

BARRIERS TO LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN TWO HIGHER
LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN NAMIBIA

BY

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Declaration

I declare that Barriers to learning English as a second language in two higher learning institutions in Namibia is my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other institution, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged in the reference list.

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Abstract

The effectiveness of language requires that users of a language be provided with the right knowledge to cope with its complexity and demanding nature especially in the area of writing. In this sense, this thesis sought to draw attention to some of the important features of writing and speaking skills in the English language at two higher learning institutions in Namibia. English is a second language for students at these institutions. Articles 3 and 20 of the Namibian Constitution stipulate that the language policy must promote the use of English in schools (The Constitution of Namibia (1990)). It is now 24 years since English as medium of instruction was introduced in schools and tertiary institutions, but some students' English proficiency is still relatively poor, especially in writing and speaking communication skills. This study investigated the barriers that prevent students to write and speak English well at University A and University B. The writing and speaking skills were investigated through the lens of syllabi/study guides, and lack of practical teaching of oral communication and writing skills inter alia morphology and syntax. Fifty-seven respondents took part in the research, comprising Heads of Departments (Language, Communication and Language Centre), Course Coordinators, lecturers and students in the English field at the two institutions investigated. Students were deliberately selected for the questionnaire to illustrate the difficulties they face when writing and speaking English as a second language. The lecturers were also deliberately selected because they were the ones who were with the students in classrooms. This study used qualitative research to gather information through methods such as observation, interviews, open-response questionnaire items, document analysis and verbal reports.

The following were the main findings. There was a lack of specific teaching objectives in oral communication and written skills in the syllabi, while the inability of students to write correct sentences, and the limited time allocated to these courses also played a role.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that students' communicative competency is very poor. Therefore, it is the opinion of this researcher that improvement is much needed regarding syllabi content, teaching approaches of speaking and writing skills, students' admission criteria and the time frame allocated for the different courses. To answer the research question: firstly the time allocated to some of the English courses is short, there is

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lack of teaching and learning of oral and writing skills approaches and, the syllabi were planned and design in a way that do not enhance much the teaching and learning of the second language. There are not many activities in the study guides that could be used to enhance students' communicative competency. Such activities should include subject and verb agreement, passive and active form, sentence construction, word-building using prefixes and suffixes, auxiliaries or activities which give the students a chance to practice a certain aspect of language. Also, since English is a second language for students in Namibia, the institutions must seriously look at the time allocated to the courses they offer so that lecturers can appropriately apply proper approaches to teach writing and speaking skills.

Key terms:

Barriers; English as second language; Cognitive factors; Syllabi; Syntax; Writing skills; Oral Communicative Skills; Bound and Free Morphemes; Students' Written work; Instructional Methods.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the investigation of the barriers to students' learning of oral and writing skills in English as a second language at two higher learning institutions in Namibia that are identified by means of the pseudonyms 'University A' and 'University B'. The investigation takes the form of a case study.

English is an international language. Kirkpatrick and Chau (2010:32-45) point out that a move to internationalise higher education has encouraged the use of English as a common medium in many countries worldwide. Kirkpatrick and Chau (2010:32-45) give an example of students from non-English medium of instruction countries that choose to do their medical studies in a number of non-English-speaking countries such as Russia, which now offer these degrees through the medium of English. Also, Asian students travel to western countries to obtain degrees offered in English. Ammon (1996) in Kirkpatrick and Chau (ibid) confirms the statement that English is increasingly becoming the international language of instruction and assessment in higher education and has long been dominant as the language of international scholarship. Ammon (1996) in Kirkpatrick and Chau (ibid) further report that English is an important language of scientific and scholarly conferences, and give an example of the European Science Foundation whose working language is English as well as the language of the Foundation's journal. Therefore, English is seen as an international language by many.

1.2 English as a medium of communication

English is a "top online language" where there are almost 536 564 837 Internet users (The Namibian Newspaper, 30 June 2012). English is used in education as an official language in many countries, and as means of communication among people of different backgrounds. In addition, English is "a dominant international language in communication, business, science, aviation, entertainment, radio, diplomacy and is currently also the most widely-spoken language in terms of geography" (ibid). In this regard, Namibia has embraced English. Most of the educational programmes such as research, instructor guidelines, reading materials

and programmes that are meant to support and educate students are written in English. The rationale behind this is that students at these institutions would be expected to exhibit proficiency in English in the work place after they graduate.

Therefore, this study investigates the use of English by the students at tertiary level in Namibia. In Namibia, legislation on language stipulates that the official language of Namibia shall be English and schools and higher learning institutions should teach in English, but nothing contained in the Constitution prohibits any other language as a medium of instruction, provided it ensures proficiency in the official language or in pedagogic reasoning (The Constitution of Namibia, 1990). In view of this legislation, the language (English) problem in Namibia is an officially recognised challenge which dates back to the years preceding the country's independence in 1990.

While teaching at a secondary school, the researcher attended various meetings with teachers, parents and education officials about the poor performance of learners, especially in Accounting, Mathematics, Physical Science, History and English as a Second language. The Ministry of Education and some parents believed that the problem was with teachers' English proficiency. As a result, this researcher (Frans) was motivated by this situation to undertake two pilot studies: one on the institutionalisation of a language policy in Grade 10 in 2007 and the other in 2009 on the "Impact of the English language policy in Grade 12 in Namibian schools". Frans's conclusion (2007:52) indicates that the institutionalisation of the language policy in Grade 10 had occurred on a superficial level only, as teachers' use of English in the classroom was mainly textbook bound. Although the teachers were able to teach in English, they sometimes appeared to lack the language proficiency to go beyond the textbook and use a range of vocabulary during explanations. This affected the institutionalisation of the language policy.

The official language policy for Namibia is documented as part of the constitution in Articles 3 and 20. These articles stipulate that the language policy must promote the use of mother tongue and English in schools. As a result, a document, The Language Policy for Schools 1992-6 and beyond (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1991) was formulated and implemented. This policy was not clear in its guidelines on how different mother tongues are to be used in schools. It mainly spelt out how the phasing in of English as medium of instruction from 1992 to 1996 should be achieved. The document also stipulated that English

was to be the medium of instruction in schools in conjunction with the communicative approach. English is a second or even third language for learners and students in Namibia; therefore, the language policy states the following:

- Grades 1-3 will be taught through the mother tongue, a local language, or English. The official language, English, will be taught as a subject if schools opt for either the mother tongue or for a local language.
- Grades 4-7 will be taught through the medium of the official language, English. Ideally, all learners should study two languages as subjects, one of which must be English. From 1996 onwards Mathematics, Sciences and Social Studies, and the major promotional subjects will be taught through the medium of English.
- Grades 8-10 will be taught through the medium of the official language, English. From 1993 onwards the Grade 10 National Junior Certificate examination will be written in English.
- Grades 11 and 12 learners will write the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) which is now referred to as the Namibia Senior Secondary (Ordinary Level) (Namibianised) Certificate (NSSCO) and Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGSCE) which is currently the Namibia Senior Secondary (Higher Level) (Namibianised) Certificate (NSSCH) examinations with English as the sole medium (MEC 1993: 6 & 7).
- At tertiary level, English should be the medium of instruction.

Wolfaardt (2001:1) conducted research on “Language Policy Implementation” in Namibia. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture was concerned with the very poor results of learners in schools. Wolfaardt undertook the research to find out what was contributing to learners’ poor performance. The studies of both Wolfaardt and Frans focused on the language policy and how it affected learners’ learning and performance in schools. It emerged from these studies that the cognitive language skills of learners (for example comprehension of texts and question instructions in content subjects) were very poor. Learners had difficulties with problem-solving in Mathematics and written language. For example, syntaxes affected learners’ abilities to express themselves clearly and adequately. Also, mostly older teachers who taught subjects such as Accounting, Mathematics, Physical Science, History, Geography, Biology and English had been trained in Afrikaans but had been forced to teach these subjects in English after independence (Wolfaardt, 2001).

This suggests that teachers' English proficiency was also relatively poor, adding to the learners' lack of understanding. The findings of Frans' pilot studies confirmed Wolfaardt's (2001:239) findings that teachers were not confident to teach in English and recommended that they needed in-service English training (Frans, 2007 & 2009).

The recommendations on the findings from Frans (2007 & 2009)'s two pilot studies have not yet been properly addressed hence students' English proficiency at tertiary level has not improved. This study has tried to address these gaps by suggesting that students who obtained C, D and E symbols in Grade 12 need to complete a compulsory one year English course. Also a new curriculum should be designed that would address what students lack (gaps) from secondary level. From Wolfaardt (2001:239) and Frans' findings (2007 & 2009), one can postulate that poor results at secondary schools in English might have a negative impact on students' academic performance at tertiary level, where students are required to be proficient in English in order for them to master the subjects they study, as well as for their careers after they graduate.

Articles 3 and 20 of the Namibian Constitution emphasise that the language policy must promote the use of mother tongue and English in schools. The language policy also spells out how it should be implemented into schools and that this should be achieved by 1996. It is now more than 20 years since this language policy was implemented at schools.

The Dean of Education at the University of Namibia mentions that the high failure rates in Grade 10 and 12 could be the result of poor primary education, since teachers have poor qualifications that need upgrading while those with better qualifications are deployed to secondary schools (The Namibian Newspaper, 2014:1). The Dean further said that research had been done regarding the high failure rates in Grade 10 and 12 and this indicated that early childhood development (ECD) at the very beginning of a child's life played a key role in the child's performance at a later stage. The Dean believes that if more qualified teachers were placed at pre- primary and primary level rather than at secondary level, the performance of learners would improve. The focus of this study is on English as a language at tertiary level and not on the general poor performance of students. The Dean's attitude is worth mentioning here because all the content subjects in schools are taught in English.

Due to various complaints from the public and the Ministry of Education about the poor performance of learners specifically in Grade 10 and 12 results, the Ministry of Education intervened in 2011 by compelling school teachers to write a test to determine their levels of English competence. The purpose was that University B could compile an English course for teachers in an attempt to teach and help learners to improve their results in all subjects including English (The New Era Newspaper, 2011).

1.3 Preliminary Literature Review

This section presents the background to the research problem, various undergraduate courses offered at both universities and defining of certain key concepts used in this study. This was done to give an overview of the problem investigated.

1. 3.1 Background to the problem investigated

Namibia is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society with several languages spoken. Before Namibia gained its independence from South Africa in 1990, the Namibian education system was segregated along racial lines. There were 11 educational authorities, with each authority running its own educational affairs for a specific ethnic group. Both Afrikaans and English were the country's official languages while schools were designated as English or Afrikaans medium. Thus the medium of instruction in schools was determined by whether it was an English or Afrikaans medium school. In some areas, such as the former Caprivi (now Zambezi), the medium of instruction was English, while elsewhere, Afrikaans was usually the medium of instruction in schools except in white English-medium schools and certain private schools (Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MECYS, 1990a).

Chamberlain, West, Tait, Kleinhans, Minnaar and Bock as cited in Wolfaardt (2001:38) point out that the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), which fought for the independence of Namibia, had already decided what language would be used in a free Namibia. In 1981, SWAPO, then the government-in-waiting, felt that the use of the English language in a multi-lingual society like Namibia would prevent any accusation of favouritism regarding one ethnic language over others, and that no ethnic group in Namibia could feel that it was more important than another because of the official language policy, hence the choice of English.

As a result, SWAPO perceived English to be neutral, a language that can unify people in terms of inequalities, acceptability and in terms of positive rather than negative association for people. For example, Afrikaans was at the time the main medium of instruction in Namibia but was associated with the language of the colonisers (Wolfaardt, 2001: 33). English was then chosen as the lingua franca (Chamberlain et al. (ibid) in Wolfaardt (ibid). Scotton as cited in Wolfaardt (2001:5) contends the introduction of English in a multilingual community and concurs with Chamberlain, et al. (ibid) that to choose English as the official language was unfair because it was foreign and had to be acquired by every citizen outside their home.

