rule of grammar and assume that a certain rule is applicable even where it is not. The example of an error caused by overgeneralisation was when learners added “-ed” even to irregular verbs, for example the verb *come* became *comed* or “go” became “goed” (cf: 4.2.5.3).

Conclusions

It can be concluded that learners assumed that certain grammatical features they have learnt follow the same rule; hence, they made it a habit to apply certain rules even where it was not applicable. This may be because the learners are not aware of the exceptions related to the particular rule or they find it difficult to understand the exceptions in English. In some instances, the teacher may not have discussed the exceptions, or the learners may have forgotten.

Recommendations

English teachers must make it clear to learners that rules in L1 are not necessarily applicable in all situations. When ESL teachers are teaching grammar rules, they should emphasise that there are exceptions to each English rule. It is frustrating to discover an exception inductively; therefore, the study recommends teachers to research more on the exceptions to each grammar rule. As Larsen-Freeman (2015), teaching and learning of grammar requires not only learning the rules but practicing meaningful constructions for both communicative and writing competence free of ambiguities. This raises the importance of informal activities to provide the necessary practice.

5.2.2.4 Inadequate knowledge of grammar rule

The finding revealed that another cause of errors was lack of the English grammatical rules or grammar awareness competence. The ESL learners failed to learn more complex types of grammar structures because they found it easy to express or write in simple terms. An example

taken from their subject verb- agreement errors: *She like to sleep* instead of *She likes to sleep*. (cf: 4.2.5.3)

Other identified errors occurred because of learners' ignorance of the rule restriction. The learners failed to obey the existing rules as restricted to a specific context only and cannot be applied in other contexts. Examples of how learners applied the rule wrongly in a wrong context is '*The I am write this letter* instead *I am writing this letter*'. The learner used the *present verb form* instead of adding the "*ing*" form to verb. This indicates that learners do not understand the system of the target language. The teachers also attributed the cause of errors to an impoverished English learning background in acquiring basic language skills (competencies). They indicated that the constraints of learners' limited L2 knowledge caused learners to struggle to master grammar basic competencies because they did not have a good foundation. Thornbury, (1999) proposes that when learners lack knowledge of grammar rules of the language, they cannot understand the essence of the text when they read and write.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that learners are not exposed to English grammar in their surroundings beside their classroom environment. These learners do not understand the system of the target language. They also lack grammatical knowledge, which could be a factor that makes learners make grammatical errors in their essays.

Recommendations

To minimise grammatical errors, the study recommends teachers to implement effective teaching techniques based on the need of their learners.

5.2.2.5 Overcrowded classrooms

It was found that learners learn in harsh environments which are congested. Therefore the ESL teachers find it challenging to mark all the learners' written tasks on time and render personalised support and assistance to all learners individually in their area of weakness. They also refer to the problem of having no time to devote and assist struggling learners. Subsequently, the inability of teachers to engage learners with effective quality grammar teaching was compromised. They mentioned that grammar teaching requires more writing activities and the issue of marking 40 plus long pieces of learners' essays contributes to the high workload. Also, in terms of controlling the learners, it is a challenge because some of the grammar lessons require learners to work in groups or pairs. Kandumbu (2005) opines that

large classroom size has a negative impact on ESL learning as many teachers find it challenging to work under such uncondusive environment.

Conclusions

Teaching in a very large size classroom impact negatively on grammar teaching and learning as it leads to poor engagement of learners and passivity among the learners. It can be concluded that the impact of size affects the quality of teaching and learning of grammar. The large number of learners contributes to teachers' burnout making marking learners' essays a constraint to meet all the learners' needs and provide them with effective feedback. The issue of teaching grammar in a big sized class could be attributed to the poor writing with more grammatical errors.

Recommendations

The most obvious expectation is for the government to build more classrooms; however this may not be realised anytime soon. The reality is that the teachers have to assist the learners they have at the moment. Another reality is that there are situations where the classrooms are overcrowded. The English teachers struggling with big numbers should learn how to mitigate the problem. Furthermore, the teachers can do research, as there may be published material already on how teachers can succeed in overcrowded classrooms.

