

**The impact of formal grammar instruction on students' writing
ability in an academic literacy course at the
North-West University, Mafikeng Campus**

By

JOEL RAMONEWA MOLETSANE

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ABSTRACT

The academic writing of students at institutions of higher education is shown to be ridden with grammar errors. These errors often lead to students failing to successfully present their ideas across to lecturers, because the texts they produce are incomprehensible. A number of reasons have been put forward as to why students produce texts having such errors. Some of the reasons from literature include those of their school background, their economic background, not having adequate language and academic skills to function at university and the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) which is English being their second or third language. As a result of students having problems with accuracy in their writing which at times has a negative impact on their studies, there is a need that they be assisted to improve accuracy in academic writing so that their success in academic writing can be enhanced, hence this study.

The aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate the grammar errors that students make in academic writing with the intention to assist them to remedy the errors. Additionally, the study was aimed at investigating the effects of grammar instruction intervention on the grammatical accuracy of the academic texts produced by students. To achieve these aims, a comprehensive literature review on the analysis of errors made by ESL learners, grammar instruction, and academic writing was conducted. In addition, the study employed the quantitative research methodology utilising error analysis and quasi- experimental designs to collect data. The error analysis methodology was utilised to determine the grammar errors that students make in writing, while the quasi-experimental design was aimed at determining the impact of grammar instruction intervention on the accuracy in academic writing.

The collected data was analysed with the assistance of descriptive statistics for the error analysis and inferential statistics for the quasi-experimental design. The findings from the error analysis indicate that students make various errors in the academic texts they produce. Students, at times, make these errors to the extent that the texts they produce are often incomprehensible. The findings from the quasi-experimental design shows that after instruction, there was improvement in the accuracy of the texts students produced. That is, grammar instruction in the context of writing assisted them

in improving the grammar accuracy of the text they produced. From the findings, the study concluded that the Academic Literacy modules offered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus can be utilised to assist students in improving accuracy in their writing. From the findings and conclusions reached, the study recommends that the Academic Literacy modules be evaluated to determine whether some intervention in the form of grammar instruction can assist students to improve accuracy in their writing. This may involve making the teaching of grammar in the context of writing to become the formal component of the modules. Furthermore, the study proceeded to make recommendations regarding the changes lecturers can make by raising the grammar awareness of students during the presentation of the process approach to writing.

Key words: writing, academic writing, grammar, grammar instruction, accuracy.

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List of Abbreviations

NWU	North-West University
ALDE	Academic Language development in English
L2	Second language
L1	First Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EA	Error Analysis
IL	Interlanguage
TL	target Language
CA	Contrastive Analysis
UG	Universal Grammar
PT	Processability Theory
FonF	Focus on Form
FonFs	Focus on Forms
FonM	Focus on Meaning
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
ALM	Audio-Lingual Method
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
TBLT	Task Based Language Teaching
PPP	Presentation-Practice-Production
CF	Corrective Feedback
HE	Higher Education
ANAs	Annual National Assessments
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading
FAL	First Additional Language
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
RDD	Regression Discontinuity Design
CR	Consciousness-raising
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
PT	Processability Theory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background information on the state of accuracy as observed in the academic writing of first year students at universities in South Africa and at the North-West University Mafikeng campus in particular. The chapter provides a contextualisation to the South African Higher education which has resulted in the cohort of students characterised by the problem investigated in this study. This is followed by the contextualisation of the accuracy problems experienced in academic writing as it has been observed through global and South African studies. The rationale for the study is given followed by the problem statement. Subsequently, the research aim and objectives followed by the research questions and hypotheses are indicated. Thereafter, the research methodology and design followed by the ethical considerations pertaining to the study are presented. The chapter, lastly, closes by giving an outline of the chapters of the study.

1.2 CONTEXTUALISING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African democratic government post 1994 enacted policies that aimed at widening access to higher education, especially to the historically disadvantaged population groups. This widened access led to students from diverse backgrounds with regards to language, economic and varied needs and academic potential being admitted to study at universities (Yeld, 2010; Msila 2004; Fraser & Killen, 2003). Despite this positive move, a number of studies (Van Rooy & Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2015; Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013; Weideman, 2003; Dreyer & Nel, 2003) show that a significant percentage of these students is academically not prepared to study successfully at institutions of higher learning. One of the many problems they experience in the university context is academic writing.

In order to ensure the success of this diverse student population, universities are continuing to offer some support to enable its success academically. Despite this endeavour, students are continuing to perform poorly leading to a low success rate of especially first year students (Yeld, 2010). This indicates that universities need to offer even more support to enable students to complete their studies within the stipulated period. This will enable these students to be integrated in the university system or culture, a phenomenon which has been referred to by Van Dyk and Van de Poel (2013) as academic acculturation. This phenomenon is also given emphasis by the Education White Paper 3 which mentions that:

The higher education system is required to respond comprehensively to the articulation gap between learners' school attainment and the intellectual demands of higher education programmes. It will be necessary to accelerate the provision of bridging and access programmes within further education. It is of utmost importance that the political transformation of a university does not just result in the admission of unprepared students to the university without giving them a reasonable chance to succeed.

Universities cannot solve all the problems that first year students bring with them. As a result, universities have only concentrated only on those factors within their control (Scott, 2009). One of the factors that has been chosen by universities to concentrate on in order to assist students who, because of poor schooling backgrounds and other factors, may not perform successfully is the provision of the academic literacy courses. As it was mentioned earlier, one of the many problems faced by students at universities is that of academic writing. Therefore, the focus of this study is on accuracy in academic writing which is offered in the Academic Literacy modules.

It should be noted that the problems encountered in academic writing sometimes have to deal with the issues of poor language knowledge and skills, among others, as has been observed by Weideman (2007; 2006). Furthermore, problems relating to academic writing and the issues of accuracy in the execution thereof are not the only ones that are an impediment to student success. However, a number of studies (e.g. Van Dyk, 2010) show that low literacy levels in the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT), which is mainly English, may play a significant role in the academic success of students. This is particularly true in the South African situation where it is shown

that many students are mostly proficient in the English spoken language as opposed to the all important written form of academia. In addition, many students cannot differentiate the form of language used for academic writing and they, therefore, use the spoken language when they write academic texts (Cummins, 1999). This becomes a problem especially when the LoLT is a second or foreign language, which is the case for the majority of students at the North-West University Mafikeng campus.

Language has been shown to be a barrier in written communication. In order for students to write research-based written assignments, which is the case at university, they have to read and write logical and concise essays in English. The lack of adequate language skills may lead students not to produce comprehensible texts required by lecturers (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006). It has also been shown that most first year students as well as some in their second year who may be proficient in everyday spoken English may find it difficult to acquire the necessary academic language that should be used in academic writing. As Clarence (2009:20) states, the dominant issue in the majority of institutions is the low proficiency of students in English, and it manifests mainly in the written texts in the form of grammar errors. It is, therefore, important to contextualise the problem of grammatical accuracy in the texts that students produce at universities.

1.3 GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY IN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING: CONTEXTUALISATION

Studies show that many university students experience problems to produce grammatically accurate academic texts (Ayliff, 2010; Butler, 2009; McGhie, 2007; Huysamen, 2000). The academic writing of such students often lacks unity, coherence and clarity needed in the texts that they produce because of the large number of grammar errors they make. Scholtz (2012) and Ayliff (2012) concluded in studies conducted at two South African universities that the use of incorrect grammar and syntax in articulating meaning in written texts is a prominent problem in student academic writing, hence the importance of investigating measures which can be put in place to assist these students.

Several reasons are provided for students not being able to write grammatically correct texts. The primary reason is that English is not the home language of many students (Ayliff, 2012; Alexander, 2005; Banda, 2004; Gough & Bock, 2001). Another reason is the poor primary and secondary school teaching-learning of English, as well as the use of in English as the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) (Banda, 2004; Van Dyk & Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2012). These factors can often be ascribed to teachers' own lack of proficiency in English (Nel & Müller, 2010; Nel & Swanepoel, 2010; Mafisa & Van der Walt, 2002), leading to the transference of incorrect grammar to learners.

The application of correct grammatical rules is crucial in academic writing in order to enable students to convey correct messages to lecturers. Problems arise when students are unable to apply rules of grammar when producing texts (Archer, 2010; Archer, 2008; Harris & Rowan, 1989). Torrance, Thomas and Robinson (1999), Van Wyk (2002) as well as Du Plessis and Weideman (2014) view writing as one of the most important abilities that students need to command, as it is central to academic success at university level. In addition, the accurate use of grammar is an essential component of the norms in the use of academic language (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Hinkel, 2013). Celce-Murcia (1991) further emphasises that grammatical competence plays an important role in communicative competence. It is therefore essential that students produce academic texts that are grammatically accurate, or be assisted to do so, in order for them to communicate successfully.

A critical question to be asked in the provision of grammar support and intervention is whether it can assist EFL and ESL learners to produce grammatically correct academic texts. The question is whether formal instruction can assist in improving grammar in academic writing.

The debate on the effectiveness of formal grammar instruction in ESL contexts raises controversial issues (Ferris, 2004), with some researchers arguing that formal instruction in grammar does not assist learners to improve on the use of grammar in academic writing, while others argue that it does. Various studies have investigated this issue, e.g. Parkinson (2003), Myhill *et al.* (2012), Ellis (2008); Spycher (2007), N.C. Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2006), Keen (2004), Hinkel (2004), and Norris & Ortega (2000). Ellis (2008: 659) summarises the findings of these studies as follows:

“The case for formal instruction is strengthening and the case for the zero option is weakening. Formal instruction results in increased accuracy and ist effects are, at least in some cases, durable”. In addition, Schmidt (1994) argues that there is no learning without conscious attention to form. This attention, Schmidt (2001) states, assists learners if they are aided to attend to the specific forms they have problems with. In this regard, Ellis (2008:639) identifies two types of of formal instruction, which he refers to as *focus on forms* and *focus on form*. Focus on forms involves isolating and teaching grammatical features, while focus on form encompasses alternating focusing on form and focusing on meaning, and occurs when teachers follow a task-based syllabus that focuses on communication. Grammar instruction can also be explicit or implicit. Explicit instruction involves learners being given grammar rules which they then practise using, while implicit instruction involves learners inducing rules from examples given to them (Ellis, 2008: 642). In addition, strategies such as consciousness raising (Ellis, 2008: 643), interpretation tasks, editing and grammar practice activities (Ur, 1989) have proved to be useful in grammar instruction.

In South Africa, universities have been given the responsibility to provide extra support to students with regard to the languages of learning and teaching used at these institutions. Many instances of such support focuses on the development of students’ academic literacy ability, which is a wider and more functional concept than merely focusing on the grammatical rules of languages (Butler, 2013). However, as Van Dyk and Van de Poel (2013), Van Schalwyk (2008) as well as Boughey (2002) argue, any discussion of academic literacy will of necessity have to include some reflection on the role of language in learning and the importance of language proficiency. An academic literacy course could, therefore, also serve as a vehicle for grammar instruction by focusing on those grammar aspects with which students mostly need assistance, as suggested by Schleppegrell (2003) and Hyland (2003).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

At the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University, evidence from the Setswana Learner English Corpus (Van Rooy, 2008; Van Rooy & Schäfer, 2002) suggests that first year Setswana home language students (the majority of students registered at this campus) often produce academic English texts ridden with grammatical errors. In

addition, my experience as lecturer in Academic Literacy indicates that students' grammatical errors at times interfere with the messages they are trying to communicate in writing. The extent to which students make grammar errors in writing has not been investigated in the context of using the results as the basis for grammar instruction. There is, therefore, a need for the type of grammar errors that students make as well as the extent to which they make them to be investigated. It is only through acting on the findings of this investigation that lecturers can devise the means of assisting students to improve accuracy in their writing.

Although the current academic literacy modules offer incidental grammar instruction, there is no specific focus on the improvement of students' grammatical competence. There is, therefore, a need to determine whether a structured specific intervention that is based on a needs analysis exercise that identifies the type of grammar errors students make in their academic writing can be integrated functionally into the academic writing part of the Academic Literacy modules. There is no study, in the South African context that has investigated the effect of grammar instruction when integrated with the teaching of academic writing.

It is also necessary to investigate the effect and impact of such an intervention in order to establish whether it has the desired outcome, viz. the ability to produce comprehensible academic texts with limited grammatical errors. No study, in South Africa, has been conducted to investigate the impact of grammar instruction on grammatical accuracy in academic writing, specifically when such instruction utilises academic literacy modules to teach grammar, hence the need for this study.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Currently there is an ongoing debate on whether grammar instruction can assist in improving accuracy in students writing with Truscott (1996), among others strongly, arguing against the teaching of grammar in the writing classroom and Ferris (1997) intensely in favour. This study is making a contribution to that debate in the South African university context. The findings of the study will thus inform academic literacy curriculum developers, academics and researchers on whether the teaching of grammar in the context of the process writing approach can greatly improve accuracy

in the texts that students produce. Furthermore, it has been proven with this study that the academic literacy modules can be utilised as vehicles for improving accuracy in academic writing for all disciplines. This is possible because in many universities academic Literacy is a compulsory module for all first year students.

The findings of this study will assist in improving the impact that the Academic Literacy Modules have, especially the academic writing component, by incorporating the instruction of grammar in order to assist students who come to universities with low literacy levels in the LoLT. The importance of accuracy in academic writing cannot be overemphasised as shown in the literature review.

As it was mentioned earlier, there is the observation that the academic texts that university students are at times riddled with grammar errors which affect the message that they send to lecturers, therefore, there is a need that these students be assisted. The findings of this study have shown that intergrating grammar with process writing can assist students to acquire grammar and improve their academic writing. Furthermore, the study proved that students will be empowered by the inclusion of the grammar component in the academic literacy modules. This will improve their grammatical competence which is important in producing acceptable written texts. This is important as it has been shown that the school system does not adequately prepare students for studying at university. Therefore, universities should be able to assist these students. The findings of this study thus indicate that students can be assisted to improve accuracy in writing by intergrating grammar in the writing instruction.

1.6 HYPOTHESIS

H₁. Systematic and focused grammar instruction improves grammatical competence which will lead to a higher level of grammatical correctness in the academic texts produced by first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

H₀. Systematic and focused grammar instruction does not improve grammatical competence which will not lead to a higher level of grammatical correctness in the

academic texts produced by first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main research question this study sought to answer is:

What is the effect of grammar intervention on the grammatical accuracy of academic texts produced by first-year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University?

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

- What types of grammatical errors can be identified in the academic texts of first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University?
- What extent do they make such errors?
- What is the effect of the designed intervention on the level of grammatical competence of first year students, and how is this knowledge applied in the production of academic texts?

The aim of the study was:

- To determine the effect of grammar intervention on the grammatical accuracy of academic texts produced by first-year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

In order to achieve the main idea, a number of objectives were set. The objectives of this study were:

- To determine the types of grammatical errors that can be identified in the academic texts of first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.
- To determine the extent to which students make such errors.
- To determine the effect of grammar intervention on the level of grammatical competence of first year students, and how this knowledge is applied in the production of academic texts.

1.8 RESEARCH METHOD

1.8.1 Survey of the Literature

Literature on the following topics will be surveyed: error analysis, academic writing, grammar instruction; grammar intervention; writing in higher education.

1.8.2 Empirical Research

Design

Firstly, a non-experimental (descriptive research) research design utilizing error analysis was employed to determine the errors that first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University make as well as the extent to which they make such errors.

Secondly, a quasi-experimental (simple interrupted time series design) and) methods were employed. Quasi-experimental designs typically compare (existing) groups. Dimsdale and Kutner (2004) state that quasi-experimental research attempts to answer questions such as: “Does a treatment or intervention have an impact?” As the main aim of the study was to investigate whether an intervention based on the identified grammatical forms will improve the accuracy of written academic texts produced by first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University, this design seems an appropriate one

1.9 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population for this study were first year students registered for the two modules of Academic Literacy (ALDE 111 and ALDE 122) at the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences (FEMS) for the first and second semester academic literacy modules at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University. Based on the 2018 statistics, there are about 1115 students registered in the Faculty of Commerce and Administration at the Mafikeng Campus. A non-random convenience sample of approximately 60 students was chosen to participate in the study. The researcher had direct access to these students, as he is responsible for teaching the students in this

particular faculty. Furthermore, purposeful sampling was utilised to only choose those students who make high frequency errors to participate in the study. The number of participants for both the treatment and the control group will be made up of approximately 30 students each.

1.10 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Students completed a biographical questionnaire in order to profile them. A detailed error analysis was conducted on student argumentative essays. The findings from the results of the error analysis exercise pre-test were used to design supplemental grammar instruction in the ALDE course. This instruction was provided to the experimental group. A second error analysis was conducted at the end of the course and the results were compared with the first. The impact of the intervention was determined by analysing the errors of participants (belonging to both the treatment group and control group) made in a second written text.

1.10.1 Procedure

- Students were requested to write an argumentative essay at the beginning of the academic year. The extent to which students make grammar errors in their academic texts and the types of errors they make was investigated by means of a detailed error analysis of a corpus of written texts produced by the students. The corpus investigated was collected from both the treatment group and the control group. Error categories were not determined beforehand, but emerged from the analysis. The error taxonomy followed the detailed analysis suggested by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982).
- A supplemental and integrated grammatical intervention based on the errors identified was taught to the treatment group to determine its impact on grammatical competence of participants. The intervention covered the problematic grammatical aspects identified through the error analysis. The activities included a mix of a focus on form and forms with the utilisation of grammar consciousness raising and corrective feedback.

- The impact of the intervention on the treatment group was determined by comparing the error analysis of the data collected at the beginning of the study with those collected at the end of the study, once again using an argumentative essay as a vehicle. Possible statistically significant differences between the two groups were determined.

1.10.2 Control for variables

To control for variables, firstly the same lecturer was responsible for the instruction of both the control and the experimental groups; participants had the same profile; and the instruction for the intervention and control groups occurred during the same period. The essays to be analysed were administered to the treatment group and control group at the same time under the same conditions.

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analysed in consultation with a professional statistician:

- To determine the level of students' grammatical knowledge, frequencies, percentages and means of specific grammatical difficulties were calculated.
- To analyse students' texts for grammatical errors, frequencies of various types of errors were analysed.
- To determine the impact of the intervention on the grammatical knowledge of students, the following were done:
 - I. An independent t-test was used to compare the difference between the pre-test for the control group and that for the treatment group.
 - II. A dependent t-test was used to compare the difference within the pre-test for the control group and the post-test of the same group.
 - III. A dependent t-test was used to compare the difference between the pre-test for the treatment group and the post-test for the same group.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study was conducted by adhering to normal ethical procedures. An application was made for ethics clearance at the relevant ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before commencing with the empirical investigation. Participation in the study was voluntary and any participant can withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged. The researcher respected the right to privacy of the participants and their anonymity was ensured during all stages of the study. The findings of the study is to be made available to participants and in scientific publications or conference papers.

1.13 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

This section presents the definition of important terms, including those found in the thesis title. The aim of providing these definitions is to provide the context for the rest of the study.

Impact/effect

The term impact is used interchangeably with effect in this study. The Oxford Dictionary of English (2016) defines effect as a change which is a result or consequence of an action or other cause. The action that is of concern to this study is tha of grammar instruction.

Grammar

The term grammar has been defined in a number of varied ways. These definitions of the term grammar could be used in different ways, depending on the context in which the term is employed. It should be noted, as Larsen-Freeman (2009) articulates, that the term grammar is possibly the most ambiguous term in the language teaching field. To further clarify this, Larsen-Freeman (2009) distinguishes between different uses for the term grammar and articulates the opinion that grammar is possibly the most ambiguous term in the language teaching field. Simply put , Oxford Dictionary of English (2016) defines grammar the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences. For the purpose of the study, grammar is a meaning making resource which supports writers in making appropriate linguistic chouices which help them to shape and craft texts to satisfy their rhetorical

intentions (Jones, Myhill & Bailey, 2013). This means that without accurate grammar, it will be difficult send a message in academic writing.

Instruction

The Oxford Dictionary of English (2016) defines instruction as the act of educating, giving the steps that must be followed or an order. In this study, instruction is linked to grammar. Therefore, instruction refers to the teaching of structural aspects of language which include phonological, lexical, grammatical and pragmalinguistic aspects of language (Ellis, 2001). In the case of this study, instruction of grammar is linked writing with the aim being to improve accuracy in the texts that they produce.

Writing ability

Writing is a difficult concept to define in an academic context. In this context, writing is not only viewed as a product or a process. Writing is viewed as a social act influenced by a variety of linguistic, physical, cognitive, cultural, interpersonal and political factors which are needed for academic writing purposes. These vary from context to context, discipline to discipline, subject to subject, lecturer to lecturer and student to student (Candlin & Hyland, 1999). Because writing in the context of this study takes place in an academic setting, it is referred to as academic writing. Academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise. From this description of academic writing, writing ability therefore means the ability to follow the writing style used by academics in their discipline. One of the main characteristics of academic writing is that of grammar accuracy, which is the focus of this study.

Academic literacy

Scholars have shown that describing and defining academic literacy is very difficult and complex (Van Dyk & Van de Poel, 2013:47; Van Schalkwyk, 2008). Warschauer, Grant, Del Real & Rousseau (2004) define academic literacy as “reading, speaking, listening and thinking skills, dispositions, and habits of mind that students need for academic success and it includes the ability to critically read and interpret a wide range of texts, to write competently in scholarly genres, and to engage in and contribute to

sophisticated academic discussions”. The above skills constitute the characteristics that students should have to succeed at university. This study views academic literacy from the point of view of Weideman (2003) which is the act of accessing, processing and producing of information. It is the quality of the produced information that is of concern in this study.

1.14 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 Introduction: This chapter gives an overall orientation of the study. The chapter begins by providing the background to the study followed by the problem statement that led to the need for this study to be conducted. The following important aspects of the study are also illuminated: study hypotheses; research objectives and questions; research method and design; study population and sampling; and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 Literature review: This chapter reviews the literature the theoretical perspectives on the teaching of grammar. The chapter presents different theories of teaching grammar. The chapter then begins by firstly discussing a number of non-interventionist theories and moves on to the discussion of interventionist theories. The discussion then proceeds to the presentation of the debate on whether to teach grammar or not. The chapter lastly presents the approaches and options in grammar instruction.

Chapter 3 Second language learner errors and error analysis: This chapter reviews literature on the errors that second language learners make as well as their analysis. The chapter begins by differentiating between an error and a mistake. It then illuminates the importance of errors in language acquisition. The sources of errors are also identified. A presentation on fossilization is also made in this chapter. Lastly, the important procedure of error analysis is described

Chapter 4 Academic writing in higher education: This chapter firstly provides a definition of academic writing and the crucial role it plays in higher education. It then provides different models for the presentation of academic writing. The chapter also presents the challenges faced by students in academic writing. Factors leading to

grammar problems faced by students in academic writing are reviewed. Lastly the significance of grammatical accuracy in academic writing is presented.

Chapter 5 Research methodology: This chapter presents the description of the methodology and design utilized in this study. The study follows the quantitative methodology. The error analysis and the quasi-experimental research designs as applied in the study are discussed. Also, the population and sampling technique utilized in this study as well as the variables are presented in this chapter. The chapter also describes the data analysis techniques the study employed. Other aspects covered in this chapter include the issues of ethics that the study considered as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter 6 Data presentation and analysis: This chapter presents and analyses the collected data. Firstly, the chapter presents the findings from the error analysis which determined the grammar errors that participants made. Secondly the findings from the quasi-experimental design which aimed at determining whether grammar instruction led to an improvement in grammar accuracy on academic writing are presented. The discussion of the findings is also presented.

Chapter 7 Conclusion and recommendations for further research: This chapter summarises the study. It also re-visit the research questions as well as hypotheses set at the beginning of the study. Recommendations for academics as well as those for future research are also presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of literature pertaining to the subject of this study. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section of the chapter starts by discussing two important positions on language teaching and learning. These positions either advance or criticise and have resulted in the theoretical underpinnings which have exerted a significant influence on language pedagogy. These positions are referred to as the non-interventionist and the interventionist. The proponents of the non-interventionist position believe that language learning should resemble naturalistic conditions. Theories to be discussed under this position include the Identity Hypothesis, Interlanguage Theory and Krashen's Monitor Model. The interventionist position emphasizes the importance of the facilitative role of grammar instruction. The theories under this position presented in this study are the Identity Hypothesis and the Skill Learning Theory Interaction-based Theories. The second section of this chapter begins by defining grammar. It then presents literature on the debate on the role of grammar instruction on L2 acquisition. The chapter then discusses the different options available in second language instruction.

2.2 NON-INTERVENTIONIST POSITIONS

A number of researchers who analysed language data in instructed and naturalistic settings have questioned the role of grammar in the second and foreign language curriculum. The findings of their studies provided evidence in support of a predictable acquisitional order. They suggested a built-in syllabus for grammar acquisition (Corder 1975; Krashen, 1982). These findings, coupled with the results of formal grammar instruction which was seen to be unable to change the order of acquisition, led SLA researchers to propose a complete rejection of formal teaching of rules and structures of the target language due to the lack of observable advantages of grammar intervention. Theorists in the non-interventionist position claimed that the target language is acquired incidentally and implicitly through exposure to comprehensible input. As Krashen (1985) puts it, the only contribution that classroom instruction can

make is to provide comprehensible input that might otherwise not be available outside the classroom. Krashen (1982) recommended the abandonment of any forms of explicit error correction as he claimed it is a harmful practice for the acquisitional process. The views presented in the theories, albeit divergent, share on significant characteristic. As Pawlak (2006) states, they were some of the factors that led the abandonment of formal instruction and error correction and resulted in facilitating naturalistic acquisition in the language classroom. The next section discusses the noninterventionist theories to language learning.

2.2.1 Identity Hypothesis

After a series of studies (Newmark, 1966; Ellis, 1985) comparing the processes involved in the acquisition of L1 and L2, the Identity Hypothesis, also known as the Creative Construction Hypothesis, was formulated. This hypothesis states that the processes underlying the acquisition of the mother tongue and second language acquisition are essentially the same (VanPatten & Benati, 2010). The identity Hypothesis theorises that the language acquisition device which is believed to be responsible for L1 acquisition is also available to L2 learners (Ellis, 2008). This belief was strengthened by the findings of a number of studies (Dulay and Burt, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1974) which have shown that there are similarities between first and second language learning. This can mostly be observed in the early stages of development. It is at this stage that there is the occurrence of the intralingual errors, the use of formulaic expressions, the silent period and structural simplifications. The researchers found that the most important similarity was the order of acquisition which in the case of L2 learning was impervious to language instruction. The hypothesis has a belief that language is an innate construct which is independent of external factors. This belief led to a conclusion by Ervin-Tripp (1974: 126) that:

The functions of early sentences, and their form, their semantic redundancy, their reliance on the ease of short term memory, their overgeneralization of lexical forms, their use of simple order strategies all were similar to processes we have seen in first language acquisition. In broad outlines, then, the conclusion is tenable that first and second language is similar in natural situations.

However, there have been studies (Ellis, 2008) that have shown some differences between L1 and L2 acquisition, which claim that the domain –specific language of children ceases to operate in adults. This is further supported by Larsen-freeman (2003) and Brown (2001) who reported many discrepancies between children and adults. Despite these difference, as Ellis (2008) states, it is true that there exist features which are common between the language systems of children learning an L1 and L2. This is mainly true in the acquisition of syntactical structures and vocabulary. Ellis (2008, 106) puts it succinctly that: “ The correct characterization of early L1 and L2 acquisition might be to say that L2 learner language displays many features of L1 learner plus some additional ones”. In addition, Brown (2001) and Larsen-Freeman (2003) in their criticism of this hypothesis argue that it only makes sense to draw analogies between L1 and L2 acquisition if at least some of the variables are held constant for the groups being compared. These variables include the learners’ age and native language background, as well as the learning context which involves the amount and quality of exposure and the availability of instruction, among others. Therefore, as Pawlak (2006) states, in view of the inconclusive empirical evidence and the complexity involved in making comparisons between L1 and L2 acquisition, the Identity Hypothesis is untenable.

Although the findings of different studies mentioned might have been inconclusive and contradictory, the assumptions put forward by the theorist who proposed the Identity hypothesis were pedagogical recommendations that postulated recreating naturalistic conditions in the language classroom to facilitate learning rather than interfere with learning processes (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014). In other words, the assumptions of the Identity Hypotheses have had a great impact on the teaching and learning of an L2. Teaching an L2 has to be as natural as possible and should resemble real life contexts.

2.2.2 Interlanguage Theory

Interlanguage originates from investigations into the errors made by language learners and L2 developmental pattern was one of the first attempts to unravel the complexities of L2 acquisition. Interlanguage theory is also important in that it gave rise to many later developments and perspectives in the study of the acquisition of an L2. One of these developments is that it constitutes an attempt to explain errors (Ellis, 1990). The

interlanguage theory views a second language as a rule-governed system, similarly to the first language as produced by children. As Brown (2000) states, it describes learners as intelligent creative beings proceeding through logical, systematic stages of acquisition, and creatively acting upon their linguistic environment as they encounter its forms and functions in meaningful contexts. The theory views learning a language as a process of trial and error, done through hypothesis testing, which finally allows learners to succeed and approximate the system used by native speakers. Furthermore, Ellis (2008) states that with the coming of the interlanguage theory, learner language became the object of investigation as a logical, rule-governed system, evolving along a sequence of stages, being dynamic response to the requirements of the context in which it functions and gradually approximating the system used by native speakers of the target language.

The term interlanguage was coined by Selinker (1972). There are, however, other terms which refer to the same phenomenon namely transitional competence (Corder, 1967), approximative system Nemser (1971) and idiosyncratic dialect (Corder 1971). All these terms describe two interrelated concepts. Firstly, as Ellis (1990) states, interlanguage may describe the structured system which the learner constructs at any given stage in his development. Again, interlanguage also refers to Corder's (1971) built-in syllabus formed by a series of interlocking systems. Interlanguage assumes that the language produced by learners is distinct from their L1 and L2 constituting a separate linguistic system. Recently, Gass and Selinker (2001) have adopted a more balanced view of interlanguage which perceives it as a combination of elements whose origins can be traced back in the mother tongue, the target language and neither of them as well.

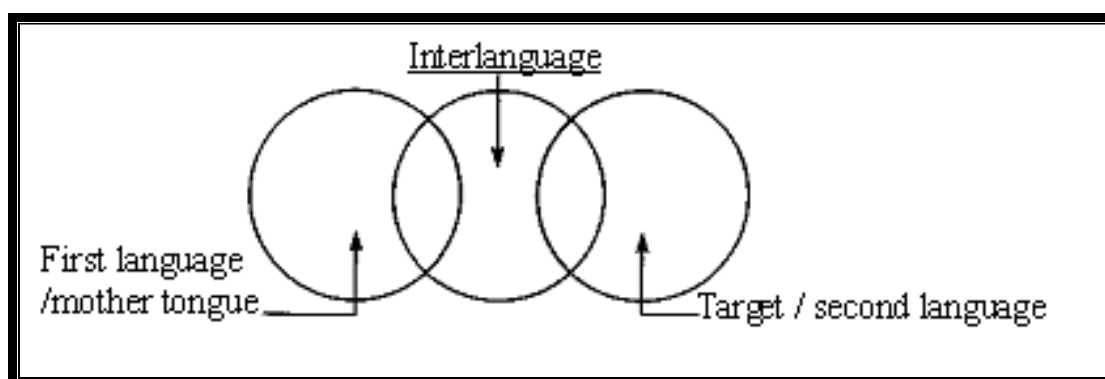


Figure 2. 1 Structure of interlanguage (Corder, 1981: 17)

Figure 2.1 is a representation of interlanguage. As it can be observed from the representation, interlanguage straddles both first language and the target language. The main assumptions of Interlanguage Theory were outlined by Nemser (1971), who claims that:

1. an approximative system is distinct from L1 and L2 at any given time;
2. the systems form an evolving series; and
3. approximative systems of learners at the same stage of proficiency may coincide in a given contact situation.

In addition, the principles of interlanguage development listed by Selinker (1972) attempt at specifying the cognitive processes responsible for second language acquisition in the following way:

1. Language transfer: L1 interference is believed to be plausible.
2. Transfer of training: interlanguage restructuring may be a result of instruction.
3. Strategies of L2 learning: “an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned” (Selinker 1972: 37).
4. Strategies of L2 communication: “an identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers” (Selinker 1972: 37).
5. Overgeneralisation of target language rules.

These processes constitute the ways in which the L2 system is believed to be internalised by the learner.

The role of interlanguage in second language acquisition is based on its three characteristics of permeability, dynamism and systematicity. Firstly, interlanguage is dynamic. Proponents of interlanguage, according to Ellis (1985), believe that L2 learners formulate rules through hypotheses-testing, a strategy that is used to make sense of the target language as they move along the interlanguage continuum. Learners do not, however, jump from one stage to the next. They revise the interim systems to accommodate new hypotheses and rules about the target language. This process of constant revision and extension of rules is a feature of inherent instability of interlanguage and its built-in propensity to change. In the development of interlanguage, learners creatively reorganise the input they get. They abstract rules and constantly restructure their hypotheses about the target language. The feedback they receive from speakers, whether implicit or explicit, provides them with an

opportunity to update their hypotheses. After they have internalised a new rule, its coverage is transferred and it gradually extends to other linguistic contexts.

Secondly, interlanguage rules are permeable. The L2 learner's interlanguage is permeable as it is subject to constant change and evolution, depending on the situations and contexts the learner encounters. This implies that the rules of interlanguage are not fixed, but they are open to amendment. As Ellis (1990) states, because the L2 learner's grammar is incomplete, it can always be penetrated by new linguistic forms and rules. The permeability of interlanguage is different from that observed in acquiring a first language. This degree of permeability is also limited because of fossilization. According to Alwright and Bailey (1991), because of fossilization, not all L2 speakers reach the end of the interlanguage continuum. Many remain with fixed linguistic forms that do not match the target language.

It should also be noted that interlanguage can be stable and therefore no longer permeable for the following reasons: a subsystem loses its permeability and becomes stable because it reached the TL norm and further progress is not possible; or, regress in the forms of backsliding or attrition occur; or a subsystem becomes stable and loses its permeability because it fossilizes (Ellis, 1990; Han 2004). The permeable character of ILs and their being in a constant state of change complicates their identification and description.

The third characteristic is that of systematicity. L2 learner language is systematic as learners base their performance on their own existing rule system, the same way as the native speakers. It is therefore difficult to evaluate a learner's grammar in terms of the target language rules, as the rules may differ from the internalised rules of the interlanguage. However, as Ellis (1985) states, it is possible to detect the rule-based nature of the learner's use of the L2 as learners do not select haphazardly from their store of interlanguage rules, but do so in a predictable way. Therefore, the errors they make are evidence that they are applying a certain system at each point of their development. The significance of the systematic nature of interlanguage is that it is possible to detect the rules the learners have acquired at any stage of their development as they rely on their existing rule system when the L2 is used for communication purposes. L2 learners' language, should not, as mentioned earlier, be

evaluated in terms of the target language grammar, because it draws rules from the interlanguage. Systematicity allows the learner to make grammaticality judgements based on their current IL grammar (Ellis, 1985), though not reliably on native speaker language since the native speakers' knowledge and the L2 speakers' underlying knowledge may differ to some extent. In addition to the three characteristics, recently, Saville-Troicke (2006) added another feature of interlanguage, namely that it is a reduced system both in form and function.

After identifying the features of interlanguage, researchers tried to identify the processes responsible for its construction and the nature of interlanguage continuum. After identifying these, they came up with the concept of hypothesis forming and hypothesis testing. Corder (1967) argues that there exist common features between L1 and L2 acquisition. These include forming and testing hypothesis about the target language. L2 learners are exposed to input and grammar structures present in the input. With this, they then create hypothetical grammars which are then later tested during comprehension and production. Regardless of where the beginning of the interlanguage continuum is, most learners do not reach the target language competence. The learners may thus reach fossilization as described in detail in chapter three.

As a result of the findings from research arising from the Interlanguage Theory, it has been observed that the pedagogical recommendations bear much resemblance to those of the Identity Hypothesis. That is, the main assumption is that there should be the creation of conditions as similar to naturalistic acquisition as possible in order to develop learners' interlanguage towards the L2. As Ellis (1990) states, it is proposed that the second language syllabus should follow the developmental sequences, or that learning should actually be limited to creating conditions for meaningful interactions. This implies that grammar teaching should be reduced to the minimum. In addition, the hypothesis advanced specific pedagogical proposals centred on remedial procedures, error treatment and the organization of the syllabus. As Pawlak (2006) comments, it is the interlanguage hypothesis which suggested that teachers should carefully analyse the errors committed by learners with the aim of establishing their place on the IL continuum. This would then lead to thoughts on how to deal with these errors. Regarding the organisation of the syllabus, the proposal were radical since it

made little sense to externally select, order and sequence the teaching content if it was accepted that learners followed their own, internally derived blueprint for approximating TL competence. The hypothesis suggested that teachers should limit pedagogic intervention to creating meaningful conditions for meaningful interaction and shy away from grammar teaching. This led to the emergence of new teaching innovations such as the Natural Approach, Immersion programs or the Communicational Teaching Project.

2.2.3 Monitor Model (Krashen, 1981)

Van Patten and Williams (2007: 25) refer to the Monitor Model as “one of the most ambitious and influential theories in the field of SLA, and one that is probably the most familiar to language educators”. The model was first proposed in the late 1970s (Krashen, 1977) and refined in the early 1980s (Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1985). The model, as Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2012) states, seeks to account for a whole variety of phenomena in foreign language learning, ranging from investigating the age effect on SLA to explaining differences in attainment levels. It came into being as a result of the dissatisfaction with language teaching based on behaviourism. It does not explain the processes responsible for learning, but it is the first theory to propose language-specific model of acquisition. The Monitor Model assumes that acquiring L1 and L2 is essentially the same, and that linguistic knowledge is essentially the same. It also assumes that linguistic knowledge is an innate ability.

As Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2012) mention, within this model, acquisition emerges from the interaction of linguistic information derived from comprehensible input with the language faculty humans are naturally capable of. The model exerted a tremendous pressures in the language classroom in that it related to the experience of language learners and teachers in the sense that it attempted to account for the fact that not everything that is taught is learned and at times what is learned may not have not been taught. VanPatten and Williams (2007) state that it was as a result of the model that the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed a rejection of grammar instruction because it provided that language is acquired implicitly due to adequate exposure to the target language. The model has been described in five hypotheses which provide

the major assumptions about how the target language is acquired. The next discussion concentrates on the description of these hypotheses.

1. The acquisition-learning hypothesis

The acquisition-learning hypothesis is based on the premise that language acquisition and language learning are two distinct ways of gaining a second language knowledge and they are stored separately. As mentioned by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2012), the acquired knowledge or system originates as a result of unconscious processes on condition the learner is focused on message conveyance, while the learned system results from a conscious process of language learning and it applies to explicit knowledge. Krashen (1982) refers to the acquired system as implicit knowledge, while the learnt system is the explicit knowledge. Acquisition is defined as subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilise in acquiring their first language, whereas learning describes the conscious process that results from knowing the language (Krashen, 1985). Acquisition is believed to be resulting from natural interaction which has a meaningful purpose, and learning to be resulting from classroom procedures where the target language is the object of instruction but not necessarily the medium. The idea of meaningful communication is the major claim of the difference between acquisition and learning. The meaningful communication can take place both outside and inside the educational context. However, the key factor is the real communicative purpose which will encourage and trigger subconscious processes in the case of acquisition, contrary to conscious attention to form while learning.

One criticism of this hypothesis is the difficulty of differentiating between a learner's subconscious and conscious processing. Krashen also emphasizes that learning does not turn into acquisition. He claims that the two types of knowledge gained by means of the two routes never interact and never unify into one. He, therefore, proposes that formal instruction should be abandoned as its effects will not help learners communicate spontaneously. Instead, learners should be provided with an abundance of input and the opportunity for meaningful interaction. This is due to the reason that despite the knowledge and practice of rules by students, this knowledge cannot be converted into implicit knowledge and become available for real life use. As a result, Krashen's model is referred as the non-interface position or the zero option.

2. The monitor hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis accounts for the actual application of the learned and acquired knowledge. Krashen (1982) states that learning has only one function, and that is as Monitor or editor and is used to make changes in the form of our utterances, after they have been produced by the required system. The hypothesis supports the view that the acquired system is central to language knowledge and performance, whereas the learned system or the explicit knowledge is accorded a secondary role. However, Krashen claims that this learned knowledge can be used, firstly, only if learners have sufficient time at their disposal, as is the case in the course of untimed writing tasks; secondly, on condition that these tasks require special attention to accuracy; and lastly, if the speaker or writer knows the rule (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2012). Therefore, as VanPatten and Williams (2007) state, the scarce classroom time should not be wasted on developing learned knowledge. Three types of learners are distinguished by the theory (Krashen, 2003). The first is the optimal monitor users who resort to the learned knowledge as long as it does not impede genuine communication. The second is Monitor underusers who value fluency the most and are not concerned with accuracy. Their speech may be fluent, but not very correct. And the third is the Monitor overusers who excessively rely on their formal language to the detriment of communicative skills. They constantly check their language against the rules they have learnt. Their speech may be slow and not non-fluent.

3. The natural order hypothesis

The natural order hypothesis is based on the findings that second language acquisition processes operate according to a certain sequence. In other words, there is the existence of important regularities concerning the sequence of acquisition of specific forms, such as grammatical morphemes, that has been demonstrated by first and second language research (Krashen, 1985). However, the natural order faced criticisms as it does not take into account individual differences or language transfer.

4. The comprehensible input hypothesis

The main assumption of the input hypothesis is that being exposed to comprehensible input of written or spoken portions of L2 comprising forms which are slightly beyond the current level of learners' internalised language, is the necessary and sufficient

condition for language acquisition. Comprehensible input is the language that a learner is exposed to at the level $i+1$, with letter i standing for the learner's current competence and $+1$ being the next step in the developmental sequence. As VanPatten and Williams (2007) state, Krashen believes that being able to process and understand such input activate the innate language faculty, thus allowing learners to proceed from one stage to another along natural developmental sequences. The input hypothesis is, therefore, connected with the Natural Order Hypothesis as it claims that learners progress along the developmental path by receiving and processing comprehensible input. Krashen (1985: 2) argues that:

If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order – it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

This hypothesis has been criticised because of the unresolved problem of what exactly constitutes i and $i + 1$. Krashen argues that learners are automatically exposed to various levels of input naturally and in their educational settings; therefore, different learners will access different levels of comprehensible input appropriate for them. VanPatten and Williams (2007) state that Krashen believes that the provision of rich and comprehensible input is not only the necessary condition for successful Second Language Acquisition, but it is a sufficient one. According to this hypotheses, neither pedagogic instruction nor output practice contribute to acquisition since production is perceived as a result of acquisition rather than its cause.

5. The affective filter hypothesis

The hypothesis was formulated in an attempt to account for the visible differences in attainment levels among language learners. The affective filter hypothesis ascribes the differences in attainment levels to the interplay of factors such as attitude, motivation, anxiety, competitiveness as well as other emotional responses. Krashen (2003) argues that these factors do not have a direct impact on acquisition, but they facilitate or hinder access of input to the language acquisition device. For instance,

there are learners who may not be motivated to study the second language as there may be no need for them to use it. The affective filter for these learners will be high, thus they may not access those parts in the brain responsible for SLA. On the other hand, those learners who are motivated to learn the L2 for various reasons will have a lower affective filter which will allow more input to get through in to be processed by the brain. Despite that the evidence the hypothesis is based on is still inconclusive, the hypothesis is important as it assists in providing answers to the different levels of success reached by language learners.

A number of criticisms have been levelled at Krashen's monitor model mainly from psychologist (McLaughlin, 1990; Odlin, 1986) and linguists (White, 1987). The first and most important is its claim that there is no interface between acquisition and learning. McLaughlin (1990) argues that it is difficult to empirically measure acquisition and learning. Therefore, he questions the model's claim of making a distinction between what is conscious to what is unconscious. Gregg (1984) also questions the non-interface position and argues that if unconscious knowledge is capable of being brought to consciousness, and if conscious knowledge is capable of being unconscious, then there is no reason to accept Krashen's claim without evidence. In addition Gas and Selinker (2008) also doubt the logic of the idea that nothing learned formally can be used in spontaneous language production.

Although there have been a number of criticisms levelled against the Monitor Model, the ideas influenced educators and their teaching procedures. The model generated questions about the importance of grammar teaching and the usefulness of error correction (Stern, 1992). As a result of the importance of the affective-filter as proposed by the model, teachers should aim at creating stress free learning environment to avoid acquisition being hindered by the high filter. A number of teaching approaches which include the Communicative Language Teaching rely on the model. As mentioned by Pawlak (2006), the assumption that consciously learned language plays only a minor role in producing output and that it cannot be transferred to the acquired system casts misgiving on the effectiveness of grammar teaching and correcting learner errors.