After independence, the education system changed dramatically. The 11 education authorities were abolished and absorbed into the Ministry of Basic Education. The introduction of English as an official language followed shortly after independence and English as a medium of instruction was introduced in Namibian schools in 1991 (MECYS,1990b). Wolfaardt (2001:5-7) states that, directly after independence, the primary concern of the new government was to reform education and the policy on language. Therefore, the reform started in 1990, when the first Minister of Basic Education started issuing a series of official policy statements and directives on educational development. The most important directives and policy statements were:

- National integrated Education System for Emergent Namibia: Draft proposal for education reform and renewal (NIESEN) (Angula, 1990). The main aim of this directive was to describe the future content, methods and organisation of Namibian education.
- Education in Transition: Nurturing our future (Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MECYS, 1990b). This outlined the reform of measures that formed the foundation for change and looked forward specifically to 1991 for implementation. In this directive, under the rubric of Language in Education, the proposed policies for schools were explained.
- Change with Continuity (MECYS, 1990a). This action statement outlined policy evolution, its direction and its implications. It aimed at setting up a framework for operations and parameters for implementation.

The policy decision relevant to this study was the change in medium of instruction in education from Afrikaans or mother tongue to English. The most obvious implication of this was that since English was the mother tongue of only 0.8% of the population, most teachers had to adjust to teaching in and through a language (English) of which they had had little exposure to (Wolfaardt, 2001:12).

Guvercin (2012:19) underscores the importance of preserving mother tongue for example children who come to school with a strong foundation in their mother tongue. Guvercin (ibid) is of the opinion that these children develop stronger literacy abilities in the language used at school. When parents or caregivers are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well prepared to learn the language of their immigrant country and succeed educationally. The ability to converse in a language is developed through the mother tongue. The child will become familiarised with the nuances of a language, how to learn it and use it, and this will enable him or her to learn other languages as well. A strong foundation in their first language will contribute to learning another language and help them develop stronger literacy skills in the school language, because children's literacy knowledge and abilities transfer across languages from mother tongue to the language the child is learning at school. When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years they gain a deeper understanding of language and gradually acquire knowledge about how it can be manipulated and applied in different ways. Children explore the similarities and differences between languages (ibid).

Ball (2014) concurs with Guvercin (2012) that children learn better in their mother tongue. Ball (ibid) argues that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has encouraged mother tongue instruction in primary education and highlights as some of the advantages of mother tongue education right from the start that children are more likely to succeed and perform well in school, parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning (Benson & Kosonen 2013), and children in multilingual education tend to develop better thinking skills compared to their monolingual peers as Mackey and King (2007) believe.

1.3.2 Grade 10 and 12 results in Accounting, Geography, Physical Science, History and English as 2nd Language

This section discusses the background of subjects taught in English at secondary schools. It also clarifies especially the results in English as a subject in two grades. By studying these results, one would have an idea of why this study was undertaken. Tables 1 and 2 below are shown because learners in Grade 10 and 12 receive national certificates to either receive vocational training after (Grade 10) or to continue with tertiary training after (Grade 12). Those who qualify to be enrolled in vocational training are those who did not achieve the minimum points to proceed to Grade 11 and those who are past the minimum age to remain in secondary education. In addition, students who completed only Grade 10 and have turned 25 years or older can write a mature age examination to enter tertiary level. The relevance of the Grade 10 issue to this study is that these learners will not complete Grade 11 and 12, which means once they pass the mature age examination they will go directly to tertiary education. This suggests that between Grade 10 and tertiary education these students experience a huge gap and the level of their English proficiency cannot be determined. This could also be a problem when they enroll for tertiary education. Hence, the Grade 10 results are shown in this thesis to clarify what levels of students enter tertiary education.

Table 1: The overall distribution percentages of Grade 10 results from 2010-2012 in some subjects offered in English (Khomas Region JSC Examination 2013, Ministry of Education).

Subjects	2012	2011	2010
Accounting	79.9	62.0	61.4
Geography	91.5	93.8	95.2
Physical Science	90.3	84.4	85.3
History	93.7	93.7	96.4
English 2nd Language	97.7	97.5	97.2

These results above show the percentages of students who are graded in those subjects. A learner should obtain a minimum of 23 points as a Grade 11 entrance requirement. This means if a learner obtains below 23 points in Grade 10 then he or she has to repeat Grade 10. English as a Second Language results were not that bad but the problem is that the results remained constantly the same for three years. Can these results be correct or just to satisfy the

Ministry of Education? If the result for ESL in 2012 was 97.7% then all the learners must be extremely proficient in English! The same must be said for all the results in the other subjects – they must write and speak English like native speakers. If the results are as good as they seem why then when learners get to Grade 12, their English proficiency drops? There is something wrong somewhere.

Table 2: Grade 12 Ordinary Examination Results in certain subjects in Khomas Region in 2011(Ministry of Education, 2012)

Subject	Number of	Number of	Pass rate			
			A+	A	B	C,D,E,F, U and I
English 2nd Language	147	2459	7	12	187	2252
History	94	766	2	11	46	717
Mathematics	149	2345	12	26	78	2229
Physical Science	147	1289	3	23	97	116

It can be seen from Table 2 above that the learners who obtained good symbols (A+, A, B) in English are few compared to the number (2459) which sat for English examination. The rest either obtained C, D, E or ungraded. The performance in other subjects such as History, Physical Science and Mathematics is also very poor. There is something wrong with either pedagogic or the Ministry of Education because when the Grade 10 English results of 2012 (high pass rate 97.7%) are compared to the Grade 12 of 2012 (bulk of learners obtained between C, D and E symbols) in English as Second Language, then a question is raised: what or where is the problem?

Table 3: Grade 12 Ordinary Examination Results in certain subjects in 32 schools in Khomas Region 2012 (Ministry of Education, 2013)

Symbols	A+	A	B	C	D	E	F,G, U and I
Subjects							
English 2nd	3	8	106	273	802	616	244
Mathematics	12	30	90	350	467	519	187
Physical	5	26	104	201	255	268	108
Total	20	64	300	824	1524	1403	539

These results are from the Khomas region which is regarded as the region with the most competent teachers and where learners have access to good learning materials and libraries (Ministry of Education, 2013). The results show the learners' performance in Grade 12 Ordinary level in 2012. These institutions (University A and University B) under investigation admitted students who obtained symbols from A+ to E. Although the examiner's report was not obtained, it can be seen here that most students obtained between C and E symbols in Mathematics and Physical Science. Does this mean that students did not understand the questions and instructions properly? Also, the results in English as a second language show that the bulk of students obtained between C and E symbols. These results in table 3 show that tertiary institutions received many students whose English was not up to standard, hence their poor performance. Students who obtained F, G and U (ungraded) symbols in Grade 12 have to repeat English in the hope of obtaining better grades.

When this researcher started to teach at a higher learning institution, she needed to get an accurate picture of the English proficiency of students at tertiary level. Experience showed that some students still had poor communicative competency in English especially in basic grammar, writing and speaking skills.

There are specific English courses designed for undergraduate degrees at both institutions which were studied, and which have almost the same basic entry requirements. The normal basic requirement for entrance to an undergraduate course at both institutions is 25 points

from Grade 12. The score is calculated by adding the points of the best five Grade 12 subjects only, of one which is English. English is a compulsory subject at both institutions. The difference is, that University B, English would normally have been done at Ordinary level (English as a Second Language) and passed at Grade D or better (Prospectus for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies, University B 2010) whereas at University A, English should have been studied at Ordinary level and graded at Grade E or better (Prospectus for Undergraduate Studies and Postgraduate University A, 2011). Therefore, when learners complete secondary school education, they are believed to be proficient in speaking, writing, reading and listening in English.

This study was undertaken to underscore the negative impact of English as a second language on students' general performance at tertiary level where students are taught English skills as well as all other subjects in English. This is required to successfully meet the demands of the future working environment. By looking at some of the students' pass rates in English at University A in 2014 in Table 4, the results such as those of the English courses in 2014 at University A, are so unimpressive? Although this study was directed specifically at training after school, it also examined the challenges associated with English as a second language at school level.

Table 4: The overall percentage pass rate results in five English courses (investigated) at University A (2014)

LANGUAGE IN PRACTICE			
First Semester		Second Semester	
Year	Pass Rate %	Pass Rate %	Average%
2012	65	42	58
2013	53	40	48
2014	63	39	56
ENGLISH IN PRACTICE			
First Semester		Second Semester	
Year	Pass Rate %	Pass Rate %	Average%
2012	-	64	64
2013	43	72	60
2014	73	63	67
ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC			
First Semester		Second Semester	
Year	Pass Rate %	Pass Rate %	Average %
2012	-	59	59
2013	72	69	71
2014	72	52	63
PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION			
First Semester		Second Semester	
Year	Pass Rate %	Pass Rate %	Average %
2012	-	81	81
2013	79	68	74
2014	80	61	71
PROFESSIONAL WRITING			
First Semester		Second Semester	
Year	Pass Rate %	Pass Rate %	Average %

2012	-	65	65
2013	57	32	43
2014	48	34	41

Source: Head of Education and Language Departments Statistics (2014)

The students who are enrolled in Language in Practice and English in Practice courses are either first years or second years. The differences between these two courses are discussed on page 18 and 19 of this chapter. The students who are enrolled in English for Academic Purposes, Professional Writing and Professional Communication are those who completed the first two courses or are exempted from registering those courses because of the grades obtained in Grade 12 (i.e. 1 or 2 at Higher level). If a student obtained a C, D, or E symbol in Grade 12, he/she enrolls for Language in Practice (LIP), while those who passed Language in Practice or obtained a B symbol in Grade 12 do English in Practice (EPR). This study not only focused on first year students but looked at all the English undergraduate courses namely, Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Academic Purposes (University A), Professional Writing, Professional Communication, English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills and English for Academic Purposes.

The English examination results at University A cited in table 4 show that the average pass rate in Language in Practice dropped from 58% in 2012 to 48% in 2013, and went slightly up in 2014 to 56%. The results in English in Practice remained consistently the same for three years. The average results in English for Academic Purposes went up in 2013 from 59% in 2012 to 71% and again dropped in 2014 to 63%. The average pass rate in Professional Writing is too low while the average pass rate for Professional Communication is best when compared to the results in all English courses. This shows that English as a second language was still a problem at the institution in 2014.

Table 5: Distribution of marks awarded by examiners at both institutions in English

	University A	University B
Distinction	75 and above	80 and above
Very good/ merit	70-74	70-79
Good/credit	60 - 69	60 – 69
Satisfactory/pass	50 -59	50 -59
Fail	49 and below	49 and below

Source: Prospectus for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies (2011)

The table above shows the distribution of marks awarded at both universities. When these marks are compared to the pass rate of students in Table 4, it shows that the bulk of students' English proficiency fell between good and fail in 2014.

In concluding this section, there are a number of issues which prompted this research:

Some of the English examination results at University A as shown in Table 4 above.

The aim of University B that the students be part of an international community of graduates who are highly sought-after by employers worldwide on the basis of their skills, leadership qualities and civic commitment (Prospectus for the Undergraduates and Postgraduates Studies 2011); The fact that University A strives to “enable students to acquire knowledge and to develop the skills of applying that knowledge in practical settings for careers or professions” (Prospectus for Undergraduate and Postgraduates Studies 2010 and 2011); and The experience this lecturer gained while teaching at tertiary level.