5.2.2.6 Workload

The findings from the interviews with teachers indicated that that the new revised curriculum was expansive by incorporating the aspect of grammar teaching. Teachers claimed that the high workload made it difficult for teachers to spend adequate and quality time on grammar teaching (cf: 4.3.3.1). The complexities of the English curriculum brought in a high workload, which is viewed as a serious drawback for teachers to complete their English syllabus on time. They also end up rushing, which eventually hinders effective grammar practice as there is no time left for revision. Ipinge (2018) agrees that heavy workload can affect effective teaching and this can affect the learners' performance negatively.

Conclusions

As already mentioned, the teachers are under pressure, as a result they rush through the curriculum. This may explain the issues discussed earlier (overgeneralization, inadequate

knowledge). Teachers are not able to invest time into the grammar lessons. If this continues to happen the learners will continue to struggle, because they do not get the opportunity to internalize the knowledge.

Recommendations

The study suggests that both curriculum developers and syllabus designers should look at what learning outcomes are more important to be included in the syllabus and which ones are obsolete. This was supported by Duray et al. (1982) who pointed out that learners' errors can indicate to curriculum developers the specific parts of the targeted language which the learners face difficulties in. This may take time, or it may not even happen, it is therefore critical for the teachers to do something about the problem. Teachers themselves can be strategic and focus more on problematic grammar items and less on those items that the learners understand (Ntsala, 2019). The writer points out that this deviation can be discussed with the school managers. The study once more reiterates the need for explicit instruction when teaching grammar. A teacher may not have problems of workload, but if the teaching is not explicit enough, the learners may still fail. This aspect raises the need for effective in-service training on the part of the department of education.

5.2.2.7 Few opportunities for continuous development

Among other impediments reported, was that there are few opportunities for continuous teacher development which contributes to learners' high number of grammatical writing errors. This was requested by teachers to be provided with in-service training and extra continuous professional development to develop their personal and professional qualities to enhance their grammar teaching practices. They also requested for the inclusion of certain grammar items and enrichment programmes to empower teachers to improve grammar teaching and proper orientation on how to handle learners' writing errors in a professional development program.

Conclusions

The magnitude of the problems highlights that in-service training programmes are a real need. Some teachers can find solutions on their own, while others will be able to make connections with other teachers, but at the end the department of education has the responsibility to help improve content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.

Recommendations

The study recommends the school system to provide opportunities for ongoing professional development for all the ESL teachers. The Regional office, cluster centres and schools should take a leading role to intensify professional development in grammar-teaching and enable teachers to share knowledge. There is need for more training programmes and workshops for language teachers to keep them updated with new methods and techniques in grammar teaching. Effective in-service programmes can help mitigate the problem of poor pre-service training. Teachers should also be pro-active, and use the available platforms for their benefit. Research can benefit teachers, seeing that there are platforms that provide teachers with free advice and material. The principle of life-long learning can also help the teachers improve their content and pedagogical knowledge.

5.2.3 What are the teachers' approaches and techniques that are used to teach Grammar and improve learners' writing skills?

During the interviews, the participants were asked to elaborate on their teaching and this was in pursuance of research question number 4. Findings regarding teachers' teaching approaches indicated that they employed different teaching grammar methods, inductive, deductive and teaching grammar in context (cf: 4.3.5) but this appears that they were not effective because the findings from the quantitative phase shows a total number of 2049 grammatical errors from the learners' written essays.

5.2.3.1 Inductive and deductive teaching approaches

The findings from the interviews indicated that English teachers use both the inductive and the deductive approaches in their classrooms (cf: 4.3.5). There were those who expose their learners to grammar rules in advance, while others let the learners discover the rules and patterns on their own. From the interviews, many teachers favoured the inductive instruction of grammar teaching as being beneficial to the learners in which dissecting examples and self-discovery, the grammatical structures are sequenced and the rule is taught inductively. This is supported by Yin (2016) who claims that the inductive approach has a slight advantage in terms of improving ESL learners' grammar knowledge.

Conclusions

It is clear that the teachers have different preferences in terms of the language approaches to use in class. Having different ideologies on pedagogy is not necessarily wrong, as long as the

learners are not disadvantaged. At the end of the day it is not about the teacher's preferences but about the success of the learner.

Recommendations

The study suggests that English teachers have the right to use any approach, but they should do away with the teacher-centred teaching approaches. They should employ appropriate grammar teaching strategies that focus on teaching grammar implicitly and practice grammar rules in meaningful contexts.