2.3 INTERVENTIONIST POSITIONS

Although non-interventionist positions have made cogent assumptions and drawn some important assumptions, the results of more recent research support the idea that grammar instruction is beneficial in second language acquisition. A number of studies have compared the effects of various types of instruction with naturalistic learning (Doughty, 1991; Norris and Ortega, 2006; Pawlak, 2006). The findings from these studies confirmed that instruction makes a difference and is worth incorporating in the second language curriculum. Despite that there are fixed orders and sequences of SLA which are resistant to grammar intervention, Larsen-Freeman (2003) is of the view that form-focused instruction can foster the process of learning. In addition, it can contribute to the more accurate production of language features, particularly at higher levels of learning. The discussion now moves to discussing the theoretical positions which posit that grammar instruction intervention should be an integral part of the process of instructed language learning and can bring benefits for the process of SLA. The theories to be discussed include the Processability Theory, the Noticing Hypothesis, the Skill Learning Theory and the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis.

2.3.1 Processability Theory

Processability Theory (PT), also known as the Multidimensional model, is believed to have resulted from a study of the acquisition of German by adult migrant workers with little or no instruction (Pienemann, 1998). As Ellis (2008) states, the findings of the study led to researchers concluding that the regularities in learner language are the product of cognitive procedures that govern those linguistic operations which are possible to be handled by learners. Pienemann (2005) argues that once the sequence in which language learning routines could be spelt out, those grammars that are processable at different points of development can be delineated. The theory, therefore, seeks to determine how learners acquire procedural skills that operate on the linguistic knowledge they build. Drawing on work on speech production and the computational model, Pienemann (2005) proposes that language production can only be accounted for if the following basic premises are taken into account:

- Processing components operate largely automatically and are generally not consciously controlled.
- Processing is incremental, i.e. a processor can start working on the incomplete output of another processor.
- The output of the processor is linear although it may not be mapped onto the underlying meaning in a linear way.
- Grammatical processing has access to a temporary memory store that can hold grammatical information.

The logic behind PT is that learners cannot access the hypotheses both about the first and the second language that they cannot process. The original version of PT assumes that language development is constrained by processability, which does not only influence L1 and L2 acquisition, but also affects interlanguage variation and L1 transfer. The theory claims that in the process of L2 development, learners accumulate various grammatical structures, rules and exceptions to those rules, which then develop into individual developmental trajectories that interact with the overall developmental programme. As Ellis (2008) states, PT proposes that the processing procedures of comprehending grammatical forms are hierarchical and are mastered one at a time. Further, PT assumes that processing devices are acquired sequentially and the exact sequence depends on the sequence of activation in production. Therefore, the acquisition of the low-level processing device is crucial for the acquisition of the higher-level device and consequently, the grammatical features that depend on it.

Pienemann (2005) presents the following hierarchy of language generation processes by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2012):

1. No procedure (e.g. Producing a simple word such as *yes*);
2. Category procedure (e.g. adding a past-tense morpheme to a verb);
3. Noun phrase procedure (e.g. adding plurality as in *two kids*);
4. Verb phrase procedure (e.g. moving an adverb out of the verb phrase to the front of the sentence as in *I went yesterday/yesterday I went*);
5. Sentence procedure (e.g. subject-verb agreement); and
6. Subordinate clause procedure (e.g. use of subjunctive in subordinate clauses triggered by information in a main clause).

As Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak (2012) state, each of the processes requires a learner to deposit and exchange a different type of grammatical information. Because the learners at first are unable to control the processes, they have a limited access to L2 words base, the transfer of L1 procedures is blocked by lack of specialised L2 subsequent stages. As they advance to subsequent stages, they develop complex abilities requiring a growing degree of analysis and ability to manipulate the structure constituents. As Pienneman (2007) claims, the learner has to develop through the hierarchy because they develop their grammatical inventory following this hierarchy for a number of reasons. Firstly, the hierarchy is implicationaly ordered, that is, every procedure is a necessary prerequisite for the next procedure. Secondly, the hierarchy mirrors the time-course in language generation.

The application of PT to language teaching referred to as the Teachability Hypothesis assumes that language acquisition can benefit from instruction as long as the instruction concerns structures for which the interlanguage is developmentally ready. According to Pienneman (1998), the predictions of the Teachability Hypothesis are that stages of acquisition cannot be skipped through formal instruction. In addition, Instruction will be most beneficial if it focuses on structures from the next stage.

The hypothesis, therefore, recommends that teachers should introduce linguistic form in a manner that mirrors the natural order of acquisition. This implies that the classroom syllabus should be designed in accordance with the learner's internal syllabus. This will assist in facilitating the development and acquisition of L2 features. Lightbown (1998), however, states that although the application of the hypothesis is recommendable, it is hard to implement in education settings. Firstly, the knowledge of acquisitional orders is still inadequate and incomplete; and secondly, it is difficult to estimate the exact developmental levels of particular learners, which is even more complex due to the variability and diversity of language learners in one group. The other criticism of the Teachability Hypothesis highlighted by Nunan (1994) is levelled to the claim that instruction will be most beneficial if it focuses on structures from the next stage. Nunan pointed to the advantages of formal instruction in structures that are far beyond learners' processing capacity, as this may foster the acquisitional processes of the less complex features. Spada and Lightbown (1998) also provided

evidence that the relationship between the developmental stage and the effectiveness of instruction is not always direct. This is so as one has to take into account learners' L1. In addition, Ellis (1997, 2002) claims that explicit knowledge may not be acquired in the same fixed sequence as implicit knowledge. This casts doubt on the possibility of applying the Teachability Hypothesis to explicit knowledge. Despite these criticisms, it is worth noting that the theoretical provisions of the Processability Theory are worth consideration as they perceive grammar instruction as a facilitative teaching option.

2.3.2 Skill-Learning Theory

Skill-Learning Theory represents the strong interface position and does not only pertain to the development of language, but also to all human behaviour involving cognitive and psychomotor skills from initial learning to advanced proficiency. It operates under the premise that different learning processes, which are not different across various skills, lead to proficient behaviours. The evolution of the targeted skill, which language learning is one of them, can be observed in the course of repeated practice and gradually reaching the status of largely spontaneous, effortless and proficient behaviour (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2012). Researchers agree that being competent in a skill involves having moved through three consecutive stages of development which Mitchel and Myles (2004) call them cognitive, associative and autonomous. The same stages have been labelled declarative, procedural and automatic by Anderson (1983, 1995), refers to them as presentation, practice and production. According to Skill Learning Theory, one has to traverse through the stages in the process of SLA during which the transformation of declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge occurs.

Byrne (1986) states that the first stage involves gaining knowledge about the skill with really applying it in practice. This can happen through observing others who are involved in the behaviour to be learned. It may be through verbal transmission from those who know to those who do not. It may also occur as a mixture of the two when an expert demonstrates the behaviour and explains the necessary conditions and steps to follow. The next step aims at transforming the declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. As Anderson (1995) says, this stage is not very demanding, when relevant declarative knowledge is available and can be applied while performing

the target behaviour. This is where practice is crucial. As DeKeyser (2007) mentions, in the case of language learning, communicative practice constitutes the best opportunity for the knowledge to be finely tuned. In the traditional view of language learning, this involves the use of mechanical drills as it is the case with the audio-lingual and oral-situational methods of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2002).

The model of learning proposed by the Skills Learning Theory suggests that the development from declarative to procedural stages of knowledge resembles the development from controlled to automatic processing. This is to say that every human being learning a skill proceeds from the declarative stage, where explicit knowledge which involves learning the rules consciously is provided, to the procedural stage, where the knowledge is implicit and there is an indication that the knowledge has become acquired and automatized. In the case of SLA, the declarative stage involves explicit knowledge of grammatical rules. It accounts for the acquisition of isolated facts and rules and is often slow and monitored. McLaughlin (1990) states that with practice, the processes of proceduralisation and restructuring, which involve processing of large pieces of information and qualitative changes in the learner's knowledge, operation and attentional resources for higher level skills facilitate efficient and smooth performance.

The greatest advantage of proceduralised knowledge over declarative presentation is that it is available as a ready-made chunk to be called up in its entirety each time conditions for a behaviour are met. It can be said that in the case of SLA learning requires the development of implicit knowledge, which is understood to be the target-like communicative behaviour resulting from fully automatized explicit knowledge.

In the application of the Skill Acquisition Theory in language teaching, a proposal put forward by Johnson (1996) is worth mentioning. Johnson posits that combined form-focused and meaning-focused practice leads to the development of implicit target language knowledge. He also proposed that explanation of a language feature may prove facilitative for the acquisitional processes. He also, however, claims that instruction involving hints and demonstration may be more effective in constructing declarative knowledge than elaborate and precise explanation. Another important contribution of Skill Learning Theory in the case of SLA was made by DeKeyser (1998,

2001, 2007) who points that second language fluency, which refers to as an automatic procedural skill, can be achieved through being engaged in the practice of the target language during the performance of communicative tasks by making use of the relevant declarative knowledge available in the working memory. He, however, is of the opinion that mechanical drills of grammatical features are unable to create form-meaning relationships. He suggests that teachers should rather develop activities with no time limit, such as fill-in-the gap, transformations, or translation.

DeKeyser, on the other hand, acknowledges the facilitative role of communicative practice in order to foster the growth of implicit procedural knowledge. This can be implemented by means of communicative tasks with the focus on meaning and more freedom on the part of the learner. This is in agreement with Ellis (2003) who claims that in order to change behaviour, it is necessary to provide practice of the actual behaviour itself. Skill Learning Theory provides that a language feature should be explicitly expressed and then practiced, both in structure and meaning-oriented activities, with the aim of creating a fluent target language performance.

The advantage of the Skill Learning Theory rests in the fact that it fits with other aspects of cognitive sciences. In addition, it can be applied to various learning processes and language subsystems. The theory, therefore, provides justification for explicit instruction concerning not only language rules, but also other dimensions of communicative competence which are indispensable for proficient language use.

2.3.4 The Noticing Hypothesis

The debate on whether learning is driven consciously or unconsciously has been a controversial topic for second language researchers. This led to the proposition of the Noticing hypothesis by Schmidt (1990, 1994, 1995, 2001) who challenges Krashen's (1982) views on the role of implicit learning and the use of the word "unconscious". Schmidt argues that the scope of the meaning of the word conscious could be used to refer to three phenomena of learning without intention, learning without explicit metalinguistic knowledge and learning without awareness. He claims that what is noticed becomes intake which is necessary for L2 learning. However, it should be noted that it is plausible that both conscious learning and unconscious learning surely

exist and contribute to L2 learning. Although the existence of unconscious learning, as suggested by Krashen cannot be denied completely, conscious learning or attended learning cannot also be denied. Conscious learning is, therefore, attended learning and is assumed to play a greater role in L2 learning. It should also be noted that paying attention to form is facilitative and necessary if learners are to learn redundant grammatical features and to learn to produce them correctly.

Despite Schmidt's criticism of Krashen, who asserted that conscious learning is of little use in actual language production and comprehension, he firstly concedes that not all learning may be intentional or occurring consciously. He, secondly, believes that an exact boundary between explicit and implicit knowledge is extremely difficult to draw since the two types of knowledge are part of a continuum rather than separate phenomena. Third, Schmidt argues that learning results from a subjective experience of noticing when learners pay attention to input. According to Schmidt, learning must be conscious since, in his words, "SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and notice target language input and what they understand of the significance of noticed input to be" (Schmidt, 2001: 4).

The Noticing Hypothesis claims that noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition or the conversion of input to intake for learning to occur (Schmidt, 1994), but acknowledges learners' internal processing capacities. The hypothesis claims that if a learner pays attention to the features of language in input and interaction, then they may in fact generate more intake as the language may be processed and may be incorporated in their linguistic system. It is crucial that the concepts of attention and awareness, consciousness, and noticing be explained as they are central to understanding of the Noticing Hypothesis.

Attention and awareness

The concept of attention is necessary in order to understand virtually every aspect of second language acquisition, including the ways in which interaction, negotiation for meaning, and all forms of instruction contribute to language learning (Schmidt, 2001). Therefore, attention (voluntary or involuntary) to the material to be learned is considered crucial in L2 learning. Simply put, attention is the ability of a person to concentrate on some things while ignoring others. Attention is concerned with those

mental processes that are conscious and under the working hypothesis that SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and notice in target language input and what they understand the significance of noticed input to be. In addition, the role of attention is emphasized mostly in cognitive accounts of second language development, especially those that are strongly psycholinguistic in approach (Bialystok, 1994; Ellis, 1996; Gass, 1988, 1997; VanPatten, 1990, 1994), within which attention to input is seen as essential for storage and a necessary precursor to hypothesis formation and testing. Common to these approaches of L2 development is the idea that L2 learners process target language input in ways that are determined by general cognitive factors including perceptual salience, frequency, the continuity of elements, and other factors that determine whether or not attention is drawn to them. Attention is what permits speakers to become aware of, which may be a discrepancy or gap between what they can produce and what they need to produce, as well as between what they produce and what proficient target language speakers produce (R. Ellis, 1994; 1997a; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Swain, 1995, 1998).

Most discussions concerning the role of attention in second language development have mainly focused on its importance on morphology and syntax acquisition. Peters (1998) proposes that in every domain of language learning (phonology, grammar, semantics, pragmatics, vocabulary, discourse structuring), learners must attend to and notice any source of variation that matters, as well as to whatever makes a difference in meaning. There are others who emphasize the importance of attention, but do not claim that attention is necessary for all learning. For instance, Carr and Curran (1994) claim that focused attention is required for some types of structural learning, but restrict this to cases where complicated or ambiguous structures are the object of learning. Furthermore, Gass (1997a) argues against the principle that all second language learning requires attention (attributing some learning to UG), but cautions that her arguments are not intended to weaken the claim that attention is important, as they are merely to show that attention and awareness are not the only factors.

Despite the criticisms, the number of SLA researchers that attest to the significance of attention and awareness cannot be ignored. As they have argued, attention can assist in the attainment of fluency in the target language. As Schmidt (2001) states, one crucial assumption about attention is that encoding into memory is an obligatory

consequence of attention (representations in memory are not complete and accurate snapshots, but only encode what subjects pay attention to), and retrieval is an obligatory consequence of attention at the time of retrieval.

In addition to the views of Schmidt and others with regards to the role of attention in SLA, there have been other views on the role of attention in SLA. One notable view is that of Tomlin and Villa (1994) who in their analysis of attention in language processing from a cognitive perspective described attention with regards to the three components of alertness, orientation and detection. They argued that detection, which they define as cognitive registration of stimuli, is required for the processing of input and making it available for further processing. They, therefore, disagree with the notion that awareness is necessary for the detection of input and language development. Leow (2006) found some common features in the two views of awareness in L2 processing. They suggested that detection occurs before noticing in the acquisitional processes and that it is at the level of noticing (i.e. attention plus minimally low level of awareness) that the linguistic data are available for further processing.

The three basic assumptions on attention are that it is limited, it is selective and it is partially subject to voluntary control. This section discusses these assumptions briefly.

Attention is Limited

Attention has limited capacity. This view has been proved to be true even in SLA by among others, VanPatten (1994). The limited capacity of attention includes specific resource pools for specific modalities. This means that attention-demanding activities can be carried out the same time more efficiently if they exercise different modalities than if they make use of the same modality (VanPatten, 1994).

Attention is selective

For the reason that there is a limited supply of attention and because any activity that draws upon it will interfere with other activities requiring it, attention must be strategically allocated (Schmidt, 2001) Simply put, when resources are limited, a cost-benefit analysis determines the focus of attention. VanPatten has drawn upon this metaphor of limited resources in SLA, arguing that what is important in most SLA contexts is the meaning of messages. Limited attentional resources are directed first

at those elements that carry message meaning, primarily lexicon, and only later, when the cost comes down, towards communicatively redundant formal features of language (VanPatten, 1996). VanPatten (1996) confirm the selective nature of attention in SLA by stating that because of the limitation, attentional resources are directed first to lexical items. This occurs because in most L2 learning contexts, understanding meaning is important and lexical items carry message meaning. This is the reason the attentional resources are then directed to communicatively redundant formal aspects of language later. To show the significance of attention in L2 learning, Gass, Svetics and Lemelin (2003: 498) explain that: "language processing is like other kinds of processing. Humans constantly exposed to and often overwhelmed by various sorts of external stimuli and are able to, through attentional devices, tune in some stimuli and tune out others".

Attention is subject to voluntary control

As Schmidt (2001) states, a great deal of language teaching practice is founded on the premise that learners can attend to different aspects of the target language and that one of the important functions of teaching is to help focus learners' attention. This is to say that teachers can control the aspects of the target language learners have to attend to. Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984) have suggested that certain tasks can be repeated, with the teacher telling learners each time to pay attention to different features, such as grammar, pronunciation, rate of speech, and completeness of information, among others. However, as Neumann (1996) states, there is an involuntary form of attention as well. For example, it sometimes happens that one cannot help attending to a loud voice whether one wants or not. Therefore, while involuntary attention is controlled by outside events and is beyond one's will, voluntary attention can be directed to a certain part of inner attention.

Noticing

Noticing in L2 learning involves a L2 learner assigning significance to some aspect of the L2 form relative to others. It is considered to be one form of awareness. Schmidt (1990) argues that noticing is necessary for input to become intake. The minimum requirement of noticing, as defined by Schmidt (2001), is to pay attention to key grammatical elements in input with greater than a threshold level of subjective awareness. To put it in Schmit's (2001), own words, noticing is a subjective correlate

of attention. A number of terms have been attributed to what Schmidt refers to as noticing. Allport (1979) in Schmidt (1990) refers to it as episodic awareness, Gass (1988) refers to it as apperceived input, while Tomlin and Villa (1994) refer to it as detection within selective attention. These terms identify the level at which stimuli are subjectively experienced. That is, noticing can be seen as learners' detection with subjective awareness together with rehearsal in short-term memory (Robinson, 1995).

Schmidt (1995) argues that noticing should be separated from metalinguistic awareness as clearly as possible, because they are two different processes. He states that the two levels differ because awareness at the level of noticing involves the conscious registration of the concurrence of some event, whereas awareness at the level of understanding requires recognition of a general rule or pattern.

The question to be asked, if noticing is necessary for SLA, is: How does noticing take place? As Schmidt (1990) proposes, the factors of frequency of form, perceptual salience, instruction, the current state of the learner's interlanguage and task demands all play an important role in directing attention and bringing some features of input into awareness. As Schmidt (2001) states, instruction is important in that it draws learners' attention to forms, because many features of L2 input are likely to be infrequent, non-salient and communicatively redundant. Therefore, intentionally focused attention may be a practical necessity for successful language learning. Schmidt and Frota (1986), from their study on the process of generating intake from input, advance a claim that intake results from noticing the gap. That is, learners make conscious comparisons between the input they receive and the language they already possess and normally use, and thus notice and act on the gap they identify. Schmidt and Frota (1986) also mention that learners are also able to observe that their linguistic skills are inadequate to express the precise meaning they want, which is called noticing the hole. In doing so, they are able to reflect on what is noticed, seek to understand its significance, and finally experience insight.

The Noticing Hypotheses and its role in SLA has attracted much support as well as criticism. A number of linguists, including Ellis (1994, 1997) and Skehan (1998), have acknowledged that noticing is responsible for input becoming intake before the actual process of incorporation of the new linguistic forms into the learner's interlanguage.

Other linguists such as Gass (1988), Rutherford (1987) and Sharwood-Smith (1981) go further by claiming that noticing is the first stage of language acquisition. However, Sharood-Smith (1981) and Rutherford (1987) oppose the view that noticing and noticing the gap (Schmist & Frota, 1986) must be conscious processes only. Ellis (1997) also acknowledges the validity of Krashen's (1982) claim that the range of linguistic features is too vast for all of them to be acquired consciously.

The most serious criticism of the Noticing Hypothesis is that by Truscott (1998) and Carrol and Swain (1993) which claims that the foundation of the hypothesis is not based on any rational theory of language. To counter this criticism, Robinson argued that the Noticing Hypothesis has never been intended as a comprehensive theory. They further claim that the Noticing Hypothesis is representationally empty with regards to the properties of the input that initiates noticing. In addition, Truscott and Sharwood-Smith (2011) argue that noticing and understanding are almost impossible to operationalise in any non-arbitrary way. From the criticisms, Truscott (1998) proposes a weaker version of the Noticing Hypothesis by arguing that it is only necessary for the acquisition of metalinguistic knowledge, that is, the ability to manipulate words, complete gap-fills, manipulate sentences, and state grammar rules. It is, however, worth noting that the Noticing Hypothesis has had a profound influence not only on research into SLA, but its premises can also be implemented more specifically in form-focused instruction. Unquestionably, the focus on form tactic relies on the Noticing Hypothesis as it involves the utilisation of activities aiming at assisting learners to notice the hole and notice the gap.

Now that the chapter discussed the theoretical perspectives on second language learning, the following section describes grammar instruction (form-focused instruction) as well as the available options in its presentation.

2.4 FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION DEFINED

The term form in form focused instruction refers to structural aspects of language which include phonological, lexical, grammatical and pragmalinguistic aspects of language (Ellis, 2001). In this distinction, Ellis (2001) defines meaning focused instruction as an instruction that requires learners to attend only to the content of what

they want to communicate, while form focused instruction refers to the instruction where there is some attempt to attend to draw learners' attention to linguistic form. Spada (1996) and Ellis (2001) succinctly define form-focused instruction as a capacious and umbrella term which covers any kind of teaching which requires learners to attend to the formal aspects of language, including the use of explicit and implicit instructional techniques, as well as the presentation and the provision of corrective feedback. The concept is thus synonymous with formal instruction or grammar teaching. Besides, it encompasses both a focus on form and a focus on forms.

According to Pawlak (2006), form-focused instruction is best defined when it is distinguished from meaning focused instruction. In contrast, as Pawlak (2006) states, meaning focused instruction engages learners in using the TL to convey messages in tasks requiring information exchange, problem solving or opinion sharing rather than focusing on a specific aspect of the code. As Ellis (2001) mentions, it should be noted that it has been accepted that interactions in the language classrooms fall between the two extremes and thus focus on forms a dual focus on form and meaning. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, grammar teaching and form focused instruction refers to the same aspect. Because the concept grammar is approached from different perspectives, it is crucial that these perspectives be understood. Therefore, the following section presents the different perspectives of what grammar is.

2.5 SOME DEFINITIONS OF GRAMMAR (FORM)

The term grammar, as gleaned from literature in the field of language learning and teaching has been defined in a number of varied ways. These definitions of the term grammar could be used in different ways, depending on the context in which the term is employed. It should be noted, as Larsen-Freeman (2009) articulates, that the term grammar is possibly the most ambiguous term in the language teaching field. To further clarify this, Larsen-Freeman (2009) distinguishes between different uses for the term grammar and articulates the opinion that grammar is possibly the most ambiguous term in the language teaching field.

As Larsen-Freeman (2009: 518) states, the term has been used to refer to “an internal system that generates and interprets novel utterances (mental grammar); a set of prescriptions and proscriptions about language forms and their use for a particular language (prescriptive grammar); a description of language behaviour by proficient users of a language (descriptive grammar); the focus of a given linguistic theory (linguistic grammar); a work that treats the major structures of a language (reference grammar); the structures and rules compiled for instructional and assessment purposes; (pedagogical grammar) and the structure and rules compiled for instructional purposes for teachers, which is usually a more comprehensive and detailed version of pedagogical grammar (teacher’s grammar)”. From Larsen-Freemans’ (2009) view, what grammar is, is very broad in scope. Therefore, only a few descriptions of what some of the types of grammar entail as presented by Larsen-Freeman (2009) are discussed in the ensuing section.

2.5.1 Prescriptive grammar

Prescriptive grammar is “the rules found in schoolbooks” and it “prescribes what people ought to do” Cook (2001). As Hinkel (2018) further explains, a prescriptive grammar specifies how a language should be used and what grammar rules should be followed. Therefore, a prescriptivist view of language implies a distinction between "good grammar" and "bad grammar," and its primary focus is on standard forms of grammar and syntactic constructions. Among native speakers of practically any language, a prescriptivist approach to grammar often encompasses many ideas, opinions, and judgments about how and when grammar rules should be used. Prescriptive grammars supply the rules for using or not using specific grammar constructions. Therefore, the focus of prescriptive grammar is mainly on morphology and syntax.

Prescriptive grammar also accounts for the distinction between a standard and non-standard variety of a language by labeling one as good and the other as bad. This perspective in grammar was obligatory in the past as the person’s ability to use appropriate language rules often determined educational and social status. Grammar also had a unifying role by codifying language varieties and regional dialects as well

as allowing for smooth communication between communities and people of different generations (Swan, 2005). Prescriptive grammar is also referred to as traditional grammar because its origin was based on Greek and Latin which provided extensive description of linguistic forms along with exceptions to the rules (Purpura, 2005). Prescriptive grammar has been criticised for being somewhat artificial because what is good or bad is arbitrary and does not always reflect any crucial principle or thought (Odlin, 1994).

2.5.2 Descriptive grammar

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) define descriptive grammar as a study of a language, its structure, and its rules as they are used in daily life by its speakers from all walks of life, including standard and nonstandard varieties. That is, descriptive grammar describes the language, its structure, and the syntactic rules that govern sentence and phrase construction. DeCarrio and Larsen-Freeman (2002) state that the scope of descriptive grammar is wider than that of prescriptive grammar as it includes phonetics, phonology, semantics and lexis, in addition to morphology and syntax. In addition, Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad (2006) describe the descriptive study of grammar as being non-judgmental, and not having the goal of determining what represents good or bad language, correct or incorrect structures, or grammatical or ungrammatical forms.

Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad (2006) are of the view that a descriptive grammar is typically studied by linguists, anthropologists, ethnographers, psychologists, or other researchers who seek to identify how the grammar of a language is actually used in various contexts and for various purposes. This type of grammar is typically the one that is found in books that describe and present the grammar of any language. Among other considerations, a good descriptive grammar may also take into account cultural and social variables that, in many cases, determine how language is produced and understood. In an academic sense, a descriptive grammar of a language is, therefore, a theory that attempts to explain how a particular language works. As Hinkel (2018) states, anthropologically speaking, a descriptive grammar seeks to formulate syntactic

rules that are based on the way a language is actually used for communication, but not what these rules should be.

As Laarsen-Freeman (2001) states, descriptive grammar may further be subdivided into formal and functional grammars. Formal grammar, as described by Chomsky (1965), is concerned with the structures and how they operate in the overall system. The most influential formal grammar is Chomsky's transformational–generative grammar. As Chomsky (1965) puts it, input which is imperfect, ill-informed and incomplete, cannot construct a basis for successful language acquisition. Because of this reasoning, Chomsky introduced the idea of Universal Grammar which is innately available to humans. Larsen-Freeman (2001) states that formal grammars take as their starting point the form or structure of language, with little or no attention to given to meaning or context of language use. As Dik (1991) states, Dell Hymes (1972) in response to Chomsky's Transformational Theory developed a functional model which focuses on how language functions in discourse. This was an extension of the generative model and emphasized sociolinguistic and pragmatic functions as the rules and principles composing the language system. These rules and principles can only be adequately understood when they are analysed in terms of the conditions of use.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2001), functional grammars conceive of language as largely social interaction, seeking to explain why one linguistic form is more appropriate than another in satisfying a particular communicative purpose in a particular context. As Halliday (1994) states, functional grammar views meaning as the most important aspect to be analysed, while grammar is seen as a resource for making and exchanging meaning. A model developed based on functional grammar is termed Systematic Functional Grammar or Systematic Functional Linguistics which is concerned with the notion of language function. The theory takes into account the social context, its features, possibilities and constraints with regard to language. It takes into account the importance of the three types of meaning in grammatical structure. The first is the ideational meaning which represents experiences and inner thoughts; the second is interpersonal meaning which represents interactions with others; and the third is textual meaning which represents how coherence is created in spoken and written language.

2.5.3 Pedagogical grammar

According to Larsen-Freeman (2009), pedagogical grammar draws on from formal grammar and functional grammar. It relies on corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics. Its aim is to prepare learners for not only constructing accurate grammar structures, but also for using them meaningfully and appropriately. Odlin (1994) and Taylor (2008) explain it as the type of grammar constructed especially for language teachers, teacher trainees, course or syllabus writers and language learners. It is descriptive rather than prescriptive in approach. Odlin (1994) and Taylor (2008) further mention that pedagogical grammars are the types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students. According to Hunston and Oakey (2010), pedagogical grammar is concerned with how a grammar of a language might be best described for learners, and how it might be best taught to learners. As Chalker (1994) states, pedagogical grammar can be used for reference. It can also be graded to meet a particular language level. It, therefore, can be of help to both learners and teachers and is likely to combine both the prescriptive and descriptive approach to attending to language rules.

In summarising the discussion on what grammar is, it should be noted that grammar is described on what the aim of description is, which can be assessing grammar based on what is assumed to be a standard (prescriptive), describing how meaning is coined (descriptive) and deciding on what is to be taught. All these are linked to grammar instruction. Whether teaching grammar is beneficial in language learning or not is a long standing debate as has been alluded to in the presentation in chapter three of the non-interventionist and the interventions approaches in language learning. The next discussion focuses on the grammar instruction debate.

2.6 THE GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION DEBATE

Whether grammar should be a focus of language instruction has been debated for some time. The debate mainly falls in three categories. The first argues that grammar instruction facilitates SLA and thus should be promoted. The second argues that grammar instruction should be eliminated as it does not assist in SLA. The third argues that grammar instruction should be subordinated to meaning-focused use of the target

language. The following discussion presents arguments for and against grammar instruction in second language learning.

2.6.1 Arguments against grammar instruction

The question of whether grammar should be taught or not has been mainly motivated by debates in the field of cognitive psychology regarding the role of explicit versus implicit language learning, and whether such learning occurs through conscious manipulation of information or through unconscious processes (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). The initial claims that grammar instruction does not aid acquisition was made by Krashen (1981). Krashen argued that language should be acquired through natural exposure, not learned through formal instruction. The belief is that grammar instruction only leads to the declarative knowledge of grammar structure, but not the ability to use those structures correctly in output.

Besides Krashen, the position against grammar teaching was mainly supported by evidence from earlier studies (Bailey, Madden & Krashen, 1974; Dulay and Burt, 1974) which investigated the acquisition of English morphology. It was found that speakers of different languages learn English morphemes in a similar order. The results from these studies led to claims that similar processes of acquisition underlie both first and second language learning. It was, therefore, assumed that because the acquisition of the first language does not require instruction, second language learners should not also be given instruction. This position was also made on the basis of the application of Universal Grammar in Second Language acquisition. The argument was that because L1 learning occurs mainly through the interaction of the principles of UG with input, therefore, L2 learning should follow the same route as UG is also accessible to L2 learners.

The grammar instruction debate, is also the debate of whether teachers should correct language errors in students' written work. The discussion of whether students' errors should be corrected is covered under the topic of corrective feedback.

2.6.2 Arguments for grammar teaching

The advent of the communicative language teaching saw the abandonment of grammar instruction in language learning classrooms. However, it was realised that L2 learners continued to make grammar mistakes in both speech and writing despite the use of approaches which emphasized that language learning follows the natural approach and the principles of Universal Grammar. As a result of this realisation, research in SLA has led to a reconsideration of the role of grammar in the L2 classroom. Nassaji and Fotos (2004) mention four reasons for the re-evaluation of grammar as a necessary component of language instruction.

The first reason for the re-evaluation is that the dominant hypothesis of the 1980s that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness has been found to be theoretically problematic. This position for grammar teaching was championed by Schmidt (1990, 1993, 2000) who suggested that conscious attention to form, or noticing is a necessary condition for language learning. This resulted in the promulgation of the attention hypotheses. This view that noticing is necessary for language learning was also supported by other researchers including Leow (1998) and Tomlin and Villa (1994). Schmidt (2001: 3) emphasized the role of attention by stating that:

The concept of attention is necessary in order to understand virtually every aspect of second language acquisition (SLA), including the development of interlanguages (ILs) over time, variation within IL at particular points in time, the development of L2 fluency, the role of individual differences such as motivation, aptitude and learning strategies in L2 learning, and ways interaction, negotiation of meaning, and all forms of instruction contributing to language learning.

Subsequent to Schmidt's attention hypotheses, a number of SLA researchers have agreed that noticing or awareness of target forms plays an important role in L2 learning (De keyser, 1998, Doughty, 2001; R. Ellis, 2001, 2002; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewe, 2001, Fotos, 1998, Nassaji, 2000, 2002). Furthermore, Tomasello (1998) in support of the importance of attention found that learners cannot always successfully process target language input for both meaning and form simultaneously. If learners are not assisted to notice target forms in input, they may otherwise process input for meaning only and not attend to specific forms, and as a result fail to process and acquire them.

The second reason for the renewed interest in grammar instruction stems from the evidence that L2 learners have to go through some developmental sequences and the evidence that learners can be assisted through them. It was because of Piemann's (1988, 1999) teachability hypothesis that it was suggested that while some developmental sequences are fixed and cannot be altered by grammar instruction, others structures can benefit from instruction anytime they are taught. This spurred some researchers (Lightbown, 2000; Ellis, 2002) to investigating this hypothesis resulting in findings that indicate that it is possible to influence sequences of development favourably through instruction. However, this will be successful if grammar teaching coincides with the learner's readiness to move to the next developmental stage of linguistic proficiency. As a result of the teachability hypothesis, there have been calls for the place of grammar in the second language classroom where the focus is in communication.

A large body of research pointing to the inadequacies of teaching approaches where the focus is primarily on meaning-focused communication without addressing grammar problems also led to the renewed interest in grammar instruction (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004;; Swain & Lapkin, 1989; Swain, 1985). The findings from these studies showed that despite substantial long exposure to meaningful input, students in immersion classes, students did not achieve accuracy in certain grammatical forms. From these findings, it can be concluded that the suggestion is that some form of focus on grammatical forms was necessary if learners were to develop high levels of accuracy in the target language.

Grammar teaching in the L2 classroom was also reconsidered as a result of its positive effects. The evidence for this is mainly from extensive laboratory and class-room based studies as well as reviews of studies on the effects of instruction over decades (Ellis, 1994, 2001, 2002a; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Long, 1988, 1991). The positive effects of grammar instruction has been shown on the development of specific target language forms (Lightbown, 1992; Lightbown & Spada, 1990) as well as corrective feedback on learner errors (Nassaji & Swain, 2000). These studies indicated that grammatical instruction has a significant effect on the attainment of accuracy. It has also been found that instruction has facilitative effects on both the rate and the ultimate level of L2 acquisition (R. Ellis, 1997, 2001, 2002a).

Despite the debate on whether grammar should be taught in a second language classroom, teachers have continued to teach grammar in these classrooms. The ensuing discussion presents options that second language teachers have in teaching a second language.

2.7 APPROACHES AND OPTIONS IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

As mentioned earlier, grammar instruction or form focused instruction is an umbrella term used to refer to any pedagogical technique, proactive or reactive, implicit or explicit, used to draw students' attention to language forms (Ellis, 2001; Spada, 1997). It has initially followed two distinct routes or approaches as proposed by Long (1988). The first is what Long (1988) refers to focus on form (FonF) and the second is what he refers as focus on forms (FonFs). In addition, Long suggested the third approach to language teaching which he called focus on meaning. This approach does not involve the teaching of any grammar, rather the emphasis is on communication. These approaches are presented in Figure 2.2 below.

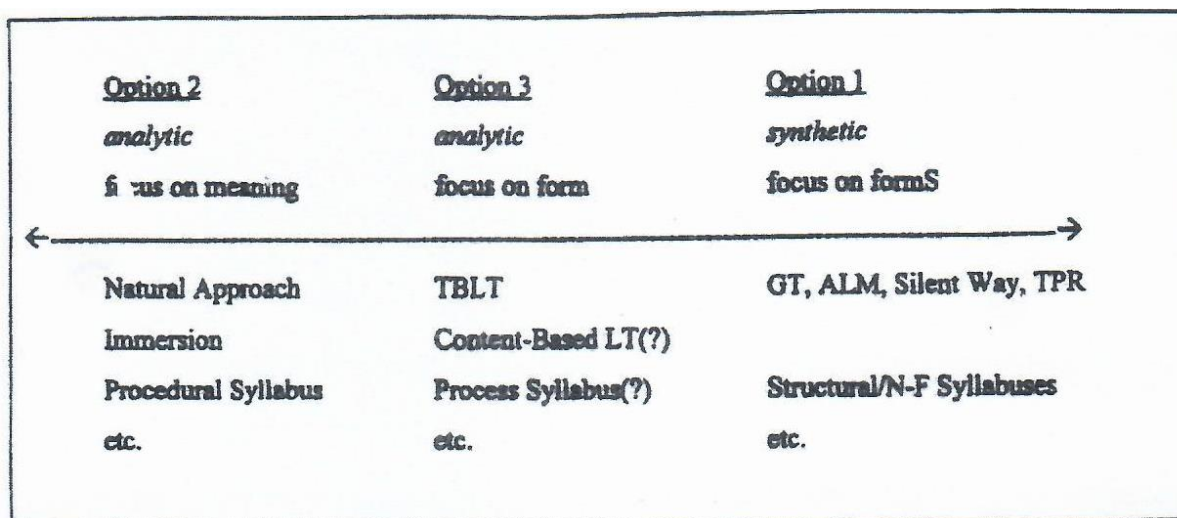


Figure 2.2 Options in language teaching (Long, 1998: 36)

As shown in Figure 2.2, there are three options that can be used in language teaching. On the extremes are a focus on meaning and a focus on forms. These are labelled option 2 and three respectively. In the middle is focus on form which includes aspects of both two and three. As indicated by Long (1988), Focus on Form overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose

overriding focus is on meaning or communication. On the other hand, Focus on Forms, as Long (1998) states, follows a structural syllabus which involves the traditional language teaching consisting of the presentation and practice of items drawn from a structural syllabus. A structural syllabus, also known as a grammatical syllabus, is a product-oriented syllabus based on grammatical structures graded according to complexity. The teaching methods aligned to focus on forms include the Grammar Translation method, Audi-Lingual Method, silent Way and the Total Physical Response methods, among others. Option 2, which is meaning focused instruction follows the Procedural syllabus. A procedural syllabus is a syllabus which is organized around tasks, rather than in terms of grammar or vocabulary. The teaching methods associated with meaning focused instruction include the natural approach and immersion classes. Lastly, option three which is focus on form follows the process syllabus. This is a dynamic type of syllabus which involves content negotiation between teachers and learners. The methods aligned to focus on form include the Task Based Language Teaching and Content Based Language Teaching.

As Long and Robinson (1998) state, the three approaches constitute a continuum. Daugherty and Williams (1998) also argue that focus on forms and focus on form cannot be treated as two distinct dichotomies, but rather focus on form entails a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on forms is limited to such a focus and focus on meaning excludes it. Sheen (2002: 303) succinctly distinguishes between the theoretical background concerning focus on form and focus on forms by stating that:

In terms of the theoretical underpinnings of these two options, there is a fundamental difference. 'Focus on form' derives from an assumed degree of similarity between first and second language acquisition positing that the two processes are both based on an exposure to comprehensible input arising from natural interaction. However, it is also assumed that there are significant differences in the two processes: that exposure is insufficient to enable learners to acquire much of the second language grammar, and that this lack needs to be compensated for by focusing learners' attention on grammatical features. 'Focus on forms', on the other hand, is based on the assumption that classroom foreign or second language learning derives from general cognitive processes,

and thus entails the learning of a skill – hence it's being characterized as a 'skills-learning approach'.

The following section provides a description of these options separately.

2.7.1 Focus on forms

The term focus on forms refers to the traditional approach to grammar teaching based on a synthetic syllabus. This is a syllabus where language is broken down into its component parts such as functions, words and grammatical structures, among others (Pawlak, 2006). The items to be taught are preselected and ordered according to criteria which include simplicity, frequency or utility (Johnson, 2001). The preselected items are then presented deductively or inductively and are systematically and intensively treated in the hope that the learner will eventually be able to utilise them in communication (Long & Robinson, 1998). As Long (1998) alludes, a course design which follows FonFs starts with the language to be taught. The designer divides the L2 into linguistic items, each to be learnt separately at a time, and presents them in a predetermined sequence. Doughty and Williams (1999) explains this by stating that it always entails isolation or extraction of linguistic features from context or from communicative activity. Ellis (2001) describes it as an approach in which the teacher and students are aware that the primary purpose of the activity is to learn a pre-selected form and that learners are required to focus their attention on some specific form intensively in order to learn it.

This option has, however, been criticised by Long (1997) who is of the opinion that focus on form lessons tend to be dry as they consist principally of work on linguistic items, which students are expected to master one at a time, often to native speaker levels. With this option, anything less than the prescribed forms is treated as error, and there is little if any communicative language use. It involves the memorization of grammar rules, short dialogues, linguistically modified texts, transformation and error correction exercises and display questions. As mentioned, with focus on form, learners are required to master each feature in isolation and then, it is hoped that they will synthesize all the components and use them in communication. The following are

other criticisms levelled against the focus on forms approach as presented by Long (1997):

- a. There is no needs analysis, resulting in teaching language aspects learners do not need or the other way round.
- b. It uses artificial language in pedagogic materials leading to language usage and not language use.
- c. There is ignorance of language learning processes and research findings, assuming the principles of the behaviourist approach.
- d. It leaves learners out of syllabus design, believing they learn what is taught;
- e. It uses boring lessons leading to lack of motivation and attention;
- f. Focus on forms produces many more false beginners than finishers, as SLA is not a process of accumulating entities.

The instructional methods accompanying Fonfs include the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Visual method among others where classroom practices such as the presentation of explicit grammar rules and memorization of short dialogues are the norm. The common and typical focus on forms lessons follows the presentation-practice-production (PPP) procedure. When utilising this procedure, the teacher starts by explaining some specific new forms and meanings of the L2. As Skehan (1998) states, the first stage of the PPP procedure is generally focused on a single point of grammar which is presented explicitly or implicitly to maximize the chances that the underlying rule will be understood and internalized. This would essentially aim at the development of declarative knowledge". Then, learners move on to the second stage which is the practice stage. In this stage learners focus mainly on accuracy, subject to the teacher's careful supervision or control. The practice stage is mainly aimed at converting declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge. During this stage, control is gradually loosened as learners move to the next stage of production. During the production stage, the learners are provided with opportunities to produce the target form, sometimes through communicative activities. In this production stage, learners would be required to produce language more spontaneously, based on meanings the learner himself or herself would want to express (Skehan, 1998).

2.7.1.1 Focus on form methods

As Pawlak (2006) states, the teaching methods associated with the focus on form approach include the Grammar Translation and the Direct Method which are discussed next.

2.7.1.2 The Grammar Translation Method

This is the grammar teaching method which emerged from the Greek system of classification which described language in terms of observed form and function and established formal categories to which conceptual interpretations of their external environment was established (Rivers, 1981). The conceptual interpretations included nouns denoting names of people, places and things and verbs denoting actions or states and have become universally applied categories. Although this view of language lacking in scope, it has left a rich legacy of grammatical terminology which has been treasured and is still viewed as a dominant meta-language for speaking about formalising the various levels of structure in the language (Dirven, 1990).

The Grammar Translation Method places emphasis in fostering analytical thought in the description and classification of language in its written form, where the focus is on the detailed analysis of the grammar rules in the target language. The main feature of its teaching technique is translation from, and into, the target language. A typical lesson of this method involves the presentation of a statement of the rule followed by vocabulary lists and translation exercises. It is through translation that learners are engaged in active problem solving situations where language rules which have been taught deductively are applied. The aim is also to heighten the learners' grammatical awareness in both the learners' first and target language (Fotos, 2005). Teacher and student interactions in this approach involve checking and improving learners' knowledge of grammar which involves the ability to memorize and recite rules.

Its positive effect lies in the fact that because it is shaped by analytic procedures, it fosters linguistic awareness which enables learners and teachers not only to

communicate logically in the second language, but also to communicate about the language in a meta-language. DeKeyser (1998) also mentions that it has what he refers to its happy side effect which involves being able to use the basic structures of the target language. The popularity of this approach is attributable to the reasons that firstly, it is safe and easy to implement especially in huge heterogeneous classes; and, secondly, it easy to test by means of multiple choice tests. Brown (1994) also mentions that the application of the method requires few skills on the part of teachers. It is, however, referred to by Richards and Rodgers (2001) as a method for which there is no theory as there is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it.