1.3.3 Definition of certain key concepts

The following are brief explanations of the key concepts used in this study, which are set out in detail in Chapter 2: morphology, syntax, curriculum/syllabi, and lack of teaching of oral and writing skills. Also, a number of sources are initially used to explain the following barriers/concepts:

- Morphemes and syntaxes
- Lack of teaching of oral and writing skills
- Curriculum (syllabus/study guide) content

Baker and Baker (2009) are of the opinion that acquiring any language means learning five primary linguistic elements: phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics. This study is only interested in syntax and morphology in students writing and speaking skills. What is the relationship between syntax, morphology and language proficiency especially in second language learning? Syntax is grammar, the rules that govern word order in sentences. Knowing the grammatical rules allows the speaker to produce an infinite set of sentences that can be easily understood by any individual proficient in that language. For example, the following sentence: “The green turtle ran across the street to look for her friend the duck,” can be understood by proficient native English speakers even though it is unlikely that the individual has encountered this particular sentence before. According to Baker and Baker (2009) morphology is the study of word formation. Morphemes represent the minimal unit of meaning in words. For example, the word fitness is made up of two morphemes: fit and ness. Ness is considered a bound morpheme because it can never be a word by itself, while fit is defined as a free morpheme because it is a word in and of itself like the words man, woman, and moon. The ways words are used in sentences also follow accepted patterns. For example, English speakers say, “Mt. Everest is a high mountain,” but not “The Empire State Building is a high building.” (They would say, “The Empire State Building is a tall building.”) Sometimes the appropriateness of certain word combinations is clear; while at other times the combination appears to be quite uninformed (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Therefore, Wiig and Menyuk (n.d) feel that knowledge of the morphology of the language is critical to vocabulary development and reflects the smallest building blocks for comprehension, this enhance the language proficiency of second language learner.

Wiig and Menyuk (ibid) describe syntax as the study of how individual words and their most basic meaningful units are combined to create sentences. As words are grouped together when we communicate, we must follow the rules of grammar for our language, in other words, it is syntax. Wiig and Menyuk (n.d) further explain that it is the knowledge of syntax that allows us to recognise sentences, while containing different word order and levels of complexity to maintain the same meaning for example:

- The boy hit the ball.
- The ball was hit by the boy.

Both sentences have the same meaning but are structured differently. Students should know how to say something in different ways while maintaining the same meaning. Syntax also allows us to accept “I went to the store” as a meaningful (grammatical) sentence while “To the store went I” would not be acceptable English (Wiig & Menyuk, *ibid*). For these arguments, students need to be taught to use these two aspects (syntax and morphology) appropriately in order to be clearly understood.

1.3.3.1 Morphology

Dikuua-Fulkerson (2011:15) describes English morphology as the study of the structure of words and how they are understood by looking at the various parts of a word. In Dikuua-Fulkerson’s (2011:15) opinion, morphology rests upon the study of morphemes, or the smallest unit of meaning within a language. For example, the word “unlikely” has three parts which are: un-like-ly. Un and ly are morphemes while like is the root, or base morpheme.

According to The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) a morpheme is the “smallest linguistic unit that has a meaning or grammatical function.” Some morphemes are called prefixes and suffixes, that is, small units that are in front of a word or at the end of it. For example, the prefix ‘un’ is added to the word ‘able’ and the word becomes ‘unable’, thereby changing the word’s meaning. The suffix ‘ness’ can be added to the word ‘dirty’ and the word becomes ‘dirtiness’.

1.3.3.2 Syntax

This is a brief explanation of ‘syntax’ and will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2. “Syntax is the discipline that examines the rules of a language that dictate how the various parts of sentences go together; or syntax examines how fully formed words fit together to create complete and understandable sentences” (The Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995). In a sentence, there should be a subject and predicate. For example: John often comes late to class. In this sentence, John is the subject and the other part is the predicate which includes the verb and the object. Therefore, to be understood in the context of what one tries to communicate, words in a sentence should follow a certain order for the message to be received. A sentence should usually begin with either a subject (a doer) for example

“Maria writes a test”, or an object (something/somebody that receives the action, for example “The test is written by Maria”, or with an adjectival phrase, for example, “Smiling happily, the boy said hello”. In addition, the words in a sentence should be arranged according to the role they fulfil in the sentence in order to communicate the message sensibly.

1.3.3.3 Curriculum/syllabus

There are two terms used in education that describe what needs to be taught, and these are “curriculum and syllabus”. Below are different definitions of the two terms. The Chambers-Macmillan Dictionary (1995) defines curriculum as a document that consists of several parts that form a course of study at a school, college or university. Lanfranco (2006: v) defines a syllabus as an outline of specific programmes prepared by the instructor, and which includes the topics to be covered, their order, the required and suggested reading materials and any other relevant information. From these explanations, a curriculum identifies several parts of the course whereas a syllabus describes what a student is expected to know and be able to demonstrate at the end of the learning activity, and lists what will be taught and tested.

In view of the two institutions being studied, the documents (the syllabi) describe what students need to know and the objectives of the programme. Therefore, this researcher used the term ‘syllabus’ for her purposes in this study. The following is an explanation of different syllabi at the two institutions that were investigated.

1.3.3.3.1 Syllabi at University A

There are four core English syllabi that a student needs to pass before completing an undergraduate course at University A. They are Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Specific Purposes, Professional Writing and Professional Communication. All are semester courses. As mentioned previously, this study was only interested in writing and oral communication skills. The following is what each English syllabus entails in terms of what a student actually needs to do.

1.3.3.3.1.1 Language in Practice Course

Language in Practice is evaluated as Level 4 on the NQF. A student in Grade 12 needs to obtain an C, D or E symbol in English Second Language to be enrolled in this course. It is a done by first year students. Language in Practice is an institutional core course which covers all four English skills, namely, writing, reading, speaking and listening. Students are introduced to the basic elements of English grammar, academic reading and writing skills while continuing to develop their vocabulary through the production of well written basic sentences, paragraphs and essays. The purposes of this syllabus are to instil the four skills of English, expand, adapt and apply speaking skills and strategies in a formal and informal context. Once a student completes this syllabus, he/she should show evidence of his/her ability to demonstrate an understanding of the correct use of English in written and spoken form, generate, plan, and organise ideas for written and oral activities and use English across a variety of contexts and situations. The course content covers grammar, especially parts of speech and sentence construction, paragraph and essay-writing and text analysis. Language in Practice is facilitated through learner-centred learning activities, lectures delivered face-to-face, e-learning, tutorials, online practice and application and collaboration through group work, which is not clearly defined, practice exercises, homework, tests and assignments (Language in Practice Syllabus, 2011). While this is not a comparative study, when Language in Practice is compared to English for General Communication at University B, there are some differences and similarities. For example, they are both evaluated as Level 4 but a student cannot study English for General Communication at University B if she/he has obtained an E symbol at NSSC level. Also, Language in Practice, at University A is a semester course while English for General Communication at University B is a full year course.

In addition to this, at University B, the syllabus covers speaking skills where students are taught conversational and presentation skills unlike at University A, where the oral communication skills (speaking skill) are only facilitated through group work. Some differences are also found in writing. The writing skills in Language in Practice at University A cover a wide range of activities such as paragraph structure with emphasis on topic sentences, supporting sentences and concluding sentences, while at University B, students are taught to differentiate between written and spoken language, types of sentences, sentence structure (morphology and syntax), paragraph- writing, cohesion and the use of cohesive

devices, paraphrasing, summarising, topic sentences, writing introductions and conclusions, and selecting and synthesising ideas. There are similarities in that students at both institutions are taught to identify topic sentences and paragraph writing (Language in Practice syllabus, 2011).

1.3.3.3.1.2 English in Practice Course

English in Practice is evaluated as Level 5 on the NQF. The course prerequisites are a successful completion of Language in Practice, a minimum B-symbol in English as a Second Language at NSSC Ordinary Level a B symbol obtained at Namibia Centre for Open Learning (NAMCOL), English Communication course modules 1- 4 or the required mark as set by the Department for Criminal Justice in its required placement test. English in Practice aims at equipping students with the necessary grammar competencies, expands their understanding of specific grammar components in a descriptive method and integrating the four English language skills (listening, writing, speaking and reading) throughout. This syllabus elaborates vocabulary to improve especially the students' writing skills and expose students to different literary texts integrating language skills, critical thinking and expanding students' reading and writing skills. The syllabus further aims to incorporate technology and consolidate the practical application of the students' English skills (English in Practice Syllabus, 2012).

- Writing skills lessons

The grammar competencies are ensured when students correctly apply common grammar rules and demonstrate the correct use of tenses, reported speech, passive voice, gerunds and conditionals in their writing.

Students are also expected to show evidence of competence by integrating new vocabulary found in the workbook and in other selected literary texts in their writing. Students are taught essay- writing skills and proof-reading strategies to write focused, lucid, and cohesive essays. They are also taught how to differentiate between summarising and paraphrasing, how to summarise short and long texts. In addition to these, students review the paragraph-writing and structure of an essay they learned in Language in Practice namely, the introduction with a thesis statement, the body paragraphs and conclusion. Two types of essays are taught

in the course namely, argumentative and opinion. When comparing the writing skills in English in Practice at University A which at NQF level 5 according to NQF with English for Specific Purposes at University B which is also at NQF level 5, there are differences in the content. For example, the students at University B are taught to determine the importance of correct spelling and punctuation in early drafts, how to analyse a text for its content and purpose, how to interpret graphics and writing based on graphics, the introduction to academic styles of writing and how to analyse the titles of essays. All these processes are not covered at University A. In addition to this, the prerequisites for both courses seem to be the same except for English in Practice at University A which does not require a student to only obtain a B symbol or a 4 grade at secondary school level while at University B, this applies.

- Speaking skills lessons

The speaking activities in English in Practice course include power point presentation and, when engaging with critical reading, students are expected to pair and engage in group thinking where they critically discuss questions and come up with answers. They are also expected to understand the genre, fiction/biographies/autobiographies, concepts and writing techniques. The learning is facilitated through blended instruction face-to-face and on-line activities, tests which cover various units, tutorials where students have to complete relevant online tasks, individual presentations and group discussion (English in Practice Syllabus, 2012).

1.3.3.3.1.3 English for Academic Purposes Course

According to NQF's evaluation, English for Academic Purposes is Level 6. Its prerequisites are English in Practice Level 5 or students who obtained an "A symbol" at NCCS or grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 on Higher level. It is also a compulsory course. It covers 140 hours per semester.

This syllabus is designed to introduce students to the oral and written English skills required to enable them to use English effectively in the academic contexts they encounter in their studies. The main emphasis is on improving students' confidence and competence in using English in written and oral contexts. As far as possible, the syllabus addresses the specific language needs of students' ability levels and subject specialisation.

The aims of English for Academic Purposes are to develop and expand students' linguistic competence, critical reading ability, and to develop the students' ability to respond logically and effectively through writing and speaking activities related to their field of study. In addition to this, the course aims to teach, guide and assist students in order to communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in academic speech and writing within an academic context. The course also assists students to improve and develop their English language proficiency within academic contexts. English for Academic Purposes is facilitated through the following learning activities: a learner-centred and constructive approach is favoured where the emphasis is on being learning-driven rather than exam-driven. Students are expected to participate actively in each lecture session. Co-operative and collaborative learning is encouraged where students are given responsibility to participate in planning and evaluating their work under the lecturer's guidance.

In addition to the above, lecturers use a variety of techniques and activities to develop students' language and communication skills including individual tasks, group and class activities, discussions, practice exercises and quizzes (English for Academic Purposes 2008).

1.3.3.3.1.4 Professional Communication Course

Professional Communication is evaluated as level 7 on the NQF, which covers 150 hours. It is a semester course. Its prerequisites are successful completion of English for Academic Purposes, exemption from English for Academic Purposes or successful completion of Professional Writing. Professional Communication builds on topics introduced in English for Academic Purposes and enhances students' abilities to interact effectively in professional situations. During the course, students develop their discipline related language and technical skills while studying topics such as meetings management and documentation, argumentation, problem-solving, interpersonal and intercultural skills, professional presentations and interviewing skills (Professional Communication syllabus, 2011).