5.2.3.2 Teaching grammar in context

The findings indicated that among all the respondents there was only a single teacher from Mahonga School who mentioned that teaching grammar in context was her most preferred method (cf: 4.3.5.). The teacher indicated that she does not teach grammar in isolation, but in context. Developing the four basic language skills helps learners' comprehension of grammar rules and to conduct error free writing. This idea was supported by Thornbury (2008) who reminds teachers of the inseparability of language learning from reading, writing, speaking and listening skills when teaching grammar in context. This could be attributed to the recipe that their school recorded the lowest number of errors.

Conclusions

Teaching grammar in context is said to be an effective way of teaching. This was echoed by Ulla (2018) who concludes that teaching grammar in context pays much attention to language forms and grammar rules become clear. This teaching approach helps learners to acquire grammar conventions more effectively, both in writing and in communication. Despite teachers' views on different strategies to present grammar, there was no evidence concerning the regular practice of essay writing. The researcher believes that, if this could be done properly during the full primary phase, then learners will have sound basic knowledge of the language to observe how grammar is used in texts. This employment of these activities in teaching grammar can possibly develop the learners' stimulation and perceptions of L2 learning engagement if used effectively. This could help learners to use the TL meaningfully and possibly contribute to error free written products.

Recommendations

Teachers should teach grammar through functional and the indirect approach that encourages learners to explore language through integrating the skills of writing, listening and speaking and reading, which leads to replicate correct grammar usage in the process.

5.2.4 Error correction and corrective feedbacks

The major finding was that teachers were aware of learners' errors and of their writing hurdles and they use error correction with sensitivity. They used explicit corrective feedback and some appropriate remedies to address only the main errors. This is supported by Ellis (2009) who also makes a point that error correction should only be directed at features that make learners to have a problem. It was noted that teachers encouraged learners to reflect on their errors in order to urge them to make self-corrections.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that marking learners' written work is a good practice, as it makes the learners aware of their flaws and creates opportunity for learners' to self-correct. This also helps the teachers to identify the errors. In line with Heydari and Bagheri (2012) who argue that learners' written pieces are very useful for the teachers as they help to notice learners' difficulties while using the language, this study, in a way, seeks to promote this practice because it is invaluable.

Recommendations

Proper identification of errors on time, coupled with constructive feedback, may help alleviate some of the challenges that teachers are faced with. The study further suggests that when the teachers correct learners' written errors, they should not directly provide the correct form of learners' errors, but to mark where the error is by using codes such as "sp" for incorrect spelling or "gr" for incorrect grammar usage or "con" for faulty concord (subject-verb agreement) (Sadat, 2017). Taking this into account, teachers should correct errors in learners' books when they distort meaning, or when the teacher wants a certain grammar rule to be practised correctly. Seeing that the teachers complained about heavy workload and big numbers, they can consider moving around and observe and point out the problem areas on time. This may reduce the stress of having to deal with a lot of errors, or even mistakes (Ntsala, 2019).

5.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies may include a bigger sample so that the findings can be generalised. Furthermore, such studies could investigate, in great detail the methods of teaching grammar, its impact on ESL as well as the common constraints. The study also raises the need for further studies that could focus on the use of mother-tongue and its interference, as a factor that negatively influences the learning of English. This study also raises the need for further studies on how grammar can be taught effectively in over-crowded class settings.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One limitation of the study is that it did not get the views of the learners; as a result, the discussions are based on the views of the teachers. Again the study only explored the seven (7) categories of learners' errors. Secondly, it was limited to the analysis of common grammatical errors. Future research may explore, using the principles of EA, other areas of language errors such as spelling and cohesion, among others.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The study explored how (EA) error analysis contributed to comprehension of the language learning process as it described the grammatical errors the ESL learners made in their essay writing. The results indicate that Namibian Grade 7 learners struggle to grasp basic grammar rules in the areas of tenses, articles, subject-verb-agreement, singular and plural, prepositions, conjunctions and word choices. It has been found that the causes of learners' poor grammatical usage come from factors such as interlingual influences (mother-tongue interference) and intralingual influences and inadequate knowledge of grammar rules. The results of the study suggest techniques for ESL teachers to minimise these errors and enhance learners' writing skills. The significance of this study was to inform different educational stakeholders, educators, curriculum developers and syllabus designers about the grammatical writing errors that ESL learners face. The study points out that errors are not always negative, but rather stepping-stones to reaching competence in the language; they provide insights into the mind of the learner about how they interpret and construct discrete language units. It is envisaged that this study has made a contribution to give current and future teachers of English a general idea of learners' common grammatical errors and that this will broaden their perspectives on how