According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979:3), the key features of the Grammar Translation Method are as follows:

- a. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
- b. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
- c. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- d. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
- e. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
- f. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
- g. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
- h. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation

2.7.1.3 The Direct Method

The Direct Method can be regarded as a reaction to the weaknesses of the Grammar Translation Method and was developed at the end of the 19th century (Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979). The main weakness of the GTM is that it was not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively. It can be safely argued that the direct method was a first attempt to make the language learning situation one of language use. It demanded inventiveness on the part of teachers and

led to the development of new techniques of language, such as demonstrations of pictures and objects, the emphasis on questions and answer, spoken narratives, dictation and imitation. The method was also a direct departure from the GTM which emphasized reading and writing in that it places emphasis on listening and speaking. The method enjoyed some popularity at the beginning of the twentieth century. The basic premise of the Direct Method is that second language learning should be more like first language learning and should include more of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second language and little or no analysis of grammatical rules.

One of the criticisms levelled against the Direct Method focused on the lack of a linguistic theoretical basis and the loss of efficiency of the method when its principles were followed too strictly (e.g. sometimes a mere translation is more efficient than long explanations of a word) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 13). The other criticism was that it was difficult to implement in huge classes. Just like the Grammar translation method, this one also lacked theoretical foundations. Because of the practical difficulties in its implementation, its use had declined by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century. It was, however, revived and directed into what by the middle of the twentieth century became the Audiolingual method. Although its reign was short-lived, the method contributed to the advent of newer methods. It can therefore be said that the direct method can be regarded as the first Language Teaching Method to have caught the attention of teachers and language teaching specialists. It marked the beginning of the “methods era”. According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979:3), the main characteristics of the Direct Method are:

- a. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
- b. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
- c. Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
- d. Grammar was taught inductively.
- e. New teaching points were taught through modelling and practice.
- f. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
- g. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.

- h. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

2.7.2 Focus on meaning

It was out of the dissatisfaction with focus on form approaches such as the GTM and ALM in the 1970s and 1980s that the meaning-focused instruction emerged. As Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1997) state, with GTM and ALM there was a mismatch between what was learned in the classroom and the communicative skills needed outside the classroom. Also, research in grammar revealed that most adult second language learners who were successful in controlling grammatical rules and structures in the classroom could not apply these rules successfully in real communication. It was felt that the focus on form approach has failed to assist in L2 acquisition as it was futile to impose external linguistic syllabus on learners. The other reason was the belief that much of first and second language learning is not intentional, but occurs incidentally and is implicit. Long (1997) distinguishes 'FonF' from 'focus on meaning' (FonM) – an approach to teaching that emphasized incidental and implicit language learning through content-based instruction or immersion programmes where the learners' focus was more or less entirely on meaning. The main proponents of focus on meaning approach are Corder, Felix, Wode, Allwright, and others, in Prabhu's procedural syllabus, as well as Krashen and Terrel who all advocated for the Natural approach to language learning. The early supporters of the focus on meaning option believed that the goal of language teaching should be developing learners' communicative competence which also includes sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. Richards and Rodgers (1986) mention that the supporters of this approach, who include Corder and Krashen, believed that language acquisition can be best enhanced through activities that involve real communication and can be used for carrying out meaningful tasks. It was also believed that language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the main learning method of the meaning-focused instruction approach. As Swain and Lapkin (1998) state, CLT emphasises the use of tasks as stimuli for the generation of interaction among students. Learners are not usually not specifically taught the strategies, maxims and

organisational principles that govern communicative language use, but they are expected to work these out for themselves through expensive task engagement (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel, 1997). The proponents believe that language learning is assisted through the social interaction of learners and their interlocutors, particularly when they negotiate toward mutual comprehension of each other's message meaning (Pica *et al.*, 1989).

Focus on meaning is arguably a great improvement on Focus on Form because of its considerable success in helping learners become fluent and confident L2 users. However, it suffers from a number of problems as alluded to by Long (1997). Firstly, it does not always address learner needs or means analysis in its guiding curriculum content and delivery, respectively. In this regard, Pawlak (2006) mentions that the Focus on Meaning approaches cannot be applied to different cultural, institutional and educational contexts. Secondly, Swain (1991) has observed that the evaluation of the programmes it has been implemented in has shown that the productive skills of mature learners who have gone through it remain far from native-like, particularly with grammatical competence. The third criticism is that because of increasing evidence of learner maturational constraints, including sensitive periods in SLA, older children, adolescents and adults regularly fail to achieve native like levels in L2 because they have lost access to innate ability they used to learn languages in early childhood. Therefore it is insufficient for later L2 learning to simply create the condition for L1 acquisition in the classroom. The other criticism arises from the fact that some times the first language may be slightly different from the second language to the point that positive evidence alone may suffice to show the learner what is grammatical, but not what is ungrammatical. Lastly, a number of studies (Ellis, 1994; Long, 1983, 1988) have shown that a pure focus on meaning is insufficient. They show that there is advantage in acquisition for learners who receive instruction with attention to code features.

The reason that meaning focused approaches calls for teachers to create classroom discourse conditions of naturalistic language learning results into a problem as it has been shown by Ellis (1992) that most L2 classrooms do not manifest these characteristics and, therefore, might be said to constitute acquisition-poor environments. As Pawlak (2006) states, most classroom interactions are

characterised by communicative asymmetry where the teacher allocates turns and controls their duration and the topics for learners' contributions. This does not happen in out of classroom communication where turn taking rules are governed by competition and being initiative. It can, therefore, be concluded that the prospects for recreating the natural language experience look bleak in language classrooms. One reason for this is that learners in these classrooms do not always obtain what Lightbown (1992) refers to as quality input as much of the target language they receive is interlanguage talk or the imperfect output of their peers. Besides, many L2 teachers are themselves not mother tongue speakers of the L2 they are teaching. As Wong-Fillmore (1992) states, this may result in fossilization. Therefore, it is nearly impossible replicate conditions of naturalistic acquisition in the L2 learning classroom.

The other condemnation of Meaning Focused language instruction is that it does not improve the quality of learner output. A number of studies (Swain, 1991; Harley, 1992; Davidson & Snow, 1995) have shown that learners who went through this type of instruction in immersion classes tend to attain near-native speaker levels of discourse and strategic competence as well as being able to speak the target language fluently. However, it has also been shown that the grammatical competence of these learners lags far behind. From the findings of these studies, it can be concluded that while some grammatical features are intrinsically easy to acquire from exposure, others are not, and may require the provision of Form-Focused Instruction, or negative feedback. As Pica (2002) expounds on this issue, when the attention of language learners is focused solely on the communication of message, they primarily focus on meaning and thus fail to recognise how the L2 structures, sounds and forms shape the input. They cannot, therefore, notice how L2 sounds and structures relate to the meanings of messages they encode.

A further criticism of the meaning focused instruction is that the decision to disregard grammar in the L2 curriculum may be ignoring the individual characteristics and preferences of L2 learners. This is true as studies have shown that unlike young learners, adolescents and adults benefit from FFI as it expedites and facilitates the learning process (Pawlak, 2006).

The other criticism of the meaning focused instruction is based on pedagogical considerations. As Ellis (2002) states, the notional-functional syllabuses on which meaning focused instruction is based do not ensure a comprehensive and systematic coverage of TL forms as compared to a structural syllabus. Again, there is a shortage of materials that are entirely meaning centred. Without tools, it is therefore, difficult to implement meaning focused instruction.

2.7.3 Focus on form

As it has been mentioned in the previous discussion, the emphasis in focus on forms is the grammatical mastery of the target language, while the focus of attention in meaning focused instruction is communication. It should be noted that focus on form is an attempt to combine the strengths of focus on forms and focus on meaning with the aim of overcoming their limitations. Focus on form approach is mainly motivated by the Interaction Hypothesis and is based on the analytic syllabus. Wilkins (1976) mentions that the analytic syllabus is organized in terms of the purposes for which a language is learnt and the uses of language necessary to meet them, rather than a list of linguistic items. As Long (1991) states, focus on form overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication. With this approach, language is attended to as a tool and a means of communication. Any focus on form, therefore, should be learner originated during some form of meaningful exchange. As Long argues, the learner's internal syllabus is, therefore, respected. As Long and Robinson (1998) mention, this takes place because of the realisation that during meaningful communication, factors may arise that lead even the fluent language user to temporarily attend to the language itself. In order to clarify how this approach could be practically implemented in the classroom, Long and Robinson (1998) mention that focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher or one or more students – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension and production. Long (1991), when first proposing the approach emphasized its two important characteristics:

1. Attention to form should occur in lessons which are predominantly meaning-centred and permit genuine communication.

2. Attention to form should be incidental, that is, it should arise as a result of communicative need either in anticipation of or in response to a learner error. In addition, a further interpretation of these characteristics was made by a number of researchers, notably Ellis (2015) who states that Long's views about FonF can be characterized as entailing a focus on form that:

- arises in interaction involving the second language (L2) learner;
- is reactive (i.e. occurs in response to a communication problem);
- is incidental (i.e. it is not pre-planned);
- is brief (i.e. it does not interfere with the primary focus on meaning);
- is typically implicit (e.g. it does not involve any metalinguistic explanation);
- induces 'noticing' (i.e. conscious attention to target linguistic forms);
- induces form–function mapping; and
- constitutes an 'approach' to teaching (i.e. FonF) that contrasts with a traditional form-centred approach (i.e. FonFs).

The FonF approach draws mostly from Schmidt's noticing hypothesis. Schmidt (1990) believes that certain features of language, both grammatical and lexical, can go unnoticed in input unless the learner's attention is drawn to them. Therefore the purpose of FonF is to encourage learners to notice these features in accordance with the Noticing hypothesis. Schmidt (1990, 1994) claims that noticing is a conscious process, and attention is necessary for the acquisition to take place. Because focus on form needs to occur in a communicative context, it requires the use of 'tasks' that focus learners' primary attention on meaning but also provide periodic attention to form by the teacher and/or students when this is triggered by communicative need. This suggests that the target language structures in this approach are learned in a communication context. Ellis (2008) mentions that the underpinnings of implementing focus on form in a second and foreign language classroom has been revised as follows:

- learners have the opportunity to engage in meaningful language exchanges in order to become ready to use the new forms spontaneously;
- full acquisition of the new form is possible only when the form is attended to while using the language in a meaning-focused task (see also Long 1991);

- taking into account learners' limitations while attending to content and form in the input (VanPatten 1990), it is believed that learners concentrate on the meaning first during a communicative activity; and
- therefore, there is a need to incorporate techniques for learners to attend to form during a communicative activity, as they may help learners briefly draw their attention to form, meaning and use during one cognitive event (Doughty 2001: 211).

The underlying assumption of focus on form, as Doughty and Williams (1998) states, is that meaning and use must already be evident to the learner at the time that attention is drawn to linguistic apparatus needed to get meaning across.

The different options to implementing Focus on Form include Task Based Language Learning and corrective feedback.

2.7.3.1 Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) can be successfully utilised to teach grammatical forms despite that it is not based on a grammar syllabus. As Ellis (2014) states, in TBLT learners are asked to perform various types of tasks which create contexts for the authentic use of language in interaction. Ellis (2003) defines a "task" as an instructional activity that satisfies the following four criteria:

- It requires a primary focus on meaning;
- There is some kind of gap (e.g. an information gap that motivates the learners to communicate);
- Learners use their own linguistic resources (i.e. they are not provided with the language needed to perform the task; and
- There is a communicative outcome (i.e. not just the display of correct language).

It should be noted that learners' attention to form in TBLT can be motivated either by the way the task is designed (e.g. a task that involves reporting an accident will provide a natural context for the use of the past tense) or by the way the task is implemented (e.g. by means of corrective feedback).

In addition, tasks can be unfocused or focused. This suggests that where tasks are intended to facilitate the acquisition of grammar they will need to be focused. In other words, they are designed to induce attention to the use of a specific grammatical feature. As Ellis (2008b) notes, focused tasks provide opportunities for learners to use a specific grammatical feature that will be natural or useful for performing the task. Furthermore, the presentation of the grammar feature may either be explicit or implicit. In explicit instruction such tasks involve presentation-practice-production (PPP). In this way they provide a means for the intentional practice of a grammatical feature that has been previously explained to the students. However, tasks serve a different purpose in implicit grammar instruction. Their purpose is to create contexts for the incidental acquisition of the target feature. In this context, students are not told what the target is. Instead, they are encouraged to orientate to the task as a “language user” rather than as a language learner” so that attention to the target structure arises naturally through the performance of the task (Ellis, 2014).

As Ellis (2014) further states, focused tasks can be input-based or output based. Ellis describes an input-based task as the one where learners are presented with L2 input (oral or written) which they need to comprehend in order to achieve the outcome of the task. Therefore, an input-based task does not require production on the part of the learner. It should, however, be noted that learners are not prevented from speaking and, in fact often do so when they fail to comprehend. These tasks are based on the assumption that learners will pick up new linguistic forms through exposure to the input provided that they are able to comprehend the input and they notice the new forms. Input-based tasks can, therefore, be used to help students acquire new grammatical structures. On the other hand, output-based tasks aim to elicit production of the target structure and are best suited to helping learners obtain greater control of the grammatical structures that they have partially acquired, but are not yet using with a high level of accuracy.

A number of researchers have also suggested the ways in which grammar instruction can be incorporated in TBLT. For instance, Skehan (1998) proposes that tasks can be designed in such a way that when they are performed learners will need to focus on clusters of grammatical features. Furthermore, Samuda (2001) has shown through a study that a teacher may temporarily suspend the performance of a task to provide a

brief explanation of the grammar feature to be utilised in the task. Estaire and Zanon (1994) suggest that a task based lesson can also include a pre and a post-task phase, where the pre-task phase incorporates some teaching of grammar.

2.7.3.2 Corrective feedback

Corrective feedback (CF), also known as error correction or grammar correction is one of the most studied type of Focus on Form. Questions that are asked in discussions about the effect of CF second language acquisition include but are not limited to the ones asked below. The first question is whether CF should be implicit or explicit. The second question is whether CF should be proactive or reactive. The last question, which is probably the most important is whether CF leads to the acquisition of grammatical forms. According to Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006), CF involves the responses to learner output that contain an error. It constitutes a reactive type of approach that occurs in both the negotiation of meaning and of form. As Ellis *et al.* (2006) mention, the responses given regarding the error that occurred in the utterance can firstly consist of an indication that an error has occurred. Secondly, the learner can be provided with the correct target language form. Thirdly, the learner can be provided with metalinguistic information about the nature of the error. Lastly, the response to the error committed by the learner can be a combination of all three.

This discussion now responds to the first question on whether CF should be implicit or explicit. To better understand the difference between implicit and explicit CF, there should first be an understanding of how implicit knowledge differ from explicit one. As Ellis *et al.* (2006) state, implicit knowledge is the one that learners are only intuitively of and is easily accessible through automative processing. In contrast, explicit knowledge consists of knowledge that learners are consciously aware of and that can be accessed through controlled processing. From this distinction, it can be inferred that even learning, which is the aim of CF, can take place implicitly or explicitly. N. Ellis (1994) explains that implicit learning of a language involves the acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process that takes naturally without instruction and without conscious operations. In

the case of language learning this involves learning without grammar instruction. In contrast, explicit learning involves a more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in search for a structure. In language learning, this involves the study of the grammar of the target language.

A number of studies investigated the effectiveness of explicit and implicit corrective feedback. In an analysis of studies assessing the role of feedback on acquisition, Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) analysed eleven studies, they observe that the results point to an advantage for explicit over implicit corrective feedback in studies in which the treatment involved production. The studies whose findings revealed the advantage include those of Carrol and Swain (1993), Muranoi (2000), Havranek and Cesnik (2003). However, the studies by DeKeyser (1993) and Kim and Mathes (2001) did not reveal significant differences between the effects of explicit and implicit feedback techniques. Some studies went further to determine the role of implicit and explicit feedback on learners' explicit and implicit knowledge of the target language. One such study is that of Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) which observed the effectiveness of explicit corrective feedback. The following are the reasons for the advantage of explicit corrective feedback (Ellis *et al.* 2006: 363):

- explicit corrective feedback in the context of communicative activity can facilitate the conversion of explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge;
- explicit feedback is more likely than implicit feedback to be perceived as overtly corrective;
- metalinguistic feedback, in comparison to recasts, seems more likely to lead to greater depth of awareness of the gap between what was said and the target norm, thereby facilitating the acquisition of implicit knowledge; and
- metalinguistic feedback does not intrude in the communicative flow of the activity.

The second question, which deals with practicalities of implementing CF is whether it should be proactive or reactive. Dealing with this question is important in that teachers have to take a decision that will result in them providing the necessary assistance to their students. Proactive grammar instruction in the form of CF involves pre-planned instruction to enable students to notice and use target language features that might

otherwise not be used or even noticed in classroom discourse (Lyster, 2007). Doughty and Williams (1998) claim that it involves making an informed prediction or carrying out some observations to determine the learning problem in focus. They further describe it as an instructional situation where a teacher chooses a form in advance to present to students in order to help them complete a communicative task. This simply means that the teacher prepares in advance instruction on the features he would like students to concentrate on, in anticipation of the need to use those features in a classroom communicative process. It is practiced because the teacher may be anticipating specific problems resulting from a given activity. This can be done explicitly through formal instruction or in a less explicit manner which might involve students being asked to alter or manipulate a text that contains a form the teacher would like the learners to concentrate on. This should not be confused with the traditional grammar instruction as the grammar focus is not centered on a set of language structures imposed by the syllabus. In this case, the choice of form is determined by the communicative needs of the learners (Doughty & Williams, 1998).

Fotos and Nassaj (2007) also mentions that advanced planning in proactive focus on form does not impose external to a linguistic syllabus, instead, it requires the analysis of the needs of the learners for the teacher to plan what to teach in order to address those needs. Long (1991) advises that before deciding on structures for pre-emptive focus on form, aspects such as individual learner difference, developmental sequences, input quality, formal and functional complexity and L1 influence should be considered. It should be noted, as Ellis *et al.* (2002) state, proactive focus on form can also be student initiated. This happens when it occurs by means of a query that the student addresses to the teacher. The advantage of the student initiated focus on form is that it addresses gaps in the students' linguistic knowledge which can be presumed to be important to them and which they are, therefore, strongly motivated to try to fill. In contrast to proactive focus on form instruction, reactive focus on form occurs in the form of CF or any other attempt aimed at drawing learner's attention to language during interaction (Lyster, 2007). It therefore addresses a performance problem. As Doughty and Williams (1998) succinctly put it, reactive focus on form encompasses responses to communication problems resulting from incorrect use of the target form. It can also be regarded as a source of negative evidence since it occurs when learners use a form in an unacceptable way and the teacher tries to correct them or ask other

learners to make a correction for them. As Thornbury (2001) states, reactive teaching enables the teacher to follow each learner's developmental trajectory by responding to their communicative errors rather than to pre-selecting the errors through pre-teaching. It deals with student output. Willis and Willis (2007) assign the following benefits of reactive focus on form instruction:

- It helps prevent fossilization as learners are alerted to the fact that they still have some way to go in mastering a problematic target language feature and use it correctly in communication.
- If used sparingly it helps motivate learners.
- It provides useful negative feedback as sometimes it is this feedback that is the quickest and most efficient way of putting learners on the right track when a structure has been incorrectly used.

The two options discussed above present some advantages and disadvantages in communicative language settings. Pre-emption of form may likely disrupt communication flow. Besides, it may lead to learners to thinking that the teacher is more concerned about form rather than meaning. In addition, the forms teachers pre-empt may not constitute actual gaps in the student's L2 knowledge. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when the teacher's pre-emption is useful in preparation for communicative activity which needs the use of the form.

The third question, which is probably the most important as mentioned earlier, is whether CF leads to the acquisition of grammatical forms. This has been one of the controversial issues in L2 teaching for several years, with Truscott's (1996, 2007) seminal papers being at the forefront in dismissing its significance in L2 acquisition. Truscott (1996) argued that grammatical error correction in L2 writing should be abandoned as it does not lead to an improvement in accuracy. He based his reasoning on both theoretical and practical basis. On theoretical basis, Truscott argued that grammar correction ignores the theory that claims that much L2 grammatical learning follows a natural order. That is to say that the acquisition of grammatical knowledge follows a particular sequence. Problems arise when instructional sequences or the grammar corrected are inconsistent with the natural order of acquisition. This implies that when students are corrected on a point they are not ready for, that correction will not have value for them. Correction can be said to be ignoring the developmental sequence of L2 acquisition. Furthermore, Truscott argues that correction results in

pseudo-learning which cannot be transferred to future writings. He argues that the fact that correction fails to recognise that interlanguage is a system that develops by its own processes makes its prospects of enhancing L2 acquisition dim.

With regards to the practical reasons why error correction should be abandoned, Truscott (1996) argues that the problem arises when teachers are not able to determine that an error has been committed, or to identify it in a student's writing. Furthermore, if teachers are able to identify the error, they may encounter difficulties in the attempt to explain it to the learner, who also may have a problem understanding the explanation given. In addition, in the situation where the learner is able to understand the explanation, there is no guarantee that the learner will apply the rule correctly in future. It is for these reasons that Truscott vehemently opposed any stated value of error correction.

On the other hand, Ferris (1999, 2002, 2003, 2004) has strongly advocated against Truscott's assertions regarding the value of CF in L2 learning and teaching. Ferris (1999), in response to Truscott's argument that error correction should be abandoned because it is harmful, mentioned that there is mounting research evidence that effective error correction—that which is selective, prioritized, and clear—can and does help at least some student writers. Besides, it encourages self-editing. Furthermore, despite the negative assertions against grammar correction, the results of the CF research provide the clearest support for focus on form (Mackey & Goo, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006). These studies have shown that correcting learners' errors while they are communicating is a highly effective way of drawing their attention to form, and there is clear evidence that CF facilitates acquisition. It has also been observed through several studies that CF is more effective if it is explicit, presumably because it is more likely to guarantee a switch in selective attention to form. Nonetheless, implicit forms of CF such as recasts have also been found to be effective and may even have a greater long-term effect. CF is likely to be more intensive when it is performed by the teacher, but it also occurs in learner–learner interactions and contributes to learning.

Recent studies on the effects of CF in L2 writing

A number of studies summarized in Table 2.1 show the positive effects of CF in writing.

Study	Focus of study	Error types receiving treatment	Type of corrective feedback
Ashwell (2000)	Effects of timing of content versus form-focussed feedback	Seven categories including lexical, morphological, and mechanical errors.	Indirect, not explicit (no codes or rule reminders)
Chandler (2003)	Written CF's effects in revision and over time; direct and indirect written CF	23 categories; a range of linguistic domains	Direct, indirect, rule reminders, different treatments at different points of the term
Ferris (2006)	Effects of written corrective feedback over time and teachers' written CF strategies	16 categories; broad range domains	(Mostly) indirect with error codes
Ferris and Roberts (2001)	Effects of more versus less explicit indirect CF	Five broad categories	Indirect feedback, either coded or uncoded depending on treatment group
SLA studies			
Bitchener <i>et al.</i> 2005	Types of CFs; differences between international and migrant learners	Definite and indefinite articles	Direct with varying levels of additional explanation
Bitchener <i>et al.</i> 2005)	Effects of written plus oral CF	Articles, simple past tense, prepositions	Direct written CF plus 5-min oral conferences
Ellis <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Effects of focused versus unfocused CF	Definite and indefinite articles	Direct with metalinguistic explanation
Sheen (2007)	Effects of written CF	Article use in narratives	Direct written CF

Table 2. 1 Studies of corrective feedback Adapted from Ferris (2010: 187)

As shown in Table 2.1, the findings from research conducted recently have shown that both L2 writing and SLA researchers have come to a conclusion that CF leads to improvements in student writings. It should be noted that the studies of SLA researchers are mainly concerned with whether CF facilitates long-term acquisition of particular linguistic features, while L2 writing researchers are interested in whether CF helps student writers to improve the overall effectiveness of their texts to develop as more successful writers (Ferris, 2010). The studies conducted after Truscott (1996) all reported a positive effects of CF (Ashwell, 2000; Ferries, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). The other set of recent studies have provided compelling evidence that CF when done under the right conditions can facilitate L2 development and help students improve their writing accuracy for the linguistic features under consideration (Bitchner & Knoch, 2008; Bitchner et al., 2005, Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007).

2.7.3.3 Grammar consciousness raising

Consciousness raising refers to the “deliberate attempt to draw the learner’s attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language” Sharwood Smith (1985: 274). This is achieved by making learners perform tasks that will raise their consciousness regarding the language structure of concern. A C-R task is as an activity where the teacher provides learners with L2 data in some form and are required to perform some operation on or with it. The purpose is for learners to arrive at an explicit understanding of the chosen linguistic properties of the target language (Ellis, 1997). As Ellis (2003) further describes it, C-R should consists of (1) data containing exemplars of the targeted feature of the L2 and (2) instructions requiring the learners to operate on the data in some way. Options in presenting the exemplar data include a text showing the correct use of the structure of concern. Students can be asked to respond to the correctness or appropriateness of the way the structure is used.

C-R holds a middle ground between the Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching. Its main principle is to develop awareness of specific grammatical structures at the level of understanding than to spontaneously require the learner to produce them in communication. As Ellis (2002) puts it, the aim

of this kind of grammar teaching (C-R) is not to enable the learner to perform a structure correctly but simply to help him/her to 'know about it. C-R has been dubbed a potential facilitator for the acquisition of linguistic competence. It is hoped that by acquiring knowledge, students will be able to apply it in future

The nature of Consciousness raising tasks

According to Richard (1992), conscious raising tasks can either be deductive or inductive. In a deductive approach, learners are taught rules and given specific information about a language. This approach can also be called rule-driven learning because when utilising such an approach a grammar rule is explicitly presented to students and followed by practice applying the rule. The deductive approach starts with the presentation and explanation of the rules and then is followed by the examples of the sentences using the rules. This is to say that in the deductive approach the teacher directly explains the rules. This clarification is then completed with discrete sentences. Learners then have to confirm their understanding by coming up with their own sentences.

A number of advantages have been suggested for the deductive approach for teaching English grammar. These benefits include the fact that the approach is straight forward and therefore time-saving. It may be preferred by teachers as the school timetable does not offer much time for teaching. The approach furthermore respects the learners' intelligence and maturity. It assumes that they are capable of learning from been given rules. It also confirms many learners' expectation about classroom learning especially for those who have analytical learning style. This expectation is that teachers have to provide knowledge. In addition, the approach allows the teacher to deal with language points as they come up rather than having to anticipate them and prepare them in advance.

In contrast to the deductive approach, an inductive approach comes from inductive reasoning in which a reasoning progression proceeds from particulars to generalities as stated by Widodo (2006). The methodology with the inductive language teaching approach is that learners are not taught grammatical rules or other types of rules directly. They are, however, left to discover or induce rules from their experience of

using the language (Richard, 1992). Learners are made to infer the rules through examples from which a rule is inferred. When applying the rule, teachers do not give the rules directly to the learners. Instead, learners are provided with input from which they are asked to discover the rule by analysing the provided sentences in a discourse level. This type of learning has been likened to acquiring the first language but because it is practiced every day and continuously with many exposure then the grammatical rules are required naturally.

Some of the advantages of the inductive approach include that it makes the rules more meaningful and memorable as learners discover language rules for themselves. In addition, it ensures that the mental effort that is done by the students leads to their cognitive depth. The approach also allows for students to be more actively involved during the teaching and learning process when compared to applying deductive approach. It largely beneficial in satisfying the desire of the students who have good ability in pattern recognizing and problem solving. It, additionally, prepares the learners to be active participants to their learning. Consciousness raising tasks have been found to be effective with high intermediate level learners (Hendricks, 2010), the description that can be given to the participants in this study.

2.8 DIFFERENCES AMONG FOCUS ON FORMS, FOCUS ON FORM AND FOCUS MEANING

The dissimilarities among the three approaches (FonF, focus on meaning and FonFs) have been summarised by Ellis (2016). Firstly, FonFs and focus on meaning approaches do not follow needs analysis of the learners and language structures are presented as per syllabus. In contrast, in the FonF approach a needs analysis of the target tasks learners need to perform provides the basis of a task based syllabus. Secondly, FonFs does not have a realistic model of language, while FonF attracts learners' attention to forms that otherwise learners might not notice. With regards to focus on meaning approach, it has been shown that older learners cannot fully acquire a second language naturally, thus FonM may not succeed in enabling such learners to achieve high levels of L2 proficiency. Thirdly, FonFs ignores the fact that learning a new word or rule is a slow and gradual process. On the other hand, FonF allows for the slow and gradual process involved in the learning of L2 linguistic features. When

coming to FonM, it has been shown that even prolonged exposure to the L2 does not ensure that learners will acquire non-salient linguistic features. FonFs also fails to recognise that the Teachability of grammatical forms is constrained by learnability while FonF respects the learner's internal syllabus. On the other hand, FonM has been branded to be inefficient as it results in only slow progress. Lastly, FonFs may result in more false beginners than finishers, while FonF assists the development of form-function mapping and thus promotes both fluency and accuracy. On the other hand, FonM in a positive way can result in confidence and fluency in the use of the L2, but limited accuracy in the use of the target language system.

2.9 GRAMMAR INSTRUCTIONAL OPTIONS

There are a number of options teachers can choose from in the teaching of grammar. Teachers may utilise the good from each option to better assist their students. These options are discussed next.

2.9.1 Implicit versus explicit instruction

Explicit instruction of grammar involves drawing learners' attention to the rules of target language feature mainly through rule explanation (DeKeyser, 1995; Ellis, 2006). Therefore, explicit instruction involves teaching a particular grammar rule during the learning process and encouraging the learners to develop metalinguistic awareness of that rule. Ellis (1997:94) further mentions that with explicit instruction, "learners construct some kind of conscious, cognitive representation, which, if asked, they can articulate". The aim of explicit instruction is simply to help learners develop an explicit representation of a grammatical rule. As Ellis (2014) states, this is of value to learners because they can use it to monitor for accuracy and it also facilitates the long-term processes involved in the acquisition of implicit knowledge. An example of tasks that are part of explicit instruction include those dealing with consciousness-raising. It should, however, be noted that tasks that are aimed at enhancing explicit knowledge will result in the acquisition of implicit knowledge. But if those tasks are presented and performed in the target language, Ellis (2014) mentions that it is possible that they may assist in the usage based development of implicit knowledge in general as learners interact among themselves or with the teacher.

As mentioned earlier, explicit knowledge is helpful to learners in monitoring output and in self-correction, especially when producing a text. Explicit knowledge, according to Schmidt (2001), is also of value to learners as it assists in the acquisition of implicit knowledge as this requires conscious attention to linguistic forms. Furthermore, explicit knowledge may be needed to help learners acquire grammatical features that are resistant to implicit learning.

In contrast, in implicit instruction there is no attempt to direct learners' attention towards the rules nor is there any rule explanation. Instead learners have to infer the rules from the exemplars provided (Norris and Ortega, 2000; DeKeyser, 1995; Ellis, 2005). In other words, as Ellis (2009) states, implicit instruction aims to provide learners with conditions under which they can infer the rules without awareness. The outcome of implicit instruction is that learners will internalize the pattern without having their attention focused on it. Ellis (1997: 84) further states that "in implicit grammar instruction learners are asked to engage in practice of some kind. In this case, the aim is that the learners should learn the target structure to the extent that they can use it not just when they are consciously attending to it, but also when they are engaged in meaning-focussed communication". With regards to implicit instruction, as Ellis (2014) states, the aim is to influence the acquisition of implicit knowledge directly either by drawing attention to the use of a specific grammatical form by means of an input-based task or creating a context for the meaningful and purposeful use of a specific grammatical form by means of output based tasks. An example of tasks that are part of implicit instruction include focused tasks such as those in Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

Ellis (2014) states that the conditions that implicit grammar teaching seeks to create in order to facilitate acquisition include frequent exposure to the target structure and/or frequent opportunities for learners to attempt production of the target structure. The other condition is the creation of "real operating conditions". That is, exposure to and use of the target structure need to occur in a context where the learner is engaged in trying to communicate in order to achieve some outcome other than that of learning the target structure. The last condition is a periodic focus on the target grammatical form while communication is taking place.

2.9.2 Deductive and inductive grammar instruction

A distinction can be made between direct (deductive) and indirect (inductive) form focused instruction. When utilising the deductive grammar teaching approach, learners are provided with metalinguistic descriptions of the targeted feature followed by examples of its use encountered in context. In contrast, the inductive approach requires learners to discover metalinguistic features for themselves after they have been provided with data illustrating the target feature first (DeKeyser, 1995). The discussion now moves to describing the two options in grammar teaching separately.

A number of modifications can form part of the deductive grammar presentation. These modifications include the degree of explicitness involving whether the rule is presented fully or only partially and that of elaboration which concerns the length of time taken (Sharwood-Smith, 1981). The teacher mostly presents the rules concerning a particular language feature orally or in written form at the beginning of the lesson. As Pawlak (2006) states, teachers have various options at their disposal regarding the presentation of a given language feature. They may, amongst other, use formulas, demonstration, charts, pictures or iconic devices. In addition, teachers may also resort to the use of the learner's mother tongue for explanations and cross-lingual comparisons of very complex rules. It is, however, recommended that before this is done the explanation should have been first done in the target language. Swan (1994) proposes the following six considerations to be made when rules are presented:

- Rules should be true.
- Rules should show clearly what the limits on the use of a given form are.
- Rules should be clear.
- Pedagogic rules should be simple.
- Explanations must make use of the conceptual framework available to the learner.
- Rules should answer the question (and only the question) that the student's English is 'asking'.

As Thornbury (2001) and Johnson (2001) have observed, a number of reasons make deductive grammar teaching appealing to teachers. The alluring features of this approach include that it is time saving. It again provides the learner with a kind of mental map regarding the features of the target language. It also recognises the intelligence, maturity and preferences of especially adult learners. Besides, it allows for the principled coverage of language features while ensuring well-organised classroom management. Besides the advantages, a number of criticisms have been directed to deductive teaching. Chief among them, as mentioned by Long (1997) and Skekhan (1998), is that it promotes a teacher-centred approach to teaching. It may also be boring and discouraging to younger learners. Again, it is connected to the Grammar-Translation Method and PPP procedure, both of which are out of favour. It is because of these reasons that the inductive method is preferred.

In contrast to the deductive grammar teaching method as stated earlier, with regards to the inductive method, learners are provided with a number of examples which illustrate the use of a particular language structure. It is assumed that learners will make attempts to arrive at the rule of using the structure, or make generalisation based on the examples and illustrations given. The method, therefore, encourages learners to discover rules pertaining to the target language themselves. As H.D. Brown (2001) states, employing discovery activities in the language classroom is motivating as students construct rules which are more meaningful, memorable and serviceable. Further, Thornbury (2001) argues that the inductive method is more engaging as it fosters learner autonomy and supports efforts required to solve the language problem which results in the activation of language processing at a deeper level. Larsen-Freeman (2009) recommends the inductive approach for teaching complex target language rules which are difficult to articulate and internalize.

Besides the advantages of the inductive method, it also has a number of problems. Firstly, the typical educational setting does not provide the ample time that is needed by this method for students to discover rules. It is, therefore, time consuming. In addition, it may be more effective for teachers to directly state the complex grammar features of the target language to avert learners from constructing erroneous hypotheses which will take time to reformulate. As Larsen-Freeman (2003) emphasizes, it is necessary to guide learners to understand the reason why things are

the way they are when it comes to the functioning of L2 grammar. This can be achieved by providing learners with meaning based explanations as this will reduce the arbitrariness in grammatical rules.

It should be noted that a number of studies (Robinson, 1996; Ellis, 2003), though few, prefer the deductive over inductive method in as far as their role in second language acquisition is concerned. It can be suggested that despite the appeal of any of the methods to teachers, caution should be exercised to ensure the selection of the best solutions depending on learning contexts. As Pawlak, (2006) states, there is a need to take into consideration factors such as syllabus requirements, time and materials available, as well as learners' cognitive styles, goals and preferences, among others.

2.10 CONCLUSION

The first section of this chapter presented the different theories of second language acquisition. The theories discussed are the interventionist and the interventionist theories in second language learning. These are the theories on which grammar teaching approaches are based. The second section of the chapter discussed the debate on whether grammar instruction is beneficial to second language learners. The chapter also discussed different options that second language learners and instructors have in the learning and teaching of a second language.

CHAPTER 3

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNER ERRORS AND ERROR ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Language learning, like any other human learning, entails the making of mistakes or errors. It is therefore crucial to study the mistakes and errors that second language learners make as this assists with the understanding of how these learners can be assisted to acquire the second language. This chapter reviews literature on the errors that second language learners as well as the analysis of those errors. An understanding of the errors that second language learners make can assist teachers to help them overcome them. Because of the importance of the difference between the mistakes and errors that L2 learners make, it is important to differentiate between the two. This differentiation is important because it is the errors that are of concern to second language practitioners, and not the mistakes as the discussion in this chapter shows. It is as a result of this reason that the chapter further highlights the importance of errors in L2 learning. To better understand the errors that L2 learners make, their sources and causes are thoroughly discussed. Since one of the objectives of studying errors is to analyse them so that they can be remedied, this chapter, in addition, gives a thorough description of the error analysis process in language learning by looking at its historical overview, its importance and the criticisms levelled against it.

3.2 ERROR AND MISTAKE DIFFERENTIATED

In order to assist learners to deal with the problems they encounter in Second Language learning, it is important to differentiate between an error and a mistake. This differentiation is crucial as it is the errors that language learners make which are of a greater concern for SLA. The Dictionary of Language Teaching and Linguistics (1992) differentiates between an error and a mistake clearly. It states that a learner makes a mistake when writing or speaking because of lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Therefore, mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is paid. However, an error cannot be self-corrected as the learner does not know what is correct.

In addition to the definition given above, Ellis (1997) states that there are two ways which can be applied to distinguish between an error and a mistake. The first involves checking for the consistency of the learner's performance. If a learner sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, a mistake is occurring. But, if a learner always uses a grammar structure incorrectly consistently, this suggests that an error is being made. The second way to determine if the learner is making a mistake or an error is to ask that he correct the incorrect utterance. If the learner is able to correct the utterance, it may be assumed that the incorrect utterance was a mistake. However, if the learner is unsuccessful in correcting it, then the assumption may be that it was an error.

In order for an error to be evidence of the learner's interlanguage, Corder (1967) made a distinction between performance and competence errors. This distinction is crucial because errors of performance are unsystematic, and can, therefore, be labelled as mistakes, while errors of competence are systematic and are therefore a representation of the second language learner's interlanguage (Corder, 1967). From Corder's distinction, therefore, only errors of competence are referred to as errors, while the others are referred to as mistakes. Corder (1973) mentions that errors are the deviance and are due to deficient competence. As a result of this, they tend to be systematic and not self-correctable. He further mentions that mistakes occur usually because of performance deficiencies that arise from lack of attention, slips of memory, and anxiety which may possibly be caused by pressure of time. In addition, they are not systematic or readily identifiable and are self-correctable. It is, therefore, significant to pay special attention to the errors that L2 learners make rather than to the mistakes.

However, it should be noted that distinguishing between error and mistake is not without problems. As Ellis (1994) argues, distinguishing between errors and mistakes as lack of knowledge and as failed performance respectively is not unproblematic in itself. This is because it cannot be assumed that native speakers who deviate from the norm and do not correct themselves lack knowledge. Therefore, one cannot always be sure that a deviation from the target language norm is an error just because the speaker did not correct themselves. The second problem that Ellis (1994) alludes to with regards to distinguishing between error and mistake is that it is taken for granted that competence is homogeneous instead of being variable. In other words, the fact

that the learner's knowledge of a structure is partial is often overlooked in the analysis of learners' errors. Deviations in areas the learner has already learned can be attributed to failed performance or lack of automatization, whereas deviations in areas not yet learned represent lack of knowledge.

3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNER ERRORS

The importance of learner errors can be looked at from the angle of the learner, the researcher and the teacher. Corder (1981) pointed out that errors are not only viewed as negative inputs or as unsuccessful pieces of language, but also as significant pieces of information, which can help in the understanding of the learning process, i.e., the different stages the learner must go through to reach proficiency in a language.

According to Corder, by being aware of the type of errors a learner produces we can pinpoint the stage the learner has reached in his or her language learning process. Thus, the importance of errors is threefold (Corder, 1981). Firstly, they are important for the teacher because they tell him how closer to the goal the learner has advanced. To further explain this importance, Fanselow (1997:591) states that errors are a necessary part for teachers in observing the linguistic development, and that errors are significant because they may represent the discrepancy between the grammar of the learner's 'transitional competence' and that of the target language. In order to be able to utilise the learner's errors in the process of second language acquisition, a basic knowledge of their errors is necessary. The teacher should be familiar with both the nature and causes of the errors produced by learners in order to make maximal use of error analysis in the classroom. Therefore, the significance of error analysis as an approach used for pedagogical reasons is that it is, as put by Olsen (1999: 192), "aimed at giving pedagogical advice on how to deal with different types of error in learners' language". In addition, a relevant more recent argument for the potential contribution of error study to EFL pedagogy, particularly in improving the quality of teachers' error feedback, is that of Salem (2007). She mentions that learner error enables teachers to reflect on their attitude to learner language, and provides 'raw material' for sharpening their linguistic awareness. She concludes that the study of ESL learner error can lead to teachers modifying their feedback on their students' output.

The second importance, as mentioned by Corder (1981), of EA is for the researcher. For the researcher, errors are important in that they provide evidence of how a language is learned or acquired, and what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. This importance of EA for researchers is closely linked to the significance it has on pedagogy as the findings are applied in second and foreign language classrooms. As Ellis (1994: 48) puts it, even "the attempt to discover more about L2 acquisition through the study of errors was itself motivated by a desire to improve pedagogy". Without doubt, it can be argued that the results of many studies in first and second language acquisition, as argued by Hendrickson (1978:389), "have important implications for teaching foreign languages efficiently and for developing effective instructional materials".

The third reason put forward by Corder (1981) as the importance of errors is that learners can learn from their mistakes. To clarify this, Hendrickson (1987) states that errors are signals that actual learning is taking place. Errors do indicate to students their progress and success in language learning. As Ellis (1994) states, the significance of error analysis is even more evident for learners than for teachers. He argues that it is more desirable for the learner to do EA since it is the learner who is usually engaged in a process of comparing his/her 'interlanguage' (IL) (i.e. what they actually say) with the target language (TL) and noticing the discrepancies between the two. In other words, it is a comparison led by learners themselves, of the linguistic features they have noticed in the input with what they currently produce in their own output which is their 'mental grammar'. They thus register through EA, the width of the gap between the input and their output. It is this comparison that can encourage learners to master the structure of the target language.

3.4 SOURCES AND CATEGORIES OF ERRORS

Errors can be considered from different perspectives depending on what the focus is when the description of an error is given. The focus may be on a number of areas such as how well the structure of the utterance grammatically is, and how correct the pronunciation is, among others. Besides, different authors have given different terms to the same types of errors. For example, transfer errors are at times referred to as

interference errors. For sources of errors to be established, and the way their categories to be determined, it is crucial to look at the types of errors encountered and to try to identify them. The sources of errors involve the strategies that language learners use to produce target language utterances or output. These strategies often give rise to incorrect target language.

For the reason that error sources are varied, James (1998) insists that the system utilised to determine the description of errors should firstly be well developed and highly elaborated, and secondly, be simple, self-explanatory and easily learnable. Ellis (1994) highlights that it is in the attempt to determine the source of errors that one will ultimately establish the processes responsible for L2 acquisition. In the main, regarding the sources of errors, Taylor (1986) points out that the error source may be psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, epistemic, or may reside in the discourse structure. Psycholinguistic sources concern the nature of the L2 knowledge system and the difficulties learners have in using it in production. Sociolinguistic sources involve such matters as the learners' ability to adjust their language in accordance with the social context. Epistemic sources concern the learners' lack of world knowledge, while discourse sources involve problems in the organization of information into coherent 'text'. For the purpose of this study, only the psycholinguistic sources of errors will be discussed. One of the reason for concentrating on this type is because this study utilizes EA to determine the type of grammar errors that first year students make. As Abbot (1980: 124) cited in Ellis (1994) puts it, "The aim of any EA is to provide a psychological explanation". Over the years, different theorists used different classificatory systems in their discussion of the psycholinguistic sources of errors. Some of these classifications are now discussed. Ellis (1994) presented the psycholinguistic sources as in the figure below.