1.3.3.3.1.5 Professional Writing Course

Professional Writing and Professional Communication are taught simultaneously and they are elective courses. Professional Writing at NQF level 7 and a semester course. Its prerequisite is English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or exemption from EAP. Professional Writing

builds on the business writing skills introduced in English for Academic Purposes. In this course, students develop the advanced language and writing skills necessary for concise and effective business correspondence. Students practice writing letters, proposals, questionnaires, reports and e-mails and undertake other business related writing tasks. The emphasis is on correct format, style, and language usage. The emphasis of this course is mainly on business writing skills. Professional Writing's emphasis is on business writing. Eleven units are covered in this course. For the sake of this study, only those which are relevant to this study, namely, writing and speaking are mentioned.

Unit 2 is an introduction to Academic Writing with reference to the field of study. The writing process for academic writing covers planning, presenting where speaking is involved, organisation, re-writing, proof-reading and editing.

Unit 5 covers Research Writing with reference to the field of study. This unit covers the writing process for research reports, researching and summarising specific information, applying comparing/contrasting and cause/effect organisation to reports, quoting, support, citing evidence and referencing sources in reports and bibliographies. Students are also taught to summarise specific information from a report.

Unit 8 covers Academic Report writing (Course specific). Students are introduced to academic format, apply compare/contrast and cause/effect organisation to reports.

Unit 10 covers Business letters. Students are introduced to the business letter format, letters of enquiry, response letters and business letter terms and phrases.

Unit 11 covers oral presentations with reference to field of study. The students are taught how to listen to presentations and to take notes. They are also introduced to informative presentation structure skills and language, and to speaking and non-verbal presentation skills (Professional Writing syllabus, 2008).

1.3.3.3.2 Syllabi at University B

University B offers three English core courses for undergraduates namely, English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills, and English for Academic Purposes. The university also offers English Access as a bridging course. This course (English Access) prepares students who did not meet the entry requirement to enrol in the three English courses mentioned above, and specifically for the students who obtained an

“E” symbol in English at Ordinary level in Grade 12. Each course’s syllabus is explained in detail below.

1.3.3.3.2.1 English for General Communication Course

The English for General Communication Course (ULEG 2410) is evaluated by the Namibia Qualifications Framework (NQF) as level 4. It is a compulsory one-year course. Its prerequisite is a D symbol in English at Namibia Secondary School Certificate Ordinary level. This course caters for the language needs of students who are enrolled for diploma programmes and those who meet the requirements to enrol for degree courses but have obtained lower than a D symbol in English at secondary school. The course places emphasis on grammar rules and the four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing. The English for General Communication course focuses on skills which students will need throughout their career and beyond and serves as an introduction to university, where styles of teaching and learning differ from those of secondary schools. Upon completion of this course, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of different types of texts, apply effective writing skills and use effective speaking skills in different contexts. The course covers the following: reading, writing, speaking and listening. For the sake of this study, the researcher only looked at the impact of the use of morphemes and syntaxes on students’ writing and speaking skills.

- Writing skills lessons

Students are taught how to identify the purpose of written texts and differentiate kinds of written work such as journals, letters and essays. In addition to these, students are taught to summarise texts.

- Speaking skills lessons

Students are taught different types of conversational skills such as how to talk slowly, to hold eye contact, to notice details, to give compliments, to express emotions and offer interesting insights. The presentation skills such as preparation and planning of the presentation are also taught, which include among others the audience, the introduction of oneself and the subject,

the objectives of the presentation, a chance to give the audience the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, and present a summary of the presentation and conclusions.

The course is facilitated through lectures, seminars, tutorials and oral presentations by students. Learning resources such as study guides, Internet and core reading materials are posted electronically while other methodologies such as via mobile/cell phones, chat rooms, blogs, face book, twitter, CD's and hard copies, especially for distance students are used. Acknowledged experts and professionals in the specific domains may also be invited as learning resources (University B: English for General Communication Syllabus, 2012).

1.3.3.3.2.2 English Communication and Study Skills Course

This is a second year core course offered at University B. According to NQF, the English Communication and Study Skills course is evaluated as level 4, similar to English for General Communication (ULEG 2410). The differences are that English Communication and Study Skills is offered over 160 hours per semester, unlike the English for General Communication which is offered throughout the year.

The English Communication and Study Skills course's prerequisite is a C symbol in English at NSSC Ordinary Level and it is compulsory. The English Communication and Study Skills course aims at introducing students to the practices of academic communities. Students who are faced with the task of studying in a new environment and in a language which may not be their first language or language of instruction benefit from this course. The course focuses on skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening which the students will need throughout their academic career and beyond. Once the students complete this course, they will be able to demonstrate comprehension of different genres, use a dictionary for spelling and pronunciation, and apply effective and written communication skills in different contexts. The course covers the following: reading, writing, speaking and listening, but this study only looked at writing and speaking skills.

In this course students are introduced to the purpose of writing and to the process of genre approach. Yan (2005:20) sees the process of genre approach as an approach that teaches students to determine the importance of correct spelling and punctuation in early drafts of writing, how to treat the different steps in the composition process and how to analyse a text for its context and purpose. During this process, students are also taught to

differentiate between written and spoken language, types of sentences, sentence structure (morphology and syntax), paragraph-writing, cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, paraphrasing, summarising, topic sentences, writing introductions and conclusions, and selecting and synthesising ideas. Syntax is the way of putting words and phrases together to form sentences in a language; this means that a certain order should be learned and followed. Newton, Padak and Rasinski, (2011:1) are of the opinion that a very productive study of words that focuses on meaningful word patterns, and the instruction in morphology awareness on literacy achievement should be developed at an early stage of schooling.

- Speaking skills lessons

The speaking skills in this course are focused on general speaking skills, conversational skills, speaking in group discussions and oral presentations. The course is facilitated through lectures, tutorials, and oral presentations by students. Learning resources such as study guides, Internet and core readings are posted electronically and other methodologies such as via mobile/cell phones, chat rooms, blogs, face book, twitter, CDs and hard copies, especially for distance students are provided. Acknowledged experts and professionals in the specific domains may also be invited as learning resources (University B: English Communication and Study Skills Syllabus, 2013).

1.3.3.3.2.3 English for Academic Purposes Course

The English for Academic Purposes course is Level 5 and covered in 160 hours. The prerequisites are: students should have successfully passed English Communication and Study Skills or obtained a B symbol in English at Ordinary level, or a 4 in English at Higher level in Grade 12. The course is offered over one semester and it is compulsory.

The students are taught paragraph-writing, cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, paraphrasing, summarising, essay-planning, how to write different types of essays, for example presentations of arguments for and against, writing effective introductions, conclusions and writing reports. Speaking is taught through creative thinking where students are taught presentation skills and presentation of arguments for and against.

The English for Academic Purposes course is facilitated through lectures, seminars, tutorials and oral presentations by students. Learning resources such as study guides, Internet and core readings are posted electronically and other methodologies such as via mobile/cell phones, chat rooms, blogs, face book, twitter, CD's and hard copies, especially for distance students are provided. Acknowledged experts and professionals in the specific domains may also be invited as learning resources (English for Academic Purposes syllabus, 2010).

1.3.3.4 Lack of teaching of speaking and writing skills in the undergraduate English courses investigated

The limitation of teaching of oral communication and writing skills is also a barrier that was investigated. The focus here was specifically on lecturers. What was investigated was how lecturers taught oral and writing skills, which enhance students' use of syntax and morphemes in their speaking and writing communication. This issue (lack of teaching of oral communication and writing skills) is being reviewed in detail in Chapter 2.

According to Dunbar, Brooks and Kubicka-Miller (2006:2) the goal of teaching essential skills for college and university students, such as in oral communication, is to prepare students to be more effective employees and responsible citizens and also to help students progress toward graduation with certain skills well developed. Morreale, Rubin and Jones (1998) as cited in Dunbar, et al. (2006:4) identify several communication skills that are vital for students to learn at both basic and advanced levels. For example, the ability to recognise when it is appropriate to speak, to speak clearly and expressively, to present ideas in an organisational pattern that allows others to understand them, to listen attentively, to select and use the most appropriate and effective medium for communication, to structure a message appropriately, to identify others' level of receptivity to a message, to give information and to support it with illustrations and examples.

Therefore, Hughes (op.cit.:209) in Paran (2012:2) points out that 'materials for teaching speaking need to synthesise what can be extracted from the immense variety of spoken discourse types and contexts to form the basis of something that can manageably be presented, taught and assessed. In addition to this Hughes (op.cit. 209) in Paran (2012:3) is of the opinion that the challenge of getting students to interact is re-emerging and points out that speaking is a high-risk activity, which can never be retracted or erased, makingsome

students worry about speaking and losing face. Increasing students' speaking time is therefore bound up with understanding by both student and lecturer of contributions to the quantity and quality of classroom interactions.

As a result, lecturers should focus on their role in encouraging students to speak. In addition to what Hughes (op.cit.:209) in Paran (2012:2) points out, Choudhury (2013) says that during the writing stage, word clouds can be used to brainstorm, providing some relevant vocabulary to trigger writing, in which learners prepare for what they will write. One of the main elements in writing is register, and one aspect of register is the choice of topic vocabulary. Wordling (Wordle is a toy for generating "word clouds" from text that lecturers provide) can provide such a topic vocabulary to improve students' performance in writing. Lecturers can use Wordle to improve their instruction performances. The incorporation of Wordle into the classroom acts as an instructional tool that can help students to use more varied vocabulary in styles which are new to them. Choudhury (ibid) points out that when that using this new mixture of technology and teaching tools in English as a Second Language classes, some techniques are provided. For teaching word order and parts of speech, scrambled questions and sentences are a useful technique. Lecturers can create a series of word clouds using individual questions or sentences. These word clouds can be printed or projected. The students have to unscramble the words. Another use of word clouds is as simple vocabulary exercises where words have to be joined together to form collocations. Lecturers can create a word cloud from a news article and use it to start a conversation. Students may also use visual word clouds to ask about new vocabulary which provides them with input. Before engaging students in speaking, by Wordling key words, lecturers can increase the vocabulary knowledge of students about the conversation. For teaching writing, brainstorming is one of the key techniques. Students can use word clouds to generate ideas for new writing topics and/or themes.

Weigle, (2002: 15) in Choudhury (2013) argues that, educational researchers have generally held that written language should be more valued because it is more "correct" than the spoken form. In contemporary English language pedagogy, written language and spoken language are reconciled, giving primacy to neither but accepting the difference between the two. For one thing, speech takes place in context, which often makes references clear. Writing, however, creates its own context and therefore has to be fully explicit.

In addition to this, Hughes (op.cit.: 209) in Paran (2012:3) states that students need to be taught to dig deep in order to find the right words to form proper sentences (grammar), use the proper words and the correct spelling. Written communication also helps students with speaking and therefore verbal communication becomes stronger and clearer as they search for words to use.

- Oral communication skills

Oral communication is through the mouth. It entails individuals conversing with each other, be it through face-to-face or telephonic conversation. Some other forms of oral communication are speeches, presentations and discussions.

Kayi (2006) points out that, linguists agree that people learn to speak a second language by “interacting” through communicative and collaborative learning. Communicative learning is based on real life situations that require communication. When this method is used, students will have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the targeted language and collaborative learning.

Kayi (ibid) identifies materials which can promote speaking such as discussion; for example, after a content-based lesson, a discussion can be held to arrive at a conclusion. This type of activity fosters critical thinking and quick decision-making and students learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with others. Bygate (2001) in Kaplan (2010) concurs with Kayi (ibid) on activities to use when teaching oral communication, such as question surveys where students each receive a different question and conduct a survey of their classmates, a weekly talk show where three or four students in a class answer questions from the class on a particular topic, pair work/dialogue, group work, discussion and debate. In all these activities, lecturers are urged to also encourage students while in class or group discussions to ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support and check for clarification.