to teach grammar in primary school. Finally, the researcher acknowledges that the study of this nature is on-going and therefore, no inference can be made because teaching and learning English grammar are both complex processes. The results of this study cannot be generalised and regarded as a presentation for the entire population, since it sampled only three schools.

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Appendix F: Questions for semi interviews with English teachers

A question guide for the Grade 7 English teachers

The study aims to identify the most common English grammatical writing errors and their frequency of occurrences in English writing among the Namibian Grade 7 learners.

1. Could you please tell me more about your qualifications and your experience in for teaching English?
2. What, in your opinion, may contribute to the learners' poor performance in English second language especial relating to grammar aspects?
3. Apart from teacher-training at tertiary level, what additional training programme did you attend with regard to ESL teaching?
4. What challenges do you experience when teaching English second language in your classroom?
5. In your views do you think educational reform especial regarding the language policy, and the newly revised curriculum is a problem? If so, please explain how it is problem?
6. Could you please elaborate on the methods or strategies you use to teach grammar in your English lessons? What influences your choice of a teaching method or strategy?
7. Statistics/research has shown that the ability to write in a second language without errors is not an easy task for many of ESL learners. In your grade 7 English classrooms, what are the most common grammatical errors?
8. How do you assist learners on regular basis to learn how to writing correct English grammar? What do you do to improve the situation if learners are continually struggling to grasp grammar rules? (Any suggestion)
9. In your opinion, what should be done to reduce the problem of poor writing competency among Grade 7 learners, with particular emphasis on the elimination/reduction of grammar errors in writing essays?
10. In your view, what do you think can be done to improve learner's academic performance in the teaching and learning of English Second Language?

Appendix A: Permission to conduct research from the Erongo region education authorities



ERONGO REGIONAL COUNCIL
ERONGO REGIONAL COUNCIL



DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
DIVISION: PROGRAMMES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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SWAKOPMUND

25 February 2019

Enquiries: Ms. N. Guriras

Ref: SP

Email: nataliaguriras@yahoo.com

To: Mr. Ntsala Sekanse

University of Free State

Faculty of Education

Curriculum Studies

School of Social Sciences and Language Education

Dear Mr. Sekanse

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN ERONGO REGION

Permission is hereby granted to Hanna - Monica Emvula (student number 2017345832) to conduct research at three Primary Schools in Erongo Region. Permission is granted on condition that:

- Participation by individual teachers/learners are voluntarily.

- The school's academic programme is in no way to be disturbed.
- Once completed a copy of the thesis be deposited with the Teachers Resource Centre.

I would like to wish Ms. Emvula all the success and look forward to the findings and possible recommendations of her research.

Yours sincerely



MS. E.J. STEPHANUS
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

2019



Appendix B: Letter requesting permission to conduct research in Erongo region from the Director of Education

Research topic: common English grammatical writing errors among grade 7 learners in Namibia.

The Director of Education, Arts and Culture
Erongo Regional Directorates of Education
Private Bag 5024
Swakopmund

Dear Mrs Stephanus

I, Hanna - Monica Emvula, Student number 2017345832 a Master student, doing research under the supervision of Dr Ntsala at the University of the Free State, South Africa. I kindly request permission to conduct my research at the three selected primary schools in Erongo region.

The aim of the study is to identify common English grammatical writing errors among grade 7 learners in Namibia. The study will entail Grade 7 learners end-of-year examination scripts for common English grammatical writing errors analysis. The study will be conducted through professionally, with high integrity and confidentiality at the three schools; and the names of the learners on scripts will be kept confidential. All the writing samples will be encoded with numbers instead of student names to maintain anonymity of the participants.

The benefits of this study include providing feedback to the relevant stakeholders (Curriculum designers, textbook publishers, MoE officials, English teachers and researchers to help them improve the teaching and learning process of English grammar in schools. There are no foreseeable risks and confidentiality is ensured.