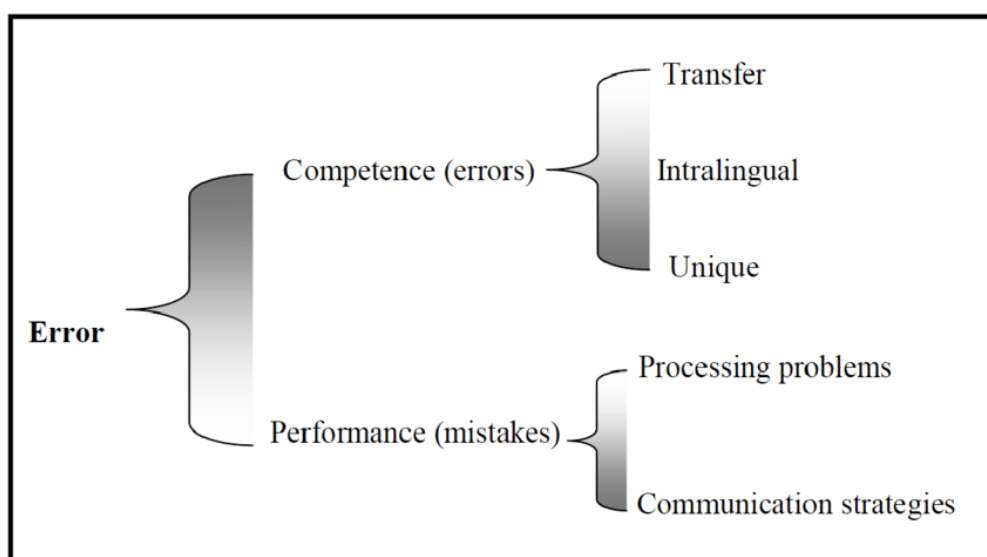


Figure 3. 1 Psycholinguistic sources of errors (Ellis, 1994: 58)

As indicated in Figure 3.1 above, Ellis (1994) mentions that any deviation from the target language is a reflection of either a problem of competence or that of performance. Competence errors are the ones which have been considered central to L2 acquisition. These are errors language learners make because they do not know the correct form of the target language. The source of these errors are transfer, intralingual and unique. Unique errors are the errors which the source of cannot be explained. On the other hand, performance errors are mistakes that result from processing problems of various kinds and those resulting from the strategies that second language learners utilize as a result of lack of competence in the target language. These strategies include circumlocution and paraphrasing.

As Ellis (1994) states, it is mainly competence errors that have been considered to be central to the study of L2 acquisition. For instance, Richards (1971) distinguished three sources of competence errors. The first are interference errors which occur as a result of the use of elements from one language while speaking another. These are the errors which Ellis call transfer errors. The second are intralingual errors which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. The last are developmental errors which occur when the learner attempts to build up hypotheses about the target language on the basis of limited experience. A distinction between Richards' intralingual and development errors was found not to be clear

(Schater & Celce-Murcia, 1977) resulting in researchers working with only transfer errors and intralingual errors, the latter being a combination of Richards's intralingual and developmental errors.

Three categories have been suggested for the categorisation of transfer errors. The first is referred to overextension of analogy. It occurs when the learner misuses a vocabulary item because it is similar, either phonetically, orthographically, semantically or syntactically to another form in the LI. The second category is called transfer of structure, or hyper correction avoidance. This occurs when the learner utilizes some L1 feature rather than that of the target language. However, this transfer may also include the possibility of transfer from all previously learned L2s as it happens in many multilingual societies. The third category is that of interlingual or intralingual errors. These errors arise when a particular distinction does not exist in the L1 (Ellis, 1995). The interlingual errors have been further subdivided by Richards (1971) into overgeneralisation errors; ignorance of rule restrictions; incomplete application of rules; and false concepts hypothesised. These errors happen when the student commits a grammar error because the mother tongue rules are followed.

Richards (1974) further claims that competence errors made by language learners can be subdivided into three types, depending on the origin of the error. As Richards states, errors are either induced by the Native language (interference errors) or by the Target Language (intra-lingual and developmental errors). Richards (1974) subdivided competence errors into firstly interference errors which are caused by the structure of the native language. The second subdivision is intra-lingual errors which originate in the structure of the TL itself. The third subdivision is that of developmental errors which reflect the strategies employed by second language learners to acquire the TL. Although Richard's explanation of errors is similar to Ellis', it excludes instruction as a possible source for learners' errors.

Generally, as Touchi (1986) states, there are mainly two major sources of errors in second language learning. The first source is interference from the native language while the second source can be attributed to intralingual and developmental factors. Interference is defined as the use of elements from one language while speaking another, and may be found at the level of pronunciation, morphology, syntax,

vocabulary and meaning. Interlingual errors or errors of interference are also called transfer or interference errors. Since the 1940s and early 50s, a view that the native language of second language learners and any other language they speak play a mostly negative role. Selinker (1972) argues that the over emphasis on the transfer errors gave prominence to contrastive analysis. After the contrastive analysis movement and the ushering of error analysis, researchers tended to minimize interlingual errors and emphasized intralingual and developmental errors (Richards, 1971; Dulay & Burt 1974; Dulay *et al.*, 1982; Ellis, 1994). However, negative transfer or interference is still acknowledged as an important factor in second language learning (Kellerman, 1979; Touchie; 1983).

Besides the categorisation of errors as discussed, Burt and Kiparsky (1972) categorised errors with reference to the consequences these errors would have on the process of learning an L2, or on what the person who says them has to learn in English. This has led to the compilation of lists and dictionaries elaborating on errors (Turton, 1996) as well as dictionaries of false friends (Kirk-Greene, 1992).

The error categories as suggested by Burt and Kiparsky changed some years later when Dulay *et al.* (1982) described four error taxonomies after taking into consideration those categories. In the first two taxonomies, they categorised errors according to some observable surface feature of the error itself without reference to its underlying source or cause. These were referred to as the linguistic category classification and the surface structure taxonomy. In this case, errors are classified by taking into account either the language or linguistic constituent or both as being affected by the error. Errors covered involve those related to phonology, syntax and morphology, semantics and lexicon and lastly those of discourse. The linguistic category is often used in conjunction with other taxonomies for research. The surface strategy taxonomy deals with errors related to omissions, additions, mis-formations, or mis-orderings (word or sentence misordering) (Dulay *et al.*, 1982).

Recently, researchers have suggested new categorisations of errors. An example is the error categorisation by James (1998). James categorised errors by classifying their sources depending on the level of language they are produced from as shown below.

1. Errors in encoding in speaking (Mispronunciations)	}	SUBSTANCE ERRORS
2. Errors in encoding in writing (Misspellings)		
3. Errors in decoding in hearing (Misperceptions)		
4. Errors in decoding in reading (Miscues)		
5. Errors in composing spoken text (Misspeaking)	}	TEXT ERRORS
6. Errors in composing written text (Miswriting)		
7. Errors in understanding spoken text (Mishearing)	}	
8. Errors in understanding written text (Misreading)		
9. Errors in formulating spoken discourse (Misrepresenting)	}	DISCOURSE ERRORS
10. Errors in formulating written discourse (Miscomposing)		
11. Errors in processing spoken discourse (Misconstrual)	}	
12. Errors in processing Written discourse (Misinterpretation)		

Figure 3. 2 Levels of error (James, 1998: 130)

As the focus of this study is on the writing medium, a brief explanation of the error levels as presented in Figure 3.2 only concentrates on this medium. As shown in Figure 3.2, misspelling errors, which fall under substance errors include punctuation errors, typographic errors, dyslexic errors and confusibles. These are errors occur at the writing production level (James, 1998). The other error level in Figure 3.1 is text errors. Errors at this level are those that occur in language usage, which for the purpose of this study is writing. These errors occur from ignorance and misapplication of the lexico-grammatical rules of the language. They include lexical errors and grammar errors. The last level of errors in Figure 3.1 is that of discourse errors.

It should be noted from the discussion of the sources of errors that describing and identifying errors is complicated. As Ellis (1994) states, the source of the majority of learners' errors is unclear. In addition, classification into clear categories is further impeded by the fact that most errors have more than one source. In addition, errors may not only be ascribed to the sources identified in the discussion presented. Some errors have been attributed to fossilization which occurs at different stages of the

interlanguage development of second language learners. The next discussion is on fossilization as the source of errors.

3.5 FOSSILIZATION DESCRIBED

As it has been mentioned earlier, second language learners, whether in naturalistic or instructed settings continue to make errors in their attempt to acquire the second language. In addition, Brown (2007) states that all learners in all areas experience uneven lines of progress, and in many cases the lines flatten out, especially in advanced stages of learning. L2 learners are not exempt as they also navigate through this experience. In view of this, it has long been established by SLA research (Selinker, 1972; Selinker & Lemendella, 1979; Selinker, 1992) that many L2 learners fail to achieve native speaker like proficiency as a result of inability to correct persistent errors. Some failure occurs and remains at around the beginner level, while others make it to an advanced level. But, eventually there is a trade-off between the effort that would be required to top up the system, and their current degree of satisfaction at their communicative effectiveness. Therefore, there is a consensus among L2 researchers that L2 learners, unlike L1 acquirers generally do not reach the same level of competence as native speakers because some language errors will persist in their output. This is to say that the grammar of an L2 learner is not the target language grammar, and that L2 learners are therefore likely to make errors even at an advanced stage of competence. This phenomenon is referred to as fossilization. The term “fossilization” was introduced to the field of SLA by Selinker in 1972 on the basis of his observation that the vast majority of second language learners fail to achieve native-speaker competence. This is because certain rules and items fossilize. As Selinker (1972) puts it, fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular Native Language will tend to keep in their inter language relative to a particular TL, no matter what the age of the learner or the amount of explanation and instruction the learner receives in the TL.

The definition of the term fossilization is itself a bone of contention among researchers, and has also evolved over time. The notion of fossilisation was introduced by Selinker (1972: 2015) in his seminal paper on interlanguage where it is stated that:

Fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their IL... no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the target language.

Later Selinker and Lamendella (1978) defined fossilization as a permanent cessation of IL learning before the learner has attained TL norms at all levels of linguistic structure and in all discourse domains in spite of the learner's positive ability, opportunity, and motivation to learn and acculturate into the target society. It should be noted that the proponent of fossilization, Selinker (1974: 14), also accepted that it is not only errors that may be fossilized, but "correct things" may also become fossilized, especially if they are caused by processes other than language transfer. This point is covered succinctly by Ellis (1985: 48) in his description of fossilization by stating that:

Fossilization occurs in many languages and cannot be remedied by further instruction. Fossilized structures can be realised as errors or as correct target language forms. If when fossilization occurs, the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature X in the interlanguage has assumed the same form as in the target language, then fossilization of the correct form will occur, if, however, the learner has reached a stage in which feature Y still does not have the same form as the target language; fossilization will manifest itself as an error.

However, it should be noted that there is a dispute concerning the existence of fossilization in SLA literature. Its strong proponents like Selinker (1972) believe in its existence and permanence, while other authors like Washburn (1994) claim that what appears to be fossilization is only temporary cessation of learning variously referred to as plateauing, temporary stability and jellification. In addition, there are others like Tollefson and Firn (1983) who believe that temporary aspects of fossilization exist. Long (2001), on the other hand believes that fossilization does not exist. Long (2001: 37) argues that: "while fossilization may yet turn out to exist, there is little evidence that it does thus far, and hence, there is currently little or nothing to explain". To sum up this fossilization debate in literature, the cessation of learning has been hypothesized to be temporary, permanent or both. The temporary aspect is the

perspective of fossilization that is provided by the sociolinguistic approach, which argues that changes in circumstances leads to learning resumption. On the other hand, there are views which relate fossilization to factors of age or maturation. This view that postulates that maturational changes in learner's brain, prominent in the Critical Period Hypothesis, will result in second language learning being incomplete once the learner has passed the critical period.

As to what the causes of fossilization are, there are a number of thoughts on the subject. Lightbown (2000: 179) speculates that fossilization happens when the learner has satisfied the need for communication and or integration in the target language community. She concludes that the issues regarding fossilization are complicated, and that the reasons for fossilization are very different to determine with any certainty. Fossilisation, according to Brown (2007), is a result of many factors, one of them being the presence or absence of internal motivating factors, of seeking interaction with other people, of consciously focusing on forms, and of one strategic investment in the learning process. That is, for fossilization to take place, a number of factors should be at play like the motivation level of the learner. A motivated learner would consciously try to use correct structures even though he communicates clearly using the incorrect TL structure. This he can achieve by utilising different platforms including the ones mentioned earlier. In addition, Brown (2007) notes that fossilization often occurs at the point where learners have reached some level of fluency in the target language, with some errors still occurring repeatedly and unconsciously in their language usage. The learners often may have achieved a level of competence which ensures communicative success, but the grammar may not be similar to that of the target language. This may be the case with university students who have learnt in English all their school years, but still make some grammar errors in both speech and writing.

The other factor leading to fossilisation as Greenbaum and Mbalu (2002:233) state, is "when learners do not need to adopt 'native' varieties because the level they have attained functions adequately for their communication needs." To clarify this, Higgs and Clifford (1982:78) expressed that —when students are regularly rewarded for linguistically inaccurate but otherwise successful communication of meaning or intent, the threat of proactive interference in the form of fossilization looms large. This is the

view which is also held by Lightbown (2000) when speculating that fossilization happens when the learner has satisfied the need for communication and or integration in the target language community. Further to these, Krashen (1985:43) in response to the question on whether L2 theory can account for fossilisation, suggests several possible causes of fossilisation as being:

- a. insufficient quantity of input;
- b. inappropriate quality of input;
- c. the affective filter;
- d. the output filter; and
- e. the acquisition of deviant forms.

Apart from the causes of fossilization mentioned above, Long (2003) mentioned the factors that have been proposed over time to be the causes of fossilization. A few of these factors are now presented. Higgs and Clifford (1982) as well as Yoriso (1994), as cited in Long (2003), claim that one of the causes of fossilization is lack of negative feedback on error both externally and internally in the form of self-monitoring, and/or provision of positive feedback on successful communication despite error. This happens especially when the error co-occurs with unavailability of negative evidence in natural L2 input. Another cause, mentioned by Nakuma (1998) in Long (2003), is the idiosyncratic transfer of L1 elements which particular learners perceive as equivalent to elements in the L2, so as to avoid duplicating them in the new language. Premature communication pressure has been mentioned by Higgs and Clifford (1982) as another cause. Hulstijn (1989) mentions the other cause as being the automatization of incorrect forms and rules, with resulting errors more likely to appear in casual than careful style due to less attention to form being exercised.

Zan (2004: 219) summarised the causal variables of fossilization as evidenced from studies conducted over time to include but not limited to the following:

- lack of instruction (e.g. Krashen and Seliger, 1975, 1976; Schmidt, 1983);
- absence of corrective feedback (e.g. Higgs and Clifford, 1982; Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Tomasello and Herron, 1988; Vigil and Oller, 1976; Valette, 1991);
- satisfaction of communicative needs (e.g. Corder, 1978, 1983; R. Ellis, 1985; Klein, 1986; Klein and Perdue, 1993; Kowal and Swain, 1997; Selinker and Lamendella, 1978; Wong-Fillmore 2002);

- age (passim the SLA literature);
- lack of written input (Schmidt, 1983; VanPatten, 1988);
- false automatization (Hulstijn; 1989, 2002a);
- end of sensitivity to language data (Schnitzer, 1993);
- lack of access to UG learning principles (White, 1996);
- learning inhibits learning⁵ (Elman et al., 1996); and
- language transfer (Han, 2000; Jain, 1974; Kellerman, 1989; Major, 2002; Selinker & Lakshmanan, 1992).

It is clear from this discussion that some form of cessation occurs in the process of learning a second language. This cessation, referred to as fossilization, occurs as a result of a number of factors. It may be because of fossilization that errors occur in the language of second language learners, leading to learners not reaching native like competency in the target language. There are, therefore, two important questions to be asked in this study regarding fossilization. The first question is whether fossilization can be overcome, while the second one asks about the ways to overcome it if that is possible. In responding to the first question, it should be noted that linguists differ in their opinion of whether fossilization can be overcome.

3.5.1 Overcoming fossilization

Whether fossilization can be overcome is still a debate among second language acquisition researchers with some arguing that it can while others argue that it cannot. The prominent among linguists who believe that fossilization cannot be overcome are Vigil and Oller (1976) who assert that fossilization occurs in most languages and cannot be remedied by further instruction.

Some of the linguists who assert that fossilization can be overcome include Brown (1994, 2000). According to Brown (2000), fossilization is a normal and natural stage for many learners, and should not be viewed as some sort of terminal illness, in spite of the forbidding metaphor that suggests an unchangeable situation etched in stone. A metaphor that Brown uses is that fossilization is something like "cryogenation", which is the process of freezing matter at very low temperatures. This situation could

be reversed by giving some warmth to the matter. The same could happen to the fossilized items through some instruction.

Brown (1994) anchors his stance of the reversibility of fossilization on Vigil and Oller's (1976) account of fossilization as a factor of positive and negative affective and cognitive feedback. He believes fossilization may be overcome if the learner is given the necessary positive affective feedback meant to encourage further attempts at communication, as well as with neutral or negative cognitive feedback. Brown (1994) states that this would encourage learners to try again, to restate, to reformulate or to draw a different hypothesis about the rule. Skehan (1994) refers to the crucial role of instruction in an attempt to overcome fossilization. He claims that what is learned, although derived from actual instances, consists of underlying rules which have been induced from the stimulus material and then become the basis for generalisation and transfer. He argues that learning is interpreted as the accumulation of chunks or formulaic items. Skehan claims that rather than relying on analysis and rules, users of exemplar-based system match current input with correct prior input. Judgements of well-formedness and instances of L2 production are based on these accumulated chunks. Skehan (1998) interprets fossilization as an error produced by a rule-based system which becomes an exemplar, albeit one which can be supplanted later if the underlying rule-based system evolves sufficiently. He, therefore, believes that fossilization occurs as a result of the misinterpretation of a rule by a learner which has not subsequently been eradicated by the accumulation of well-formed formulaic items, and argues that instruction can be of assistance.

3.5.2 Ways of overcoming fossilization

On how to overcome fossilization, there seems to be overwhelming evidence that second language instruction plays an essentially positive role in that regard. There is, at the same time, a wide conviction among second language researchers and instructors that second language instruction will help learners progress more rapidly through developmental stages, and it can destabilize interlanguage grammars that have fossilized (Ellis, 1999). This a belief held by some linguists (Kuo, 2003; Ellis, 1989; Long, 1988; Long, 1983) who believe that learners may need form-focused instruction to make them aware of grammatical features that have little communicative

importance and yet constitute target language norms. Long (1988) succinctly puts it that form focused instruction pre-emptively reduces the likelihood of inflexibility and fossilization in language development. To emphasize, Kuo (2003:14) holds that "with the focus on conversational and discourse-level grammar, the teacher bases the language instruction on the content and specific linguistic skills upon the conversational framework". Structurally organised communicative instruction such as this promotes fluency as well as accuracy of the target language forms.

Brown (1994) states that fossilization may be overcome if the learner is given the necessary positive affective feedback, meant to encourage further attempts at communication, together with neutral or negative cognitive feedback. Brown (1994: 218) states that these would encourage learners to "try again", to restate, to reformulate or to draw a different hypothesis about a rule. Lightbown and Spada, (1999: 120) also support the view that a communicative approach might help prevent early fossilization errors. The findings of the study by Norris and Ortega (2000) have also confirmed earlier results on the fact that formal instruction can aid in reversing fossilization. The main findings of Norris and Ortega's (2000) study are summarized below:

- a) focused L2 instruction results in large target-oriented gains;
- b) explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types;
- c) focus on Form and Focus on Forms interventions result in equivalent and large effects; and
- d) the effectiveness of L2 instruction is durable.

Zheng (2010) suggested instructional practices that can be adopted to overcome fossilization. Firstly, conducting needs analysis among the language learners can assist teachers to determine aspects of the target language which may have fossilized. This practice can serve both the language instructors and the language learners to place emphasis on what to teach and what learn. The reason for this is that, knowing the needs of the language learners may enable language instructors to select appropriate teaching materials, to adopt corresponding teaching strategies and to make other relevant preparations. In addition, language learners can have definite goals after they know their own needs and they can study with certain purposes so as to enhance their own autonomy of learning an L2. This is the approach this study is

taking where EA is utilised to identify the grammatical needs of the participants. Secondly, testing the language learners' proficiency of the target language can assist in arresting fossilization. This can be done by utilizing proficiency tests which comprise speech sounds, syntax, pragmatics, and several other aspects. The main purpose of proficiency tests is to know the level of the learners, especially their present problems in language learning. From the results of a proficiency test, language instructors may have clear targets in teaching and guiding language learners. The third instructional practice involves fostering a positive learning attitude in language learner. The positive attitude of language learners can be conducive to their learning, while the negative attitude of language learners may affect their learning potential. The fourth practice includes cultivating language learners' learning strategies. It is crucial for language learners to learn to select certain strategies in their own study to overcome fossilization and make new progress. Lastly, Zheng (2010) suggests that developing language competence and pragmatic strategies among language learners may assist in overcoming fossilization. Zheng suggests that it is through these practices that language learners can make steady progress in language learning and language use and consequently overcome fossilization to a largest extent. However, it should be noted that instruction is not the absolute solution to fossilization. As Larsen-Freeman (1995) states, instruction is useful to some extent, for some forms, for some students, at some point in the learning process.

3.6 ERROR ANALYSIS IN SECOND LANGUAGE STUDIES

As mentioned earlier in the discussion, errors are significant phenomena in language that warrant to be examined. They, therefore, warrant to be examined with the aim of enhancing second language acquisition. Literature shows that analysing learner errors has been the focus of research for some time. For example, Ellis (1994) mentions that as early as the late 1940s French (1949) studied different types of errors made by learners of nine different languages and discovered that the majority of the errors was uniform in nature, which led to the conclusion that learners' errors are not caused by their native languages but rather by the TL itself.

Ellis (1994) mentions that Lee (1957) tried to analyse and categorise about 2000 errors in the writing of Czechoslovakian learners. Lee argued that such analysis put a teacher

in a better position to decide how teaching time should be spent. French and Lee' studies are some of the early ones that looked at errors and concluded that not all errors do always result from the learner's first language. It was at the end of the sixties that there was a shift on pedagogical focus from preventing errors that L2 learners make to learning from those errors. As Hendrickson (1978) states, by the mid-1970s the view that errors are a natural and integral part of L2 learning became prominent, thus prompting more research on learner errors. This shift in pedagogical focus enhanced research on EA. Therefore the significance of errors as opportunities for learning continue to be espoused by modern theorists, thus also provoking research on L2 learner errors.

Error Analysis (EA) is one of the major theories dealing with errors in L2 acquisition. The history of EA cannot be fully understood without firstly providing a background of Contrastive Analysis (CA) which preceded it. It is a theory that replaced the Contrastive Analysis, which was abandoned by linguists and teachers due to its ineffectiveness and unreliability. EA came about when doubts about the status and applicability of CA to language teaching became apparent. As a result of these doubts, linguists (Corder, 1967; Richards, 1974; Selinker 1972) searched for a more efficient method of identifying and analysing the area of language learning. Contrastive analysis is the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities. Contrastive analysis had a strong belief that the learning of a second language is strongly influenced by the learner's L1. Advocates of CA claimed that the systematic comparison of the native language of learners and the target language will allow linguists to make predictions about the areas of learning difficulty in the target language. Emphasis was, therefore, placed on these differences. The most unsatisfactory aspect of CA, as mentioned by Ellis (1985), was that the assumption that the influence of L1 on the target language was a negative one. This is despite that, as Sharma (1981) points, the L1 is a linguistic apparatus that could facilitate rather than hinder the acquisition of a L2. These criticisms on CA gave rise to EA, as it was found that not all the errors made by L2 learners were the result of L1 interference.

As mentioned by Brown (2007), error analysis is one of the four common means of measuring language development, which include mean length of utterance, rating

scales and standardised Tests. The interest in error analysis came about because of the realisation by researchers and teachers of second languages that the errors that a person makes in the process of constructing a new system of language need to be analysed carefully as they possess the process of second language learning, has led to the process of error analysis. As Brown (2007) further states, the fact that learners do make errors which can be observed, analysed and classified with the aim of revealing about the system operating within the learner, led to a surge of the study of learners' errors called error analysis. Since this realisation, a number of language practitioners has defined error analysis differently.

Error analysis is concerned with the compilation, study and analysis of errors made by second language learners. EA belongs to applied linguistics, but it has no interest in explaining the process of L2 acquisition. It is rather "a methodology for dealing with data" "(Cook 1994). EA gained momentum in SLA with the publication of Pit Corder's seminal article titled: "The Significance of Learner's Errors" (Corder, 1967). As Brown (2007) states, the significance of EA intensified when language teaching became more humanistic and less mechanistic. With EA, as Brown (2007) mentions, learners were looked on not as producers of malformed, imperfect language replete with mistakes, but as intelligent and creative beings proceeding through logical systematic stages of acquisition, and creatively acting upon their linguistic environment as they encounter its forms and functions in meaningful contexts.

The analysis of learner errors and language production processes eventually led to a shift in the dominant language teaching methodology, which turned toward the communicative approach and away from its former behaviourist focus (Ellis, 1998). As earlier mentioned, the main objective of EA is to identify and systematically classify L2 errors by their types in order to establish the patterns of L2 development and acquisition. The analysis makes important distinctions between systematic errors and mistakes.

3.6.1 Error analysis defined

The early definition of EA was coined by Selinker (1974) as being the research conducted into errors committed by the students in the learning of foreign languages,

which can reflect learners' L2 learning results. The definition has evolved over time. Another definition which covers the procedures involved in EA is that by Crystal (2003:165) who defines Error Analysis (EA) as a "technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics". James (1998) has also defined error analysis as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language." He further states that EA "involves first independently or objectively' describing the learners' Inter Language and the TL itself, followed by a comparison of the two, so as to locate mismatches. Additionally, he mentions that EA involves the study of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance. It is an area of applied linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that deals with a systematic and methodical collecting and documenting of second language (L2) errors in learners' language production. Another definition of EA is provided by Brown (2007:17) who sees it as a process through which researchers observe, analyse, and classify learner errors in order to elicit some information about the system operating within the learner.

3.6.2 Importance of error analysis

Despite the criticism levelled against error analysis which will be discussed later, the process does have some significance. At its inception, the benefits of EA were based on its goals. Sridhar (1976) mention the goal of EA as being that of determining the sequence of presentation of target items in text books and classrooms; deciding about the relative degree of emphasis, explanation and practice that a teaching item should deserve during teaching; devising e remedial lessons and exercises; and selecting items for testing the learners' proficiency in the target language. These original goals of EA are still applicable.

Ellis (1994) credits EA for making the errors that L2 learners make respectable, thus forcing recognition that errors are not something to be avoided, but are an inevitable feature of the learning process. A justification for error analysis, as mentioned by Corder (1973) and Sercombe (2000), is that a good understanding of the nature of the errors L2 learners make is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found. The analysis of the second language learner's errors can help identify

the learner's linguistic difficulties and needs at a particular stage of language learning. With the information obtained from the analysis, the learners can then be assisted through devising remedial measures and preparing a sequence of target language items in class rooms and text books with the difficult items coming after the easier ones. Besides, as Mitchell and Myles (2004) claim, errors if studied could reveal a developing system of the students' L2 which is dynamic and open to changes and resetting of parameters.

Corder (1973) believes that paying attention to the learner's errors could lead to an understanding of the learner's needs. Therefore, teachers would stop assuming that they know how language courses should be structured, and design courses from a guide of what learners lack. According to Corder, studying learner errors has practical applications for L2 teaching because firstly, the errors provide feedback, they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his techniques. Secondly, they show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learnt or taught and need further attention. Lastly, in terms of a broader planning with a new group of learners, they provide the information for designing a remedial syllabus or a programmer of re-teaching (Corder, 1973). This is in agreement with Ethertton (1977) who also believes that error analysis additionally provides information for the preparation of textbooks and examinations. It also provides invaluable data when conducting research in language learning and teaching.

Besides the significances of EA mentioned by Corder (1981) and others, Dulay *et al.* (1982) perceive the other importance of EA to its success in having elevated the status of errors from complete undesirability to the relatively special status of research object, curriculum guide, and indicator of learning stage. In addition, it has brought multiple origins of learners' errors to the attention of teachers and researchers. As Pinker (1986) states, the presence of errors as well as their noticeable absence have been used by researchers to classify different types of errors, linguistic varieties, as well as to explain the causes of the errors. Without errors, linguists and teachers would have very little upon which to base their understanding of language learning. Without error analysis, it would have been impossible to describe the language of the learner in its own right.

3.6.3 Error analysis process

In order to conduct error analysis, Corder (1987) suggested the following five stages:

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

This section gives a brief description of the stages followed in error analysis.

3.6.3.1 Selection of corpus language

The corpus may be used as the sources for error analysis. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) mention that the primary data for investigating L2 acquisition should be samples of learner language. This is because competence, as they state, can only be examined by investigating some form of performance. Therefore, the corpus for the purpose of error analysis can be sourced from the performance of learners (e.g. learners' written essays). As James (1998) mentions, EA has traditionally based itself on performance data. Besides, Selinker (1972) states that the utterances which are produced when the learner attempts to say sentences of a language are the main source of data for EA. Therefore, the first stage of error analysis is when errors are identified or detected. James (1998) terms this stage error detection as it is actually the spotting of the error in the material to be analysed. A sentence is usually taken as a basic unit of analysis as it is used by the researcher to point out the erroneous utterances.

A consideration that one has to make is determining what the purpose of the study is and then try to collect relevant data for the study's aim and research questions that needs to be answered (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:57). If a written corpus is chosen as a source for EA, a decision should be taken regarding the genre to be used. This is important as the choice of genre is likely to influence both the macro and micro-linguistic characteristics of the samples. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) also mention that a decision should be made regarding the conditions under which the written samples are produced. These conditions include whether the written sample is timed or

untimed, and whether the learners have access to reference tools such as dictionaries and grammars while they write. With the timed sample, samples are usually produced under examination like conditions. In order to ensure a reliable corpus for analysis, descriptions should be made regarding the following:

1. The learner's social and situational background;
2. The situational context in which the writing took place.
3. The genre;
4. The topics;
5. The timing; and
6. The availability of reference tools.

In addition, it should be noted that the nature of the sample collected can influence the nature and the distribution of the errors observed. Table 2.1 provides a summary of the factors that can influence the nature and distribution of the observed errors. From the table, these factors include those which affect the learner, the language and production of the sample. When deciding on collecting a sample for error analysis, the proficiency level of the learner should be taken into consideration. If for example, a sample is a written one, a learner at the elementary level may not be able to produce enough information. Therefore, the researcher may have to think of the stimuli to use to encourage the learner to produce an acceptable sample. In addition, the other languages that the learner speaks have a contribution on the output. The learner who speaks only one language will have fewer transfer errors than the one who speaks a number of languages. The sample will also be affected by the learning background of the learner. A learner who studied the second language from an instruction setting will produce different results from the one who acquires the language from a natural setting, or a mixed one. With regards to the language factor, a consideration should be made on the medium of the sample, that is, whether it is oral or written. Whether the medium is oral or written will be affected by the level of the learner. More advanced learners may produce more than beginners. In addition, a decision should be made on the genre of the sample, that is, whether it is an essay or speech. The topic of discussion should also be borne in mind. It should be a topic that the learner is familiar with. If it is unfamiliar, the quality and quantity of the production may be affected. The other consideration that should be made relates to the production of the sample itself. The researcher should make a decision on whether the production should be planned

or not for it to suit the aim of the study. The other factors affecting sample collection are presented in Table 3.1 below.

Factors	
A. Learner 1. Proficiency level 2. Other languages 3. Language learning background	Elementary, intermediate, or advanced. The Learner's L1, other L2s Instructed, naturalistic, mixed
B. Language 1. Medium 2. Genre 3. Content	Oral or written e.g. conversation, narrative, essay The topic of the discourse
C. Production 1. Unplanned 2. Planned	The discourse is produced spontaneously. The discourse is produced after planning or under conditions that allow for careful planning

Table 3. 1 Factors affecting learner errors in samples of learner language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005: 58)

3.6.3.2 Identification of errors in the corpus

Identification of errors involves the analyst locating errors in the chosen corpus. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) state that the identification of errors involves a comparison between what the learner has produced and what a native speaker counterpart would produce in the same context. Therefore, this stage firstly involves the reconstruction of the sample as it would have been produced by the learner's native speaker counterpart. Secondly, an assumption should be made that every utterance or sentence produced by the learner is erroneous. Those that the comparison has shown to be well formed should then be eliminated. The last step is to identify which part of the learner sentence or utterance differs from the target language. The problem inherent with the reconstruction in the first step is that the error may not be constrained to the word, but to the breath of the context it is used in. However, as James (1998), argues there are problems associated with this as some errors are difficult to locate because they can be diffused throughout the sentence or the whole text and appear only after the whole text is carefully examined. Before analysing a text to identify errors, it is important to define what an error is beforehand. For example, when identifying grammatical errors in English learners' texts, one has to compare them to what is grammatically correct in English grammar books (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:58). However, if the aim is to analyse learner's errors in oral production, one has to take

into count which English variety the learners are exposed to when identifying their errors. Lennon (1991) mentions that problems arise in the identification of errors when the reconstruction of sentences or utterances is made (first step). The error has to be identified in its domain. In other words, a consideration should be made whether the error in the erroneous utterance or sentence is the word, phrase, clause, previous sentence or extended discourse. Another consideration to be made is the extent of the error, or the size of the unit that needs to be reconstructed in order to repair the error.

3.6.3.3 Classification of the errors identified/description

Corder writes that in order to describe an error, one has to specify how the English learner's error differs from the native speaker's (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:60). Description focuses on surface properties of learner utterances. In order to give a description, two steps have to be followed:

1. The development of a set of descriptive categories for coding the errors that have been identified.
2. Recording the frequency of the errors in each category.

In order to achieve this classification, James (1998) suggested two kinds of taxonomy to be used which are linguistic taxonomy and surface structure taxonomy. Linguistic taxonomy is drawn from a descriptive grammar of the target language. Such grammar, as Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) state, include general categories relating to basic sentence structure, the verb phrase, verb complementation, the noun phrase, prepositional phrases, adjuncts, coordinate and subordinate constructions and sentence connection. However, the chosen categories for error analysis depend on the data collected. The analyst should, therefore, develop categories to reflect errors identified in the sample. Errors therefore, should be classified in terms of the target language categories that have been violated rather than the linguistic categories used by the learner.

The surface structure taxonomy, as Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) have alluded, is based on the ways surface structure are altered in erroneous utterances. The four ways in which learners modify target forms are the following:

1. Omission. The absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.

2. Addition. This is the presence of a form that does not appear in a well formed utterance.
3. Misinformation. This involves the use of a wrong form or morpheme or structure.
4. Mis-ordering. This involves the commission of errors characterised by the wrong placements of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.

In addition to this, James (1998), suggests the fifth category of blends. This involves errors that reflect the learner's uncertainty as to which of two forms is required.

3.6.3.4 Explanation of the psychological causes of the errors

In order to analyse errors, firstly the analyst needs to explain them to determine their source and to account for the reason they were made. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) refer to this stage as the most important in EA. Although there are many sources of error, the psychological source of errors is the most significant as it relates to the processing mechanisms involved in L2 use and to the nature of the L2 system. From this source, it has been discovered that the source of errors may be interlingual and intralingual. Interlingual errors, as Corder (1983) states, are the result of mother tongue influences and occur as a consequence of transfer and borrowing. On the other hand, intralingual errors reflect the operation of learning strategies that are universal as they are evident in all learners irrespective of their L1. The other possibility is that at least some errors can be related to be neither intralingual nor inter lingual. These are errors which occur when language learners develop inter-language grammars, idiosyncratic dialects or approximate systems, and these errors may not necessarily be based on either the mother tongue or the target language (Corder, 1967). These sources are compatible because inter-language systems may involve errors based on L1, L2 and other forms. It should be noted that in many occasions of conducting error analysis, a difficulty may arise in trying to assign source of error, especially as many errors seem to have multiple origins (Londono Vasquez, 2008).

A classification of the explanation of errors as used in error analysis has been provided by James (1998). The target language causes or intra-language errors include the following:

1. False analogy, which can be referred again as over-generalisation;
2. Misanalysis. (This occurs when a learner has formed a hypothesis regarding the target language and in attempting to apply it he makes an error because he has misanalysed the rule.);
3. Incomplete rule application. (This is the converse of false analogy.)
4. Exploiting redundancy;
5. Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions; and
6. System-simplification.

3.6.3.5 Evaluation of the gravity or ranking of the identified errors

It will be an insurmountable task to try to address all the errors that learners make. The error analyst should, therefore, make decision on which errors to pay special attention to. This stage is crucial if the intended purpose of the analysis is to provide remedial instruction. A thorough evaluation will enable the analyst provide remedial instruction based on what was discovered to be the major errors of at the time. This stage involves the analysis of learner errors as a supplementary procedure for applying the results of EA. It involves determining the gravity of different errors with a view to deciding which ones should receive attention (Ellis, 1994). Error gravity judgments are, therefore, made to examine what degree of seriousness certain errors are in comparison to other errors, and what criteria could be used to decide on that degree. James (1998) indicates that the aim with error evaluation is to attach value to the errors, but not to devalue learners and their language. In addition, he mentions that evaluating errors prevents the obsession with trivial errors and allows one to give priority to the ones that really matter. In order to evaluate errors for their gravity, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) suggest the following steps:

1. Selection of the errors to be evaluated. These may be all errors identified, or a sub-set.
2. Making a decision regarding the criterion the errors are to be judged. The criteria to be chosen from include the error seriousness or gravity and intelligibility.
3. Preparation of the error evaluation instrument. A method that may be used for this step includes ranking the list of erroneous serious to the least serious.
4. Choosing judges. At least two judges should be chosen.

As James (1998) observed, early in the history of EA, a conservative choice of criteria for error gravity, which is conformity or comprehensibility was offered to practitioners by scholars such as Quirk (1968). Conformity is based on the grammaticality of utterances produced by a learner, while comprehensibility has to do with how accessible the content is, as opposed to the form of the utterances (James, 1998). As James further states, conformity was prominent at the time when language teaching and learning was inclined to focusing on form. Comprehensibility gained weight in EA ratings with the advent of the focus on functional communicative proficiency. Burt and Kiparsky (1972), Hendrickson (1978) and Ferris (2002) then classified language errors into global and local errors in an attempt to understand which errors affect the comprehensibility of utterances. Burt (1975) defines local errors as those that affect single elements (constituents) in a sentence and do not usually hinder communication significantly. These include errors in noun inflections, articles, auxiliaries and the formation of quantifiers. These errors are limited to a single part of the sentence. In contrast, global errors refer to errors that cause a listener or reader to misunderstand a message or consider it incomprehensible, while local errors cause little or no difficulty in understanding the intended meaning of an utterance. Global errors, according to Burt (1975), are those that affect the overall sentence organisation and significantly affect communication of the message. Ferris (2002), however, notes that the globalness or seriousness of particular linguistic errors varies from writer to writer and possibly even within a single student text, thus making this evaluation questionable.

There are other criteria (James, 1998) that can be utilised to evaluate error gravity. The first is rule infringement. Rule infringement is the breaking of the target language rule. The problem with this criterion in evaluating error gravity is that it does not provide immediate indication on which sorts of errors are more serious than the others.

The second criterion is rule generality. With respect to the generality criterion, grammatical errors should be distinguished from lexical ones in terms of their seriousness and gravity. It should be noted that there is a debate on whether grammatical errors are more serious than lexical errors or vice versa. Among researchers who argue that grammatical errors are less serious when coming to

intelligibility of a text is Page (1990) as mentioned by James (1998), who asserts that grammatical accuracy is not always essential for accurate communication. The researcher argues that as long as one can achieve communication, wrong grammar is not serious. However other researchers like James (1998:217) insists on "the intelligibility of learners' language in terms of its textual well-formedness". This is in agreement with Frodesen and Holten's (2003) claim that for many scholars, the writing task cannot achieve its overall purpose successfully unless it conforms to "the conventions of English syntax and usage. Therefore, error gravity should be determined in terms of the syntactic structures they violate. This suggests that a distinction should be made in respect of local errors which are evaluated as less serious since they involve single lexical items which are unlikely to affect the entire understanding of the message. These should be differentiated from global errors which occur in main clauses and are likely to affect the meaning of the whole message (Norish, 1983).

The third is the frequency of errors. This is the number of times that a particular learner commits the error in question. Frequency helps in indicating the degree of consistency with which the learner commits this error, thus informing the analyst of its gravity and the type of attention it requires. Error frequency should be distinguished from error density. Frequency, as initially stated, is the occurrence of an error at intervals while error density is the occurrence of multiple errors in an utterance. James (1998) shows that frequency presents a lesser problem to a reader or listener than does error density, since one can accommodate the error if it is repeated by making adjustments to listening or reading. However, with error density one may be unable to accommodate the frequency of a number of different errors. A number of studies (Zola 1984, cited in James 1998) suggest that high frequency errors should be among the first teachers should attend to. The fourth criterion is intelligibility. This involves deciding whether the error leads to an instance where it becomes difficult to understand what is being trying to be said. The fifth is communicativity. With this criterion, a decision is made on whether the error leads to miscommunication. The sixth is noticeability. Mostly overt errors in writing are more noticeable than spoken ones (James, 1998).

The other criterion for error judgment is the factor of irritation. This is the term used to describe the emotional response by the addressee upon encountering certain erroneous features in the learner's output. A study by Johansson (1975) as stated in James (1998), has ascertained that not conforming to the linguistic features of the target language can affect the relationship between the listener and the speaker, or between the reader and the writer. As James (1998) states, it was however found that all errors are irritating. The irritation factor occurs when the errors made affect the relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Because there are different criteria used by different analysts in assessing error gravity, Ellis (1994) suggests that teachers should attend most carefully to errors that interfere with communication (i.e. semantic and global grammatical errors). With regards to errors in writing, James (1998) insists on what he refers to as the intelligibility of learners' language in terms of its textual well-formedness. This is in agreement with Frodesen and Holten's (2003) claim that the writing task cannot achieve its overall purpose successfully unless it conforms to convention of English syntax and usage.

In concluding this sub-section, it should be noted that different criteria are used to evaluate learner errors. The seriousness, acceptability and intelligibility of errors will thus vary among evaluators as these are influenced by the context in which the errors occurred.

3.6.3.6 Problems in analysing errors

A number of problems can be encountered when one does error analysis. Central to these problems and the notion of error in general is the analyser's view of language and grammar. As Norrish (1983) mentions, there may be times when the person who does the analysis may consider an identified form as an error, while the other person considers it an acceptable language form. This may be brought about by the fact that language change over time; therefore, what is considered incorrect now may be acceptable in future. Norrish further remarks that there are areas of idiom where an awkwardness may or may not be considered incorrect.

3.6.3.7 Taxonomies for error analysis

In order to categorise errors after collecting them, the analyst has to make a decision on the choice of taxonomy or taxonomies to present them. In recent applications of the EA exercise, some improved taxonomies have been suggested. Among these are those suggested by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) which include the pre-selected category, the linguistic category, the surface category, the comparative category and the communicative effect taxonomies. The taxonomies can be used as a reporting tool to organise errors collected from learner output. A description of these taxonomies follows.

3.6.3.8 Pre-selected category

Etherton (1977) suggested the pre-selected category as one of the approaches that can be utilised. The pre-selected category approach consists of a list of headings from which the analyst may choose the errors they want to analyse. The problem with the approach is that the analysis is not based on the actual errors that the learner made, but on a list of errors that the analyst believes the learner will make errors on. If this approach is selected, it may raise a problem of generalising learner error. The better approach is the one in which the errors identified suggest the errors to be analysed. This approach concentrate on specific learners in particular. It does not generalise about the type of errors learners are likely to make. This approach works better in a written sample.

3.6.3.9 The linguistic category

According to Burt *et al.* (1982), the linguistic category taxonomies classify errors according to either or both the language component and the particular linguistic constituent the error affects. The language components covered by this taxonomy are phonology (pronunciation), syntax and morphology (grammar) semantics and lexicon (meaning and vocabulary), and discourse (style). This is used by linguists to organise language lessons in workbooks and textbooks. The category makes teachers and learners feel that they have covered certain aspects of the language in their classes as well as allowing them to find the parts of the language they are most interested in

studying or teaching. It can also be used to add to the description the errors provided by other taxonomies. This taxonomy was first developed by Politzer and Ramirez (1972).

3.6.3.10 Surface strategy taxonomy

This taxonomy highlights the ways the surface structures are altered. It is mainly used by researchers whose interest is on identifying cognitive processes that underlie the learner's reconstruction of the new language. The errors mostly covered by the taxonomy are those of omission, where an item or word that must appear in a well-formed utterance has been omitted; the errors of additions where an utterance is characterised by the presence of an item which must appear in a well-formed utterance. The other errors covered under the surface strategy taxonomy include regularization, where rules are generalised to even situations they are not to be used in (Burt *et al.*, 1982).