In addition to that, Bygate (ibid) points out that lecturers’ approach in the classroom such as observation and discussion, relating to the students during a lesson, smiling, moving around, and maintaining eye contact and participant’s interest can motivate students to communicate in English. Bygate (ibid) advises that students should be encouraged to routinely communicate in English inside and outside the classroom. Students should also be urged to

use English most of the time in every core class or other classes they attend. According to Bygate (ibid), when hearing, speaking, reading and writing “real English”, students will manage in almost any English language situation they meet outside and inside the classroom.

Narayanan, Rajasekaran and Iyyappan (2008:485) conducted a project analysis on first year Engineering and Technology students on some factors affecting English learning at tertiary level. Although the project analysis did not focus on oral and writing communication skills as is the focus of this study, the impact of learning English as a second language has also to be considered because it can contribute to the richness of this study (research).

The aim of the research was to study some factors in relation to the learning of English as a second language. Narayanan, et al.’s research (2008:485) focused on factors such as anxiety and motivation. Cope and Horwitz as cited in Narayanan, et al. (2008:485) describe anxiety as “the subject feeling tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry” associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system. Gardner (1985) in Narayanan, et al. (2008:285) refer to motivation as “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction in this activity” such as positive task orientation, ego-involvement, need for achievement and so on. Narayanan, et al. (2008:485-486) point out that successful second language learning entails a complete participation of the learner and argued that learning a second language as a total physical, intellectual and emotional involvement is needed to successfully send and interpret linguistic messages.

Cope and Horwitz in Narayanan, et al. (2008:486) define second language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviour related to using second language for communication beyond the language classroom”. One cannot agree more because students’ emotions are involved. Firstly, students try to overcome their shyness by attributing their successful outcomes to themselves and their behaviour. Secondly, second language students are embarrassed to make mistakes and be laughed at. As a result, the students’ language (English) development suffers, which contributes to poor language usage. Cope and Horwitz (2008) in Narayanan et al. (2008:491) point out that pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary are the criteria that influence the way of learning a second language, and that they affect language anxiety as well.

Cope and Horwitz in Narayanan, et al. (2008:491) also look at the interactions between teacher/lecturers and students, which according to them involve such questions as, how does the teacher correct the students? How much discomfort does the learner/student experience when he or she is wrong? How 'foolish' does the learner feel when he or she does not succeed? When a student is faced with these kinds of feelings, such a student will not be able to produce any good results.

- Writing skills

Wang (2012:1) suggests teaching practice in "Practical English Writing" in higher colleges in improving students' ability regarding practical writing through analysing present curricular status, particularly of writing courses. The syllabi from the two institutions do not include a "course on practical writing". Therefore, this researcher is of the opinion that the two institutions being studied would benefit greatly from Wang's ideas. Wang (ibid) believes that the ability to write is a must in modern society and gives an example of world famous universities which have listed writing classes and analytical reasoning classes to teach practical writing mainly as part of the 'core curriculum' rather than the compulsory curriculum. Wang (2012:1) also claims that in China, writing ability is considered as one of the essential measures in justifying one's qualification on various occasions such as in the national civil service exam, the recruitment of leaders and members in public institutions and in private enterprises, and the talent market. Wang's claims are similar to the aims and objectives of English offered at the two institutions that were studied in this research. Wang (2012:2) suggests that the emphasis of the teaching materials for practical writing be put on analysing various cases during practical application and in individual guidance. For these, Wang (ibid) comes up with the following suggestions to improve students' ability in writing skills:

- A scientific teaching plan that can stimulate students' interest and motivation needs to be designed;
- The boundaries of traditional teaching methods need to be broken and a learning atmosphere with enthusiasm should be created; and
- New teaching methods such as task-driven and project-oriented theories should be introduced and the emphasis should be put on student-oriented ideas.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Piaget (n.d) in Kendra (2012)'s philosophy of the cognitive constructivist classroom as "a formal operational stage" which begins at about the age of 11 - 15 and continues into adulthood. The students at these institutions were considered as young adults. During this stage, a person demonstrates the ability to critically analyse situations taking into consideration reasoning and arguments. Piaget (ibid) in Kendra (ibid) offers a constructivist view of the learning environment of the students. The above author considers the activities and approaches between lecturers (in this case) and student interaction where the ability to think in more abstract terms is applied. Studies by Wolfaardt (2001) and Frans (2007 & 2009) reveal that the cognitive language skills of learners in schools were low. For example, incorrect syntaxes affected learners' ability to express themselves clearly and adequately when writing and speaking. If the cognitive language skills of students at these institutions are not well developed, their speaking and writing skills suffer. This theoretical framework looked at activities in the syllabi and classrooms, and approaches to teaching these skills because cognition and language in second language learning create each other, where the remembering of utterance and episodes takes place. Also, whether the activities in syllabi were set in a way that allowed students to think in more abstract terms in a second language learning environment, using the given activities in the study guide in the classroom situation. Cognitive learning specifies the interface of grammatical factors which can be used to communicate effect in producing utterances, with other aspects of conceptual structure Piaget (n.d) in Kendra (2012). Piaget's philosophy (formal operational stage) is described fully in Chapter 2. Similarly, English oral communication includes the ability to explain and present ideas in clear English using appropriate styles and approaches. If there is lack of teaching of speaking skills in classes and if the lecturers do not design speaking activities for students to practice in class, then students will not have confidence in speaking situations.

Therefore, the lecturer should help students build confidence in their speaking abilities by encouraging them to think about preparing for speaking in different situations because some of them might have communication anxiety. For example, lecturers should design speaking activities (such as group discussions, debates, pair work and so on) to help students to have confidence in what they are saying. This way, students are given opportunities to practice formal speaking.

1.5 Conceptual framework

Two issues were explored: syllabi and lack of teaching of oral and writing skills (how students use syntax and morphology) in their writing and speaking. The syllabus was measured using the following aspects and whether these aspects, namely, aims, objectives, content, instructional methods, and specific methods for certain activities in oral and writing skills (syntax and morphology) enhanced students' English proficiency.

Lack of teaching of oral and written skills was explored. This was measured by explaining the way lecturers taught oral and written skills, and how students used syntax and morphemes in their speaking and written skills especially regarding subject and verb agreement, possessive case, progressive form, active and passive form, auxiliary verbs and punctuation.

1.6 Problem statement

When Namibia became independent in 1990, the education system changed from the Cape Education system to the Cambridge Education system. Since then, there has been an outcry about the poor results of Grade 12 learners in general, because some of them (learners) do not make it to tertiary level (Media, NBC Television and The Ministry of Education 2010). Some of those that complete secondary education lack a competent command of the English language which is a prerequisite for entry into tertiary education. While some teachers who are themselves incompetent in written and often spoken English teach English and other subjects at school and tertiary level, learners and students will never become competent, as a language is a living thing which needs to be correctly practised every day for it to become embedded in the mind of the user.

The learners and students in Namibian schools and tertiary institutions seldom hear correctly spoken English (including on TV) from which they could absorb correct English usage thus there is no possibility of teaching them correct usage when they have been brainwashed in incorrect usage for 12 years while at school (Media, NBC Television and The Ministry of Education 2010). It is therefore clear that most students who complete their studies at tertiary level will not have been proficient in English language usage. This implies that these students will have barriers that they must first overcome before they can have a positive influence as future teachers. The conclusion drawn by Wolfaardt (2001:243) and

Frans (2007 & 2009) that English is a stumbling block to learners' performance in different subjects in schools leads one to believe that a lack of understanding of English has an impact on students' academically performance at tertiary level. Against this background, this study seeks to answer the following question:

What are the barriers preventing undergraduate students (in all undergraduate English courses) from improving their oral and written skills in English?

To understand the teaching and learning processes of oral and written communication skills, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- How will students be able to improve their proficiency in English oral and writing skills through this research?
- Do the syllabi meet the criteria for language (English) teaching and learning?
- How can a lack of teaching of oral and writing skills in English as a second language affect students?

1.7 Aims and objectives of the study

Central to the research problem, the general aims of this study were to analyse the content in the English syllabi and understand what syllabi emphasise in providing students with advanced oral and written skills in English in all contexts of life, and to describe the experiences of lecturers teaching these skills and the experience of students learning oral and writing skills. This study, therefore, only looked into issues of English oral and written work because of their basic importance to writing and speaking.

Both lecturers and students alike, for example, may have several barriers to overcome when teaching and learning English and specifically oral and written work, regarding teaching methodologies and learning strategies or the lack thereof. Overcoming these barriers investigated in this study may improve students' oral and writing skills. The aim of the research is to establish specific barriers preventing undergraduate students from improving their oral and written skills in English second language. To ascertain the barriers preventing undergraduate students from improving their oral and written skills in all English undergraduate studies, the objectives of this research are therefore:

- To determine in what way teaching and learning processes at two institutions affect students who are learning oral and writing skills in English as a second language;
- To establish how students who learn English as a second language can improve their oral and writing proficiency; and
- To determine whether the syllabi of the two institutions meet the criteria for teaching oral and writing skills in English as second language.

Kirkpatrick and Chau (ibid) mention that a move to internationalise higher education has encouraged the use of English as a common medium of instruction in many countries worldwide. In addition, it is used in education and as an official language as it is the case in Namibia, and also used in business and aviation. In this regard, Namibia has also embraced English. Most of the educational programmes such as research, instructor guidelines, reading materials and programmes that are meant to support and educate students are written in English. The rationale behind this is that students would be expected to exhibit proficiency in English in the work place after they graduate.

1.8 Research Design

Kothari (2004:31) describes a research design as the arrangement of conditions for collecting and analysing data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose. This study investigates the barriers (syllabi, lack of teaching of oral and writing skills inter alia, morphemes and syntax) to students' learning of Oral and writing in English as second language at two higher learning institutions, namely, University A and University B in Namibia.

Data was collected from the syllabi, lecturers teaching the courses, students studying the courses and students' written work at the institutions being studied. According to Kothari (2004: 31), there are two types of data, namely primary and secondary data. This study is concerned with primary data which was collected for the first time and was original. The non- probability sampling which was used included people who had knowledge of the topic of this study. Questionnaires, interview questions, class observations and analysis of documents (students' written work and syllabi) were the techniques used to collect data.

There are two types of questionnaires with different questions, one for students and one for lecturers. The two questionnaires are separately analysed. Data from the written documents are analysed using content analysis. Semi-structured interview questions are analysed one by one.

1.9 Research Approach

The research took place within the interpretive paradigm where the researcher sought to understand the phenomenon and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting (Schumacher and McMillan, 2010:321-322). To understand and interpret social situations, the researcher interacted with people in such situations, listening to them and trying to make sense of their perceptions and experiences (Schumacher and McMillan, 2010:322). The interpretive paradigm allowed this researcher to investigate how students were involved in learning oral and writing skills in English as a second language and how lecturers supported them in this regard.

1.10 Sampling and Delimitation of the study

Using purposive sampling, Oliver and Jupp (2006) believe that some types of research design necessitate researchers taking a decision about the individual participants who would be most likely to contribute appropriate data, both in terms of relevance and depth. In this sense, purposive sampling was used because the Heads of Department, Course Coordinators, lecturers and students would be the best participants to contribute appropriate data.

The study was limited to three Heads of Department that is Languages, Communication and Language Centre, eight syllabi, Course Coordinators, sixteen lecturers teaching these syllabi, and forty students who study these syllabi in the English field. Also, the study only included two universities. The study did not include all the subjects taught in English.

The students were selected on the basis that they were learning oral and writing skills in English second language. Students were also specifically selected for the questionnaire to identify the difficulties they faced in learning oral and writing skills in English as a Second

Language. The lecturers, Course Coordinators and Heads of Department were selected because they were the ones teaching the students. The researcher tried to obtain information from lecturers, Course Coordinators and Heads of Department as to how English affected their teaching of oral and written communication skills.