The results and findings of this study will be made available after the study has been approved. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Hanna - Monica Emvula, cell number +264811247507 monica.emvula@gmail.com.

Yoursfaithfully

Hanna Monica Emvula (Student number: 2017345832)

Appendix C: Letter request permission from the school principal to conduct research at the school

Research Topic: common English grammatical writing errors among grade 7 learners in Namibia.

Dear Sir /Madam

I, Hanna - Monica Emvula, student number 2017345832. I am a registered Masters student at the University of the Free State (South Africa). I kindly request permission to conduct research at your school.

The study will entail interviews with the Grade 7 English teachers, and examining Grade 7 end- of- the year learners 'examination essay scripts for English subject for grammar writing errors. The aim of the study is to identify common English grammatical writing errors among the Grade 7 learners and then analyse them to understand the root causes of these errors. The findings of the study will serve as a useful guide for English teachers to know the aspects of grammar that they need to pay more attention to, while teaching English.

Information shared during the interview will be treated as confidential and no name will be disclosed in the research findings to ensure anonymity. The study will be conducted professionally with high integrity and dignity, at the three schools whose names (and that of the learners) will be kept confidential. All the writing samples will be encoded with numbers instead of learners names to maintain confidentiality of the participants.

Yours faithfully

Hanna - Monica Emvula (Student number: 2017345832)

Student signature _____

Cell nr: 0811247507

Appendix D: Letter of informed consent English Language teachers

Research topic: Common English grammatical writing errors among Namibian Grade 7 learners.

Dear Sir / Madam

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a research study. I, Hanna - Monica Emvula, Student number 2017345832 a Master student at the University of the Free State request your permission to be interviewed on issue concerning ESL teaching and learning.

Focus will be on your perceptions on the teaching and learning of English grammar in grade 7. The interview will take at least 40 minutes of your time. Permission for the study has been given by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State, the Erongo Directorate and the school principal.

The Grade 7 English teachers will play a significant role in this study, because the researcher value their hands-on experience and knowledge in the teaching of English Language. Schools and teachers therefore, will be in a better position to provide information related to this study.

Information shared in this interview will be handled and treated as confidential and your will not be disclosed in the research findings in order to ensure anonymity. Information collected will only be used for data analysis and educational purpose. Your right and identities in this study are protected. There are no foreseeable risks and your safety is guaranteed. You will have a choice in terms of the time and the venue of the interviews. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time should you wish to do so. Whether you agree to take part or decline to take part will remain unknown to any third party. Note that with your kind permission the interviews will be audio-taped in order to capture all the information, and that the data generated from the interviews will be stored safely in aa password protected files.

There are no payments of participation; however, the result obtained during this study may provide knowledge and insight for the Namibian child and ultimately education benefits as a whole. The outcome of the study will serve as a useful guide for English teachers to recognise the areas where they could to pay more attention to, while teaching English. The study will generate knowledge and understanding of the types of grammatical English

writing errors that may also inform policymakers and teachers to make better decisions to assist learners in improving English academic achievement.

The results will be made available after the study has been approved. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Hanna Monica Emvula +264811247507 and monica.emvula@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering this request.

I confirm that I have read the information presented in the request letter about the research study in education. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and to request any additional information/ clarity if wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio- recorded to ensure an accurate and authentic recording of my responses. I am also aware that extracts from the interview may be included in publications to come out of this research, with the understanding that my opinions will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

I understand that I do not give up any legal right by signing this letter of consent.

I agree to the recording of the insert specific data collection method.

I am aware that I will receive a signed copy of this document.

Participant name: _____

Signature of participant _____

Date: _____

Signature of research _____

Date _____

Appendix F: Questions for semi interviews with English teachers

A question guide for the Grade 7 English teachers

The study aims to identify the most common English grammatical writing errors and their frequency of occurrences in English writing among the Namibian Grade 7 learners.