3.6.3.11 Comparative taxonomy

In this taxonomy, errors are classified on the basis of comparisons between the structure of L1 errors and certain types of construction. Falling under this taxonomy are developmental errors which are errors similar to those made by children learning the target language as their first language. They include interlingual errors which are similar in structure to a semantically equivalent phrase or sentence in the learner's native language. Ambiguous errors, those that can be classified as being developmental and interlingual, also fall under the comparative taxonomy.

3.6.3.12 Criticisms and weaknesses of error analysis

Despite its prominence as a tool to assist in language learning, error analysis as a procedure for identifying learner errors has been criticized because of a number of practical reasons. In early studies, it was Schacter and Celce-Murcia (1977) who cautioned linguists and teachers to be aware of the weaknesses of EA. They cautioned that we must guard against the notion that EA, even though it is associated with a rich and complex psycholinguistic view of the language learner, should supplant CA as the

exclusive basis for developing teaching materials or for discovering language acquisition strategies (Schacter & Celce-Murcia, 1977).

A major problem with EA is that its overly preoccupation with identifying and categorising errors may result in the ignorance of the learner's correct utterances, or those utterances being taken for granted. As Brown (2007) alludes to this criticism, with concentration placed largely on errors, teachers may lose sight of the value of positive reinforcement of correctly language resulting from the learner's progress and development. As Ellis (1994) puts it, this deficiency of mainly concentrating on the errors the learner makes fails to provide a complete picture of learner language.

Most of the reasons for the criticisms are connected to the fact that EA tries to gather the knowledge of language learning processes by examining the learner's output or production. With EA, the analytical attempts associated with language learning processes and phases are primarily inferential: analyses of errors are based on learner output. One practical disparagement of EA is that firstly, it is sometimes difficult to prove that and determine whether there is an error at all, and if so, what constitutes it. This is because at times it is not easy to make a distinction between error and mistake. In addition, determining what exactly represents an error proved to be difficult as what could be seen as an error in one context might not be an error in another. Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977) explain this by stating that the problem occurs when errors are analysed in isolation instead of analysing them with those structures that are used correctly and those which are not used at all.

Furthermore, identifying and classifying errors by type only added to the complexity. For instance, causes of errors are often difficult to establish when an error can be attributed to more than one category. As EA is concerned with errors but not mistakes or lapses, distinguishing between these two types of production flaws is not always easy (Brown, 1987; James 1998). Furthermore, as Hughes and Lascaratou (1982) state, notwithstanding native-speaker intuitions, error is difficult to define and can by no means always be unambiguously identified in production. Brown (2007) further mentions that the point that there is more than one way of classifying an error creates additional problem to EA. In addition to the problem arising from classifying errors, causes of errors are difficult to determine as there is a multitude of possible causes.

That is, the causes of learner errors may not be possible to determine with any degree of precision. This is even more difficult to determine as the learner's output is the only source of evidence.

The other criticism levelled against error analysis is that it makes no allowance for "avoidance phenomena" (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Ellis, 2000; Brown, 1987; Schachter 1974). The avoidance phenomena is the strategy of the learner to avoid what is difficult in the target language use. The learners may not use certain structures, because they know they get them wrong, thereby only using structures they are certain they will get right. Avoiding the use of the structure may be assumed incorrectly by the analyser that the learner does not have a problem with the structure. The learner's avoidance of a structure may lead to distorted result if it is excluded from the analysis. As Kellerman (1977) states, if a difficult structure is only used in contexts when a learner is sure of using target-like and avoided in contexts that the learner thinks too difficult, this learner will produce relatively fewer errors than a learner who does not avoid the same structure. Therefore the absence of error is not an indication of a native like production as learners may be avoiding the structures that are difficult to them.

The other criticism levelled against EA is that of the learner's competence as mentioned by (Ellis: 1994). In the EA process, it is generally assumed that the learners' competence is homogeneous and not variable. EA does not consider that knowledge of a TL form can be partial instead of complete. It should be noted that if a TL form is sometimes used correctly and sometimes incorrectly, this does not mean that the target form has been acquired and deviations are to be considered as mistakes. Another reason for weakness of EAH is due to what Ellis (2008) mentioned as the weaknesses in methodological procedures, theoretical problems, and limitations in its scope. Furthermore, Schachter and Murcia (1977) argued that the analysis of errors in isolation focuses the attention of the investigator on errors and thus excludes the other corpus from consideration.

Despite these criticisms of EA, the procedure has continued to be used by teachers and researchers to improve the learning and teaching of a second language with varying degrees of success.

This chapter looked at errors made by second language learners. A distinction was made between an error and a mistake as they have to receive different treatment to remedy them. The discussion continued to look at the sources and causes of the errors that language learners make. It was shown that one other source of errors is fossilization which accounts for second language errors not reaching the mastery of the target language like in first language acquires. A number of ways to overcome fossilization were looked at, with instruction, besides its limitations being at the forefront. The error analysis procedure was discussed thoroughly by looking at its significances and the steps followed. The discussion now moves on to the theoretical perspectives in second language learning and teaching in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ACADEMIC WRITING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is to make a determination of whether grammar intervention can lead to the improvement of accuracy in academic writing. This chapter, therefore, presents the discussion of academic writing in higher education as writing is one of the primary means of assessment of knowledge and understanding at universities. The chapter firstly define and contextualise academic writing. Then the theoretical perspectives of academic writing is presented by discussing the different models of academic literacy within which writing occurs. Furthermore, the chapter presents challenges faced by students with regard to accuracy in academic writing as well as the possible causes of writing problems experienced by university students are presented. The chapter also discusses ways of integrating grammar in the context of teaching academic writing. Lastly, a presentation of the approaches to writing is made.

4.2 ACADEMIC WRITING CONTEXTUALISED

Academic writing is an activity at the centre of teaching and learning in Higher Education (HE). As a result, it is difficult to provide a definition of what it is. Academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise through writing. As Evans (2013: 85) states, “writing is important in academia. Besides it being one of the foremost ways that we communicate to each other, it is also a way that we are assessed, and, therefore, it is crucial to our progression. However, writing is not something that comes naturally to anyone. It is something we all learnt to do and then practice and develop as far as is appropriate to our context”. Because of the complex nature of writing, particularly academic writing, a number of scholars (Butler, 2013; Archer, 2008; Lillis & Scott, 2007) have argued that teaching university students academic writing can assist them to succeed in their studies

As Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis and Swann (2003) state, academic writing is at the centre of teaching and learning in higher education. It fulfils a range of

purposes according to the various contexts in which it occurs. Some of the purposes of academic writing as delineated by Coffin *et al.* (2003) are discussed briefly.

The first purpose of academic writing is that of assessment, which is often a major purpose for student writing and is one of the most powerful tools for promoting learning. Assessment provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes with the aim to reflect evidence of students' acquisition of academic writing skills and the level of familiarity with the academic writing conventions. In assessment, students may be required to produce essays, written examinations, or laboratory reports whose main purpose is to demonstrate their mastery of disciplinary course content. In assessing such writing, lecturers focus on both the content and the form of the writing, that is, the language used, the text structure, the construction of argument, grammar and punctuation (Coffin *et al.*, 2003).

The second purpose of writing is learning, which can help students grapple with disciplinary knowledge as well as to develop more general abilities to reason and critique (Coffin *et al.* 2003). Separately from or simultaneously with writing for assessment, students may also be asked to write texts that trace their reflections on the learning process itself, as with journals where they record thoughts, questions, problems, and ideas about readings, lectures, and applied practice (Coffin *et al.*, 2003).

Thirdly, through writing students enter particular disciplinary communities, whose communication norms are the primary means by which academics transmit and evaluate ideas (Prior, 1998). As they progress through the university, students are often expected to produce texts that increasingly approximate the norms and conventions of their chosen disciplines, with this expectation peaking at the level of postgraduate study (Coffin *et al.*, 2003).

Despite that student academic writing continues to be at the centre of teaching and learning in higher education, as Coffin *et al.* (2003) state, it is often an invisible dimension of the curriculum. This means that the rules or conventions governing what counts as academic writing are often assumed to be part of the 'common sense' knowledge students have, and are thus not explicitly taught within disciplinary courses.

It should, however, be noted that students lack familiarity with these conventions, but the assumption is often held that they will 'pick it up' as part of learning their subject knowledge. Although this position might have been understandable within the context of a small and predominantly homogenous higher education system, it is no longer justified within current contexts where significant changes are affecting all aspects of teaching and learning, including student academic writing. These changes, which are also discernible in the South African Higher Education system include, but are not limited to the ones discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the increasing student numbers led to the shifting away from a highly elitist provision of higher education with the aim of widening access to those previously deprived of opportunities to study at universities (Coffin *et al.*, 2003). This has been the case in South Africa where access to higher education was widened after 1994.

Secondly, the student population at universities is also a diverse one as compared to the past. Presently, students from social groups historically excluded from higher education have been given access. Therefore, students new to higher education may not feel at ease with academic writing conventions or with staking claims for knowledge about which their lecturers have greater expertise (Coffin *et al.*, 2003), thus necessitating more explicit instruction about writing. In the South African context, the widening of access to higher education post 1994 resulted in universities admitting students from diverse educational backgrounds which may have not prepared them for studying at university.

Academic writing instruction has developed in different geographical contexts and for different historical and socio-political reasons. For instance, in South Africa, where fundamental changes in higher education are taking place, teachers and researchers are critically reconceptualising the purpose and nature of student writing in the academy (Angelil- Carter, 1998; Thesen, 2001). Academic writing instruction follows a number of models, a few of which are discussed next.

4.3 MODELS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

This section presents three major models of academic writing. The objective of this discussion is to firstly indicate that academic writing cannot solely be said to be occurring under a particular model; and secondly the objective is to point to the fact that what academic writing should constitute should be an encapsulation of the good from each model. As the focus of this study is to determine whether grammar intervention can be utilised to improve accuracy in academic writing, an attempt is made to show the importance given to accuracy in each model.

4.3.1 The skills model to academic writing

The skills approach originates from the deficit or remedial perspective where deficiencies in writing are seen as being easily addressed (Huijser, Kimmins & Galligan, 2008; Green, Hammer & Stephens, 2005). Its sources lie in behavioural psychology and training programmes which conceptualise student writing as being technical and instrumental. The model is underlain by the belief that writing consists of applying knowledge of a set of linguistic patterns and other structural rules related to an effective text (Reder & Davila, 2005). The belief of the skills model, as Lillis (2001) states, is based on the conception of language as being a transferable skill which can be transmitted from one person to the other regardless of the context. The main focus of this approach is primarily on the teaching of commonly held features and norms with skills taught in generic workshops or skills classes. According to the skills approach, good writing is determined by the correctness of form and aspects of language such as the letter word, sentence and text formation (Ivanic, 2004). Lea and Street (1998) further clarify the skills model when they mention that its focus is on attempts to 'fix' problems with student learning, which are treated as a kind of pathology. In other words, according to this approach, good writing entails the ability to produce grammatically correct texts.

As mentioned earlier, the approach focuses on grammar and the visible academic writing conventions such as the presentation of the essay introduction and referencing skills, among others. Students are taught, for example, spelling, punctuation rules, sentence construction and paragraphing. Lillis (2001) states that the study skills

approach is often presented in the form of a foundation or introductory modules in specific discipline areas, whereby first year undergraduate students may be offered guidance on essay writing as one of the study skills they need in Higher Education.

Lillis (2001) identified three prominent characteristics of the skills approach. Firstly, the approach views the writing problem and its solution as being primarily textual. This is to say that the writing problem and its solution are to be found in the text produced by students, but not at the level of context, participants or practices. Secondly, within this approach, the writing of students is explicitly dissected and problematized, while the writing conventions governing the discipline and the ways of accessing these conventions are generally not addressed. Thirdly, because the writing problem and the solution skills approach is biased towards the text, these are conceived as being relatively straightforward to identify and resolve.

A criticism levelled against this approach is that because its emphasis is on discrete linguistics skills rather than on the characteristics and requirements of the social context in which the writing activity is being used, this leads to the teaching of writing in a fragmented manner in that it is treated as a separate skill from reading (Ivanic, 2004). This fragmentation and de-contextualisation of writing promotes surface learning and the perception that shortcomings in writing can be easily corrected (Wingate, 2006). It has, however, been noted that the skills approach does not facilitate access to the literacy practice of academia as students are generally confused about the nature of the academic literacy conventions they are required to write and make meaning within (Lillis, 2001; Lea & Street, 1998). It should be noted that study skills remain the dominant approach in institutional strategies for supporting student writing despite the criticisms.

4.3.2 Socialisation Model

The socialisation model emerged in an attempt to remedy the criticisms of the skills model. The sources of this model lie in social psychology, in anthropology and in constructivist education. As Lea and Street (1998) state, it should be noted that each model successively encapsulates the other. This suggests that the academic socialisation perspective takes account of study skills, but includes them in the broader

context of the acculturation processes. Unlike the skills model, Ganobcsik-Williams (2006) states that the socialisation model, which is also referred to as the institutional default model, implies that students will acquire academic writing skills through 'implicit induction'. The socialisation model holistically examines students' daily engagement with the subject discourse alongside the role of the institutional habitus without concentrating on specific linguistic skills.

The assumption of this model is that students develop knowledge and skills in their chosen discourse simply by being immersed in the culture of higher education. Therefore, the socialisation model places more emphasis on issues relating to context and culture than that of the skills model, and challenges the presumption that academic writing is solely an individual issue. Whilst this approach highlights that students need to identify and interpret the language of the discourse, it also recognises the university and its teaching staff as being integral in the transference of academic writing skills and knowledge (Lea and Street, 1998).

As they state, the socialisation model allows for an appreciation of the concept of acculturation. It should, however, be noted that although an emergence in the culture of higher education may play an important part, it cannot be supposed that simple socialisation may remedy academic writing issues as there are writing skills which also need to be attended to. Eventually, the socialisation model treats the university, 'As a homogenous culture, whose norms and practices have simply to be learnt to provide access to the whole institution (Lea & Stierer, 2000). In other words, as Brea and Street (1998) state, it appears to assume that the academy is a relatively homogeneous culture, whose norms and practices have simply to be learnt to provide access to the whole institution. Furthermore, this approach tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning (Brea & Street, 1998).

However, discussions of linguistics and academic literacies, as mentioned by Spack and Zamel, (1998) demonstrate the complexities of language, highlighting that it cannot be assumed that students will simply soak up the language of a complex discourse that may have taken their lecturer themselves many years to understand.

Together, the two approaches have provided the theoretical basis for practical academic writing provision throughout higher education institutions in the UK and South Africa. The limitations of these two approaches has lead researchers to propose that a more holistic approach to academic writing is required. Consequently, this has resulted in the emergence and prominence of the academic literacies approach.

4.3.3 Academic Literacies model

As it has been mentioned earlier, the models of academic writing encapsulates each other. Brea and Street (1998), therefore, mention that the academic literacies model, then, incorporates both of the other models into a more encompassing understanding of the nature of student writing within institutional practices, power relations and identities. For example, as Lillis (2003) alludes, whilst a 'skills' approach to writing, with its implicit model of language as a transparent medium, is often taken as the only or 'common sense' way of thinking about communication/writing in official discourse, the academic literacies frame enables us to see that a skills approach represents one particular, albeit a powerful, way of conceptualising language, literacy and student writing in higher education. This is to say that the model does not treat academic writing as the focus of linguistic skills exclusively. A number of researchers in the field (Lea & Street, 1998; Lea & Stierer, 1999; Lea & Lillis, 2003) put it clearly that the academic literacies frame has helped to foreground many dimensions to student academic writing which had previously remained invisible or had been ignored. The aspects that now are part of academic writing discourse include the impact of power relations on student writing, the centrality of identity in academic writing, academic writing as ideologically inscribed knowledge construction, the nature of generic academic, as well as disciplinary specific, writing practices.

Academic literacies came about in the UK as a result of the widened access to Higher education which brought into the system students with varying abilities. In South Africa, interest in the writing and reading ability of university students occurred in the wake of post-Apartheid expansion of higher education. The advent of democracy brought with it issues of access, diversity, power and equality which are central to a political agenda of social transformation (Thesen & Cooper, 2014; Thesen & Pletzen, 2006). The increased access to higher education meant that not only the elite students

could go to universities as barriers were broken for an enlarged access. This led to even the inadequately prepared students to be admitted at Higher Education institutions.

The theoretical framing of the academic literacies model lies in critical linguistics and anthropology and foregrounded the social, cultural and contextualised nature of academic writing (Lillis, 1997). As Lillis (1999) states, the model challenges the notion that writing is solely a technical skill or an individual action but instead, ‘...identifies writing as a social and disciplinary practice’. The model engages with the complexities of individual, disciplinary and institutional identities as the basis for all higher learning in the university. The model is transformative in orientation in that it focuses on:

- a) locating such conventions in relation to specific and contested traditions of knowledge creation;
- b) eliciting the perspectives of writers (whether students or academic staff) on the ways in which such conventions impinge or inform their meaning-making; and
- c) exploring alternative ways of meaning-making in academia not least by recognising the resources that (student) writers bring to the academy as legitimate tools for meaning-making (Lea & Street, 2006).

Differently to the skills and the academic socialisation models, this model examines the institutional culture in which writing takes place and the way in which this may encourage or hinder writing development. This it does by taking a holistic approach to writing and examining the ways in which current models and practices may need to be adapted in order to accommodate the changing culture of higher education (Lillis, 1999).

By developing the skills and socialisation models, academic literacies model questions the nature and context of academic writing. In addition, by examining writing in such a more holistic manner, academic literacies explores the culture and context in which writing takes place and consequently the very nature of higher education itself. It should, however, be noted that although the academic literacies approach posits a powerful critique of current practices and pedagogies relating to student writing, it has limited applicability as a pedagogical frame for action (Lillis, 2003). The model, although it being the ideal in Higher education settings, has been criticised for its difficulty in application.

Studies conducted on the writing problems encountered by university students in composing essays in L2 context have revealed that students experience a problem with a wide range of issues regarding academic writing strategies. For example, Hammad (2013) conducted a study on the Palestinian university students' problems with English Foreign Language (EFL) essay writing. The results revealed that the students experienced problems with grammatical errors, lexical errors, word-for-word translation, cohesion errors, lack of academic style, and lack of content knowledge. The results further indicated that the participants showed a poor level not only in their ESL writing strategy use, but also in their ESL performance levels. This was also a finding by Cekiso, Tshotsho and Somniso (2016) at a South African university.

One of the major challenges observed at South African universities, as mentioned by Pineteh (2014), is the lack of a mastery of academic writing conventions which is often observed in the poor grammatical accuracy at sentence level in academic writing. Academic writing challenges, which include incorrect grammatical constructions of students in universities are consequences of students' linguistic and general literacy backgrounds and South African universities' privileging of middle-class literacy practices (Pineteh, 2014). To clarify this, Pineteh observed that undergraduate students are expected to possess excellent English language and higher order thinking skills such as logical and critical thinking as well as analytical and innovative skills. However, in advocating for these high order thinking skills, some higher education institutions are often oblivious of the schooling experiences of students and how they influence their writings in higher education (Pineteh, 2012). This is occurring despite that post 1994, South African universities now have to deal with a contingent of students from previously marginalised and under-privileged communities who are often not intellectually and emotionally prepared for higher education.

4.5 FACTORS LEADING TO GRAMMAR PROBLEMS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

A number of factors are responsible for the low English proficiency of university students which leads them to producing academic texts that have grammar errors which at times impedes communication. Some of the factors are those that related to teachers, learners and learning, teaching contexts and the school curriculum.

4.5.1 Factors pertaining to teachers

It is generally accepted that teachers of English play a leading role in providing learners with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to read, write, speak and listen effectively (Arkoudis, 2003:162). Despite this acceptance, several researchers argue that the problem of student writing is also exacerbated by teaching staff members who are at times under-qualified, underprepared and inefficient in the teaching of English (Moutlana, 2007). Therefore, a number of teacher-related factors influence ESL teaching-learning, thus resulting in academic writing that is characterised by poor grammar skills among learners. These include the teachers' proficiency in English language, teaching qualifications and teaching styles. As it has been stated by many researches (Van der Walt, 1990; Amuzu, 1994), there is a need that ESL teachers have a high English proficiency for self-expression, reading, listening writing and teaching. Language proficiency includes linguistic competence and communicative competence. Despite this need, it has been shown (Krugel & Fourie, 2014) that in South Africa many English teachers lack the necessary English language skills to teach English effectively. To further complicate the situation, it has been established by de Wet (2002) as well as Janks (2014) that a large number of African educators educate in an English dialect. This results in learners often imitating the teachers' wrong pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

Studies (Lemmer, 1995; Amuzu, 1994; Nel, & Müller, 2010; Mafisa & van der Walt, 2000; Kruger & Fourie 2014) have shown that teachers in previously disadvantaged schools lack the English proficiency necessary for effective teaching. Amuzu (1994), in particular, mentions the poor English proficiency of newly graduated teachers. Amuzu (1994: 19) states that at colleges where most teachers come from both the

academic and the professional training was poor and the students' proficiency [i.e. teacher trainees] was too low for teachers of English. Amuzu observed that student teachers could hardly express themselves clearly in English either orally or in writing. He further goes on to mention that, their reading ability was rudimentary. And although they seem to know the names of some of the common methods of teaching, for example, Communicative Approach, most of them were ignorant of what to do in the classroom. It is clear that they were, in fact, not being prepared either professionally or academically for teaching. To indicate how critical the situation is regarding the issue of unqualified and underqualified teachers, the findings from a study by Kruger and Fourie (2014) showed that teachers lack the English proficiency that is necessary for effective teaching and do not have the knowledge and skills to support English language learning. This has a negative repercussion for learners, who often copy their teachers since the learners regard teachers as role models as has been shown by (Mbah, Monday & Ndubuisi, 2014). The study by Kruger and Fourie (2014) has also shown that the profile of Grade 12 learners of the township schools where their study was conducted equals to that of grade 8, thus signifying that their English literacy is four years behind their academic level. This is as a result of teachers lacking the necessary English proficiency for successful teaching. These are the students that end up being admitted to universities such as the one where the study was conducted.

Despite that teachers are, in most cases, not or under qualified to teach English as has been noted in the previous discussion, the teaching styles educators implement in their classrooms may impact the ability and achievement of students. It has been shown by Ngcobo (1988) that many teachers in secondary schools use the undemocratic style of teaching where they act like directors and doers of activities in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Using the democratic teaching style which ensures full class participation can enhance the achievement of learners.

4.5.2 Factors concerning learners

In addition to the factors that affect teachers, there are also learner factors which affect ESL teaching and learning in secondary schools in South Africa. One of the factors which may inhibit learners' progress in learning English include their socio-economic background and language proficiency as well as learning styles.

The environment where most learners in this study come from is generally not English speaking. As a result, most of them only get the opportunity to speak English at school. This, therefore, affects the progress of the acquisition of the target language because it is not supported and reinforced after school hours. Lemmer (1995) argues that the acquisition of the target language can be enhanced if learners are provided with opportunities to use the language outside the classroom situation. The lack of practice of the target language may be as a result of most parents and care givers being ill-equipped to assist with homework. Lemmer (1995) further observes that learners from disadvantaged communities face linguistic deprivation. One of the reasons may be that in these environments lack books, magazines, newspapers and other media which could be used as vehicles of practicing the use of the target language.

4.5.3 Reading and Writing at school level

The problem of students performing poorly in South African schools as a result of poor reading skills is well documented. As has been reported by Howie *et al.* (2008, 2012), South African learners have been reported to be not only performing poorly on the Annual National Assessments (ANAs), but also when a comparison is made internationally such as on the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), 2010) as well as the South African results of the Progress in International Reading (PIRLS) study of 2006 and 2011. The problem is further exacerbated by the methods that teachers use to teach reading (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

It should be noted that schools play a critical role in developing the writing skills of students. Therefore, if student writing is not addressed sufficiently at school level, students admitted at university will be ill- prepared for the writing demands of higher education. As Hart (1995) reports, ESL learners in South African schools seldom use English in their daily lives including the classroom. This leads to poor English proficiency which is exacerbated by overcrowded classrooms.

The effect of the poor reading skills observed at secondary schools is evident at universities. The evidence of this has been shown in a study by Hugo, Le Roux, Muller

and Nel (2005) where it is reported that a project by the Students' Service Bureau of the University of the Orange Free State has shown that the reading level of the first-year students who were tested was not higher than grade eight, with some even reading below that level. In another study conducted by the Unit for the Development of Language Abilities at the University of Pretoria, the findings indicated that the language ability of 2,000 out of 6,000 first-year students was on the same level as or even lower than that of grade 7 learners. At the North-West University where this study was conducted, Nel and Adam (2014) conducted a study whose findings indicated that the reading ability of some first year students is far below the standard it should be at.

It should be noted that there is a close relationship between reading and writing. This is to say that just as well as the ability to read enhances writing ability, writing also enhances reading. The implication here is that if learners are not taught to read correctly as it has been espoused in the preceding section, they are likely to face problems in their endeavour to write correctly. As Krashen (1993) has argued, substantial amount of research strongly suggests that we learn to write by reading. Therefore, if learners cannot read as it has been indicated, they are unlikely to write successfully. Krashen continues to mention that writing style can be enhanced through reading.

Graham and Hebert (2010) mention that findings from one meta-study have shown that when educators teach reading skills, "there is a corresponding positive effect in how well students write. Furthermore, it has been shown that when how much students read is increased, students become better writers. This is because reading allows for the capturing of useful information when one is writing.

Besides, as has been shown by Duke, Caughian, Juzwik and Martin (2013), the act of reading provides a writing lesson to the reader. This lesson provides the reader with information regarding spelling, punctuation, proper grammar usage, the structuring of a sentence or paragraph, and organizing a text. Students also learn the many purposes writing serves and the different genres and formats it assumes to serve these varied purposes (Duke *et al.*, 2013; Culham, 2014; 2012). On the contrary, Graham and Hebert (2011) have shown that creating a text also provides a reading

lesson in that it has been shown to be assisting with the improvement of reading comprehension, reading fluency and word solving.

4.5.4 Issues of the curriculum

The often poor English proficiency observed from students in South African institutions of higher learning can also be attributed to the significance given to grammar teaching in the school curriculum. As it has been observed by Ayliff (2010, 2012), the theory underpinning the Department of Basic Education's national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) on English as First Additional Language (FAL) (Grades 10-12) might not be suitable for South African learners. Some of the reasons she puts forward for this include that the curriculum minimally accommodates grammar teaching. The curriculum is also biased towards the communicative model which mostly produces relatively fluent speakers of English whose written competence is poor at times. Besides, the curriculum calls for the utilisation of a text-based approach of teaching that encourages incidental attention to grammatical structures. The curriculum assumes that learners can learn grammatical structures without concentrated focus on grammatical forms, which is not the case.

As Ayliff (2012) further states, the inadequate attention to grammar in the South African school curriculum has resulted to academics in the tertiary sector having to deal with second language students of English who are fairly confident, and fluent in the spoken English, but are weak in written English. The academic writing of these students has been observed to have problems which show with larger number of morphological and syntactic errors such as incorrect word order, incorrect tenses and concords and the use of run-on sentences. The curriculum, therefore, also has some contribution on the inability to write grammatically correct texts by students at tertiary institutions.

4.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY IN ACADEMIC WRITING

It is without doubt that there is a consensus that the application of accurate grammar is an important aspect of any piece of writing, and this is also true for academic writing. The writing that takes in academic contexts implies the use of Standard English and a high concern with accuracy. Accuracy in writing is very crucial. Besides, effective

writing depends largely on clarity which is enhanced by some degree of accuracy (Hyland, 2003). It is also true that many L2 writers do not always have the grammatical competency to produce acceptable grammatical pieces of academic writing. To further emphasize the significance of correct grammar in academic writing, Frodesen and Holten (2003) made an observation that good writing is an elusive concept that varies according to the entire rhetorical situation in which it is produced. It is clear, however, that certain properties of good writing can be identified. Most would concur that for writing to be deemed “successful” to its overall purpose, it must conform to the conventions of English syntax and usage, generally referred to as grammar. Grammar, therefore, should indisputably be an essential element of second language writing instruction. This is particularly true for ESL learners.

It has been observed that even after having studied English as well as academic writing for years, L2 learners experience a great deal of difficulty in their writings as they often fail to recognize and appropriately use the conventions and features of academic written prose. The main reason for this is that academic writing has been characterised as having complex features, the acquisition of which requires some grammatical competence. In addition, it has been established by research (Hinkel, 2013; Lee, 2009; Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008) that effective L2 usage in academic writing demands comparatively advanced language proficiency. There have also been studies (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Zhou, 2009) that have established a strong positive correlations between students’ academic performance and grammar competence, reading and writing proficiencies. As Zhou (2009) states, linguistic accuracy plays an important role in the quality of written texts, yet the explicit teaching of linguistic form – particularly grammar – for the purpose of improving learners’ writing has generated an ongoing debate. Celce-Murcia (1991) further mentions that the importance of a reasonable degree of grammatical accuracy in academic or professional writing cannot be understated.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the complex nature of the academic discourse in writing calls for some attention to be paid to the teaching of grammar. This is because linguistic accuracy, clarity of presentation, organization of ideas are all crucial to enable the communication act since they provide clues for interpretation. These are all important in academic writing as the texts produced by students should be easily comprehensible for lecturers. Furthermore, academic writing is characterised by features which without them student writers may not be successful in studying at

university. To further explain this, Coxhead and Byrd (2007) identified the following as some of the grammatical features of academic writing:

- It has long complicated noun phrases with nouns often by prepositional phrases rather than by relative clauses.
- It uses simple present tense verbs in generalizations and statements of theory.
- Passive voice is frequent in its expressions.
- It uses adverbial phrases to indicate location inside a text.

The grammatical features mentioned are the ones that most students enter universities without having a basic mastery of. It is, therefore, important for universities to impart them to their students if students are to succeed. In addition to these features of academic writing, Hinkel (2013) also suggests some grammar constructions which are essential in academic writing. As Hinkel (2013) states, these are the required constructions without which no L2 academic writer can survive and which require intensive and persistent instruction. These constructions include the following, among others (Hinkel, 2013):

- Sentence construction and boundaries. The aim of instruction should be to assist students to avoid fragments and run-ons.
- Verbs and verb phrase. This is one crucial grammar feature in academic writing that requires attention because as Reid (2000) states, writing conventions require specific verb tenses in different academic writing situations. Reid also notes that verb tense errors can be serious as they often interfere with communication.
- Noun clauses in and for restatement and paraphrase. As Hinkel (2013) states, the most important discourse function of noun clauses is to present and paraphrase information from sources.

These features and constructions are complex grammatically, and second language learners have been found to experience problems in applying them in their writing. There is, therefore, a need for second language academic writers to have some grammatical competency for them to be able to produce academically acceptable texts (Celce-Murcia, 2002; Ur, 2011). The acquisition of this grammatical competence can be enhanced through form focused instruction. To emphasize this claim, it should be noted that grammatical accuracy in academic writing has been shown to be important

by various SLA researchers. For instance, Celce-Murcia (1991) among many researchers mention that for educated and advanced learners, grammar instruction is essential if they are to achieve their educational and professional goals. In emphasizing this claim, a number of researchers (Read, 2000; Hinkel, 2002; Hinkel, 2004) allude to the fact that without instruction and learning how to construct L2 academic texts, NNS students often find themselves at a greater disadvantage in their academic and professional careers. They argue that L2 learners need to develop a basic linguistic threshold without which they cannot attain the range of lexical and grammar skills required in academic writing. This, they claim can be achieved through formal instruction. To emphasize this need for some form of grammar instruction to improve accuracy, Ferris (2010) notes that the knowledge and experience base of L2 acquirers and writers is not the same as that of native speakers. L2 learners, therefore, need additional information and intervention as well as a slightly different pedagogical approaches to writing instruction.

Although there are L2 writing specialists who argue that the teaching of grammar for writing is not needed as it impedes on fluency (Shaughnessy, 1977; Hartwell, 1985), there are those (Eskey, 1983; Silva, 1988) who object by arguing that the view that accuracy is not important underestimate the linguistic gaps that most L2 writers bring into advanced situations like academic writing. Ferris (2010) and Hammerly (1991) argue that L2 writers need additional information and intervention, and acknowledge the role for corrective feedback (form focused instruction) in L2 writing instruction. Ferris (2010) in a paper evaluating recent studies (from 2000 to 2008) on the effect of corrective feedback on writing indicated that much of the findings of these studies (Ferris, 2006; Sheen, 2007; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008) indicate that it leads to improvement if it is focused on targeted selected errors in writing, rather than when writing errors are dealt with comprehensively. As a result of findings from these studies, Ferris (2010) suggests that focusing on specific errors when providing corrective feedback will likely assist accuracy in student writing. As Bruton (2009) as well as Sengupta (2000) succinctly put it, writing tasks which limit the cognitive load and focus the students' attention on grammatical features of the language can contribute to improving grammatical accuracy in certain types of L2 writing activity. This also confirmed by a number of researchers (Hartshorn, 2008; Chandler, 2003) as well as Baleghizadeh and Gordon (2012) who in addition mention that corrective

feedback is a way of improving the structural accuracy of L2 writing. As mentioned earlier that success in improving accuracy in writing mainly occurs when particular attention is paid on selected errors, the decision on which errors to choose for treatment may depend on the result of an error analysis process, as it is the case in this study. As it has been shown that when grammar is taught in isolation it does not improve accuracy in writing, therefore, there is a need that grammar should be taught in the context of writing, that is, it should be intergarted with writing as the following discussion indicates.

4.7 TEACHING GRAMMAR FOR WRITING

The effect of grammar teaching to improve accuracy is a debated issue. Some researchers claim that teaching grammar does not benefit students when it comes to writing, while others believe that it does. This has been presented at length in chapter four in the discussion of corrective feedback. In revisiting this debate, it was observed that the reason for grammar to be concluded not to be of benefit to writing is because in almost all observations, grammar was taught in isolation. This was done with the hope that after learning grammar rules, students will apply the rules in the texts they produce. However this has never been the case. The reason for this failure of grammar teaching to enhance writing may be that the teaching was not contextualised for grammar, as it has been mentioned earlier. In this section, the discussion is how grammar teaching has proved to be able to benefit writing if it is not taught in isolation, that is, if it is taught in the context of writing. This way of teaching occurs when grammar is understood to be a meaning making resource for writing development as suggested by Myhill and Bailey (2013) and Myhill, 2018).

The starting point for a few studies (Fogel & Ehri, 2000; Fearn & Farnan, 2007) which have shown that grammar teaching can benefit writing was the identification for a need to teach particular grammar structures for them to assist in producing a text. For example, Fogel and Ehri (2000) realised that students were using a non- standard dialect of English in their writing. They set out to provide an awareness about the features of the dialect they used, thus making students aware of the difference between Standard English and the dialect. This occurred during the normal teaching of writing. Therefore, the awareness about Standard English and writing were taking

place at the same time. At the end of the study, it was found that students applied the grammar they were taught on writing.

As mentioned earlier, grammar teaching in writing, for the purpose of discussion in this paper, refers to 'helping writers develop their knowledge of linguistic resources and grammatical systems to convey ideas meaningfully and appropriately to intended readers' (Frodesen, 2001). As a result of the observed significance of grammar in writing as presented in the previous discussion, how grammar should be taught to benefit writing should be what writing instructors should pay attention to.

A number of grammar teaching strategies which can be of benefit for writing learners have been suggested. As Martinsen (2000) and Weaver (1996) point out, for grammar to be of assistance in writing, it must be taught in the context of students' writing. For instruction to be effective, grammar teaching in writing classrooms must link rules with usage or difficulties students encounter in authentic writing tasks. Weaver (1996:23) argued that teaching grammar in the context of writing works better than teaching grammar as a formal system, if the aim is for students to *use* grammar more effectively and conventionally in their writing. In support of this, Myhill (2010) argues that teaching grammar in contexts can succeed if writing is understood to be a communicative act and grammar is a tool which support writers to understand the social purposes of the texts they produce and the audience they write for.

4.8 APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF WRITING

The teaching of writing follows various approaches. Each of these approaches has both advantages and disadvantages. This implies that writing instructors can leverage on the advantage of each to assist in the development of writing. The approaches of writing discussed in this section are the process approaches to writing, the product approaches to writing and the genre approaches to writing.

4.8.1 The process approaches to writing in academic writing

Writing at university follows a number of approaches which include the process, the product and the genre approach. The approach followed in the Academic Literacy

module at the NWU is the process approach. This is the approach that is discussed at length in this section of the study. The reason for this is that the grammar instruction, as discussed in this study, took place within this approach. The process approach is grounded on cognitive psychology. A number of definitions have been suggested on what the process approach is. These definitions mostly give a description of this approach. For example, White and Arndt (1991:3) describe the process approach to writing as a form of problem-solving which involves such processes as generating ideas, discovering a 'voice' with which to write, planning, goal-setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written as well as what has been written and searching for language with which to express the exact meaning. Nunan (1994), on the other hand, states that the process approach focuses on the steps in creating a piece of writing. The emphasis in these definitions is that the writer goes through steps to improve by producing, reflecting, discussing and reworking successive drafts. One common feature of the approach agreed on by these authors is that writing is not treated as a product. This is to say that this approach allows the teacher and the students to go through the process of producing the text together. For this study, the process approach to writing is discussed with the assistance of the description provided by Ferris and Hedgecock (2004).

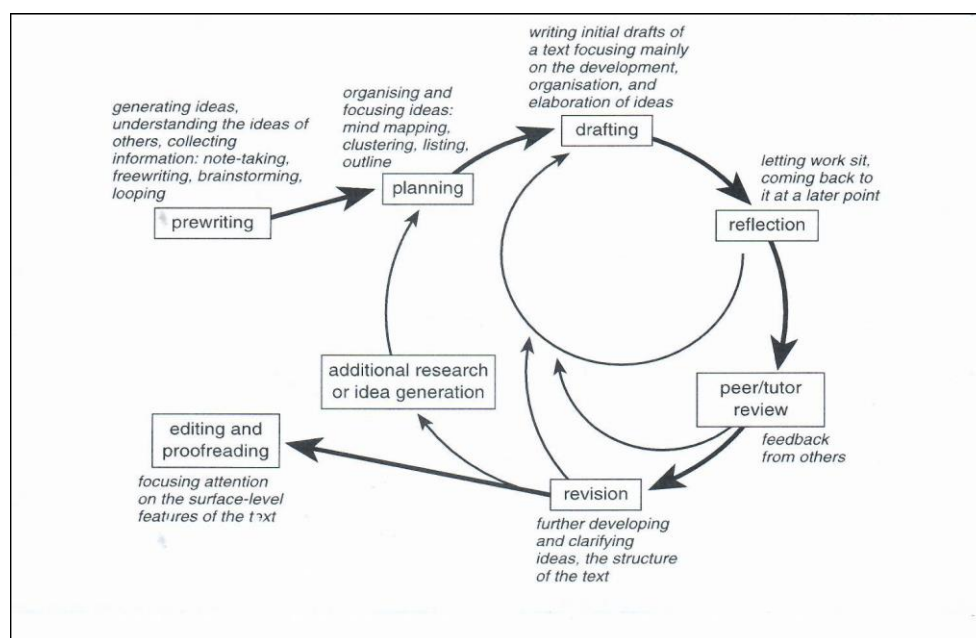


Figure 4. 1 The writing process approach (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2004: 34)

As Figure 4.1 shows, the process approach incorporates a number of stages which writers go through before producing a final piece of writing. Lecturers in the writing

instruction go through these steps with students. It should be noted that that the writing process can happen in various orders at different points. The steps in the writing process approach as shown in Figure 4.1 are now discussed briefly.

Prewriting

During the prewriting stage, writers utilise strategies such as brainstorming and free writing to help them find ideas, collect information, activate tacit knowledge and organise their thoughts as suggested by Ferries and Hedgecock (2004). Brainstorming allows for sharing of ideas, usually in an open class discussions where these ideas are often written down. Students are then involved in free writing making use of the generated ideas. The free writing exercise is never graded. It is a low-pressure strategy for writing where students do not worry about the quality of the output. Because now writers have information generated through brainstorming and free writing, they then move to the next step which is planning as shown in Figure 4.1.

Planning

This step follows from the generative techniques of the first step. This is the stage where the writer begins to organise and order ideas. This can be achieved by making use of mind mapping, clustering and branching. All these are graphic information organising techniques. With these techniques, writers review the brainstormed ideas by putting together ideas that belong together and pruning those that may not be relevant to the topic. It is at this stage that students evaluate the information. Therefore, they may go back to collecting information and feed it into the plan if there is a need. This is possible because the fundamental principle of the process approach is that writing is an iterative process. It is after a plan has been devised that the drafting of the assignment may begin.

Drafting

Drafting is the stage at which writers write several drafts. The focus here, as Figure 5.1 shows, is on writing the initial draft by focusing mainly on the development, organisation and elaboration of ideas. Writers at this stage develop meaning with the assistance of ideas gathered from the prewriting activities. Drafting a piece of writing involves writers making a number of reflections. It is through these reflections that a number of drafts are produced. It can, therefore, be assumed that reflection is part of

the drafting stage. Reflection, however, may mean letting a piece of writing sit before coming to it with a clear mind. This may allow writers to see gaps in the text structure. From this stage writers may move to the peer or tutor review stage.

Review (peer/lecturer)

Review is a key aspect of the process approach. It is at this stage that writers get feedback from either peers or lecturers and act on it. This may take place in pairs where writers read each other's assignments. The reviewers should have been given the texts in advance for them to make meaningful contribution to the writing. Oral or written discussions are held between the reviewer and writer to clarify the comments made. This then leads to revision where the comments are integrated in the writing. As Figure 4.1 shows, the review leads to revision which involves the incorporation of the comments from reviewers. The figure also shows that because of the iterative nature of the process, the writer may go back to planning and all other steps if there is a need. This ultimately leads to the last stage before submitting for grading which is editing and proofreading.

Editing and proofreading

This is the stage where writers attend to mechanics of writing including attending to issues of linguistic accuracy. From this stage the piece of work may be submitted for grading.

In closing the discussion of the process approach to writing, it should be noted that this approach offers some advantages to writers. As Reid (2000) states, the first of those is that it fosters creativity that is first experienced during the prewriting stage. In addition, the multiple drafts characteristic allows for writers to be flexible in their writing. It again encourages collaborative work. This collaboration is evidenced from the review stage which involves peers and the lecturer making comments on the piece of writing. It also calls for the provision for feedback. This is advantageous for students as they are not judged from the first attempt. Writers also learn from the feedback provided.

Despite the advantages presented above, this approach is criticised because of the amount of time needed to implement it. Adequate time is not always available to

satisfactorily apply the approach. The approach also requires that writers be given enough support. This can be a problem in situations where lecturers have to deal with a large number of students, especially when the students are not proficient with the language of teaching and learning (Reid, 2000).

4.8.2 The product approaches

The product approach is grounded on behavioural psychology. Product approaches to writing view writing as mainly being concerned with the linguistic knowledge of the writer. The emphasis in these approaches is largely on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices (Butler, 2007). The distinguishing characteristic of these approaches is their focus on the finished text as product. In presenting writing in this approach, students are provided with knowledge about the structure of language. This is to say that how the writer reaches the product is not of concern to writing instructors. The product approach gives attention to the product of students' writing without helping them to go through the processes which successful writers use to produce texts.

One way of presenting writing following the product approaches is to provide learners with a model they have to imitate to produce their own work. The support that learners get from the lecturer include being provided with exercises that will assist them in imitating the model (Jordan, 1997). This is the type of writing that is taught at school level where learners are provided with models of writing, for example, a formal letter or a laboratory report. The learners only have to write in parallel to the given models.

A number of criticisms have been levelled against this approach. One such criticism is that the approach restricts students in terms of how and what they could write as they often have had to emulate a pattern design and have to reproduce a similar text (Badger & White, 2000). In addition, the process approach gives students the impression that mastering grammar rules and vocabulary leads to good writing. The creation of meaning is peripheral to this approach. Hyland (2003) stresses that with this approach, students are unable to write outside the models they have been provided with. Therefore, there is no personal growth in terms of writing for students. This method approach does not take into account the crucial aspect of self-expression.

It should, however, be noted that despite these criticisms, the approach plays a significant role of teaching students the basic rules and forms of what is required in writing (Badger & White, 2000).

4.8.3 Genre approaches

The genre approach to writing was initiated by Australian researchers as an alternative to the process approach to writing. In this approach, students have to learn the characteristics of various types of writing that serve particular purposes in specific contexts. The main focus of the genre approach is the product. Students particularly learn the linguistic characteristics of particular texts to a point where they are able to reproduce them (Ivanic, 2004). It falls within the academic socialisation model discussed earlier. The principles that characterise the genre approach can be incorporated into curriculum planning and teaching methodology. With this approach, writing is viewed as a social activity where the writer has to take into consideration the purpose, context and audience of the writing. In addition, the teaching of writing within this genre exhibits the needs of writers. The teaching is also based on explicit outcomes and its expectations based on a visible pedagogy (Ivanic, 2004).