1.11 Limitations of the study

Initially there were few limitations in this study that could have had any influence on the external and internal validity of this study. Some limitations that are worth mentioning are *inter alia* the:

- Time factor. It was sometimes difficult to attend certain lecturing sessions, bearing in mind examinations, tests, assignment marking and class schedules.
- Inability to assess some information such as memorandums of oral and written assessments of some lecturers, who were afraid of exposing own shortcomings.
- Finances to drive to and from the institutions.

However, these limitations, such as the time factor and financial issue were overcome by careful planning and personal visits to those lecturers whose classes were initially missed. Furthermore, after winning the trust of some lecturers the most important documents were assessed and the necessary data could be gathered.

In addition, several other limitations were experienced. Firstly, two lecturers refused to allow the researcher to observe their classes. Secondly, the feedback regarding questionnaires from the participants was relatively poor, as some questions were poorly answered. Furthermore, some questionnaires were not returned by students. To overcome these shortcomings the researcher did some follow-up by visiting the students and the same lecturers, and made some oral inquiries regarding their questionnaires. Some in-depth information emerged. The researcher has a full time job, at times when the researcher was free to conduct the research some participants had other commitments. Lastly, some lecturers were unwilling to be interviewed and those who were interviewed did not provide as much information as anticipated. All of this could, therefore, have hindered the collection of information and was carefully taken into consideration during the course of the study. Despite these challenges, the researcher was still able to research and meet required criteria to make this study

effective. In the end these limitations did not have any serious effect on the outcomes and results (validity) of the study.

1.12 Summary

This chapter described the introduction to the problem, background to the problem being investigated, undergraduate courses offered at the institutions, problem formulation and the research questions, aims and objectives, preliminary literature review, rationale of the study, research sites, research approaches, research design, conceptual framework, delimitation and limitation of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the study. It also summarised the language policy in independent Namibia and how it was meant to be phased into schools. The chapter showed that language problems have been persistent at least since 1990. The Grade 10 and 12 English results set out in this chapter showed clearly how learners perform in English and indicated that tertiary education inherits language problems from secondary schools. Serious attention should be given, by all role players, to the barriers identified by this study that might prevent both students and learners in schools from improving their English proficiency. Studies, research and interventions have been undertaken to alleviate the problems.

The contribution of this study lies in the fact that it points out certain shortcomings in the teaching of English oral and writing skills as a second language to students in two higher institutions in Namibia. Secondly, an intervention programme is proposed that could be a solution to the problem investigated in this study (see chapter 5). Lastly, recommendations are made (see chapter 5) on how to overcome these barriers so that English could be taught more effectively and all stakeholders could benefit from it. This could ultimately lead to better trained teachers and lecturers and eventually to a better workforce of students in Namibia.

The following chapter (chapter 2) discusses different research done on various factors that prevent students from writing and speaking English as a second language well. The chapter also discusses some interventions to the problem being investigated in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review on the identified barriers investigated in this study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter illuminates the research problem and brings the research in line with local and international trends. The literature provides inter alia frameworks based on cognitive development theory. Piaget (n.d) constructs his idea (the cognitive constructivist classroom - stage 4 formal operational) from this theory (cognitive development). According to Piaget (n.d), the cognitive constructivist classroom can be applied at both school (micro level) and tertiary level (macro level). Micro level in this study refers to schools (small scale). Macro level refers to tertiary institutions (larger scale) because the universities that were studied strove to enable students to acquire knowledge and develop the skills of applying that knowledge to practical settings for careers or professions. In Piaget's view, micro level is still part of the cognitive constructivist classroom but does not continue into adulthood (macro level-cognitive constructivist classroom). The cognitive constructivist classroom - stage 4 formal operational - is used or continues into adulthood. This study was not interested in micro level learning but concentrated on macro level. Piaget looks at cognitive constructivist classroom (stage 4 formal operational) where it begins especially with the term "adulthood". The schools (micro level) fail to consider the larger forces that would influence individual students (adult) at tertiary level (macro level) where students would show their language competencies in their working environments. Wolfaardt (2001) and Frans (2007 & 2009) reveal that the cognitive language skills of learners in school were low for example, lack of syntaxes affected learners' ability to express themselves clearly and adequately in English. If the cognitive language skills of students at these institutions are not well developed at school level, it will cause problems to their speaking and writing skills later in life. Additionally, this section reviews the literature pertaining to the identified barriers (lack of teaching of oral and writing skills inter alia morphology and syntax, and the syllabi or curriculum) to learning English as a second language. The definitions of the identified barriers are provided in order to get a clearer picture of what they (curriculum, lack of application of teaching skills in oral and written skills, morphemes and syntaxes) entail when compared with the literature on the topic.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework is described as a supporting structure around which something can be built or ideas which are suggested to explain something (The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995). There are different types of theoretical frameworks, depending on the researcher's goals and purposes. The theoretical framework which was applied to guide this research in order to analyse data was based on Piaget's idea (n.d) in Kendra (2012), the cognitive constructivist classroom - stage 4 formal operational. Piaget (n.d) divides a constructivist view on the learning environment of the students into four stages namely:

- stage 1 sensorimotor
- stage 2 pre-operational
- stage 3 concrete operational
- stage 4 formal operational

The formal operational stage has been applied for this study. According to Piaget (ibid), the formal operational stage occurs between the ages of 11-15 and continues into adulthood. During this stage, individuals move beyond concrete experience and begin to think in abstract terms. Also, at this stage, individuals understand the world through hypothetical thinking and scientific reasoning. The formal operational stage is also marked by the realisation of consequences of actions, which means a student has to realise that consequences are a result of not following instructions. Piaget considers the activities employed in the classroom and teaching methods by lecturers, and the interaction between lecturers and students. Piaget believes that a constructivist classroom must provide a variety of activities (that involve critical thinking) to challenge students, increase their readiness to learn, discover new ideas and generate their own knowledge.

In this research, the researcher wanted to understand why students' English writing and speaking skills were poor at the two institutions that were studied. Were they not provided with a variety of activities that could enhance their language proficiency as Piaget proposed? To explore this question the researcher observed classes in action (activities and interactions between students and lecturers), studied and analysed the syllabi and interviewed the students and lecturers involved.

For the purpose of this research and in the context of Namibia, this research considered the learning and teaching of oral and written skills in English as a second language which could also enrich this research. Although this was not fully within the scope of this study and was not researched, it was worthy of discussion because it was beneficial to this study. Firstly, the meaning of a language must be defined. A general meaning of a language is a “mode of communication” and according to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2010) it is “a system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people.” Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003:379) suggest that many linguists who study second language (L2) learning believe that “second language learning is something different from first language acquisition in that L2 learning depends on the following aspects: age, talent, motivation, curriculum, instruction and whether you are in a country where the language is spoken or sitting in a classroom five mornings a week with no further contact with native speakers.” Fromkin, et al. (ibid) further argue that the most critical stage for L2 learning is age. The younger a person is when exposed to a second language the more he/she is able to achieve native-like competence. In addition, a language is something that all humans learn in the first few years of life. The knowledge acquired is of an unconscious kind where at a very young age, children learn how to create particular grammatical structures such as relative clauses.

The effects of age in L2 learning were tested by linguists Johnson and Newport (1989) in Fromkin, et al. (2003: 383) on Chinese and Korean speakers who had acquired English as a second language as adults. The subjects were asked to judge the grammatical correctness of sentences such as:

- The little boy is speak to a policeman.
- The farmer bought two pig.

Jonson and Newport (ibid) in Fromkin et al. (ibid) found that the results depended heavily on the age at which the person had arrived in the USA. In the Namibian context, students at the institutions have been studying English from a young age but their English proficiency is still poor. Are the students at these institutions not talented or motivated enough to learn English?

2.3 The theory of English as a Second Language

Fromkin et al. (2003:384) suggest that the ideal second language teaching methods include:

- Audio-lingual language teaching: imitation, repetition and reinforcement;
- Motivation on the part of the student;
- Intensive and extensive exposure;
- Native or near native-speaking teachers who can serve as models; and
- Instruction and instructional materials that are based on linguistic analysis of all aspects of the language.

Ellis and Robinson (2008:3) say that Cognitive Linguistics (CL) is about language, communication and cognition. All these concepts are inextricable. Ellis and Robinson (ibid) argue that language is used to organise, process, and convey information from one person to another person. In addition, learning a language involves the full scope of cognition such as “the remembering of utterances and episodes, the categorization of experience, the determination of patterns among and between stimuli, the generalization of conceptual schema and prototypes from exemplars, and the use of cognitive models, of metaphors, analogies, and image in thinking” (Ellis & Robinson, 2008:3).

Although it is decades ago, Hartshorne (1987) in Young (1987) looks at language itself as a repository and means of articulation of values, prejudices, traditions, past achievement and history. According to him, it is the distinguishing characteristics of human beings and what makes people see themselves as different which is related to issues of identity, position and power. Weiten (2007) defines a language as consisting of symbols which convey meaning (such as semantics, pragmatics, messages conveyed by words, sentences and symbols in the context), plus rules for combining those symbols to be used in generating an infinite variety of messages. Goldstein (2008) concurs with Weiten (2007) and defines language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that enables us (people) to express feelings, thoughts, ideas and expressions. There are two types of language, namely, the mother tongue and another language which is “second, third (or even fourth) language, all are languages and have to be learnt.

2.4 The Theory of Curriculum

In formal education, there are two concepts which describe what a student has to learn: curriculum and syllabus. “Curriculum is, perhaps, best thought of as planned activities which are designed to implement a particular educational aim or set of such aims in terms of the content of what is to be taught and the knowledge, skills and attitudes which are to be deliberately fostered together with statements of criteria for selection of content, and choices in methods, materials and evaluation” (National Focus Group on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbook, 2008). According to the National Focus Group on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbook (ibid), a teacher has a textbook which becomes an embodiment of a syllabus and its content has to be taught, and that is all that is to be taught. It becomes a methodological guide which has to be read and substantial portions memorised through repeated reading. It also becomes the evaluation system that at the end of each chapter, what has been learned has to be evaluated and answered orally and in writing, reproducing the text from the book itself. Here the textbook is an embodiment of the syllabus and of all aspects of classroom practice. Young (1987) describes curriculum from the educational point of view by stating that all educational institutions assert and assume that they have knowledge which others are entitled to have access to, and they employ people (teachers/ lecturers) who are specialists in making this knowledge available, with varying degrees of success. Young (1987) argues that “if you want to acquire specialist knowledge, you may start with a book or the Internet, but if you are serious, you will go to an institution with a curriculum that includes what you want to learn and teachers who know how to teach it”.

Young (1987) further argues that a major task of curriculum theory is to identify the constraints such as epistemological understanding regarding curriculum if it is to enable students to access useful knowledge. Curricula are also determined by external constraints such as political questions that limit curriculum choices and the pedagogic implications. For example, the government through the Ministry of Education can influence the curriculum (what is to be taught and how to teach it).

The curriculum theorist, Schwab (2009:343-259) defines the following conception of curriculum that: “curriculum is what is successfully conveyed to students, by committed teachers using appropriate materials and actions, of legitimated bodies of knowledge, skill,

taste, and propensity to act and react, which are chosen for instruction after serious reflection and communal decision by representatives of those involved in the teaching of a specified group of students who are known to the decision makers”.

Lanfranco (2006) defines syllabus as an outline of specific programmes prepared by the instructor, which includes the topics to be covered, their order, the required and suggested reading materials and any other relevant information. In view of Lanfranco’s definition, one can safely say a syllabus describes what a student is expected to know and do in class, and will be able to demonstrate at the end of the learning activity, and lists what will be taught and tested. For example, the Language in Practice syllabus lists four units (grammar, critical reading, summary writing and essay writing) that will be taught. Every unit has learning objectives and outcomes, and different types of activities for students to demonstrate what they learn. At the end of every unit, students are expected to write a test based on the content of that unit. In this study each syllabus was analysed in combination with its study guide.