1. Could you please tell me more about your qualifications and your experience in for teaching English?
2. What, in your opinion, may contribute to the learners' poor performance in English second language especial relating to grammar aspects?
3. Apart from teacher-training at tertiary level, what additional training programme did you attend with regard to ESL teaching?
4. What challenges do you experience when teaching English second language in your classroom?
5. In your views do you think educational reform especial regarding the language policy, and the newly revised curriculum is a problem? If so, please explain how it is problem?
6. Could you please elaborate on the methods or strategies you use to teach grammar in your English lessons? What influences your choice of a teaching method or strategy?
7. Statistics/research has shown that the ability to write in a second language without errors is not an easy task for many of ESL learners. In your grade 7 English classrooms, what are the most common grammatical errors?
8. How do you assist learners on regular basis to learn how to writing correct English grammar? What do you do to improve the situation if learners are continually struggling to grasp grammar rules? (Any suggestion)
9. In your opinion, what should be done to reduce the problem of poor writing competency among Grade 7 learners, with particular emphasis on the elimination/reduction of grammar errors in writing essays?
10. In your view, what do you think can be done to improve learner's academic performance in the teaching and learning of English Second Language?

Appendix G: Teachers' Matrix

Question/s	Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Participants' perspectives
What are teachers' perspectives towards educational policies?	Teachers perspective on educational policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly revised Curriculum (2015) Language policy 	Curriculum latter L/P	<i>...The newly revised curriculum is loaded[Viena]</i>
What are teachers' perceptions of in-service teacher's training?	Teachers' view on teacher's training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial teacher training In-service teacher training 	ITT ITT	<i>...I went through the old schooling system training [Stella] We need in-service training to refresh us[Ruiter We want to attend refresher courses in order to keep abreast with the latest teaching techniques. [Tuna]</i>
What are the challenges faced by teachers regarding the English Language?	Challenge faced by teachers regarding the English language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners background Poor foundation Learners 'attitudes and lack of motivation Learners low English proficiency 	L/B PF LA LoM LLEP	<i>...Little exposure to English[Ruiter] ...The damage started at lower grades[Una] ...Learners have negative attitudes toward English[Tuli] ...Learners are not motivated to learn...[Tuli] Lack of motivation is also among the causes of weakness in the writing skills of the learners. It can be said that both teachers and pupils are to blame[Stella].</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom sizes • Lack of teaching resources 	<p>CS</p> <p>LoTR</p>	<p><i>Our learners have a very limited vocabulary in English... [Vienna]</i></p> <p><i>...some pupils never take learning seriously, as a result, there is weakness generally in English and errors in the writing skill, in particular, can occur... [Vienna]</i></p> <p><i>...teachers are forced to go back to the basics which are done at junior Primary level. [Ruiter]</i></p> <p><i>...These gaps are the inability to write or read and as they ascend to the senior primary grades [Una]</i></p> <p><i>.... some learners cannot read and write in English [Ruiter]</i></p> <p><i>The GRN does not provide us with adequate teaching resources [Vienna]</i></p> <p><i>...To make matters worse, the few books that we have for languages are at risk for the learners have</i></p>
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				<p>access to the shared rooms, and the language books often go missing. [Stella]</p> <p>.... Imagine teaching a class of 40 plus learners[Stella] Learners are sharing text books[Una]</p>
What are the opportunities existing to develop teachers professionally?	opportunities existing for teachers to develop professionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher professional development 	TPD IL	...some workshops are helpful and some are not[Ruiter]
Which strategies or approaches used by teachers when teaching grammar?	Teachers approaches or strategies to teach grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inductive approach Deductive approach Teaching grammar in context Teaching through stories & role-play Integrations approach Constructive feedback 	IA DA TGIC TGTS IA CF	<p>.... learners discover the patterns and working out the rule themselves [Ruiter]</p> <p>...I explain the grammar rule to the learners; followed by example on how the rule is applied. [Una]</p> <p>I do not teach grammar in isolation, I teach grammar in context[Tuij]</p> <p>I use Stories they are eliciting [Stella]</p> <p>I incorporate various methods interactivity in grammar lessons [Viana]</p>

				<i>I underline the grammatical the erroneous grammatical form [Tulij]</i>
What are the grammatical errors encountered by teachers?	Grammatical Errors encountered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tense, spelling, articles, subject/verb concord and sentence fragments 	Types of errors	<i>our learners write everything in "Namlizh" You sometimes cannot make head and tail of what they have written. [Tuna]</i> <i>Learners use ungrammatically structured sentences in English. Their written work is a complete mess [Tulij]</i> <i>our learners have limited vocabulary and poor spelling formation [Ruiter]</i>