A genre is defined by Swales (1990:58) as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.” Since Swain came with this definition, more attention has been paid to genre in writing. In simple terms, genre defines the type of text being written by following particular conventions for conveying the message to a particular context. As Hyland (2007) states, with the teaching of writing following the genre approach, students are assisted in getting assimilated into a particular community through understanding the texts produced by other members of the same community. This, it is assumed, will assist them in producing texts peculiar to that community.

Badger and White (2000) state that the genre approaches to writing are an extension of product approaches because they are mainly concerned with linguistic knowledge.

The difference is that they stress the fact that writing differs according to the social contexts where they are produced and is affected by the existence of different kinds of writing that are associated with different situations. In other words, genre approaches emphasise the social context in which the writing is produced.

The genre approaches to writing have three main phases as stated by Cope and Kalantzis's (1993:11). In the first phase, students are exposed to samples of the genre that they are supposed to replicate. They then produce a draft with the help of the lecturer. Finally, students independently construct their own text.

These approaches have been shown to be especially vital for beginner or intermediate levels of proficiency in a second language since they make writers feel confident and capable of producing a text that fulfils its purpose. They make students feel safe in writing by providing them with useful models (Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998). However, the genre approaches have been criticised because their proponents are often not clear about their theories of learning. The approach is also seen as undervaluing students as they are treated as passive participants. Furthermore, their prescriptive nature lends the approaches to lack of creativity for writers, just like the product approaches to writing (Badger & White, 2000:156). The other criticism of the approaches, as Lea and Street (1998) state, is that they fail to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning. However, Hyland (2008: 543) views it as "a robust pedagogical approach perfectly suited to the teaching of academic writing in many contexts".

4.9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to present the discussion of academic writing in higher education as writing is one of the primary means of assessment of knowledge and understanding at universities. The chapter opened with the contextualisation of writing as happens in higher education. A discussion of the academic literacy models within which writing takes place was provided. Furthermore, the chapter presented the challenges faced by students with regard to accuracy in academic writing as well as the possible causes of writing problems experienced by university students. The

chapter also discussed the ways of integrating grammar in the context of teaching academic writing. Lastly, a presentation of the approaches to writing was made.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research methodology and procedures that were followed in conducting this study. Firstly, because research has to be located within a particular paradigm, the chapter opens by elucidating on the research paradigms which shaped this study. The description of the population from which participants were selected as well as the sampling technique utilised together with the reason for the choice of technique are made. The variables of the study together with the extraneous variables are then discussed. The chapter also discusses the research methodology as well as the two research designs that the study utilised. The chapter, in addition, presents the intervention strategy that was applied on the treatment group in some detail. The issues of validity and reliability as relating to the collected data are also presented. This is followed by the presentation of the data analysis procedures utilised in this study. Furthermore, the limitations and ethical considerations pertaining to the study are indicated. And lastly, a summary of the chapter is given.

5.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

This section describes the research paradigm which dictated the methodology chosen for this study. A paradigm is defined as a basic belief system and theoretical framework which has assumptions about the ontology, epistemology, methodology and the method utilised in a study (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). This study is imbedded in the constructivist and positivist research designs which are briefly discussed.

5.2.1 Positivist paradigm

The positivist paradigm was initiated by a French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798 –1857) and is grounded on the scientific method of investigation. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) define the positivist paradigm as a scientific method that consists

of the rigorous testing of hypotheses by means of data that take the form of quantitative measurements.

It is a paradigm which is employed to search for cause and effect relationships in nature. Its aim is to provide explanations and to make predictions based on measurable outcomes. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state, positivism is guided by the four assumptions of determinism, empiricism, parsimony and generalizability. Determinism means that the events that are observed are caused by other factors. This implies that if one needs to understand casual relationships among factors, one needs to be able to make predictions and to control the potential influences of the explanatory factors on the dependent factors. Empiricism indicates that for a research problem to be investigated, there is a need that verifiable empirical data should be collected in order for the formulated hypotheses to be tested. Parsimony refers to the attempt by the researcher to explain the phenomena studied in the most economical way possible. By generalizability it is meant that the positivist researcher should be able to observe occurrences in the particular phenomenon they have studied, and be able to generalise about what can be expected elsewhere.

In the application of the four assumptions of positivism in this study, with regards to determinism, the grammar errors committed by participants have been caused by other factors as it has been suggested by the literature on the causes of errors in ESL learning. When coming to empiricism, the data collected is verifiable. The errors were identified from the essays written by participants. With regards to parsimony, the phenomenon studied, which is the impact of grammar instruction was explained thoroughly. Furthermore a pre-test and a post-test were utilised to determine statistically significantly whether there was improvement in the grammar usage of participants after the intervention. Lastly, it is hoped that the findings of this study can be generalized to the population with similar features as the one studied.

It should be noted that the positivist paradigm advocates the use of quantitative research methods as the bedrock for the researcher's ability to be precise in the description of the parameters and coefficients in the data that are gathered, analysed and interpreted. In this study the quasi-experimental design was chosen. Another characteristic of the positivist paradigm, according to Fadhel (2002), is that that through its design researchers can gain knowledge which helps them to become more objective in understanding the world around them. This study succeeded in getting knowledge regarding the type of errors students make in writing by utilising the error

analysis methodology. The study also provided knowledge on whether or not the grammar intervention had an impact on the treatment group to reduce the frequency of the errors they make when writing.

5.2.2 Constructivist paradigm

Besides relying on the positivist paradigm, the study also utilised the constructivist paradigm. Creswell (2003) mentions that within this paradigm researchers do not start with a theory, but they generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings with a range of participants as the study progresses. This was the case with this study regarding the utilisation of the error analysis procedure. An assumption was not made about the type of grammar errors participants make. Instead, these errors were identified from their written work. As mentioned by MacKenzie and Knipe (2006), some of the data collection tools the constructivist paradigm employ include interviews and document reviews. In respect to this study, the tool that was used is document review in the form of the error analysis of the texts produced by participants. The fact that an assumption was not made regarding the errors that participants made implies that the theory of constructivism does not precede research, but follows it so that it is grounded on the data generated by the research act. It is for this reason that when following this paradigm, data are gathered and analysed in a manner suggested by grounded theory. The assumptions envisaged by this paradigm are that of a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and a balanced axiology. Subjectivist epistemology implies that the researcher makes meaning of their data through their own thinking and cognitive processing of data informed by their interactions with participants. In the case of the study, data were collected through the interaction of the researcher with the texts produced by participants. The assumption of a relativist ontology implies that what is being studied has multiple realities which can be explored and meaning made of them. In this study, the interaction with the texts can lead to the researcher identifying the causes of the grammar errors participants make. The assumption of a naturalist methodology implies that the researcher utilises data gathered, while acting as a participant observer. Lastly, a balanced axiology implies that the outcome of the research is expected to reflect on the values of the researcher in trying to present an objective report of the findings. With regard to this study, only the errors identified by the error analysis were utilised for instruction.

Population

The population for this study was drawn from first year students registered in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (FEMS) of the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University. Specifically, the population is made up of first year students registered for the compulsory Academic Literacy modules (ALDE 111 and ALDE 122) offered in the first and second semester. This population was chosen because it is in these modules where academic writing is taught.

Sampling

The sampling technique employed in this study is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling has been defined by Teddlie and Yu (2008) as a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. The participants from the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences served as a convenience sample because of their accessibility to the researcher. That is, it is the group allocated to the researcher to teach the compulsory academic literacy modules. In addition, purposeful sampling was also used as the participants had to fit the purpose of the study which was to determine whether a grammar instruction intervention can assist students to improve their grammatical competence in writing. Krueger and Casey (2009:204) mention that in purposeful sampling, participants are chosen based on what type of people can give the researcher the type of information needed for the research. The study had a small sample of 60 participants, it is crucial to note that with purposeful sampling, as Krueger and Casey (2009) state, the number of participants is not as important. In this regard, Wilmot (2005) further explains that the aim with this type of sampling is not to produce a statistically representative sample or draw statistical inference, as a phenomenon need only to appear once in the sample. In addition, the sixty (60) participants were chosen on the basis of the gravity of errors in the error analysis procedure. This is to say that the frequency of errors made was one of the criteria for inclusion in the sample. This thus implies that students who made fewer errors were not considered for the study. The grammatical errors the participants made in their writing affected the comprehension of the texts they produced. It should be noted that the findings could well contribute to the body of knowledge of the researched phenomenon. To sum up, the participants in this study were the ones

taught by the researcher and the first year students from the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University. In particular, they are the students who committed more errors than their peers as identified in the analysis of the texts they produced

5.4 STUDY VARIABLES

5.4.1 Independent variable

The independent variable in this study is the grammar intervention utilising grammatical consciousness raising. This is discussed in the subsequent section of this chapter.

5.4.2 Dependent variable

In this study, the dependent variable is identified grammatical errors from the findings of the error analysis of academic essays written by participants. The dependent variable, grammar errors, is operationalised on an interval scale. The number of grammar errors identified in the academic essay are counted. The raw scores indicating the frequency of particular grammar errors are reflected as a percentage of the total number of obligatory contexts identified in the essay of every participant. The control group and the intervention group are tested in a pre-test and post-test error analysis to determine gain or change in the dependent variable, if any. The null hypothesis that the means of the experimental and control groups would be equal at a $<.05$ is tested by means of a one-tailed mean comparison of the gain scores, using the t-test.

5.4.3 Extraneous variables

It should be noted that controlling extraneous variables in naturally occurring groups can be difficult at times. As it has been mentioned, the student groups taking part in this study are the ALDE 122 groups attending lectures in two different periods in a week. For data collection, the following extraneous variables were identified and considered in terms of controllability and relevance to the outcome of this study: Age,

gender, study course, first language, school, matriculation results, TALL results, and socio-economic background.

- A. Age: The age of participants in this study ranges from 17 to 20 years. This is a negligible age difference in terms of language development. It was considered that this variable may not affect the results.
- B. Gender: The participants included members of both sexes.
- C. The intervention group and the control group were registered for different Bachelor of Commerce degrees within the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences.
- D. First language: The first language of all participants is one of the South African indigenous languages, with Setswana speakers making seventy percent (70%). All these languages are not related to English genetically.
- E. Socio-economic background. All participants have similar backgrounds in terms of schooling and place of residence. The participants are from townships, informal areas and rural areas. English is, for all participants, a second or third language which is rarely spoken at their homes if ever.
- F. Schooling: All participants attended a school where English is the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT). They studied in English for the duration of the schooling period which is twelve (12) years. The schools they attended are under resourced with sometimes under qualified or unqualified teachers of English.
- G. Matriculation English and results: All participants studied English First Additional Language (FAL) and they achieved between 45% and 50 % in their final matriculation examination.
- H. TALL results: All participants failed to be exempted from the Test of Academic Literacy Levels written by all first year students admitted to the North-West University.

5.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The two basic research approaches are quantitative and qualitative. The difference between the two approaches is that the quantitative research approach focuses on measurements of the characteristics displayed by phenomena that researchers study and it generates numerical data or data that can be converted into numbers. On the

other hand, qualitative approach mainly focuses on understanding people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions (Thomas, 2003). The research methodology followed by this study is quantitative; therefore, a brief description of this approach is given.

Quantitative research approach

As previously stated, quantitative research, as stated by Thomas (2003), focuses on measurements of the characteristics displayed by people and events that researchers study. Furthermore, it generates numerical data or data that can be converted into numbers, for example the National Census, which counts people and households. Its main focus is the understanding of how and why variables are related to one another. Punch (2003) states that it is used to answer questions about relationships between measured variables. This kind of research can generate statistics through the use of instruments designed to test for a specific construct, which in the case of this study is the impact of grammar intervention. This study compared the frequencies of errors in the pre-test and the post-test to determine the impact of grammar instruction. The study, thus, qualifies as a quantitative research.

5.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilised two research designs to collect data. The first design is the non-experimental (descriptive research) research design. Specifically, this study firstly employed the error analysis methodology to identify the problematic grammar aspects committed by participants in academic writing. The error analysis results served as a base for the instruction provided to the intervention group. That is, the decision on which grammar aspects to be taught to participants was arrived at from the findings of the error analysis process. The error analysis was done for both the pre-test and the post-test essays.

The second design is the quasi-experimental simple interrupted time series design. Dimsdale and Kutner (2004) state that quasi-experimental research attempts to answer questions such as: "Does a treatment or intervention have an impact?" As the main aim of the study was to investigate whether an intervention based on the identified grammatical forms will improve the accuracy of written academic texts

produced by first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University, this design was deemed to be the appropriate choice for the study. The following section discusses the two research designs utilised by the study separately.

5.6.1 Descriptive research design

Descriptive research, as mentioned by Ethridge (2004) can be explained as a statement of affairs as they are. That is, the description of the phenomenon. In the case of this study, a description is made of the grammar errors committed in the writing of first year students at the North-West University Mafikeng Campus. In addition, Ethridge (2004) states that descriptive studies are characterised as simply the attempt to determine, describe or identify what is. For this study, error analysis is employed to identify the errors first year students make when writing, as well as the extent to which they make such errors. Furthermore, Fox and Bayat (2007:45) remarks that descriptive research is “aimed at casting light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely than was possible without employing this method.” For this study, the error analysis procedure put to light the grammar errors that students make in writing. Descriptive studies are used to describe various aspects of the phenomenon and are mostly used to describe characteristics and/or behaviour of sample population. Research questions in descriptive studies typically start with ‘What is...’, as are the questions that guided this study.

Ethridge (2004) as well as Fox and Bayat (2007) identified the following advantages and disadvantages of descriptive research:

Advantages of Descriptive Research

1. Descriptive research is effective in analysing non-quantified topics and issues.
2. It allows for the possibility to observe the phenomenon in a completely natural and unchanged natural environment.
3. It provides the opportunity to integrate the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.
4. It is less time-consuming than quantitative experiments.

Disadvantages of Descriptive Research

1. Descriptive studies cannot test or verify the research problem statistically.

2. Research results may reflect certain level of bias due to the absence of statistical tests.
3. The majority of descriptive studies are not 'repeatable' due to their observational nature.
4. Descriptive studies are not helpful in identifying cause behind described phenomenon.

The disadvantages of the descriptive approach employed in this study were addressed. Firstly, statistical analysis was used to scrutinise the collected data. Furthermore, this study can be repeated. Lastly, the study employed literature review to describe the causes of errors in student writing.

The following section gives a detailed discussion of the error analysis methodology as used in this study.

5.6.2 Error analysis

Error analysis is described by Corder (1981: 10) as "a method used to document the errors that appear in learner language, determine whether those errors are systematic, and (if possible) explain what caused them". The error analysis methodology follows the steps suggested by Corder. The fourth and fifth steps which are the explanation of the causes of errors and the evaluation of errors were not part of the analysis as these were not relevant for the current study.

The error analysis methodology for this study followed the following three of the five stages as suggested by Corder (1987):

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

The fourth and fifth steps, which are error explanation and evaluation, were not part of the analysis as they were not relevant for the current study. The first three steps will be briefly presented since they were thoroughly addressed in the literature review.

Selection and collection of samples

The sample of learner language utilised in this study is referred to by Ellis (1994) as a specific sample. A specific sample consists of one sample of language use collected from a limited number of learners. The specific sample of learners was made by first year students registered in the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences in 2018. Furthermore, the collection of the sample followed Ellis' (1994) typology which states that the texts used for error analysis corpus should fall into the elicited clinical data type, i.e, learners are induced to use the target language, but the list of features they needed to produce is not specified. The same procedure was followed for the writing of essays utilised to collect data for error analysis in this study.

Due to the fact that the errors learners make can be influenced by a variety of factors as alluded to by Ellis (1994), it is crucial that a well-defined sample of learner language is collected so that clear statements can be made regarding what kinds of errors the learners produce and under what conditions. In order to achieve this need for this study, the factors suggested by Ellis (1994) were considered as shown in the discussion that follows.

Factors Description

A Language

1.	Medium	The production was written.
2.	Genre	An essay
3.	Content	Argumentative essay

B Learner

1.	Level	First year university students
2.	Mother tongue	South African languages (Bantu languages)
3.	Language learning experience	12 years schooling

Table 5. 1 Factors to consider when collecting samples of learner language (adapted from Ellis, 1994: 49)

In addition to the factors that have to be considered when collecting samples of learner language as depicted in Table 5.1, Ellis (1994) also mentions that a number of decisions need to be made regarding the manner in which the samples are to be collected. One important decision to be made is whether the learner language reflects natural, spontaneous language use, or is elicited in some way. For this study, learner language was elicited in the form of what Corder (1973) refers to clinical elicitation.

Clinical elicitation involves getting the learners to produce data. For this study, first year students in the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences wrote an argumentative essay choosing from the topics mentioned in the following section.

The other decision to be made is whether the samples for analysis are collected cross-sectionally, that is at a single point in time or longitudinally, that is at successive points over a period of time. For this study, the samples were collected cross-sectionally. In a cross sectional design, as Dulay *et al.* (1982) state, language data are collected from a relatively large sample of learners at one point of their development. For this study, all learners are first year university students, and the data was collected at the beginning of the first semester of 2018.

In order to ensure a reliable corpus for analysis, descriptions should be made regarding the following as suggested by (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:57):

1. The learner's social and situational background;
2. The situational context in which the writing took place.
3. The genre;
4. The topics;
5. The timing; and
6. The availability of reference tools.

1. The learners' social and situational background

All participants were first year university students registered for the Academic Literacy module at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University. The participants attended township and rural secondary schools. These schools are mainly characterised by being over-crowded and under staffed.

2. The situational context in which the writing took place: The participants wrote the essays for both pre and post-tests under the supervision of the lecturer who did not form part of this study. The writing was done under examination conditions. Learners were provided with the writing material. They were not prepared to write the essay.

3. The genre: The genre chosen for the corpus was academic writing.

4. The topics: All the topics that participants wrote essays about were argumentative. The choice of argumentative essays as opposed to other types of essays was based on the fact that studies (Wingate, 2012; Wu, 2006) have shown that the undergraduate students are mostly required and expected to present the academic argument in essays.

The participant first year students in the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences wrote an argumentative essay of between 350 and 400 words (two pages) choosing from the following topics:

- A. Discuss whether state owned enterprises in South Africa should be privatised to improve their management.
- B. Should the economic system of free enterprise practiced by the South African government be changed in order to address the existing social problems? Discuss.

5. The timing: The participants were allowed to write for one hour. This is the standard lecture period for the academic literacy module.

6. The availability of reference tools: The participants were not allowed to bring any writing tool such as a dictionary or any other materials. They were not allowed to refer to anything for assistance.

Reliability in the identification of errors in the corpus

The marking of the essays was performed by the researcher and another lecturer who is not part of the research. It should be noted that error identification in this study was performed bearing in mind different factors that were deemed to have the possibility of influencing the results, and thus to affect the validity and reliability of the exercise itself. As Shaw and Weir (2007) state, the reliability issue may be generally more complicated as the identification involves human raters because their judgement may be subjective. Of concern to this study were issues of inter-rater reliability, and intra-rater reliability. The reliabilities may be affected because of the fact that the correction was carried out by two different markers. An attempt to avoid this was made because the two markers, the researcher and another lecturer, have a similar educational and

professional background. Currently, they are English language lecturers at the North-West University. In addition, they both obtained a Masters degree in English Applied Linguistics. An average of the frequency of the errors they identified was used for data analysis.

5.6.2 Quasi-experimental design

The second research design utilised by this study is the Quasi-experimental design. Campbell and Stanley (2015) describe a quasi-experimental design as the one which is used to describe an experimental design which does not rigidly follow the all the principles guiding true experimental research designs. Unlike in experimental designs, as Broota (2006) states, in quasi-experimental design, the experimenter does not have complete control over the secondary variables. To further explain this design, Ellis and Levy (2001) mention that the quasi-experiment, which is also known as 'field-experiment' or 'in-situ experiment', is a type of experimental design in which the researcher has limited leverage and control over the selection of study participants. Specifically, in quasi-experiments, the researcher does not have the ability to randomly assign the participants and/or ensure that the sample selected is as homogeneous as desirable.

Quasi-experimental designs test causal hypotheses. Worobey (2006:23) argues that a quasi-experimental design necessitates the utilisation of a minimum of two intact groups of subjects: the control and intervention. This is to say that Quasi-experimental designs identify a comparison group or a control that is as similar as possible to the treatment group in terms of baseline or pre-intervention characteristics. This is as a result of the fact that under the quasi-experimental design, it is not possible to manipulate the independent variables as well as to assign participants like in true experimental designs. The main reason for this is that the design utilises already existing groups; for example, the participants in this study already belonged to particular lecture groups. The comparison group captures what would have been the outcomes if the intervention had not been implemented. It is for this reason that the intervention can be said to have caused any difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups (White & Sabarwak, 2014).

In order to create a valid comparison group, Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) and propensity score matching techniques can be utilised. These assist in reducing the risk of bias. The bias that is of concern in this type of design is selection bias. This bias involves the possibility that those who are eligible in the intervention are systematically different from those who cannot. This may lead to the observed differences between the two groups to be as a result of an imperfect match rather than having been caused by the intervention (White & Sabarwak, 2014). As there may be problems regarding bias in the selection of participants, Vockell (1983:174) is of the view that comparing the pre-test performance of both groups helps in ruling out selection as a threat to internal validity. This was the case in this study, as the pre-test performance for both the intervention and the control groups was compared and only the data of participants who made almost the same number of errors in the pre-test were chosen for data analysis.

Propensity score matching

Matching requires that each individual in the treatment group to be matched with an individual in the comparison group who is identical on all relevant observable characteristics such as age, and education, among others. This was applied in this study. A set of variables to ensure that participants are equal was designed. The type of the quasi-experimental design utilised in this study is discussed in the next section.

The Non-equivalent Control Group Design with Pre-test and Post-test

The type of quasi experimental design used in this study is the one referred to by Ellis and Levy (2001) as the nonrandomized control group pre-test-post-test design, which is similar to the lab experiment's pre-test-post-test with control group design, but without randomization. The intervention group (Group A), is the group to undergo the prescribed treatment (Tx), while the control group (Group B) is the group that receives no treatment at all and serves as the benchmarking point of comparison. This can be diagrammatically be presented as in Figure 5.1.

Quasi-experimental design

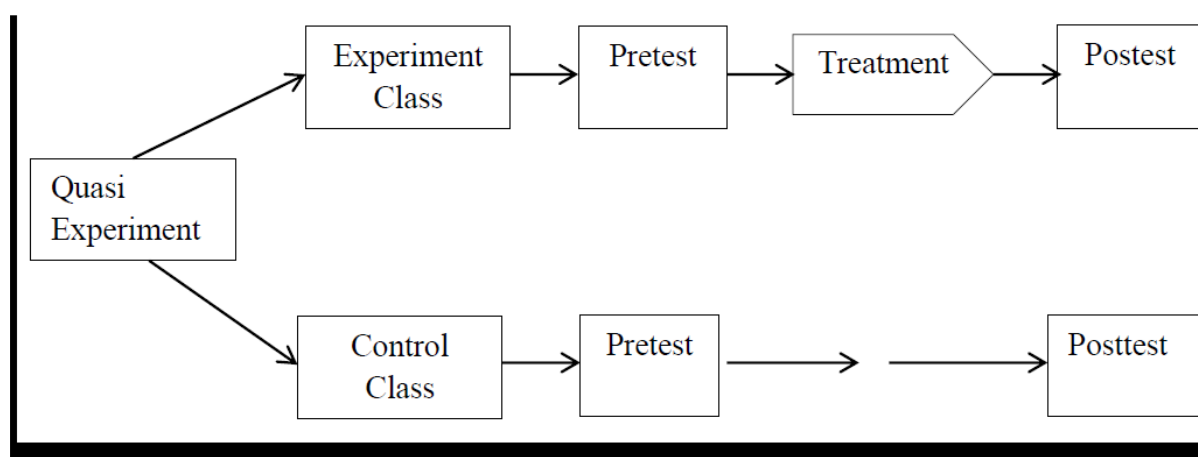


Figure 5. 1 Non-equivalent Control Group Design with Pre-test and Post-test (Fraenkel, 2012)

The main reason for the choice of this design is that, as Vockell (1983: 191) points, quasi-experimental studies can often be conducted with less disruption to ongoing school programme and the existing class time-table. In this study, participants remained in their Academic Literacy course groups.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test is one of the most commonly used quasi-experimental designs in educational research like the one undertaken by the present study. One major reason for this preference, as mentioned by Best and Kahn (2006) is because students are naturally organized in groups like those doing a similar course at a university. These groups are considered to share similar characteristics.

In this type of design, both the control and treatment group complete a pre-test and post-test. However, the treatment group is the only group that receives the research treatment, which in this case is grammar instruction. As it is the case with all other quasi-experiments, in this experimental design, groups are considered non-equivalent as groups are not randomized (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, non-equivalent groups specifically mean that participant characteristics may not be balanced equally among the control and treatment group as it is the case in true experimental research. It should also be noted that non-equivalent groups may mean that participants' experiences during the study may differ.

In order to increase the validity of the findings, researchers using non-equivalent groups should select samples from the same population, as well as selecting samples that are as similar as possible (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). This was the case in this study as only students registered in Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences were the only ones who participated in the study. In addition, attending to extraneous variables in making sure that participants are nearly the same assisted in the selection of the sample with nearly the same characteristics.

As Cohen *et al.* (2007) argue, non-equivalent groups may not be preferable in research; however, non-equivalent groups have been described as “better than nothing. A feature of this type of quasi-experimental design which increases the validity of the findings is that there was a pre-test that both control and treatment groups completed. A number of benefits have been associated with pre-testing. These include the fact that pre-testing allows researchers to analyse differences that may initially exist between control and treatment groups which then allows researchers to adjust for such differences (Green, Camili, & Elmore, 2006).

Besides that pre-testing allows for differences to be considered, it in addition indicates how big those differences are between control and treatment groups. This can be achieved through specifically determining the size of the difference of pre-test scores. Smaller differences in pre-test scores indicate that smaller differences may exist between control and treatment groups. Lastly, pre-testing also assists researchers in the statistical analysis of the data collected (Heiman, 1999). In this study, the mean scores of errors in the pre-test for both the control and the treatment groups were calculated to determine whether they are equal, and they were found to be equal.

To echo the preceding discussion, the type of quasi experimental design used in this study is the one referred to by Ellis and Levy (2001) as the nonrandomized control group pre-test-post-test design, which is similar to the lab experiment’s pre-test-post-test with control group design, but without randomization. The treatment group (Group A), is the group that went through the prescribed treatment (Tx), while the control group (Group B), is the group that received no treatment at all and serves as the benchmarking point of comparison. The treatment group and control group in this

study were, however, equal because the extraneous variables were attended to as discussed under the sampling technique that this study utilised.

5.7 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

This section discusses the intervention strategies utilised in this study on the treatment group. Different types of intervention strategies were adapted and utilised in this study. The main reason for using different adapted intervention types is that the intervention took place during the normal academic literacy lecture time during which process writing was discussed and applied. This is to say that the intervention was applied on the semester long essay writing exercise, and it was not a stand-alone lesson. The reason for adapting the intervention was based on the availability of time. Some steps in the intervention strategies were not deemed to be possible to be undertaken during the available lecture times. The efundi online learning site was also utilised to provide participants with extra practice on the identified grammar problems. The site gave access to extra material on English grammar aspects as well as extra practice exercises. The intervention strategies of consciousness raising and corrective feedback that were employed in this study are now discussed.

5.7.1 Consciousness-raising (CR) tasks utilised in this study

As earlier stated, in inductive consciousness-raising activities, the learner is provided with data and asked to construct an explicit rule to describe the grammatical feature the data is illustrating (Ellis, 2002). This is similar to the discovery technique where students are given examples of language and told to determine how they work to discover the grammar rules rather than being told about them. Ellis (200b) further clarifies that consciousness-raising aims at equipping learners with an understanding of a specific grammatical feature. Ellis identified the following as the main characteristics of consciousness-raising:

1. A specific linguistic feature is isolated for focused attention.
2. The correct usage of the structure is shown sometimes and is sometimes accompanied by the *explicit rule* describing or explaining the feature.
3. The learners are expected to learn the correct usage of the structure from the examples they are provided with.

4. If there is some misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners, clarification is provided..
5. Learners may be required to articulate the rule describing the grammatical structure.

It should be noted that the processes in CR include noticing as explained by the Schmidt's noticing hypothesis discussed in chapter three. In addition, learners are made to compare the input on the target structure with their own mental grammar. Lastly, it is hoped that the representation of the structure is integrated into their mental grammar.

This study utilised tasks which constitute the three part process of CR which are observe, hypothesize and experiment as suggested by Willis and Willis (2012). The tasks that students performed demanded of students to identify (observe) a particular pattern in the use of a grammar structure from a set of data. They then had to compare their output with the input from that set of data. Lastly they had to make a generalisation regarding the correct usage of the structure. For further practice, students were referred to the efundi site where resources were posted.

Example of consciousness-raising activity utilised in this study

Consciousness-raising task to NOTICE the construction of compound sentences.

Step 1. In setting the scene, students were provided with data showing pairs sentences with

incorrect and correct usage of compound sentences.

Step 2. Students compare the information in Step one with their production.

Step 3. Students then generate their own hypotheses regarding the construction of compound sentences. The students were also provided with the rules for the correct construction of compound sentences. Furthermore, they were referred to eFundi if they needed to practice.

5.7.2 Corrective feedback

As it has been discussed at length in chapter four, one of the decisions that second language writing instructors have to make when correcting grammar errors is whether the correction should be direct or indirect. To briefly recap on the difference between the two, Ferris and Gedgehock (2004) states that with direct feedback or correction, the teacher simply provides a target-like form, while with indirect feedback students

are provided with an indication that an error has been made. Students are, therefore, required to self-correct. The study opted for the utilisation of indirect feedback because of the advantages that it offers as has been shown by a number of studies (Ferris & Robersts, 2001; Rennie, 2000). In addition, the error correction applied in the intervention was comprehensive as opposed to selective. The decision for opting for providing comprehensive error feedback was based on research findings (Ferris, 1997) showing that learners are capable of attending to form and content at the same time. The provision of comprehensive error correction has been shown to assist in combating fossilization as when some errors are not corrected, students may assume that their constructions are correct. The following is the example of indirect corrective feedback as suggested by Ferris and Hedgehock (2004).

Option B (Smaller)

WF VF/WW

Lying is considered dishonest, cheating, or not telling the **true**, but can anyone **tells** that he or she never
VF RO
ever **lie**? Of **course not**, "everyone lies." I used to lie, and I cannot guarantee that I will not lie again in
WW
the future. Many people lie because they want to **make** fun while others lie to take advantage of someone
WW SS
else. However, lying is harmful **while** the person we lie to discovers that we are telling a lie. Despite **of**
WF
that, all lies are not **necessary** bad or wrong.

WW SS

We sometimes lie because we want to make people happy. I lied to a girl, **for** she **would** get mad.
VT SP VT
I met a girl four years ago. She **is** very **quite**, but her friend, Mindy, **likes** to talk a lot. I liked Mindy
WW
because she and I had a very good conversation. **While** Mindy left, I told that girl that I liked her more
SP
that I liked her more than Mindy because Mindy talked too much. I also told her that most **quite** girls are
SS
polite and honest, so she must be a very good girl. Although I really **didn't her**, I lied to make her happy.

KEY: VT= verb tense; VF= verb form; WW= word choice; WF= word form errors;
SS= sentence structure errors; SP= spelling.

Figure 5. 2 Indirect corrective feedback

For this study, the following correction code was utilised. The codes were explained and discussed with the students.

Correction codes used in student feedback:

SS= sentence structure

SV= Subject-verb agreement

Pr= Pronoun

Prep= Preposition

Ten= tenses

P= Punctuation

CD= cohesive devices

Corrective feedback should be effective and has to be part of the writing process. As argued by Granville and Dison (2009), it should not be a once off event taking place at the end of a written assignment. Feedback should be formative, continuous, integrated, holistic and should afford students with the opportunity to make reflections on the work (Granville & Dison, 2009; Meyer & Niven, 2007). This study believes that for feedback to attain these characteristics in academic writing, it should occur within the process writing approach. This is the approach the participants were engaged in as discussed in the subsequent section.

5.8 THE NATURE OF THE PARTICIPANTS' WRITING SITUATION

Participants in this study were registered for the Academic Literacy Development in English module (ALDE 122) at the Mafikeng campus of the North-West University. This module is offered in the second semester starting from July to the end of November. The main purpose of the module is to teach process writing for academic purposes. The participants were involved in the writing of different drafts of the aspects of the essay which include the introduction, the body and the conclusion. It was during the writing of these drafts during the writing process that the intervention was provided to the treatment group. The writing process as offered in the ALDE 122 module at the North-West University charts the following steps:

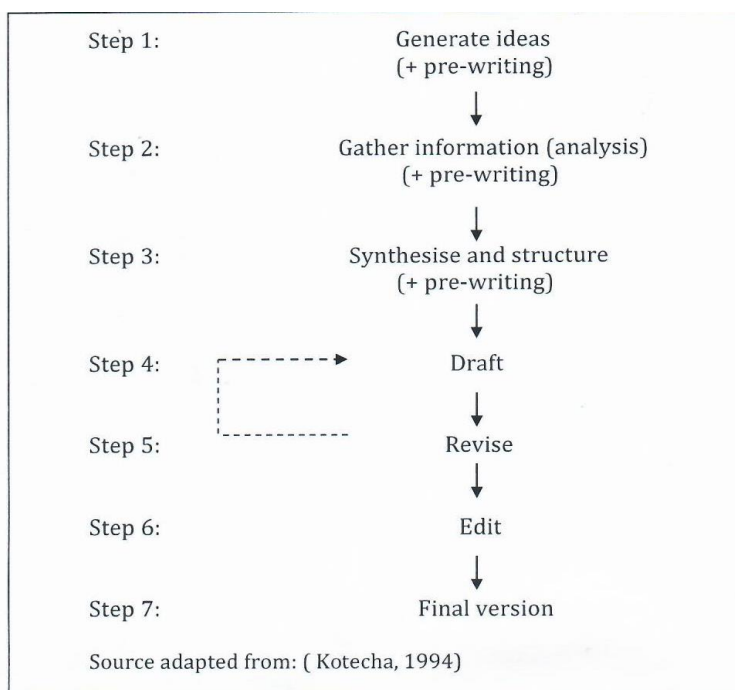


Figure 5. 3 The academic writing process (ALDE 122 Workbook: 6)

To briefly explain the academic writing process as presented in Figure 6.1, the process starts with an assignment given to students.

Step 1: Students are then involved in pre-writing activities where they generate ideas regarding the topic they have to write on. This takes place by means of a discussion of the topic during a lecture period. Students at this stage produce a paragraph based on the discussion held. The step at this stage is called free writing.

Step 2: Students gather information on the topic. Therefore, they gain more information on

the topic. Students take notes and incorporate them to the free writing activity in step one. It should be noted that students at this stage will have been provided with feedback on their free writing activity.

Step 3: With the gathered information at hand, students then plan and structure their essay. Feedback will have been provided on stage two.

Step 4 and 5: Students start drafting the assignment. They follow the route of drafting and revising based on the feedback provided. These stages may take longer depending on the quality of revision and how they satisfactorily incorporate the feedback. Some students go through the stages quicker than others. A period of about eight (8) weeks is set aside for these stages.

Step 6: The students edit the revised version that resulted from steps four and five.

Step 7: students submit the final version of the assignment for grading

5.9 THE MANNER OF PRESENTING THE INTERVENTION

As it has been mentioned in the previous section, the participants engaged in process writing which followed the steps as presented in the previous discussion. This implies that there was intervention for the treatment group at all steps of the writing process. As indicated, the feedback followed the indirect corrective feedback with some form of consciousness raising tasks and editing.

The following steps were followed:

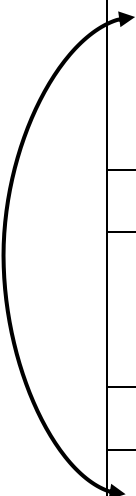
1. An error analysis of the participants was conducted to determine the type of grammar errors they make. This was based on the suggestions made by a number of scholars (Ferris, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004).

2. As students proceeded through the writing process, they were made aware of the grammar errors they make through indirect corrective feedback. This awareness was made by using codes to indicate where the error was in the writing. Throughout the steps of the process, correction codes and explanations were given for students to attend to. The content and structure of the writing as the ALDE module demands were also attended to.
3. Brief mini-lessons of the grammar structures identified from the error analysis as problematic were given. These lessons were also posted on the eFundi learning site together with the practice activities of the grammar structures identified as being problematic in the error analysis procedure performed. For each identified error, students were directed to a particular lesson on eFundi. If it was discovered through corrective feedback that many students have a problem with the structure, an incidental presentation of that rule of grammar was done during the lecture.

The steps followed as well as the instruction given and when it was provided are shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 below shows how the intervention was spread during the 7 weeks of the semester

Presentation of the intervention			
Module requirements:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students keep a file in which different drafts of their work is kept. During presentation, the previous draft is always compared with the current one. 			
	Week 1	Topic analysis, brainstorming, information gathering and free-writing.	Language aspect of consideration
		a. The Essay topics for the semester are given in class. b. The topics are analysed with students. c. A class discussion is held where the main ideas of the topics are discussed (brainstorming). d. The main points in point form are recorded on the white board. e. Students write a paragraph based on the class discussion and the main points (free writing). f. The paragraph is submitted. g. Home work. Further information gathering (sources).	
	Week 2.	Feedback on free writing (including corrective feedback), integrating the collected information to the free writing.	Sentence structure
		a. Students act on the corrective feedback (grammar errors and ideas). b. Students integrate the information gathered into the free writing. c. Students revisit the main points. d. The writing, which include the integrated information, is submitted after two days	
	Week 3.	Feedback on the extended writing submitted in week 2. Synthesis and structure of the draft.	Punctuation and Tenses and apostrophe
		a. Students work on the corrective feedback (grammar errors and ideas). b. They start to structure the essay into paragraphs. c. At this stage, they may go back to week two work to fine tune the content or to add more information. This depends on individuals. d. A draft of the structured essay is submitted after three days.	
	Week 4.	Feedback on the draft submitted in week three (corrective feedback, structure and content feedback) Draft revision	Logical connectors
		a. A mini-lesson on logical connectors is given. b. An exercise in logical connectors is given. c. Students revise the draft while incorporating logical connectors and incorporating the corrective feedback. d. The revision is mainly on the structure and content. e. If there is a need, they may go back to week three and four to improve content and structure respectively. f. The second draft is submitted after a week	



	Week 5	Feedback on the improved draft. Draft revision.	Subject-verb agreement
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The corrective feedback is incorporated into the draft. b. After discussions with the lecturer, students incorporate the ideas into the draft. c. Students may go back to the previous drafts to beef up information and further link ideas, depending on the nature of the drafts. 	
	Week 6.	Feedback on the drafts. Further draft revision	Articles
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The corrective feedback is incorporated into the drafts. b. Students rework the introduction and conclusion (corrective feedback, content and structure) c. This is submitted after two days. 	
	Week 7.	Feedback on the essay.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The corrective feedback is incorporated into the draft. b. A lesson on editing is given. c. The essay is submitted after three days. 	Editing

Table 5. 2 Intervention presentation during the semester

As shown in Table 5.2, the duration for the process of writing for the Academic Literacy module is approximately seven weeks. This is the period during which the intervention was provided. The arrows on the left of the table shows that the writing process followed was not linear. Students had the opportunity of reverting to the steps they have already passed through in order to improve writing. What is of importance for this study is the intergrated approach of teaching grammar in this study. Grammar was used as a meaning making tool inn the process of writing.

5.10 VALIDITY

Lodico *et al.* (2006: 190) state that validity is concerned with whether a test measures what it is meant to measure. This is to say, as Kirk and Miller (1986) states, the validity of a measuring instrument ascertains whether it measures the concept in question in addition to determining whether the concept tis being measured accurately. With regards to this study, the reason that the error analysis methodology was utilised to identify those aspects that students experience grammatical problems on is indicative of the fact that these grammar structures which received the intervention are the ones which students have problems with. The grammar structures were not pre-conceived.

Therefore, the pre and post-tests error analyses are a true measure of whether or not there has been any impact as a result of the intervention.

5.11 RELIABILITY

Kothari (2004) defines research reliability as the degree to which research method produces stable and consistent results. He further mentions that a specific measure is considered to be reliable if its application on the same object of measurement a number of times produces the same results. As explained earlier, rater reliability was addressed as two English lecturers identified the errors in the texts that participants produced. In addition, parallel form reliability for the pre-test and post-test was achieved by ensuring that the participants wrote on same argumentative essays under same conditions.

5.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Two data analysis procedures were followed in this study. This was necessitated by the two research designs utilised by the study. The research designs were guided by the research questions the study sought to respond to. Therefore, the data analysis employed for the first research design, which is the error analysis of student academic writing, is descriptive in nature.

For the analysis of the identified grammatical errors, the errors were recorded following the linguistic category and surface structure category taxonomies of error analysis as suggested by Dulay *et al.* (1982, 148).

Linguistic category classification

According to Dulay *et al.* (1982) the linguistic category specifies errors in terms of linguistic categories and in terms of where the error is located in the overall system of the target language. It firstly designates the level of language at which the error is located, for example, in this study the level is grammar or syntax. Further, it identifies whether the error involves for example, a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, or determiner. Finally it specifies the grammatical system that the error affects such as tense, number, voice, countability, transitivity.

Surface structure category classification

The surface structure taxonomy was proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). It is based on how learners incorrectly alter the surface structures of the target language (James, 1998). The type of errors which have been observed under this category include those of omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. As explained by Dulay *et al.* (1982), omission occurs when L2 learners omit words in their production, for example, the omission of 'be' in "My country wealthy." The errors of addition occur when L2 learners, for example, generalise the rules of the L2 as in the use of 'bayed' instead of 'bought'. Misinformation, on the other hand, is the use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme as in the use of "me" as both subject and object pronouns. Lastly, misordering occurs when learners select the right forms to use in the right context, but they arrange them in the wrong order, as in: "He every time come late home". For this study, the errors made on these structures will be labelled as being of omission, addition, misinformation or misordering.

In this study conducting error analysis involved the recording of examples of identified errors under grammatical subheadings (identified as linguistic category and surface category) as well as the corrected version of the error. For example, if the error was of sentence structure, the example of that error was given. The corrected version thereof was then given. Following the recording of the errors and their correction, a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to show the percentage of the type of error made; the mean score of the error; and its frequency. All these statistical analyses were performed on the combined errors of each participant. For example, the mean, percentage and frequency all errors of subject verb agreement for all participants were calculated together. The importance of descriptive statistics, as mentioned by Kruger (1994:208), is that they are concerned with the description or summarisation of the data obtained for a group of individuals being studied. In addition, as Huysamen (1998:4) states, the purpose of descriptive statistics is to reduce large amounts of data in order to facilitate the drawing of conclusions about them.

For the analysis of the data collected from quasi experimental design which aimed at determining the impact of the grammar instruction, inferential statistics were utilised. This was conducted by utilising SPSS version 25. Specifically, a t-test which is a type of inferential statistic used to determine if there is a significant difference between the

means of two groups, which may be related in certain features was utilised (Kothari, 2004). This test is one of many tests used for the purpose of hypothesis testing in statistics. For this study, the t-test was utilised to determine whether there is a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test after the intervention. In summary, to determine the impact of the intervention on the grammatical knowledge of students, the following were done:

- IV. An independent t-test was used to compare the difference between the pre-test for the control group and that for the treatment group.
- V. A dependent t-test was used to compare the difference within the pre-test for the control group and the post-test of the same group.
- VI. A dependent t-test was used to compare the difference between the pre-test for the treatment group and the post-test for the same group.

5.13 LIMITATIONS

There were potential expected limitations to this study as a result of the research design chosen. These limitations are related to, among others, the research design itself, sample selection, length of the grammar intervention, instrumentation, and participants. As a result of the aforementioned factors, there were threats to both internal validity and external validity. As it is the case with the quasi-experimental design, firstly the researcher did not randomly select participants. Because of this, the groups being compared may not have been statistically representative of the population. As a result of this, there is a possibility for interaction of selection and a possibility of regression, which may threaten the internal validity of the study. In order to minimise this, the intervention was assigned to the normal compulsory lecture periods in order to reduce the likelihood of this threat and the threat of regression.