2.5 Previous Empirical Investigation

Frans’s (2007 & 2009) studies on the institutionalization of language policy and the impact of a language policy (English second language) done at school level revealed that learners’ poor performance was mainly attributed to the over-hasty implementation of the language policy. Teachers were expected to implement the language policy while they were not ready in terms of language training. The researcher also got the impression from both studies that teachers were not comfortable teaching in English while being observed. Also, their language proficiency was not up to standard. A lack of a varied vocabulary was noticed, while the flow of speech was a further issue. Teachers tried to maintain a good picture of being proficient in English but one could see that teachers needed an English course to improve their English proficiency. This study investigated what might be the determining factors contributing to students’ oral and writing skills at Universities A and B.

The Namibian language policy stipulates that learners in schools should be taught through the “communicative approach” where teachers talk less and leave everything to the learners to discover their own learning (Piaget, *ibid*), teachers do not correct learners’ errors directly and learning activities involve practice. Is this an ideal approach to teaching a second language? The structural teaching approach is a part of the communicative approach which can also be

employed by teachers or lecturers to teach a second language. The focus of language teaching in the structural approach is on speech (Mareva & Nyota, 2012). Shastri (2013:38) explains that the structural approach is based on the systematic presentation of grammatical construction following the principle of simple to complex. Drilling and repetitions are the main techniques for learning of structures, sounds, and words. Grammar rules are not explained but the learners infer the rules from the use of structures. This approach is similar to the communicative approach where learners use discovery concepts for their own learning. The communicative approach has been employed in the Namibian schools but created problems with regard to learners and students' English proficiency. The Namibian language policy does not emphasise the structural approach. The communicative approach is discussed in detail in this chapter on page 69.

2.5.1 Previous research done in Namibia

Some research took place in Namibia at school level which only focused on writing skills and not on oral skills. Nghikembua (2013) researched the relevance and effectiveness of the University of Namibia's teachers' Teaching Methods of English module to the Grade 11 and 12 English second language Ordinary and Higher level syllabi. The research focus was on writing skills. The main findings from the study show that the relationship between the Teaching Methods of English Module of the University of Namibia and the Grade 11 and 12 English Second Language Ordinary and Higher Level Syllabi is inconclusive as content in the university module is 'concealed'. Nghikembua (2013) finds that the syllabi need to spell out some of the key aspects regarding the teaching of writing skills. Student teachers demonstrated that they could teach most of the writing tasks featuring in the school syllabi, but their lesson presentations lacked chronology, rich teaching-learning aids and methods, practical writing activities and awareness of process-writing stages in the lessons. On the other hand, the learners' own writing proficiency presented a mixture of originality, correct structure and style, while simultaneously, language errors continued to persist.

Kapolo (2013) investigated writing errors made by Grade 11 learners in English and found that most of the Grade 11 learners were not performing well in ESL. Kapolo (2010) found learners mostly make errors in the following aspects: tenses, words omitted, singular and plural form, spelling, punctuation, choice of words, misunderstanding of topics, paragraphing and subject agreement, which obstruct their chances of pursuing further studies at institutions

of higher learning as well as getting jobs after they complete Grade 12. It is seen here that neither of Kapolo's researches focused on students' writing and oral skills at tertiary level as did this research.

2.6 Barriers to learning a second language

There are numerous barriers to learning a second language, for example, environment (such as poverty, socio-linguistic, underdevelopment, place and attitudes towards learning), age, motivation, phonetics and semantic concepts, general exposure to English, poor foundation skills/early English exposure and cognitive academic writing, which were not within the scope of this study. Another important aspect that can also be considered as a barrier to learning a second language is "mother tongue", which affects second language learning negatively. By negatively, Krashen (2004:4) means a second language learner may transfer what he/she wants to say from the mother tongue to the second language especially in grammar, which does not always have the same meaning in one's mother tongue and the target second language. As a result, the meaning is lost or distorted. Secondly, we live in a multi-lingual society where different mother tongues are spoken. The question is: how possible would it be to create schools that cater for all the different mother tongues found in a specific society? A multi-lingual society like Namibia is very complicated in terms of mother tongue in schools because one has to think of the number of learners speaking the same mother tongue.

2.6.1 Lack of teaching of oral and writing skills in English

As stated earlier one of the barriers to learning English as a Second Language is a lack of teaching of oral and writing skills. This refers to how lecturers teach oral and writing skills in their classrooms.

This study considered different ways suggested by scholars such as Kayi (2006), Wu and Liang (2007), Hamad (2013), Colorado (2008), Wang (2012), Wright (2011) and several others on how to teach oral and writing skills in English.

Experts such as Fromkin, Rodman, Hymas (2003) and Jonson and Newport in Fromkin et al. (2003) agree that the ideal method for adults learning English as a Second Language depends

on the individual. This study did not assess students who have just started learning English at tertiary level, but who have been taught and learned English from primary to tertiary level. These students are considered adults. Storch (2008) in her introduction, points out that a common teaching strategy in the language classroom is to assign students to work on a task in pairs or small groups. This is a method often used by language lecturers. Storch (ibid) argues that research on groups/pairs has shown that such classroom organisation promotes speaking practice and negotiation of meaning. However, most of the studies on pair work to date have focused on factors affecting the quantity of certain types of negotiation moves. Very few studies have investigated the nature of group or pair interactions; that is, whether they are collaborative or not. Moreover, very few studies have utilised tasks which require students to produce a written text in pairs. Storch (ibid)'s study investigated the performance of three pairs of adult L2 students on a writing task assigned in class. Other sources of data included the researcher's observation notes and the written text the pairs produced. Data analysed for salient features of student interactions and characteristics of collaborative pair work were identified. Results showed that students working in pairs might not necessarily work in a collaborative manner, but where they do collaborate this might have an effect on task performance, specifically the duties essential to every student at the task performance site.

Davidson (2012) talks of "motivation", which according to him is a key part of learning a language. Davidson (2012) argues that the more time one spends during the day speaking his or her second language, the better at it she or he is going to be. On the other hand, Bibi, Bilal, Nawaz, Rehman & Sheikh (2014) define motivation as an aspect that is considered as an integral part in the achievement of any goal, a process that influences the success of second language learning. According to Bibi et al. (ibid) motivation is an important factor that has a positive influence in any educational learning process especially in learning a second language.

In addition, Dörnyei, MacIntyre and Henry (2015) believe that motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the second language and later becomes the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Dörnyei et al (ibid) argue that without motivation even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long term goals. In the Namibian context, students have been learning English from primary school, but up to tertiary level their English proficiency remains poor. It might be that they were not

motivated to learn English. Davidson (2012) suggests the following methods to learn a second language that can motivate students to learn English.

- Classroom based lessons

El Essawi (2013) speaks of classroom textbook where language activities are written to learn a second language. For example students can be given an activity such as “discussing frustration” and through this, a reward system can be developed such as making up a box with a number of gifts to be awarded to the best speaker, or for the learner judged to be improving or for the learner who is not afraid of making errors. Davidson (2012) is of the opinion that depending on an individual's learning style, one might enjoy a traditional class environment which provides consistent interaction with an instructor and can be helpful for students who may seek out extra guidance from class materials. In addition, Davidson (2012) says that classroom-based learning provides students with the opportunity to form peer groups with other students to study and work with. In this way, students learn from each other through interaction with each other.

- Audio lessons for listening activities

Davidson (2012) also identifies audio lessons and mentions that they are rather old-fashioned, and a lot of students find it hard to gain a real grasp of a language through this method alone. However, good online courses that teach English as a second language may involve audio lessons to give students a better idea of pronunciation and dialect. Audio lessons are commonly used to supplement a curriculum. According to Grocer (2010:131) listening, speaking, reading and writings skills must be taught together when teaching learners to use the language as a communication tool. Grocer (ibid) suggests that visual and auditory tools make the teaching more effective in second language teaching. They (visual and auditory) attract the attention of the students to the lesson; create dialogue environments for the students to use the learned language more effectively; and assist in forming the natural environment in the classroom.

Grocer (ibid) further argues that in order for the class learning to become permanent, the examples must be drawn from daily life and students must be given the opportunity to use what they learned.

- Instructional books

According to Davidson (2012), books are also typically used as supplementary resources for more involved curricula. However, for self-motivated learners, Davidson (2012) argues that instructional books may be just the ticket to learning the English language at a pace that is comfortable for them, without having the constraints and obligations encountered when technology is involved in online learning forums.

- DVD's as a learning tools

Chinnery (2006) points out that as technologies continue to evolve, so does their propensity to shrink in size. Chinnery (2006) argues that DVD players hold the capacity for language learning. Davidson (2012) concurs with Chinner (ibid) and finds DVDs to be very popular learning tools. Davidson (ibid) says that DVD-learning programmes could be very successful if followed correctly and consistently. A self-motivated student might appreciate the flexibility and freedom that comes from working with a DVD- learning tool. However, the inability to gain feedback from peers and instructors may be frustrating to a user if they are struggling with course material or cannot move forward with the programme. A DVD-learning tool could be perfect for a student that already has a fundamental knowledge of the course material, but is in need of a refresher course.

- Cell Phones as a learning tool

Chinnery (2006) mentions that cellphones are also a learning tool. By that Chinnery (ibid) says that common features of these devices now include Internet access, voice-messaging, SMS text- messaging, cameras, and even video-recording. In language learning, all of these features enable communicative language practice, access to authentic content, and task completion.

- Online learning tools

The last method Davidson (ibid) suggests is 'online learning tools', which according to him have proved to be very successful and well-received by both students and instructors. With

flexibility and convenience, he thinks this learning method might work well for a student who is unable to commit to a classroom schedule, but works well in groups and individually. AbuSileek (2014) says that several types of software have been used in computer-assisted English language learning especially in e-products such as drills and practical tutorials, simulations and games, problem-solving and data bases.

Since English competence is still a challenge for most of the students at tertiary level in Namibia, Information Communication Technology can also be used. According to Rathnasena, Dodantenna, Jaykody and Hettiaratchy (2013), Information Communication Technology can be used to lessen the barriers to learning L2. Students can focus on the content at different levels – word, sentence and text level. Also the development of writing can be enhanced through simulations, emails, fax, and Internet and so on. Students can form links between writer and audience; in this way they will be able to adapt the presentation of their writing to meet the needs of different audiences. Items such as CDs, satellite TV programmes, DVDs and videos can be used for practical speaking. This kind of practice reinforces students' autonomy, which ultimately leads the students to become confident and competent users of English, thus proving the effectiveness of integrating ICT into the learning environment of the ESL classroom. Furthermore, AbuSileek (2014) mentions that word-processing is also used for editing texts, and checking and correcting writing errors but there are a number of pre-conditions and pre-requisites which have to be present in the educational situation when the word processor is used for teaching especially writing such as:

- the availability of suitable software and compatible hardware
- the qualified instructional staff that are able to use instructional software properly
- students' willingness and minimal skills in using computers.

The use of software was not investigated in this study but it is worth mentioning since some scholars feel it is one of the methods to use in learning a language. Although students could be willing to use computers, the conditions above could also be a challenge to the institutions.

The study sought to find out whether these methods suggested by Davidson (2012) and other scholars, and learning and communication strategies suggested by Canale and Swain in Shaver (2010) were being used or were included in the syllabi at the two institutions under investigation.

2.6.1.1 Oral communication skills

Oral communication implies communication by mouth. It includes conversing with others, be it in direct conversation or telephone conversation. Speeches, presentations and discussions are all forms of oral communication. Brown (2007) defines speaking as the productive process of turning thoughts into meaningful language. The meaningful language construction is, therefore, the main purpose of the interactive phenomenon, which involves first receiving and processing pieces of information and then producing a reactive response to the received information and properly forming that response according to the context in which communication takes place. Kayi (2006) observes that speaking is very important but teaching speaking has been undervalued for many years and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues.