In addition, general assumptions about first year university students may not be adequate as the sample was small and restricted to one faculty at one university. However, there are a number of universities which have the same student characteristics where the findings may be generalised. Besides, the findings can be generalised to the entire student population at the university where the study was conducted. Furthermore, the study was limited both by its location and by the Academic Literacy module used. It is hoped that the findings can be generalised to other modules where academic writing is required.

Due to the fact that the researcher administered the intervention, there was a likelihood of stimulus characteristic and setting limitation. Additionally, the study was restricted by the amount of time spent on interventions. The interventions took place during the normal academic literacy lectures, during which different aspects of the syllabus were taught. Giving more time to the intervention may have led to different findings.

5.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study adhered to normal ethical procedures as stipulated by the UKZN's research ethics requirements. Ethics approval was granted by the UKZN. Participants were not disadvantaged in any way. Participants provided informed consent before the commencement of the research to allow the lecturer as participant-observer to use essays as part of research conducted for this study. Participants were informed that participation was completely voluntary. The participants' right to privacy was respected and their anonymity ensured during all stages of the study. No names were used to ensure anonymity.

5.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a description of the research methodology and data collection procedures that were followed in conducting this study. The chapter began by a discussion of the research paradigm which guided this study. A description of the study population as well as the sampling technique utilised was given. The reasons for the choice of the sampling technique were also given. The chapter further described the variables of the study together with the extraneous variables that were considered. The chapter also discussed the research methodology as well as the two research designs that the study utilised. The chapter, in addition presented the intervention strategy that was applied on the treatment group in some detail. The various ways of ensuring the validity and reliability of the collected data were presented. The data analysis procedures as well as the statistical methods utilised were discussed. The chapter furthermore discussed the limitations and ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

CHAPTER 6

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented a discussion of the research approach, design and methodology followed in this study including the justification for using the particular approach, design and methodology. In this chapter, a descriptive analysis and discussion on the findings of the error analysis approach are presented. This is done to answer the first research question which is: **What types of grammatical errors can be identified in the academic texts of first year students, and to what extent do they make such errors?** Therefore, firstly, the discussion presents the grammar errors that were identified in the essay written by first year students. These errors are then explained and discussed in relation to their effect on academic writing.

The second section of this chapter is the presentation and analysis of the inferential statistics comparing the control group and the intervention group in order to determine the impact of the intervention. In this presentation, a comparison of the frequency of errors identified in the pre-writing task and the post-writing task is presented. This is done to determine whether the grammar instruction intervention had an impact on the correct grammar usage on the treatment group. Therefore, the second part of the analysis is aimed at answering the second research question which is: **What is the impact of grammar intervention on the level of grammatical competence of first year students in the production of academic texts?**

6.2 GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IDENTIFIED ON THE PRE-TEST

In this section, the grammar errors identified in the error analysis of the pre-test are presented in tables following the linguistic and surface structure category taxonomies as suggested by Dulay *et al.* (1982, 148). The frequency, percentage and mean of each identified error are presented. This is followed by the description of the contents of the table. In this description, the error category of the identified error is named. This is followed by examples of the errors as they were identified on the written text of participants as well as their corrected forms. Furthermore, a brief description of the

importance to writing of each aspect of the identified grammar aspect is presented. Lastly, the discussion linking the finding to the literature reviewed is presented.

In this analysis, it should be noted that a number of problems were encountered in categorising the identified errors. This was expected as it was alluded to in the literature in the discussion on the criticisms of error analysis (see chapter 2 section 2.10). One problem to be noted here is that some errors could not be classified to be belonging to a single category. For example, what was regarded as a tense error could have also appear as sentence structure error. Again, it should be noted that the errors were identified at sentence level, but not at the phrase or clause levels. The reason for this is that it was the evaluation of the correctness of the sentence that errors were identified from.

6.2.1 Errors in the use of articles

Table 6. 1 Examples of identified article errors

Linguistic category: Syntax	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Lack of article use (no article where it is supposed to be (This is referred to by Dulay <i>et al.</i> (1992) as omission).	a. <i>Country should change the economic system.</i> b. <i>One of economic systems is capitalism.</i>	a. The country should change the economic system. b. One of the economic systems is capitalism
b. Incorrect use of both (a) the indefinite and (b) the definite article (using both where there should be zero article) (This is referred to by Dulay <i>et al.</i> (1992) as addition).	a. <i>A capitalism allows for free...</i> b. <i>The capitalism is the best for South Africa</i>	a. Capitalism allows for free... b. Capitalism is best for South Africa.
a. Using a wrong article in a sentence (This is referred to by Dulay <i>et al.</i> (1992) as wrong substitution).	a. <i>A ownership of land is one characteristic of capitalism.</i>	a. The ownership of land is one characteristic of capitalism.

The findings of the study regarding the errors of article usage indicate the frequency of 318 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9,9. The results also show that articles make 10% of all the errors committed. The errors committed by the participants relating to articles are presented in Table 6.1. As it has been shown by Dulay *et al.* (1982), article errors committed by L2 learners are those of omission, addition and substitution.

As shown in Table 6.1, participants omitted the use of articles as revealed by example (a). Also shown in the table is that participants incorrectly use both the definite and indefinite articles as indicated in example (b). Example (c) indicates that participants wrongly use articles.

It is crucial to indicate the importance of the correct use of the article system in English and to demonstrate their importance in academic writing. As Miller (2005) has alluded, in the case of academic writing, there is a greater level of accuracy that is required when presenting ideas; therefore, the correct article usage becomes an indication not only of mastery of the language of teaching and learning, but of exactness in thought and expression. The importance of the correct use of articles has been summed by Master (1997) who indicated that the imperfect control [of the use of articles] may suggest imperfect knowledge which may lead to the perception that the writer of a university essay or academic paper does not have an adequate grasp of their subject.

A number of studies (Miller, 2005. Master, 2002; Master, 1997) have shown that the English article system presents many problems for non-native speakers of English, particularly when they do not have the equivalent structure in their first language. The findings of the error analysis in this study is in agreement with the findings of these studies. Due to the fact that all participants in this study were speakers of one of the African South African languages that do not have an equivalent of articles in their mother tongue, they experience a problem with the correct use of articles.

6.2.2 Errors in the use of tenses

Table 6. 2 Examples of errors in the use of tenses

Linguistic category (morphology and syntax) and error type tenses.	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Lack of tense consistency (present and past tens in the same sentence).	a. <i>Cuba is a country that followed communism.</i>	a. Cuba is a country that follows communism.
b. Present continuous tense incorrectly used.	b. <i>Communist countries are leaving in poverty.</i>	b. Communist countries live in poverty.
c. Using has and have as a past tense marker.	c. <i>The countries have suffered in the past.</i>	c. The countries suffered in the past
d. Wrong verb tense.	d. <i>The countries are suppose to...</i>	d. The countries are supposed to....
e. Confusing verb forms (being and been).	e. <i>The country has being....</i>	e. The country has been ...
f. Wrong past-participle	f. <i>Russia has change from</i>	f. Russia has changed from ...

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on tenses indicate the frequency of 343 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.251. The results also show that articles make 10.81% of all the errors committed.

As indicated in Table 6.2, one tense error committed by participants is that of tense consistency as shown by example (a). The other problem is that of the incorrect use of the continuous tense as in example (b). Example (c) shows the incorrect use of have and has as past tense markers. In example (d) the wrong verb tense is one of the errors made by participants. Participants also confuse the use of ‘*been and being*’ as exemplified in example (e). It was also found that participants fail to use the correct past-participle in the perfect tenses as shown in example (f).

Tenses are very significant in academic writing. It is, therefore, important to make students, especially ESL students, aware of the use of different in various sections of their writing. For example, in academic writing, the *present* tense is used to state facts, to make generalisations and to report on the research and ideas of others. On the other hand, the *past* tense is utilised describe past events, for example. The future tense can be used to express the writer’s assumptions, speculations and predictions about the future after an analysis of a situation. As Hinkel (2004) puts it, tense and aspect in academic writing are important features of university level writing.

Tense, according to Bott (2010) roughly means reference to the time at which events take place, or at which processes or states hold, while aspect addresses whether or not the action takes place in a single block of time or if the action is continuous or repeated. Hinkel further notes that the teaching of these crucial aspects of academic writing has not been explored to a satisfactory level. This is despite that, as pointed by Reid (2000), writing conventions require specific verb tenses in different academic writing situations. Reid also observed that ‘verb tense errors can be serious; they often interfere with communication. There is, therefore, a need to pay special attention to these grammar features in order to facilitate communication. Despite the importance of these aspects of grammar, several studies (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Hinkel, 2002a; Jordan, 1997) have shown that these aspects have not been made relevant to academic writing by showing which specific tenses and voice are more appropriate than others in different writing contexts and different academic texts. Another point of note is that the practically requisite usage of passive voice in constructing formal written discourse also needs to be taught intensively. This is so despite the fact that studies have shown the essential grammar features of academic writing and text, these have had minimal impact on L2 grammar and academic writing instruction (Hinkel, 2004; Hinkel, 2002). As Hinkel (2004) notes, a number of studies (Hinkel, 2002a, c; Masten, 1991) have shown that the English passive is very difficult for ESL students due to complex grammatical, lexical and pragmatic features. It may be for this reason that only a few students used the passive voice among the participants.

6.2.3 Errors in the use of apostrophe

Table 6. 3 Examples of errors in the use of the apostrophe

Linguistic category and error type (Morphology)	Example of learner error	The corrected version
2. Possessive case/apostrophe		
a) Omission of 's.	a. <i>The countrys economy....</i>	a. The country's economy...
b) Using apostrophe in plural nouns even though there is no possession or omission.	b. <i>The state owned enterprises' are experiencing.....</i>	b. The state owned enterprises are experiencing.....
c) Failing to use an apostrophe to show omission in contractions.	c. <i>The enterprise dont have.....</i>	c. The enterprise don't have.....

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on the use of the apostrophe indicate the frequency of 343 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.251. The results also show that articles make 10.81% of all the errors committed. From Table 6.3, it can be observed that participants omitted the apostrophe in some of the sentences they wrote as shown by example (a). Furthermore, it was discovered that participants sometimes use the apostrophe in plural nouns even though there is no possession or omission as shown in example (b). In addition, participants fail to use the apostrophe in contractions as shown in example (c) of Table 6.3.

In academic writing, contractions are considered informal language and should be avoided. It is important to be aware of the rules for apostrophes as a misplaced apostrophe can change the meaning of a sentence. Therefore, it is important to use the apostrophe correctly in academic writing.

The findings of this study corroborates those of previous studies (Miller, 2005. Master, 2002; Master, 1997) which have shown that ESL learners often encounter problems with use of the apostrophe. In English, the most common way to form a possessive is to use an apostrophe ' and s. An apostrophe, in English, appears as part of a word to show possession or to indicate the omission of one or more letters (a contraction). This usually presents as a problem for ESL speakers, especially those whose mother tongue is structurally different from English as it was the case with the participants in this study.

6.2.4 Errors in the use of subject-verb agreement

Table 6. 4 Examples of errors in the use of subject verb agreement

Linguistic category of syntax and error type verb construction	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Confusion on the use of have and has.	a. <i>The countries has not performed well....</i>	a. The countries have not performed well
b. Confusion on the verb of singular and plural subject sentences.	b. i) <i>The economic system play an important role</i> ii) <i>The countries remains underdeveloped....</i>	b. i) The economic system plays an important role ii) The countries remain under developed
c. Confusion with the use of indefinite pronouns,	c. <i>All of the system of capitalism are....</i>	c. <i>All of the system of capitalism is...</i>

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on subject-verb agreement indicate the frequency of 312 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.83. The results also show that articles make 10.17% of all the errors committed.

From the analysis of the texts written by participants, it was found that they commit subject-verb agreement errors. One error of this category made by participants is the confusion the use of 'has and have' as shown in example (b) in Table 6.4. The other type of subject verb errors that participants made include those of the subject not agreeing with the verb, regarding the –s inflection in the verb as shown in (b) in Table 6.4. Participants were also found to be committing errors by confusing the use of indefinite pronouns, that is, the indefinite pronoun not agreeing with the verb as shown in example (c) in Table 6.4.

Correct subject-verb agreement is important in academic writing. On the other hand, incorrect subject-verb agreement can be confusing to the reader. This is especially problematic in academic writing when one is trying to prove something or trying to explain an already complex issue. A message can get lost if sentences are unclear due to subject-verb disagreement. Therefore, correct subject-verb agreement in writing helps readers better understand your ideas.

In concurring with the findings of this study, a number of studies (Ndwamato, 2017; Nudelman & Jane English, 2016; Chele, 2015; Nzama, 2010; Maliwa, 2009) have shown that South African students encounter problems with the use of correct concord. As Greenbaum and Nelson (2002: 141) state, in English, as in many other languages, one of the grammar rules is that the subjects and the verbs must agree both in number and in person. Therefore, concord or subject verb agreement refers to the matching of subjects and verbs according to their number. Celce-Murcia and Freeman (1999) observed that despite that subject-verb agreement rules are taught at early schooling to ESL learners, these rules still pose problems for all learners at all levels or proficiency, even at university. This is because, as Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) indicate, there are a number of exceptional and difficult cases relating to this rule for ESL learners. It is, therefore important that ESL writers be made aware

of these rules to enable them to apply them in their writing. This is even more important as the equivalent of these structures may be absent in their first language.

6.2.5 Errors in the use of pronouns

Table 6. 5 Examples of errors in the use of pronouns

Linguistic category of syntax and error type	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Use of pronoun and noun in the same sentence.	a. <i>Communist countries they are unable to sustain their economies.</i>	a. Communist countries are unable to sustain their economies.
b. Incorrect use of demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those).	b. <i>This countries are former</i>	b. These countries are...
c. Omission of pronouns.	c. <i>Country needs to adapt.....</i>	c. The country needs to adapt.
d. Confusing the use of <i>they, their, there, there are and they are</i> .	d. <i>They are economy is face.....</i>	d. Their economy face...

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on pronouns indicate the frequency of 319 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.947. The results also show that erroneous preposition uses make 10.1% of all the errors committed.

The analysis of the errors in the texts indicated that participants encounter problems in the correct usage of pronouns. A pronoun, according to Hacker and Sommers (2011) is a word used in place of a noun. Usually the pronoun substitutes for a specific noun, known as its *antecedent*. Table 6.5 shows that participants commit an error by using a noun and a pronoun in the same sentence as shown by (a) in Table 6.5. In addition, participants confuse the use of demonstrative pronouns as shown by (b) in Table 6.5. From the analysis of the texts written by participants, it was also found that they commit pronoun errors regarding the omission of a pronoun in a sentence as shown by (c) in Table 6.5. Lastly, example (d) in Table 6.5 shows that participants confusing the use of '*they, their, there, there are and they are*' in their writing.

Pronouns are very important in academic writing. One of the crucial role they play in writing is that they enhance the cohesion of written work (Rustipa, 2015). Incorrect use

of pronouns may lead to confusion in that the reader may not have the idea of what the wrongly used pronoun refers to.

A number of studies (Nudelman & English; 2016; Maliwa, 2009; Parkinson & Singh, 2007) which have shown that Black South Africans encounter problems in the use of the English pronouns corroborate the findings of this study. These studies have shown that students do have a problem with pronouns in their writing. An awareness on the correct use of these pronouns will go a long way in assisting students.

6.2.6 Errors in sentence structure

Table 6. 6 Examples of errors in sentence structure

A. Linguistic category and error type	Example of learner error	The corrected version
(a) Compound sentences not correctly punctuated.	a. <i>Economic growth is weak and it cannot provide jobs.</i>	a. Economic growth is weak, and it cannot provide jobs.
(b) Complex sentences incorrectly structured	b. <i>If the country follows communism it will fail.</i>	b. If a country follows communism, it will fail
(c) Sentence fragments		
Sentences which are made up of dependent clauses only	<i>When a country opts for communism.</i>	When a country opts for communism, it does not allow for.....
(d) Run-on sentences		
Two or more independent clauses are not joined correctly.	<i>The country is poor it does not encourage investment.</i>	The country is poor because it does not encourage investment.
(e) Comma splice		
A run-on sentence with a comma splice consists of two independent clauses separated by a comma and missing conjunction.	<i>Citizens do not own property, all properties belong to the state.</i>	Citizens do not own property as all properties belong to the state.

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on sentence structure indicate the frequency of 311 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.801. The results also show that sentence structure make 10.2% of all the errors committed.

As shown in Table 6.6, participants made errors of sentence structure in respect of compound sentences not being correctly punctuated as example (a) shows. Also, example (b) indicates problems encountered with the construction of complex sentences. In example (c), it is shown that participants, at times, write fragmented

sentences. Example (d) indicate that participants make errors of run-on sentences. The other error participants commit is that of comma-splice as shown in example (e).

Sentence structure is important in academic writing. It should be noted that sentences provide the framework for the clear written expression of ideas. Therefore, the aim in writing should always be to write complete sentences which are correctly punctuated. The importance of correct sentence structure in academic writing cannot therefore be overemphasized. Without the correct sentence structure usage, students' writing will not be comprehended. This may lead to them failing the written task.

A number of studies (Scholtz, 2016; Mutimani, 2016; Ward-Cox, 2012) have shown that ESL university students experience problems when constructing sentences. One major finding from these studies is that the sentence structure of some university students is often in such a way that meaning was obscured. A number of studies which have shown that Black South Africans encounter problems in the construction correct English sentences corroborate the findings of this study (Nudelman & Jane English, 2016; Maliwa, 2009; Parkinson & Singh, 2007; Banda, 2004).

6.2.7 Errors in the use of prepositions

Table 6. 7 Examples of errors in the use of prepositions

A. Linguistic category syntax and error type of prepositions	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Omission of preposition. b. Incorrect use of prepositions.	a. <i>The capitalists allow the sharing of wealth</i> b. <i>The countries which follow communism do not take account the issue of private ownership.</i>	a. The capitalists allow for the sharing of wealth b. The countries which followed communism do not take into account the issue of private ownership.
c. Unnecessary insertion of a preposition.	c. <i>This essay discusses about communism</i>	c. This essay discusses...

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on prepositions indicate the frequency of 312 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.833. The results also show that articles make 10.17% of all the errors committed.

In utilising Corder's (1974) identification of error types, preposition errors can be classified in the three categories of Wrong substitution, Unnecessary Insertion, and Omission. As indicated in Table 6.7, the participants committed errors in all the three categories. A preposition is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002) as a type of a word or group of words often placed before nouns, pronouns or gerunds to link them grammatically to other words. They may express meanings such as direction (*for example from home*), place (*for example in the car*), possession (*for example the capital city of South Africa*) and time (*for example after hours*).

The correct usage of preposition is crucial in academic writing. As shown by Sibanda (2014), prepositions are used for attributive language which characterizes academic writing. A number of studies, for example (Nudelman & English, 2016; Sibanda (2014), have shown that students commit errors regarding the use of prepositions in their writing, thus corroborating the findings of this study. As Sibanda states, some attributive verbs collocate with a preposition like to, for, with, and of. If students are not familiar with the rules, they may use wrong prepositions with the chosen attributive verb.

6.2.8 Errors in the use of cohesive devices

Table 6. 8 *Examples of errors in the use of cohesive devices*

B. Linguistic category and error type	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Incorrect use of devices.	a. <i>Economic growth will be improved by changing to capitalism however investment will grow.</i>	a. Economic growth will be improved by changing to capitalism because investment will grow.
b. Incorrectly beginning a sentence or paragraph with a cohesive device	b. <i>However the State Owned Enterprises fail to recover, they are given money.</i>	b. The State Owned Enterprises fail to recover; however, they are given money.

The findings of the study regarding the errors committed on cohesive devices indicate the frequency of 305 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.612. The results also show that articles make 10.4 % of all the errors committed.

Table 6.8 shows that the cohesive devices errors participants make include those of using cohesive devices incorrectly as shown in example (a). The other problem is that of incorrectly beginning a sentence or a paragraph with a device when they are not supposed to as in example (b).

Cohesive devices, as defined by Crystal (2003), are those features of the text which link different parts using, for example, pronouns, determiners and other words to link ideas. The importance of cohesion in academic writing is emphasized by a number of researchers (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1988) who state that, without cohesion there can be no meaningful discourse. Patricio (1993) further emphasizes that a lack of cohesion in students' may lead to communication breakdown. Cook (1989:127) also mentions that when sentences are seen in isolation the context can often be neglected. A study Chiang by (2003:471) found that some lecturers judge academic writing primarily on either coherence or cohesion.

A number of studies (Makalela, 1996; Wissing, 1987) in South Africa have observed that the English produced by speakers of the Bantu language group often shows some confusion with the use of cohesive devices. Furthermore, the studies showed that some BSAE speakers display an underdeveloped style of using cohesive devices. This study is confirming these findings.

6.2.9 Punctuation

Table 6. 9 Examples of punctuation errors

Surface structure category and error type (Punctuation)	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Not ending a sentence with a full stop. b. Sentence beginning with a small letter.	a. <i>They are rich countries</i> b. <i>The state owned enterprises' are experiencing.....</i>	a. They are rich countries. b. The state owned enterprises are experiencing.....
c. Not inserting a comma in a where it is supposed to be used.	c. <i>The freedoms in a capitalist country are those of religion assembly ownership.</i>	c. The freedoms in a capitalist country are those of religion, assembly, and ownership.

The findings of the study regarding the errors of punctuation indicate the frequency of 343 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.251. The results also show that articles make 10.81% of all the errors committed. It should be noted that the punctuation problems in Table 6.9 are some of the problems observed in participants' written work. From Table 6.9, it can be observed that participants failed to close a sentence with a full stop as shown in example (a). Furthermore, it was discovered that participants sometimes did not open sentences with a capital letter as shown by example (b). In addition, participant failed to insert a comma where it is supposed to be used.

Correct punctuation is a necessity in written academic English because it gives the reader an understanding of the meaning of the text and the idea revealed by the writer. This suggests that incorrect punctuation may alter the meaning of a text. The omission of a single punctuation mark can greatly change the meaning of the sentence. Besides, correct punctuation is also a significant tool to make a written text logical and readable. The findings of this study corroborate that of Drennan (2017) and Pfeiffer (2018) which showed that the use of correct punctuation in academic writing is one of the problems experienced by many ESL students at higher education institutions in South Africa.

6.2.9 Other errors

Table 6. 10 Examples of other errors

Linguistic category of syntax and error type	Example of learner error	The corrected version
a. Use of aspects of academic language, for example (Using contractions).	a. Communist countries can't sustain their economies.	a. Communist countries cannot sustain their economies.
b. Confusion because of homophones.	b. Communist countries insure that...	b. Communist countries ensure.

The findings of the study regarding the other errors committed the frequency of 319 errors from all the essays in the pre-test with the mean of the errors being 9.947. The results also show that sentence structure make 10.1% of all the errors committed.

The analysis of the errors in the texts indicated that there are other errors that ESLL students make beside the one discussed earlier. For example, participants used contractions even though its use is discouraged in academic writing. This is shown in example (a) in Table 6.10. There were also some confusion with homophones as example (b) shows.

The above discussion was a presentation of the results on the findings of the error analysis procedure which aimed at identifying the grammar errors that students make in writing. The following discussion is the presentation on the results achieved in comparing the pre-test and the post-test with the aim of determining the impact of grammar instruction on the treatment group.

6.3 SECTION B THE IMPACT OF GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

The aim of this section of data presentation and analysis is to determine whether or not grammar instruction had an impact on the performance of the treatment group. Firstly, a presentation of the mean errors of the pre-test for both the control and the treatment is given. This was done to indicate that the two groups were equal at the beginning of the study.

6.3.1 Comparing the means of the pre-test for the control and the intervention groups

Table 6. 11 Comparison of the mean errors between the control and treatment groups for the pre-test

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	T	df	p-value
Articles (Pre)	-.298	54	.767
Tenses (Pre)	-.196	54	.845
Apostrophe (Pre)	.631	54	.530
Subject Verb Agreement (Pre)	.195	54	.846
Pronouns (Pre)	.074	44.5	.941
Sentence structure (Pre)	.114	54	.909
Prepositions (Pre)	-.478	54	.635
Cohesive devices (Pre)	.000	54	1.000
punctuation (Pre)	1.822	54	.074

Other errors (Pre)	-1.407	54	.165
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The aim of conducting the t-test statistics on the pre-test was to indicate that the two groups, that is, the control group and the treatment group were equal at the beginning of the study. This ensured that the determination on whether the intervention had an impact or not is valid. The independent t-test results in Table 6.11 show that all the means of the errors from the pre-tests do not differ significantly between the treatment and control groups (p-values > 0.05). The p value which is more than 0.05 shows that the differences were insignificant. As indicated on Table 6.11, the p values for all grammar variables are more than 0.05. That is, the averages of the errors committed on each grammatical component were the same between the treatment and control groups for the pre-test.

6.3.1.1 Difference in the mean errors between the pre- and post- tests

Table 6. 12 Comparison: Mean errors of pre- and post- tests for Control group

	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	p-value	Mean (Pre)	Mean (Post)	Mean Difference (Pre-Post)
Articles (Pre) - Articles (Post)	.881	.167	2.788	27	.010	6,07	5,61	0,46
Tenses (Pre) - Tense (Post)	1.000	.189	2.646	27	.013	5,64	5,14	0,5
Apostrophe (Pre) - Apostrophe (Post)	.833	.157	4.994	27	.000	5,68	4,89	0,79
Subject Verb Agreement (Pre) - Subject Verb Agreement (Post)	1.031	.195	3.117	27	.004	6,14	5,54	0,6
Pronoun (Pre) - Pronoun (Post)	1.152	.218	-.328	27	.745	5,57	5,64	-0,07
Sentence structure (Pre) – Sentence structure (Post)	1.597	.302	1.420	27	.167	5,71	5,29	0,42
Prepositions (Pre) - Prepositions(Post)	1.044	.197	.724	27	.475	5,39	5,25	0,14
Cohesive-devices (Pre) – Cohesive devices (Post)	1.224	.236	-.157	26	.876	5,46	5,56	-0,1
Punctuation (Pre) - Punctuation (Post)	1.458	.276	-.518	27	.608			
Other errors (Pre) – Other errors (Post)	1.660	.314	-1.138	27	.265			

It can be observed from Table 6.12 that the t-ratios of the variables from tenses to subject verb agreement are statistically significant because they exceed -2 and 2. On the other hand, from sentence structure to cohesive devices variables are statically insignificant since they have t-ratio of less than -2 and 2.

The paired (dependent) samples t-test results in Table 6.12 show that the mean of the errors from the pre-test for Articles is significantly lower than the mean of errors from the corresponding post-test (p-values < 0.05) by 0.464. Furthermore, it is shown that the mean of the errors from the pre-test for Tenses is significantly greater than the mean of errors from the corresponding post-test (p-values < 0.05) by 0.5. In addition, the mean of the errors from the pre-test for Apostrophe is significantly greater than the mean of errors from the corresponding post-test (p-values < 0.05) by 0.786, and the mean of the errors from the pre-test for Subject Verb Agreement is significantly greater than the mean of errors from the corresponding post-test (p-values < 0.05) by 0.607. On the other hand, the means of errors for Pronouns, Prepositions, Dentence Structure, Cohesion, Punctuation and Other errors do not differ significantly (p-values > 0.05) between the pre- and post- tests.

This implies that although there was no treatment administered for the control group, the average number of errors committed on Articles, Tenses, Apostrophe and Subject Verb Agreement decreased by 0.46 to 0.6. There may be other reasons for these variables to have improved. However, it should be noted that the improvement that is shown by the treatment group indicate that if the control group was given some instruction, the improvement could have been more significant.

6.3.2 Comparison: Mean errors of the pre- and post- tests for Treatment group

Table 6. 13 Comparison of the mean errors between the pre- and post- tests for the Treatment group

	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	p- value	Mean (Pre)	Mean (Post)	Mean Difference (Pre-Post)
Articles (Pre) - Articles (Post)	1.420	.268	5.058	27	.000	6,18	4,82	1,36
Tenses (Pre) - Tenses (Post)	1.090	.206	8.838	27	.000	5,71	3,89	1,82
Apostrophe (Pre) - Apostrophe (Post)	1.815	.343	4.269	27	.000	5,46	4	1,46
Subject Verb Agreement (Pre) - Subject Verb Agreement (Post)	1.315	.248	12.504	27	.000	6,07	2,96	3,11
Pronouns(Pre - Pronouns (Post)	1.594	.313	7.381	25	.000	5,54	3,27	2,27
Sentence structure (Pre) – Sentence structure (Post)	1.055	.207	10.034	25	.000	5,68	3,58	2,1
Prepositions (Pre) - Prepositions (Post)	1.663	.314	8.295	27	.000	5,57	2,96	2,61
Cohesive devices (Pre) – Cohesive devices (Post)	2.099	.397	3.691	27	.001	5,46	4	1,46
Punctuation (Pre) - Punctuation (Post)	1.416	.268	8.677	27	.000	5,21	2,89	2,32
Other errors (Pre) – Other errors (Post)	1.687	.319	8.065	27	.000	5,75	3,18	2,57

From Table 6.13, it is clear that the standard deviation of the dataset is not much spread since the standard deviation is much closer to the mean. It can thus be conclude that approximately 68% of values in the data are closer to the mean.

If the p-value is less than the default alpha of 0.05, it can be concluded that what is being tested is significant. As shown in the table, the p -value for all variables is less than 0.05. This indicates that the difference between the pre and post-tests is statistically significant. It can thus be concluded that the intervention had a positive impact on the treatment group.

Furthermore, the paired (dependent) samples t-test results in Table 6.13 show that all the means of the errors from the pre-tests are significantly greater than the means of errors from the corresponding post-tests (p-values < 0.05). Since all Mean Differences (pre-post) are positive, this implies that the average number of errors committed for the grammatical components in Table 6.13 decreased by 1.36 to 3.11 following the intervention, as such, the intervention was successful in improving the participants' grammatical skills.

6.3.4 Comparison: Pre-test and the post-test results of the grammar aspects

Table 6. 14 Comparison of the mean errors between the control and treatment groups for the post-test

	t	Df	P-value	Mean for Control	Mean for Treatment	Mean Difference (Control-treatment)
Articles (Post)	2.465	54	.017	5.61	4.82	.786
Tenses (Post)	4.361	54	.000	5.14	3.89	1.250
Apostrophe (Post)	2.733	54	.008	4.89	4.00	.893
Subject Verb Agreement (Post)	8.984	50.621	.000	5.54	2.96	2.571
Pronoun (Post)	8.589	52	.000	5.64	3.27	2.374
Sentence structure (Post)	5.743	52	.000	5.29	3.58	1.709
Prepositions (Post)	7.843	54	.000	5.25	2.96	2.286
Cohesive devices (Post)	4.563	53	.000	5.56	4.00	1.556
Punctuation (Post)	13.077	54	.000	6.00	2.89	3.107
Other errorss (Post)	9.108	54	.000	5.50	3.18	2.321

The independent t-test results in Table 6.14 show that for the post-test, all the means of the errors from the control group are significantly more than those of the treatment group ($p\text{-values} < 0.05$) since the mean differences (control-treatment) are all greater than zero.

This implies that following the intervention, the average number of errors committed on all of the grammatical components under study decreased for the treatment group as opposed to the control group which did not receive any intervention. That is, on average, the intervention has improved the grammatical skills of the students, or the students who received treatment (intervention) committed less errors than those who did not receive treatment (control).

6.3.5 Comparison of the pre-and post-test results for each variable

The discussion now proceeds to comparing the individual variables from the pre-test to the post test. In presenting this discussion, an attempt is made to provide literature support to the findings. The discussion of results and the linkage to literature are made for the variables in general, but not specific to each variable. It should be noted, as it was mentioned in the statement problem, that there is a dearth of studies that have looked at the impact of grammar instruction on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in academic writing, especially in South Africa.

6.3.5.1

Articles

Table 6. 15 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests on the use of articles

Group	Articles (Pre)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Group	Articles (Post)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Control	2	1	3.6	Control	3	3	10.7
	3	1	3.6		4	5	17.9
	4	2	7.1		5	9	32.1
	5	9	32.1		6	7	25.0
	6	8	28.6		7	4	14.3
	7	4	14.3		Total	28	100.0
	8	3	10.7				
	Total	28	100.0				
Treatme nt	2	1	3.6	Treatm ent	3	12	42.9
	4	3	10.7		4	8	28.6
	5	7	25.0		5	7	25.0
	6	10	35.7		6	1	3.6
	7	5	17.9		Total	28	100.0
	8	2	7.1				
	Total	28	100.0				

As shown in Table 6.15 for the control group, one (1) (3.6%) participant committed two article errors in the pre-test with none committing that error in the post-test. Furthermore, the number of participants who committed three (3) errors increased from one (1) (3.6%) to three (3) (10.7%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from two (2) (7.1%) to five (5) (17.9%) from the pre- to the post-test. In addition, the number of participants who committed five (5) errors remained the same at nine (9) (32.1%) in both the pre- and post-tests. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors decreased from eight (8) (28.6%) to seven (7) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors remained the same at four (4) (14.3%) for both the pre- and post-tests. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors was three (3) with no participant committing eight (8) errors in the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.15 for the treatment group, one (1) (3.6%) participant committed two errors in the pre-test with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from three (3) (10.7%) to eight (8) (28.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors remained the same at seven (7) (25%) in

both the pre and post-tests. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors decreased drastically from ten (10) to one (1) (3.6 from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors was five (5) (17.9%) with no participant committing seven (7) errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors was two (2) (7.1%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The findings show that there was a dramatic decrease in the number of participants who committed the frequency of errors of seven (seven) (7) and eight (8) in the post-test. The results actually show that no participant committed those high frequency errors.

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 8.8% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 31.8%. This comparison is based on the total number of article errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

According to Ferris (1999) learners can improve in grammar errors such article usage because they are rule governed. Therefore, earners can be pointed to a grammar book, corrective feedback (as in the case of this study) or set of rules to resolve the error. Another study by Ferris et al. (2000) found that through corrective feedback, learners made substantial progress in reducing errors article usage. Furthermore, Ferris and Roberts (2001) reported some increase in the accurate use of articles over time as a result of instruction.

Table 6.16 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on tense errors

Group	Tenses errors committed (Pre)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Group	Tenses (Post)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Control	4	4	14.3	Control	4	4	14.3
	5	4	14.3		5	9	32.1
	6	7	25.0		6	11	39.3
	7	12	42.9		7	2	7.1
	8	1	3.6		8	2	7.1
	Total	28	100.0		Total	28	100.0
Treatm ent	2	1	3.6	Treatm ent	3	6	21.4
	3	1	3.6		4	6	21.4
	4	3	10.7		5	5	17.9
	5	2	7.1		6	9	32.1
	6	3	10.7		7	2	7.1
	7	16	57.1		Total	28	100.0
	8	2	7.1				
	Total	28	100.0				

From the Table 6.16 showing frequencies and percentages of tense errors committed, it can be observed that on the control group in the pre-test, four (4) students making 14.3 % made four (4) errors. The same number made four (4) errors in the post-test. The number of students who made five (5) errors increased from four (4) 14% to nine (9) or 32% in the post-test. The number of participants who made seven (7) errors decreased from twelve (12) or 42.9 to two (2) or 7.1%. Lastly, the number of participants who made eight (8) errors increased from one (1) (3.6%) to two (2) (7.1%). The findings generally show that more participants committed more tense errors in the post test. A number of reasons can be attributed to this. One reason may be that without students being made aware of the grammar errors they make, they may continue to make those errors until they fossilize. Therefore, it can be concluded that without intervention, ESL learners are likely to commit more tense errors.

Table 6.16 also indicates that for the treatment group one (1) (3.6%) student made two tense errors, with no one making two errors in the post test. One (1) (3.6%) made three (3) errors in the pre-test, with that number increasing to six (6) (21.4%) of the participants in the post-test. One (1) (3.6%) made three (3) errors in the pre-test, but

increased to six (6) (21.4%) in the post-test. Two (2) (7.1%) made five (5) in the pre-test, while that number increased to five (5) in the post-test. A large number of participants at 16 (57.1) made 7 errors in the pre-test; however, this number decreased to two in the post-test. The table also shows that the highest number of errors at eight (8) were made by two participants in the pre-test as compared to two (2) who made the highest of seven errors in the post-test. These findings show that fewer tense errors were committed in the post-test as compared to the pre-test. The high frequency errors of seven (7) and eight (8) were not recorded in the post-test. It can be concluded from these findings that the intervention may have assisted the participants in overcoming problems relating to tenses.

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 2.3% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 21.9%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

According to Ferris (1999) learners can improve in grammar errors such as verb tense and form because they are rule governed. Therefore, learners can be pointed to a grammar book, corrective feedback (as in the case of this study) or set of rules to resolve the error. Another study by Ferris *et al.* (2000) found that through corrective feedback, learners made substantial progress in reducing errors in verb tense.

6.3.5.3

Apostrophe

Table 6. 16 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on the use of the apostrophe

Group	Punctuation (Pre)	Frequency	Percent	Group	Punctuation (Post)	Frequency	Percent
Control	3	3	10.7	Control	4	7	25.0
	4	6	21.4		5	12	42.9
	5	4	14.3		6	4	14.3
	6	9	32.1		7	5	17.9
	7	4	14.3		Total	28	100.0
	8	2	7.1				
	Total	28	100.0				
Treatment	2	1	3.6	Treatment	1	4	14.3
	4	5	17.9		2	4	14.3
	5	7	25.0		3	11	39.3
	6	7	25.0		4	7	25.0
	7	7	25.0		5	2	7.1
	8	1	3.6		Total	28	100.0
	Total	28	100.0				

As shown in Table 6.16, for the control group, the number of participants who committed three (3) errors in the use of the apostrophe is three (3) (10.7%) in the pre-test with no participants having committed the same number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from six (6) (21.4%) to seven (7) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from four (4) (14.3%) to twelve (12) (42.9%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors decreased from nine (nine) (32.1%) to four (4) (14.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors increased from four (4) (14.3) to five (5) (17.9%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors is one (1) (3.6%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.16 for the treatment group, the number of participants who committed two (2) errors in the use of apostrophe increased from one (1) (3.6%) to four (4) (14.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from five (5) (17.9%) to seven (7) (17.9%) 9%)

from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors decreased from seven (7) (25%) to two (2) (7.1%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from four (4) (14.3%) to twelve (12) (42.9%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors was seven (7) (25%) in the pre-test with no participant having committed the same number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors is seven (7) (25%) with no participant having committed the same number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors is one (1) (3.6%) with no participants having committed the same number of errors in the post-test.

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 12.5% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 26.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

A study by Nudelman and English (2016) corroborated the findings of this study that instruction can improve the use of apostrophe in academic writing.

Table 6. 17 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on the use of subject verb agreement

Group	Subject Verb Agreement (Pre)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Group	Subject Verb Agreement (Post)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Control	2	1	3.6	Control	3	1	3.6
	3	1	3.6		4	5	17.9
	5	6	21.4		5	8	28.6
	6	9	32.1		6	6	21.4
	7	7	25.0		7	8	28.6
	8	2	7.1		Total	28	100.0
	9	2	7.1				
	Total	28	100.0				
Treatment	3	1	3.6	Treatment	1	2	7.1
	4	2	7.1		2	6	21.4
	5	4	14.3		3	11	39.3
	6	10	35.7		4	9	32.1
	7	9	32.1		Total	28	100.0
	8	2	7.1				
	Total	28	100.0				

As shown in Table 6.17, for the control group, the number of participants who committed two (2) subject-verb agreement errors was one (1) (3.6%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed three (3) errors was one (1) (3.6%) for both pre-and the post-tests. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from six (6) (21.4%) eight (8) (28.6) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors increased from seven (7) (25%) to eight (8) (28.6%) in the pre- and post-tests respectively. The number of participants who committed nine (9) was two (2) (7.1%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.17 for the treatment group, the number of participants who committed three (3) subject-verb agreement errors increased drastically from one (1) (3.6%) to eleven (11) (39.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from two (2) (7.1%) nine (9) (32.1%) in the

pre- and post-tests respectively. The number of participants who committed five (5) was four (4) (7.1%) in the pre-test with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) was ten (10) (35.7%) in the pre-test with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors was nine (9) (32.15%) in the pre-test with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors was two (2) (7.1%) in the pre-test with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The findings show that there was a dramatic decrease in the number of participants who committed the frequency of errors of six (six), seven (7) and nine in the post-test. The results actually show that no participant committed those high frequency errors.

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 15% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 51%. This comparison is based on the total number of subject-verb agreement errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

According to Ferris (1999), learners can improve in grammar errors such as subject-verb agreement through corrective feedback because they are rule governed. Therefore, learners can be pointed to a grammar book, corrective feedback (as in the case of this study) or set of rules to resolve the error. Another study by Ferris *et al.* (2000) found that through corrective feedback, learners made substantial progress in reducing errors in subject-verb agreement. This corroborates the findings of this study.

Table 6. 18 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on pronouns

Group	Pronouns (Pre)	Frequency	Percent	Group	Pronouns (Post)	Frequency	Percent
Control	3	2	7.1	Control	4	2	10.7
	4	4	14.3		5	6	39.3
	5	9	32.1		6	9	28.6
	6	7	25.0		7	7	25.9
	7	5	17.9		9	5	17.9
	9	1	3.6				
	Total	28	100.0		Total	28	100.0
Treatment	2	2	7.1	Treatment	1	3	7.1
	3	1	3.6		2	13	10.7
	4	2	7.1		3	2	10.7
	5	13	46.4		4	1	39.3
	6	3	10.7		5	4	14.3
	7	2	7.1		6	2	14.3
	8	4	14.3		7	3	3.6
	9	1	3.6		Total	28	100.0
	Total	28	100.0				

As shown in Table 6.18 for the control group, the number of participants who committed three (3) pronoun errors in the pre-test is two (2) (7.1%) with no participant having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from four (4) (14.3%) to two (2) (7.1%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors decreased from nine (9) (32.1%) to six (6) (39.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors increased from seven (7) (25%) to nine (9) (32.11%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors increased from five (5) (17.7%) to seven (7) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed nine (9) errors increased from one (1) (3.6%) to five (5) (17.9%) from the pre- to the post-test. This shows that there was an increase in the number of participants who committed the highest number of errors (9).

As shown in Table 6.18 for the treatment group, the number of participants who committed two (2) pronoun errors increased from two (2) (7.1%) to thirteen (13)

(10.7%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed three (3) errors increased from one (1) (3.6%) to two (2) (7.1%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from two (2) (7.1%) to one (1) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors decreased from thirteen (13) in the pre-test to four (4) (14.2%) in the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors decreased from three (3) (10.7%) to two (2) (14.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. (46.4%) to four (4) (14.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors increased from two (2) (7.1%) to three (3) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from two (2) (7.1%) to one (1) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. It should be noted that there were no participants who committed the high frequency errors of eight (8) and nine (9) as it was the case in the pre-test. This shows that the number of errors made by each participant is lower after the intervention

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group deteriorated with 1.9% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 26.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

A study by Abbuhl (2012) demonstrated that instruction assisted ESL students improve pronoun usage in their writing. This corroborates the findings of this study.

Table 6. 19 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on the use of sentence structure

Group	Sentence Structure (Pre)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Group	Sentence Structure (Post)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Control	3	2	7.1	Control	4	4	14.3
	4	4	14.3		5	8	28.6
	5	7	25.0		6	10	35.7
	6	7	25.0		7	6	21.4
	7	7	25.0		Total	28	100.0
	8	1	3.6				
	Total	28	100.0				
Treatment	2	5	17.9	Treatment	1	2	7.1
	4	3	10.7		2	3	10.7
	5	7	25.0		3	9	32.1
	7	6	21.4		4	10	35.7
	8	7	25.0		5	2	7.1
	Total	28	100.0		Total	26	92.9
					Missing	2	7.1
							100.0

As shown in Table 6.19, for the control group, the number of participants who committed three (3) errors of sentence structure was two (2) (7.1%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (four) errors is four (4) (14.3%) for both the pre-and the post-tests. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from seven (7) (25%) to ten (10) 35.7%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors decreased from seven (7) (25%) to six (6) (21.4) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) was one (1) (3.6%) in the pre-test with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.19 for the treatment group, the number of participants who committed three (3) errors of sentence structure is two (2) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (four) errors is four (4) (14.3%) for both the pre-and the post-tests. The

number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from seven (7) (25%) to eight (8) (28.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors decreased from seven (7) (25%) to six (6) (21.4%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors was seven (7) (25%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. The findings show that there was a decrease in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors of eight (8) and seven (7). Actually, no participant committed those high frequency errors in the post-test.

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 1.2% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 45.1%. This comparison is based on the total number of sentence structure errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

In corroborating the findings of this study, studies (Luke & Oktriono, 2016; Furey, 2017; Nudelman, & English, 2016) have shown that ESL learners can improve sentence structure after being provided with instruction. In particular, the study by Nudelman and English (2016) at the University of Cape Town shows that grammar instruction assisted students registered in the Faculty of Engineering to improve sentence structure in academic writing after instruction was provided. Furthermore, according to Ferris (1999), learners can improve in grammar errors such as sentence fragments because they are rule governed. Therefore, learners can be pointed to a grammar book, corrective feedback (as in the case of this study) or set of rules to resolve the error.

Table 6. 20 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on the use of prepositions

Group	Prepositions (Pre)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Group	Prepositions (Post)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Control	3	1	3.6	Control	2	1	3.6
	4	4	14.3		3	2	7.1
	5	7	25.0		4	8	28.6
	6	9	32.1		5	8	28.6
	7	5	17.9		6	6	21.4
	8	2	7.1		7	3	10.7
	Total	28	100.0		Total	28	100.0
Treatment	2	1	3.6	Treatment	2	2	7.1
	3	1	3.6		3	8	28.6
	4	3	10.7		4	10	35.7
	5	9	32.1		5	5	17.9
	6	7	25.0		6	2	7.1
	7	7	25.0		7	1	3.6
	Total	28	100.0		Total	28	100.0

Table 6.20 shows that for the control group, one (1) (3.6%) participant committed three (3) preposition errors increasing to two (2) (7.1%) in the post-test. Four (4) (14.3%) participants made four (4) errors in the pre-test. This number doubled at 28.6% in the post-test. The table above also shows that the errors committed 5 times on prepositions by seven (7) (17.9%) participants increased from 25% (pre-test) to 28.6% or eight (8) participants in the post-test. Nine (9) (32.1%) participants committed errors 7 times on prepositions, this decreased to 21.4% in the post-test. Five (5) (17.9%) committed seven (7) errors on prepositions in the pre-test; this decreased to three (3) (10.7%) in the post-test. A total of two (7.1%) participants committed eight (8) errors in the pre-test, but no one committed that number of errors in the post-test. The findings show that although there was no instruction given to this group, there was however a decrease in the number of preposition errors committed.

Table 6.20 also shows that one (1) (3.6%) participant committed two (2) preposition errors in the pre-test with that number doubling in the post-test. The same percentage made three (3) errors in the pre-test with number leaping to eight (8) (28.6%) in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from 3 (10.7%) to ten (10) (5) (35.7%) in the pre- and post-tests respectively. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors decreased from nine (9) (32.1%) to five (5)

(17.9%) from the pre-test to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors decreased from seven (7) (25%) to two (2) (7.1 9%) in the pre- and post-tests respectively. Lastly, the number of participants who committed seven (7) errors decreased from seven (7) (25%) to one (1) (3.6%) from the pre-test to the post-tests respectively. The general finding is that the number of preposition errors committed reduced greatly when comparing the pre-test and post-test. It should also be noted that the number of participants who committed the highest number of these errors, that is those who committed six (6) and seven (7) errors reduced from fourteen (14) to two (3).

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 12.5% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 26.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

6.3.5.8 Cohesive devices

Table 6. 21 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on cohesive devices

Group	Cohesive Devices (Pre)	Frequency	Percent	Group	Cohesive Devices (Post)	Frequency	Percent
Control	3	5	17.9	Control	3	1	3.6
	4	6	21.4		4	3	10.7
	5	5	17.9		5	8	28.6
	6	5	17.9		6	13	46.4
	7	6	21.4		7	3	10.7
	8	1	3.6		Total	28	100.0
	Total	28	100.0				
Treatment	2	2	7.1	Treatment	1	2	7.1
	3	1	3.6		2	10	35.7
	4	2	7.1		3	12	42.9
	5	8	28.6		4	3	10.7
	6	2	7.1		5	1	3.6
	7	10	35.7		Total	28	100.0
	8	3	10.7				
	Total	28	100.0				

As shown in Table 6.21 for the control group, the number of participants who committed three (3) cohesive devices errors decreased from five (5) (17.9%) to one

(1) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from six (6) (21.47%) to three (3) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from eight (8) (28.6.7%) to seven (7) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from eight (8) (28.6.7%) to seven (7) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from five (5) (28.6.7%) to eight (8) (28.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors decreased from six (6) (21.47%) to three (3) (10.7.7%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors in the pre-test is one (1) (3.6%) with no participants having committed the same number of errors in the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.21 for the treatment group, the number of participants who committed two (2) errors of using cohesive devices increased from two (two) (7.1%) to ten (10) (35.2%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed three (3) errors increased from one (1) (3.6.7%) to twelve (12) (42.9%). From the pre-test to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from five (5) (28.6.7%) to eight (8) (28.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors decreased from eight (8) (28.6%) to one (1) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (six) errors is two (2) (7.1%) in the pre-test with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors is ten (4) (35.2%) in the pre-test with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) errors is two (2) (7.1%) in the pre-test with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The results generally show that there was an improvement in the correct usage of cohesive devices after the treatment. Of importance is the absence of participants who made high frequency errors of 7 (seven) and eight (8).

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 6.9% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 44.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

In concurrence with the findings of this study, a study by Lee (2002:135) suggests that at the end of the explicit teaching of cohesive devices, students improved the coherence of their writing. Students also felt that the teaching of coherence had enhanced their awareness of what effective writing should entail. Another South African study by Pretorius (1993) on cohesion in student writing observed that L2 English users make significantly more cohesion errors than the first-language users. The main finding of Pretorius' study is that cohesion and coherence play a large role in the readability and ease of understanding a text. Pretorius also found that mostly ESL university students are not sufficiently equipped to use cohesive and coherent devices, thus they need some instruction for them to use these correctly. It can thus be concluded that the teaching of cohesive devices use may improve students' academic writing and achievement.

6.3.5.9 Punctuation

Table 6. 22 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on the use of sentence fragments

Group	Punctuatio n (Pre)	Frequency	Percen t (%)	Group	Punctuatio n (Post)	Frequenc y	Percen t (%)
Control	4	5	17.9	Control	3	1	3.6
	5	7	25.0		4	5	17.9
	6	8	28.6		5	9	32.1
	7	7	25.0		6	11	39.3
	8	1	3.6		7	2	7.1
	Total	28	100.0		Total	28	100.0
Treatm ent	3	1	3.6	Treatm ent	1	1	3.6
	4	4	14.3		2	3	10.7
	5	7	25.0		3	10	35.7
	6	7	25.0		4	5	17.9
	7	9	32.1		5	6	21.4
	Total	28	100.0		6	1	3.6
					Total		92.9
					Missing		7.1

As shown in Table 6.22, for the control group, the number of participants who committed four (four) (14.3%) errors of punctuation is five (5) (17.9%) for both the pre- and the post-tests. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from seven (7) (25%) to nine (9) (35.7%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors increased from eight (8) (28.6%) to eleven (11) (39.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) is one (1) (3.6%) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.22 for the treatment group, the number of participants who committed three (3) errors of punctuation increased from one (1) to ten (10) (10.37) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors increased from four (4) (14.3%) to five (5) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors decreased from seven (7) (25%) to six (6) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors was nine (9) with no participant committing that number of errors in the post-test. One (1) (3.6%) participant committed one (1) error in the post-test. From the findings, it can be observed that there was a decrease in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors of six (6) and seven (7).

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group improved with 7.5% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 41.5%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

Weaver (1996) corroborates the findings of this study by mentioning that by attending to usage, punctuation, and other aspects of mechanics and sentence structure in the context of writing is considerably more effective than teaching usage and mechanics in isolation.

6.3.5.10 Other errors (spelling, academic language conventions)

Table 6. 23 Comparison of the pre-and post-tests findings on spelling

Group	Spelling (Pre)	Frequency	Percent	Group	Spelling (Post)	Frequency	Percent
Control	2	1	3.6	Control	4	1	3.6
	3	1	3.6		5	7	25.0
	4	2	7.1		6	13	46.4
	5	5	17.9		7	5	17.9
	6	9	32.1		8	2	7.1
	7	8	28.6		Total	28	100.0
	8	2	7.1				
	Total	28	100.0				
Treatment	3	2	7.1	Treatment	1	1	3.6
	4	8	28.6		2	16	42.9
	5	4	14.3		3	4	14.3
	6	10	35.7		4	7	25.0
	7	4	14.3		Total	28	100.0
	Total	28	100.0				

As shown in Table 6.23 for the control group, the number of participants who committed two (2) errors is one (1) (3.6%) with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed three (3) errors is one (1) (3.6%) with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from two (2) (7.1%) to one (1) (3.6%) from the pre- to the post-test. (46.4%) to four (4) (14.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors increased from five (5) (17.9%) to seven (7) (25.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors increased from nine (9) (32.1%) to thirteen (13) (46.2%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors decreased from eight (8) (28.6.7%) to five (5) (17.9%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed eight (8) was 2 participants decreased from three (3) (10.7%) to two (2) (7.1%), and was similar to that of the post-test.

As shown in Table 6.23 for the treatment group, there was no participant who committed one (1) error in the pre-test, but there was one (1) (3.6%) participant who committed one (1) error in the posty-test. Similarly, there were twelve (16) participants

who committed two errors in the post-test, but none in the pre-test. The number of participants who committed three (3) errors increased from two (2) (7.1%) to four (4) (14.3%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed four (4) errors decreased from eight (8) (28.6.7%) to seven (7) (25%) from the pre- to the post-test. The number of participants who committed five (5) errors in the pre-test is four (4) (14.3%) with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed six (6) errors is ten (10) (35.7%) with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The number of participants who committed seven (7) errors is four (4) (14.3%) with no participants having committed the same number of error in the post-test. The conclusion that can be made from the findings in the treatment group is that there was a decrease in the number of high frequency errors of seven (7) and six (6), thus indicating that the intervention had a positive impact.

A comparison of the two groups with regards to the pre-test and the post-test shows that the control group deteriorated to 2.4 12.5% as compared to the intervention group that significantly improved with 43.9%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

6.4 GENERAL DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings from comparing the post-test for the control group and the treatment group show that there was a significant decrease in the number of errors made by the treatment group compared to the control group. This is an indication that when grammar instruction is presented within the context of writing, it may significantly improve grammatical accuracy in the texts produced by students. There was also some slight improvement even in the accuracy of the texts produced by the control group in some variables. It should therefore be indicated that this is a sign that learners at times may learn grammar implicitly. Therefore, it may be concluded that the improvement in the treatment may not be the sole contribution by the intervention. The finding that grammar intervention when integrated with the teaching of writing may improve the accuracy of the texts that students produce is supported in literature as it is discussed below.

A study by Fogel and Ehri's (2000) illustrated that when grammar is taught in the context of writing, for example, in process writing, it will have a positive impact on the accuracy of the produced texts. Another study by Fearn and Farnan (2007) has shown that when grammar and writing share one instructional context, the learners are able to transfer the grammar knowledge to their writing. A fairly recent study by Graham and Perin (2007), in support of teaching of grammar in the context of writing, found that the teaching of sentence-combining, assisted students to construct more structurally complex sentences in their written assignments.

In further corroborating the findings of this study, a number of studies (DiStefano & Killion, 1984; Calkins, 1980) strongly recommend that the most beneficial way of assisting students improve their command of grammar in writing is to use students' writing as the basis for discussing grammatical concepts. In the case of this study, grammar was taught through the essay participants were writing as part of the module they registered as part of the curriculum. These studies agree that it is more effective to teach punctuation, sentence variety, and usage in the context of writing if the aim is to improve accuracy in written texts than to approach the teaching of these aspects in isolation.

As Myhill (2010) has shown, writing should be approached firstly, with grammar being a meaning-making resource. This suggests that grammar should be taught as a support tool used by writers in making appropriate linguistic choices which help them to shape and craft texts to satisfy their rhetorical intentions. It should not be taught in isolation. This also suggests that when L2 learners realise that the grammar that is being taught will benefit them to produce better texts, they are likely to assimilate it in their writing. The study by Myhill offers robust evidence of a positive relationship between grammar and writing, particularly when writers view it as the means of meaning making.

A number of studies (Weaver, 2006; Thornbury, 1999; Weaver, 1996) have shown that for grammar instruction to benefit writing, it has to occur within the process of writing. The instruction in this study was done in the context of writing, not in isolation. It was shown that learners are likely to benefit from instruction if it proves to be beneficial to the task at hand. There was a tremendous improvement in the essay

students produced from process writing with regards to grammar accuracy. It can be concluded that students were able to transfer what they learnt during the process of writing with regards to accuracy, to the post-test. Anderson (2005) puts it succinctly that teaching grammar in context provides a meaningful framework that connects to reality (writing) in the target language.

Corrective feedback was the main method of instruction in this study. Several studies reported that corrective feedback leads to increased accuracy over time (Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris & Helt, 2000). This means that learners, through corrective feedback, are able to extend the grammar skills they acquired to other writing tasks. The positive effects of corrective feedback were discussed at length in the literature review section (Chapter 2).

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the data collected by means of the research designs (Error analysis & quasi-experimental) employed by the study. The chapter opened by making a presentation of the results of the error analysis of the texts produced by students. The aim of this error analysis was to identify the type of grammar errors that first years students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University make in academic writing. The grammar items included in the intervention were identified from this error analysis. This section of the chapter presented the results of the error analysis by reporting on the type and number of errors made by these students.

The second part of this chapter presented the results of the comparison of the pre-test and the post-test to determine whether grammar instruction has had some impact on the accuracy of texts produced by the treatment group. Firstly, this section presented a comparison of the means of the pre-test for both the control and the intervention groups. The aim of this comparison was to show that the two groups were equal at the beginning of the study. Then the mean averages of the pre-test and the post-test were compared to show whether the instruction had an impact on the intervention group. This was followed by the comparison of the different grammar items before and after the intervention for both the control group and the treatment group. The chapter, lastly, presented a general discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The widened access to higher education in South Africa post 1994 resulted in students with varying linguistic abilities being admitted at institutions of higher learning. Some of these students have been found to be lacking, as a result of a number of reasons, in the required English grammar skills that have been shown to be crucial for producing comprehensible academic texts. As a result, it is imperative for institutions of higher education to assist them in this regard. Therefore, it was the aim of this study to investigate the type of grammatical errors that first year students at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus, make if they are to be assisted to overcome them. A further aim of the study was to investigate the impact of grammar instruction on the grammar usage of these student in academic writing.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study and the findings of the research as well as the researcher's conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions are based on the literature study and the empirical research and a combination of these two factors. Furthermore, the chapter provides recommendations for various stakeholders in the teaching of academic writing as well as for future research.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study is made up of seven chapters which are summarised below:

Chapter 1 Introduction: This chapter introduced the study by providing an overall orientation of the plan the study was to follow.

Chapter 2 Literature review: This chapter reviewed the literature the theoretical perspectives on the teaching of grammar. The chapter also presented the available options for learners and instructuars in second language learning.

Chapter 3 Second language learner errors and error analysis: This chapter reviewed literature on the errors that second language learners make as well as their analysis.

Chapter 4 Academic writing in higher education: This chapter reviewed literature on academic writing and the crucial role it plays in higher education. The chapter, among others, also indicated the significance of grammatical accuracy in academic writing.

Chapter 5 Research methodology: This chapter presented the description of the methodology and design utilized in this study, which is the quantitative methodology. The error analysis and the quasi-experimental research designs as well as the data analysis applied in the study were discussed.

Chapter 6 Data presentation and analysis: This chapter presented and analysed the collected data for both the error analysis and quasi-experimental designs.

Chapter 7 Conclusion and recommendations for further research: This chapter summarised the study. It re-visited the research questions as well as hypotheses set at the beginning of the study.

7.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study utilised two research designs, one being error analysis and the other quasi-experimental. As a result, the summary of the findings are dealt with separately. The findings are linked to the study's research questions and objectives.

7.3.1 Summary of the findings from error analysis

The error analysis procedure was utilised to answer the following research questions and objectives:

Research questions:

- What types of grammatical errors can be identified in the academic texts of first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University?

- What extent do they make such errors? Objectives
- To determine the types of grammatical errors that can be identified in the academic texts of first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.
- To determine the extent to which students make such errors.

The following discussion relates to a summary of the grammatical identified from conducting the error analysis procedure in responding the research question.

7.3.1.1 Articles

The findings from the error analysis procedure indicate that participants made a number of grammar errors in their texts. The first error identified was the incorrect use of articles. Participants were found to have committed errors which involve the omission, addition and substitution of articles. With regards to the omission error, participants omitted the inclusion of an article where it was supposed to be used. Concerning addition, participants added articles in a sentence when there was no need for an article. Lastly, with regards to substitution, participants used articles wrongly in sentences. The errors made by participants relating to the usage of articles may be due to the fact that all participants in this study were speakers of one of the African South African languages that do not have an equivalent of articles. Therefore, instruction in the usage of articles may assist ESL learners. In academic writing, as Miller (2005) mentioned, it is important that writers should display some level of accuracy when presenting ideas. This is because the correct article usage is an indication not only of mastery of the language of teaching and learning, but of exactness in thought and expression.

7.3.1.2 Tenses

The findings from error analysis indicated that the participants committed tense errors relating to tense consistency, incorrect use of the continuous tense, the incorrect use of have and has as past tense marker, wrong verb tense, confusing the use of '*been and being*' and failing to use the correct past-participle in the perfect tenses. This finding corroborates the findings of studies by Nndwamato (2017) and Maliwa (2009)

which have shown that South African students encounter problems with the use of correct concord.

As has been shown by Hinkel (2004), in academic writing tense and aspect are important features of university level writing. This is because academic writing conventions require specific verb tenses in different writing situations (Reid, 2000). Using tenses correctly thus enhances the quality of academic writing. It is therefore important to teach the appropriate use of tense by showing which specific tenses and voice are more appropriate than others in different writing contexts and different academic texts.

7.3.1.3 Apostrophe

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed errors relating to the use of apostrophe. The type of errors committed include the omission of the apostrophe, using the apostrophe in plural nouns even though there is no possession or omission and failing to use the apostrophe in contractions. These findings are in agreement with those by Miller (2005) and Master (2002; 1997) which have shown that ESL learners often encounter problems with use of the apostrophe. The correct usage of the apostrophe presents as a problem for ESL speakers, especially those whose mother tongue is structurally different from English as it was the case with the participants in this study.

7.3.1.4 Subject-verb agreement

The other errors students made are those of subject-verb agreement. The results from the error analysis indicate that participants made errors of concord relating to third person singular and plural subject, indefinite pronouns, amounts, fractions and measurements, as well as the use of neither and either. With regards to third person and singular and plural subject, participants seemed confused by deciding on when to add the inflection “s” to the verb for it to agree with the number of the subject. It should be noted that in English, the subject should be in agreement with the verb, i.e., the form of the verb has to match the number of things in the subject. This, Peters (2013) maintains, is a formal agreement termed the default type of agreement, where the form

of the noun is matched in the verb, with its –s inflection present for the singular, and absent from the plural. With regards to errors of incorrect indefinite pronouns, participants were confused by subjects which sounded plural, for example, because of the use of ‘all’ as in: *All of the system of capitalism is ...* where they will write *All of the system are...* . Regarding the indefinite pronoun, the findings show that participants got confused by the use of ‘All’ which sounded plural even though the subject is singular. Because there are exceptional cases which may be confusing to the ESL as mentioned by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), it would be sensible to raise the awareness of students on the English article system so that the errors may be minimised.

7.3.1.5 Pronouns

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed errors of pronoun use. The type of errors committed include those of using a noun and a pronoun in the same sentence, confusing the use of demonstrative pronouns, omitting a pronoun in a sentence and confusing the use of ‘*they, their, there, there are and they are*’ in their writing. A number of studies showing that students do have a problem with pronouns use corroborate the findings of this study (Nudelman & English; 2016; Maliwa, 2009; Parkinson & Singh, 2007). An awareness on the correct use of these pronouns will go a long way in assisting students.

7.3.1.6 Sentence structure

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed errors of sentence structure in respect of compound sentences not being correctly punctuated, the construction of complex sentences, writing fragmented sentences, producing run-on sentences and using comma-splice. This finding corroborates those of a number of studies (Scholtz, 2016; Mutimani, 2016; Ward-Cox, 2012). Sentences are crucial in academic writing because they provide the framework for the clear written expression of ideas. Therefore, the aim in writing should always be to write complete sentences which are correctly punctuated. An instruction in sentence construction will go a long way in improving the texts that students produce.

7.3.1.7 Prepositions

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed preposition errors. It was shown from the error analysis that the errors participants made included those of wrongly substituting prepositions, unnecessarily inserting a preposition and omitting a preposition where there is a need for it to be used. This finding is corroborated by a number of studies (Nudelman & English, 2016; Sibanda (2014) which have shown that students commit errors regarding the use of prepositions in their writing.

7.3.1.8 Cohesive devices

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed errors in the use of cohesive devices. The errors participants make include those of using cohesive devices incorrectly, not using devices leading to disjointed ideas and beginning a sentence or a paragraph with a device when they are not supposed to. A number of studies (Makalela, 1996; Wissing, 1987) in South Africa have observed that the English produced by speakers of the Bantu language group often shows some confusion with the use of cohesive devices, thus corroborating the finding of this study. Furthermore, the studies showed that some BSAE speakers display an underdeveloped style of using cohesive devices. Raising the awareness of students regarding the correct use of cohesive devices may assist them in producing better academic texts.

7.3.1.9 Punctuation

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed errors of punctuation. The example of type of errors committed with regard to the use of punctuation include that of failing to close a sentence with a full stop, not opening sentences with a capital letter and failing to insert a comma where it is supposed to be used. The findings of this study corroborate that of Drennan (2017) and Pfeiffer (2018) which showed that the use of correct punctuation in academic writing is one of the problems experienced by many ESL students at higher education institutions in South Africa.

7.3.1.10 Other errors

The findings from error analysis indicate that the participants committed other errors besides the ones presented above. These errors, although they may not be those of grammar, are crucial as they affected the meaning presented in the texts. For example, participants used contraction of words even though its use is discouraged in academic writing. There were also some confusion with homophones.

7.3.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON THE QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The quasi-experimental design was utilised to respond to the following main research question and aim:

- What is the effect of the designed intervention on the level of grammatical competence of first year students, and how is this knowledge applied in the production of academic texts?

The aim of the study was:

- To determine the effect of grammar intervention on the grammatical accuracy of academic texts produced by first-year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

A summary of the pre-test and post-test for each grammar aspect is now presented.

7.3.2.1 Articles

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to articles indicate that the number of article errors decreased by 8.8% as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 31.8.9%. This comparison is based on the total number of article errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. Despite the slight improvement in the control group, there were still participants who committed high frequency article errors in the post-test as compared to the number in the intervention group. In the treatment group, it was observed that the number of participants who committed high frequency tense errors decreased significantly. Actually there were no participant who committed seven and

eight (8) errors as it was the case in the pre-test. The conclusion made is that intervention greatly assisted this group to reduce the frequency of article errors.

7.3.2.2 Tenses

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to tenses indicate that the number of tense errors decreased by 2.3% as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 21.9%. This comparison is based on the total number of tense errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. It was observed that more participants in the control group committed more tense errors in the post test. Despite the slight improvement in the control group, there were still participants who committed high frequency tense errors in the post-test as compared to the number in the intervention group. A number of reasons can be attributed to this. One major reason may be that without intervention, ESL learners are likely to commit more tense errors. For the treatment group, the high frequency errors of seven (7) and eight (8) were not recorded in the post-test. It can be concluded from these findings that the intervention assisted the participant in treatment group with regards to problems relating to tenses.

7.3.2.3 Apostrophe

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to the correct use of the apostrophe indicates that the number of apostrophe errors decreased by 12.5% (control group) as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 26.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of punctuation errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. From the findings, it can be observed that there was a decrease in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors in the treatment group. In the control group, the number of participants who committed high frequency errors increased. This shows that treatment assisted the treatment group in reducing the frequency of punctuation errors.

7.3.2.4 Subject-verb agreement

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to performance on subject-verb agreement indicates that the number of article errors decreased by 15% (control group) as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 51%. This comparison is based on the total number of subject-verb agreement errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. Despite the slight improvement in the control group, there were still participants who committed high frequency subject-verb agreement in the post-test for the control group as compared to the number in the intervention group. In the treatment group, it was observed that the number of participants who committed high frequency tense errors decreased significantly. Actually, there were no participant who committed more than four (4) in the post test. This is not the case in the control group where there are participants who still committed high frequency errors. It can be concluded that the intervention greatly assisted this group to reduce the frequency of subject-verb agreement errors.

7.3.2.5 Pronouns

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to the correct use of pronouns indicates that the number of pronoun errors increased by 1.9 % as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 26.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of pronoun errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. From the findings, it can be observed that there was an increase in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors in the control group. In the treatment group, the number of participants who committed high frequency errors decreased. In fact, the majority of participants committed fewer errors in the treatment group. This shows that treatment assisted the treatment group in reducing the frequency of pronoun errors.

7.3.2.6 Sentence structure

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to performance on sentence structure indicates that the number of sentence structure errors decreased by 1.2% as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 45.1%. This comparison is based on the total number of sentence structure errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test.

Is it can be noted, the improvement is negligible. The findings show that there was a decrease in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors in the treatment group. This cannot be said to be the case for the control group. The conclusion from this finding is that intervention assisted the treatment group in eradicating the sentence structure errors.

7.3.2.7 Prepositions

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to prepositions indicate that the number of preposition errors decreased by 12.5% as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 26.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of preposition errors by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. Although there was a decline in the number of errors observed in the control group, it was not as significant as that in the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the intervention assisted the intervention group to reduce the errors of preposition use. The significant finding is that the number of participants who committed the highest number of these errors, that is those who committed six (6) and seven (7) errors reduced from seven (7) participants each to two (2) and one (1) respectively. Therefore participants in the treatment group made fewer preposition errors in the post-test.

7.3.2.8 Cohesive devices

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to the correct use of cohesive devices indicates that the number of errors decreased by 6.9 % as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 44.7%. This comparison is based on the total number of cohesive devices errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. From the findings, it can be observed that there was an increase in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors in the control group. In the treatment group, the number of participants who committed high frequency errors decreased. The results generally show that there was an improvement in the correct usage of cohesive devices after the treatment. Of importance is the decrease in the number of participants who made high frequency errors.

7.3.2.9

Punctuation

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to performance on punctuation indicates that the number of punctuation errors decreased by 7.5% as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 41.5%. This comparison is based on the total number of punctuation errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. From the findings, it can be observed that there was a decrease in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors in the treatment group. In the control group, the number of participants who committed high frequency errors increased. This shows that intervention assisted the treatment group in reducing the frequency of punctuation errors.

7.3.2.10

Other errors

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the control group and the intervention group with regards to other errors committed indicates that the number of errors increased by 2.4 % as compared to the intervention group that significantly decreased by 43.9%. This comparison is based on the total number of other errors made by all participants in the pre-test and the post-test. From the findings, it can be observed that there was a negligible change in the number of participants who committed high frequency errors in the control group. In the treatment group, the number of participants who committed high frequency errors decreased. The results generally show that there was an improvement in the reduction of other errors after the treatment.

This section of the study presented a summary of the findings with respect to the second research aim of determining the effect of grammar intervention on the grammatical accuracy of academic texts produced by first-year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University. It can be concluded from the findings that the grammar instruction intervention assisted in the improvement of the grammatical accuracy of the academic texts produced by first-year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

7.4 FINDINGS ON THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES BASED ON THE STUDY FINDINGS

At the onset of this study, the following research hypothesis and null hypothesis were set:

H₁. Systematic and focused grammar instruction improves grammatical competence which will lead to a higher level of grammatical correctness in the academic texts produced by first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

H₀. Systematic and focused grammar instruction does not improve grammatical competence which will not lead to a higher level of grammatical correctness in the academic texts produced by first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

Based on the findings of this study, the hypothesis (H₁) of the study is accepted.

7.5 STUDY CONTRIBUTIONS

The problem statement of this study indicated that observation indicates that first year ESL students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University often produce academic English texts ridden with grammatical errors. These grammatical errors at times interfere with the messages they are trying to communicate in writing. However, no specific study has empirically and systematically investigated the types of errors students make in academic writing. In this study a systematic approach was followed in the identification of errors that students make. The study has contributed by identifying these type of errors. This will go a long way for lecturers or academic literacy courses in assisting ESL learners with the same characteristics as those of students in this study to improve their grammatical competency in writing.

The other contribution made by the study is that of showing that academic literacy modules can be used as vehicles for improving accuracy in academic writing, without following the skills approach. This is to say that the grammatical competency of students can be improved through the process writing approach as this study showed.

Furthermore, the study showed that learners' grammatical competency can be improved in the context of teaching writing through the process approach. This means that assisting students to improve accuracy throughout all the steps of process writing, will ultimately lead to improvement in their grammatical competency.

The findings of this study have shown that grammar instruction, when approached within the process writing approach, will have a positive impact on students being able to produce comprehensible academic texts with limited grammatical errors. This is a contribution in academic literacy interventions as no known study has been conducted in South Africa to determine the impact of grammar intervention on the accuracy of academic writing. As it was indicated that the widened access to higher education in South Africa resulted in students with varying linguistic skills being admitted to universities, there is a need that they be assisted in this regard for them to succeed in their studies. This study has shown that grammar intervention within a support course like academic literacy is able to improve accuracy in their writing.

7.6 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY

In this section, a number of conclusions are made in reference to the questions and objectives that the study sought to answer and achieve respectively. Firstly, it is concluded from the findings of this study that first year students do make grammar errors in the academic texts they produce. Also, it was found that the errors they make are significant to the point that they may be unable to convey their message to lecturers.

Secondly, it is concluded from the findings that when grammar instruction is integrated in the process approach to academic writing as practiced in the academic literacy module offered at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University, it can lead to improvement in the accuracy level on the academic texts produced by ESL students.

Besides the conclusions arrived at based on the findings of the study, one further conclusion observed from the study is that grammar intervention is of benefit to the improvement of grammar structures variably. This is to say that there are grammar

structures which can benefit from instruction more than the others. This suggests that the instruction given to different grammar aspects benefit the aspects differently.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has thrown up many issues in need of further investigation. Therefore, from literature and empirical findings, the study makes the recommendations, both for the ALDE 122 module and for future studies as discussed in the following section.

7.7.1 Recommendations for the ALDE module

The first recommendation regards the awareness that lecturers should have in respect of the grammar errors that students make in writing. It is through this awareness that lecturers will be able to assist students in specific ways. For identifying the errors that students make, lecturers can conduct an error analysis procedure. This can be approached by using a paragraph instead of a full essay as this exercise is bound to take more time. It is through the findings of this exercise that lecturers may determine what aspects of grammar to teach in the endeavour to assist students.

The second recommendation is for course evaluation with regards to the assistance that the academic literacy module provides students with regards to the need to improve accuracy in academic writing. The evaluation may lead to the realisation that there is a need for academic literacy lecturers to incorporate grammar in the process of teaching academic writing. It has been shown by the study findings that teaching grammar in context leads to improvement in the way students construct their writing. The third recommendation relates to lecturers determining the type of grammar that is beneficial for academic writing. Literature, for example Hinkel (2004), has shown that some grammar aspects are very common in academic writing. In addition, these are the grammar aspects that most ESL learners struggle with. Lecturers can identify and assist students with their use in order to improve accuracy in academic writing.

7.7.2 Recommendations for further studies

In the discussion on the limitations of this study, it was indicated that one such limitation relates to the limited time of presenting the intervention. This study recommends that a similar study be undertaken for a period of a year to determine whether more positive results regarding the impact of the intervention may be achieved. This is to say that grammar awareness in context should be encouraged throughout the two modules of the academic literacy.

The other limitation with the study is with regards to the corpus used in data analysis. This was a once off corpus collected at the beginning of the study year. A study may be conducted which involves a number of written texts that serve as a source for error identification. For example the proposed study may use two pre-tests and two post-tests. With these, a better determination can be made regarding the errors that students make and the impact of instruction. That is, it could be established with the pre-tests whether participants make the same errors constantly or they make them in particular written texts only. With the increased number of post-tests, it could be determined whether the impact is sustained to a number of written texts, or is it a once off incidence.

The study was also limited in terms of the sample chosen. A future study may be conducted where a bigger sample is utilised. This could assist in generalising the findings of this study. This sample could also include learners with varying abilities to determine whether intervention can assist them differently.

One of the limitations resulted from the research methodology adopted for this study. A mixed method study which involves comparing the views of the participants regarding whether the intervention was helpful and how they feel about themselves before and after the intervention will go a long way to validate the findings of a study like this one.

This closing chapter of the study opened by summarising the main findings of this study. In opening, the chapter summarised the findings of the error analysis procedure which aimed at identifying the type of grammar errors first year students at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University make in academic writing as well as the extent to which they make them. The chapter also summarised the findings on whether grammar instruction had any impact on the accuracy of the texts produced by the same students. This was followed by a presentation on the perceived contribution of the study. A conclusion, was then made based on these findings. This was made in response to the research questions and objectives set at the onset of the study. The study then presented the conclusions arrived at as emanating from literature and empirical research. In addition, the chapter recommended some feasible practices for the ALDE modules and lecturers with the aim of adding some improvements which may be of assistance to students in the endeavour to improve accuracy in academic writing. The chapter also made recommendations for future research that will add some improvements to what has been discovered by this study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Results of the pre-test and post-test error analysis

control group		PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
student	word s	article s	tense s	apostro phe	verb agree ment	pronouns	e structur	prepos itions	cohesive devices	punctuati on	spellin g												
A	1	7	6	5	4	3	3	6	5	8	7	4	4	5	4	6	5	6	5	7	6	7	6
	2	5	5	6	6	5	4	5	5	7	6	4	4	6	5	3	4	7	6	3	5	4	5
	3	4	5	2	3	6	5	5	4	6	5	5	4	7	7	7	6	6	5	4	6	5	6
	4	6	5	8	7	6	5	7	5	3	4	5	5	6	5	4	5	7	6	6	5	6	5
	5	7	6	5	4	4	2	3	4	6	5	6	4	3	5	5	5	5	5	7	7	7	7
	6	6	6	6	5	6	4	5	5	4	5	7	6	7	7	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	5
	7	6	5	7	6	5	3	5	4	5	5	7	6	4	5	5	6	6	5	3	6	6	6
	8	8	7	7	7	4	4	7	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	7	6	4	5	6	5
	9	6	6	7	6	5	4	7	7	4	5	4	6	4	5	5	7	7	7	4	4	4	4
	10	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	6	7	6	4	6	7	4	6	5	5	7	5	6	6	6
	11	5	4	5	6	7	6	2	3	7	7	7	6	6	5	5	4	6	6	5	4	6	5
	12	7	7	7	6	6	5	6	5	5	4	6	5	3	4	7	6	6	6	7	5	6	5
	13	7	6	5	4	6	5	6	5	5	5	7	5	6	6	4	5	3	4	6	3	6	3
	14	7	6	5	6	6	7	9	7	7	6	6	5	4	4	9	6	6	6	3	6	6	6
	15	7	6	6	5	5	4	6	6	6	7	8	3	6	4	6	7	7	6	4	6	6	6
	16	5	5	6	5	6	4	6	5	5	5	7	5	8	7	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	6
	17	4	6	8	7	7	6	6	4	6	7	7	5	7	7	7	7	7	8	5	6	5	6
	18	6	5	6	5	6	6	7	6	6	7	5	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	5	5	6	5
	19	7	6	5	5	7	6	6	7	4	6	5	7	3	4	6	7	8	7	7	7	7	7
	20	4	4	5	5	8	7	6	5	6	5	7	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6
	21	5	4	6	4	5	4	5	4	7	6	6	6	4	5	4	5	2	8	3	6	6	6
	22	7	5	6	3	7	6	7	6	7	7	4	7	6	6	6	5	8	6	7	5	6	5
	23	6	5	3	5	8	7	9	6	6	6	5	4	5	5	6	5	5	5	4	6	6	6
	24	4	4	4	3	4	5	8	7	3	6	5	5	4	5	7	5	7	7	5	4	6	5
	25	7	8	4	4	6	5	7	7	5	6	6	6	5	5	4		4	5	7	6	6	6
	26	7	8	8	7	7	6	6	7	4	6	6	6	8	7	3	5	5	6	6	6	6	6
	27	6	5	5	5	4	5	8	7	5	4	5	6	6	5	4	4	5	3	5	6	5	6
	28	7	6	5	5	5	4	7	6	5	4	6	5	4	4	5	5	6	6	8	7	6	5
		170	157	158	144	159	137	172	155	156	158	160	148	151	147	153	150	164	168	144	154		
student	no of words	articles	tenses	apostrophe	subject verb agreement	pronouns	sentence structure	prepositions	cohesive devices	punctuation	spelling	total											
B	intervention group																						
	0	7	4	6	5	7	5	7	4	8	5	5	3	5	4	7	4	4	3	4	4	4	
	2	7	5	5	4	6	4	3	3	2	1	7	4	6	3	8	3	6	3	5	2	3	
	3	7	6	5	5	5	4	5	2	5	4	6	2	4	4	5	2	6	3	7	3	6	
	4	5	4	8	6	5	3	6	3	2		7	5	5	2	6	3	5	2	7	3	6	
	5	6	3	2	3	5	6	5	3	8	3	7	5	7	3	5	1	4	3	6	3	6	
	6	7	6	6	3	7	4	5	2	5	3	7	5	6	4	5	2	6	4	3	3	6	
	7	3	3	5	3	5	5	8	3	7	4	6	2	2	3	5	3	7	4	7	4	6	
	8	4	5	7	4	7	7	5	3	7	3	7		8	4	5	4	6	3	4	4	6	
	9	7	6	4	3	5	3	7	4	7	4	5	3	5	2	5	4	6	2	5	4	6	
	10	7	6	7	5	7	4	7	4	2	1	7	5	7	4	5	1	6	4	5	5	6	
	11	4	5	6	4	6	5	6	4	8		4	1	7	5	5	5	7	2	8	3	6	
	12	5	4	5	3	7	2	6	3	7	4	5		4	5	7	4	4	4	2	2	6	
	13	7	7	5	3	5	2	7	2	4	4	7	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	7	4	6	
	14	6	6	4	3	5	3	6	3	5	2	7	3	4	3	5	4	4	2	2	1	6	
	15	7	6	6	5	7	4	6	1	5	3	6	3	4	1	4	6	4	1	8	3	6	
	16	4	3	8	5	6	4	7	2	8	4	3	3	5	3	5	4	4	3	7	4	6	
	17	6	4	7	5	4	5	6	3	7	4	6	5	4	3	6	6	6	3	5	3	6	
	18	8	4	7	4	6	3	7	4	4	2	4	3	6	3	5	5	4	2	7	4	6	
	19	7	5	7	3	7	4	6	4	5	4	5	4	6	3	8	4	5	3	5	3	6	
	20	7	6	6	5	6	3	7	1	4	3	7	6	6	1	6	7	5	4	5	2	6	
	21	7	4	6	4	4	6	4	2	5	2	4	3	6	2	3	4	6	3	7	4	6	
	22	7	3	6	4	3	4	7	3	8	4	5	3	7	3	2	6	7	2	7	3	6	
	23	7	6	5	4	2	5	8	3	5	3	6	4	6	1	8	5	4	4	5	3	6	
	24	7	3	6	3	5	3	6	4	8	5	6	5	7	3	9	5	6	2	5	3	6	
	25	7	5	6	3	6	3	7	4	2	3	5	4	7	4	5	4	7	4	7	4	6	
	26	7	6	6	3	5	4	6	4	7	4	6	3	7	2	8	6	6	3	7	1	6	
	27	2	3	5	4	4	3	6	3	2	3	5	3	5	3	2	2	3	3	6	4	6	
28	8	7	4	3	6	4	4	2	8	3	4	2	5	1	5	4	3	3	8	3	6		
29		173	135	160	109	153	112	170	83	155	85	159	93	156	83	153	112	146	81	161	89		
	articles	tenses	apostrophe	subject verb agreement	pronouns	sentence structure	prepositions	cohesive devices	punctuation	spelling													
31	freq	343	318	312	342	311	319	307	306	310	305	3173											
32	%	10,81	10	9,833	10,77844	9,80145	10,054	9,675	9,64387	9,76993	9,612	100											
33	mean	9,251	9,98	10,17	9,277778	10,20257	9,9467	10,34	10,3693	10,2355	10,4	100,1692											

APPENDIX 2: Exercise 2: Apostrophes

Punctuate the following sentences with apostrophes according to the rules for using the apostrophe.

Instructions:

1. Carefully study sentences 1-6.
2. Identify, from the sentences the correct usage of the apostrophe.(
Teacher further explains the rules)
3. Apply the rules you have discovered to correct sentences no 7-20.
4. Compare your responses to the memo provided

1. **Who's** the **party's** candidate for vice president this year?
2. The fox had its right foreleg caught securely in the **trap's** jaws.
3. Our **neighbor's** car is an old Chrysler, and I told him the other day that **it's** just about to fall apart.
4. In three **weeks'** time **we'll** have to begin school again.
5. **Didn't** you hear that **they're** leaving tomorrow?
6. Whenever I think of the stories I read as a child, I remember **Cinderella's** glass slipper and **Snow White's** wicked stepmother.
7. We claimed the picnic table was ours, but the Jones' children looked so disappointed that we found another spot.

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8. It's important that the kitten learns to find its way home.

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9. She did not hear her children's cries.

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10. My address has three 7s, and Tim's phone number has four 2s.

.....
.....

11. Didn't he say when he would arrive at Arnie's house?

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.....

12. It's such a beautiful day that I've decided to take a sun bath.

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.....
13. She said the watch Jack found was hers, but she couldn't identify the
manufacturers name on it.
.....
.....

14. Little girls' clothing is on the first floor, and the men's department is on the
second
.....
.....

15. The dog's bark was far worse than its bite.
.....
.....

16. The moon's rays shone feebly on the path, and I heard a lone cricket's chirpings
and whistlings.
.....
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17. They're not afraid to go ahead with the plans, though the choice is not theirs.
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18. The man whose face was tan said that he had spent his two weeks' vacation in
the mountains.
.....
.....

19. I found myself constantly putting two cs in the word process.
.....
.....

20. John's 69 Ford is his proudest possession.
.....

MEMO

8. **It's** important that the kitten learns to find its way home.
9. She did not hear her **children's** cries.
10. My address has three **7s**, and **Tim's** phone number has four **2s**.
11. **Didn't** he say when he would arrive at **Arnie's** house?
12. **It's** such a beautiful day that **I've** decided to take a sun bath.
13. She said the watch Jack found was hers, but she **couldn't** identify the **manufacturer's** name on it.
14. Little **girls'** clothing is on the first floor, and the **men's** department is on the second.
15. The **dog's** bark was far worse than its bite.
16. The **moon's** rays shone feebly on the path, and I heard a lone **cricket's** chirpings and whistlings.
17. **They're** not afraid to go ahead with the plans, though the choice is not theirs.
18. The man whose face was tan said that he had spent his two **weeks'** vacation in the mountains.
19. I found myself constantly putting two **c's** in the word process.
20. **John's '69** Ford is his proudest possession.

APPENDIX 3: Sentence fragments

The following paragraph has no capital letters or periods to mark the beginnings and ends of sentences. Add capitals, periods, commas, and/or other punctuation that may be needed to make the word groups into complete sentences. Your goal is to be sure that there are no fragments.

Read line 1-2 which have been correctly punctuated to avoid sentence fragments. Apply the same rules to the rest of the text to correct sentence fragment errors. Compare your response to the memo provided below the paragraph.

My brother was always my best friend when I was a child, especially as we two were almost alone in the world. We lived with our old grandmother in a little house, almost a shack, in the country. whenever I think of him now I see a solemn, responsible boy a boy too old for his years who looked out for me no matter what once there was a bully John Anson who looked enormous to me though he was probably an average twelve-year-old John had it in for me because he liked Littice Grant who liked me he decided to beat me up right before her eyes I was lucky my brother came by he didn't interfere any he just stood there somehow though his presence gave me confidence I kicked the stuffing out of John Anson if my brother hadn't been there I don't think I could have done it.

Memo

My brother was always my best friend when I was a child, especially as we two were almost alone in the world. We lived with our old grandmother in a little house, almost a shack, in the country. Whenever I think of him now, I see a solemn, responsible boy, a boy too old for his years, who looked out for me no matter what. Once there was a bully, John Anson, who looked enormous to me, though he was probably an average twelve-year-old. John had it in for me because he liked Littice Grant, who liked me. He decided to beat me up right before her eyes. I was lucky my brother came by. He didn't interfere any. He just stood there. Somehow, though, his presence gave me confidence. I kicked the stuffing out of John Anson. If my brother hadn't been there, I don't think I could have done it.