Kayi (2006) however argues that, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way can students express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriately in each communicative situation. In order to teach second language learners how to speak in the best way possible, some speaking activities are provided below, that can be applied to L2 classroom settings, together with suggestions for teachers/lecturers who teach oral language. This study looks at different ways and activities suggested by scholars on how to teach oral and writing skills in English.

To break the barriers to oral communication, Kayi (2006) advises lecturers to use "interacting" to teach speaking to English Second Language students. This includes communicative language teaching and collaborative learning. In addition to this, Hui (2011) is of the opinion that lecturers should reduce their speaking time in class while increasing students' speaking time so that collaborative learning takes place.

Lecturers should step back and observe. Kayi (2006) further argues that communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations such as authentic activities and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. By using this method in L2 classes, students are given the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language.

Communicative language teaching can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task. Kayi (ibid) also suggests activities that can promote speaking in L2 such as discussion, role play, simulations, information gaps, brainstorming, storytelling/completion, reporting, finding the difference, picture describing and picture narrating.

Here are some problem areas and interventions in speaking skills identified by Speaking of Language (2007) which can be used to break the barriers in teaching oral communication.

- If a student does not use appropriate grammar such as subject and verb tenses
 - Make sure the student understands that sentences express thoughts about a subject and what the subject is or does (e.g. example he/she/it add 's' to the verb, you/we/they do not add 's' to the verb);
 - Make sure the student understands the concept of plurality (e.g. ask the student to point to a picture of a "cat" and point to a picture of "cats.");
 - Make sure the student understands the concept of verb tenses by demonstrating Present Continuous (what "is happening,"), Simple past tense (what "has already happened") and Future Simple (what "will happen") through the use of objects, pictures, and/or written sentences.
- If a student mispronounces certain speech sounds in conversation
 - Identify the auditory, tactile or visual cue that stimulates the correct production of the target phoneme. The lecturer should provide this cue during oral reading when the student needs a reminder;
 - Have the student keep a notebook of words encountered in class each day that include his or target sound. These can be practiced by the students with lecturer or peer assistance; and
 - During oral reading, underline targeted words and reinforce the student for correct production
- If a student stutters during class time during conversation
 - Calmly delay your verbal responses by one or two seconds;
 - Slow the rate of your speech and prolong vowels to model slow, easy speech;
 - Give the student your undivided attention so she/he will not feel a need to hurry or compete with others for attention; and

- During periods of dysfluency (where a student is unable to produce smooth speech) allow non-verbal activities or responses to relax the student.
- If a student has difficulty learning new vocabulary
 - Present new vocabulary words with definitions that are understandable to the student (student-friendly);
 - Give examples when possible and have students give examples of terms;
 - Provide pictures, objects and new words together;
 - Provide mnemonic strategies when possible;
 - Sort new vocabulary by feature, category, function, comparison and association;
 - Break down root word and prefixes and suffixes (morphology). Make a set of flash cards;
 - Provide synonyms and antonyms for new words;
 - Select a limited number of vocabulary words; and
 - Have student develop a vocabulary log that contains: word, student-friendly and explanatory sentence to illustrate the word's meaning.

An example is that of the Irish Department of Education and Science (n.d) on a Leaving Certificate English (such as the Grade 12 certificate in Namibia). Although it is not the L2, this example could also benefit L2 students or learners in Namibia. The Irish Department of Education and Science stresses that the English syllabus should give priority to the study and acquisition of the language skills, both oral and written, that are needed for adult life. Specifically, the syllabus should provide opportunities for the development of the higher-order thinking skills of analysis, inference, synthesis and evaluation. Also students' knowledge and level of control of the more formal aspects of language, for example register, paragraphs, syntax, punctuation and spelling, should be given particular attention in the syllabus. An English course at Leaving Certificate must also be wide-ranging enough to accommodate not only vocational needs and further education, but also the lifelong needs of students and the language demands, both oral and written, that are placed on them by the wider community (ibid).

Wu and Liang (2007) point out anxiety as a barrier to oral communication, which they believe is always associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness and frustration. Wu and Liang (2007) advise that if a student has feelings of uneasiness, for example, about talking in front of other students, then one way to go about remedying this is to create and

establish your own classroom culture where speaking is a norm. This can be done by distinguishing your classroom from other classrooms by arranging the desks differently in groups instead of lines. Furthermore, lecturers are urged to teach their students classroom language and keep on teaching it. Giving feedback also helps to encourage and relax shy students to speak more. According to Wu and Liang (2007), another way to get students motivated to speak more is to allocate a percentage of their final grade to speaking skills and let the students know they are being assessed continually on their speaking practice throughout the term.

Hamad (2013:94) says that oral communication is negatively affected by internal and external factors. Hamad (ibid) points out the internal factors are such as low ability and emotional problems. When students are confronted with certain tasks, they may develop anxious feelings that they will fail in what they wanted to say. The external factors include inadequate or inappropriate teaching methods. Hamad (ibid) argues that lecturers or instructors do not use strategies such as that help the students develop speaking skills such as role-play, debates and presentation of assignment; therefore, they should be used. Lastly, Hamad (2013:94) points out that inappropriate curriculum may not also contain enough exercises for speaking skills, and this affects students' speaking skills. Hama (2013:94) is of the opinion that lecturers or instructors do not use teaching strategies such as role-play, debates or presentation of assignment which help students develop speaking skills. Lastly, Hamad (ibid) mentions that other factors that emphasise oral skills in the course content include materials used for oral activities, lecturers' approach in the classroom and personal factors stemming from students' inadequacies in using the language in and outside the classroom.

This research does not compare how to learn communication in French as a second language and English as a second language, but Morneau (2013) explains how students learn French as a second language. According to Morneau (ibid), there is no difference between learning French or English as a second language.

The process of learning a second language remains the same. The document Reference Framework for the Oral Communication Competencies of Second Language Learners is a tool used to assess students' level of oral French according to some parameters such as general communication skills, vocabulary, grammar and syntax. The English lecturers teaching English as a second language could also use this tool to assess the level of oral

English among students learning English as a second language. Morneau (ibid) argues that lecturers mostly focus on the concepts and overlook the skills needed in academic programmes. Therefore students should be taught the specific subject-related vocabulary (in case of content subjects), the right expressions and correct structures. In addition, Cooper (2007) mentions that to know whether students are learning, a balanced that includes written, oral and practical tasks should be used. According to Cooper (ibid), almost everything that is done through writing can also be done orally. Furthermore, Cooper (2007) emphasises that by giving students the opportunity to communicate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes orally not only helps the lecturers reach their various students but also provides them with an ongoing opportunity to improve their language skills.

Nearly twenty years ago Ahmed (1996:5) came up with an approach which he called “task-based approach to syllabus design” for the oral communication skills course in academic settings. Two aspects of oral communication skills in academic settings which are important were identified: the centrality of the classroom situation and institutional contexts. In support of Ahmed (ibid), The Curriculum Planning and Development Division in Singapore (2010:46) emphasises on building a strong foundation in language and enriching language learning for all through the English syllabus for secondary schools. The division (ibid) anticipates that by the end of secondary education, learners are expected to communicate effectively in English in the following areas: speaking, writing, reading and listening. This can be achieved through a systematic approach to teaching language skills with an emphasis on grammar and spoken English, using rich texts and a variety of language resources to enable learners to appreciate the language beyond the classroom.

Ahmed (1996:6) further argues that in an academic setting, the classroom situation is where the locus of instruction and learning serves as the starting point for identifying specific curricular needs and selecting relevant tasks, while the institutional contexts form the broader framework beyond the classroom situation and provide important input for designing a syllabus, particularly at the level of goals and objectives. According to The Curriculum Planning and Development Division in Singapore (ibid), to develop the skills in learners, learner strategies, attitudes and behaviour for effective speaking, teachers will have to:

- model the use of internationally acceptable English (Standard English) that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience and context, develop learners’ understanding of the key features of spoken language;

- teach pronunciation explicitly;
- plan learning activities to enable learners to produce a variety of spoken texts of increasing complexity through exposure to models, direct instruction from teachers and regular practice;
- guide learners in generating ideas, planning and organising their presentations using variety of skills and strategies, according to the purpose, audience, context and culture; and;
- expose learners to a variety of spoken texts (conversations and speeches).

Bygate (2009:45) identifies materials which can also be used in classes for oral activities such as one-question surveys where each student receives a different question and conducts a survey of their classmates, a weekly talk show where three or four students in a class answer questions from the class on a particular topic, pair work or dialogue, group work, discussion and debate. Additionally, Bygate (2009:46) points out that lecturers' approach in the classroom, such as observation and discussion, relating to the students during a lesson, smiling or moving around and maintaining eye contact as well as participants' interest can motivate students to communicate in English.

Bygate (2009:46) further advises that students should be encouraged to routinely communicate in English inside and outside the classroom. Students should also be encouraged to use English most of the time in every core class or other classes they attend. According to Bygate (2009:47), when hearing, speaking, reading and writing accurate English, students will manage in almost any English language situation they meet outside and inside the classroom.

Although it is almost twenty years ago, Ahmed' views on both writing and speaking skills for second language learning should not be ignored. Ahmed (1996:8) points out that speech is the main form of communication for English second language students especially when teaching productive skills of spoken communication and conversation in daily practical situations. Ahmed (ibid) suggests that students need to be taught to actively practice English speech and pronunciation in various daily situations. Students need to learn how to ask questions and listen carefully when a person replies. Lecturers need to talk less and listen more; lecturers need to bring students out of themselves by creating a supportive environment where they are

not afraid to make mistakes. Students further need active feedback and guidance from lecturers when they (students) make errors. There are many activities where students can role play in the classroom such as in general daily conversations with friends and family; answering and talking on the telephone at work; telephoning the police, ambulance or fire brigade for help in dangerous or medical situations.

2.6.1.2 Writing communication skills

Writing is the process of printing words using a pen and a piece of paper or a computer to convey a message where one needs to print out meaningful and readable information. Writing is a very important skill for people of all ages and for daily use. Colorado (2008:1-2) provides some reasons why writing is so important such as to complete tasks, it is an important element of a student's education where students have to show more sophisticated writing skills and to complete more tasks through their writing, it is an important element of an employee's job and an important form of communication. In addition to this, Colorado (2008:1-2) claims that many students have trouble writing with clarity, coherence and organisation, which discourages them from writing if they are frustrated in this case they plagiarise. Therefore, students need to be taught to write well. Wentzell, Richlin, and Cox (2013) talk of academic dishonesty, which according to them is a significant problem in higher education because it is increasingly more possible and interferes with genuine learning in enhancing students' written and oral communication skills. Wentzell et al (ibid) further argue that plagiarism creates shortcuts that bypass the time and effort required to develop the writing and analytical skills necessary to produce evidence of progress in mastering course content. Wentzell et al (ibid) suggest that an essential part of the writing process that results in new learning is offering developmental feedback; for example students to be given the option to receive audio or written feedback.

This will better serve them in their efforts to improve their writing. Hoch (n.d) claims that for a second language learner, writing is an extension of listening and speaking. Therefore, students must be provided opportunities to build, extend and refine oral language in order to improve written output. Hoch (ibid) came up with some strategies for helping a second language learner to write well such as:

- Pre-writing

Pre-writing may include an outline or some sort of thinking map to help students organise their thoughts and plan how to write a story, an essay or a paragraph. Pre-writing is essential for the writer whose first language is not English especially at the lower levels of proficiency because students have a limited lexicon and therefore often have difficulty expressing their ideas. Therefore it is important for L2 students to plan their writing before they begin writing.

- Drafting

At the drafting stage, before students start to write their final texts or essays, they have first to come up with a draft in the form of an essay where they write their ideas down using some of the notes, language and structures generated during the pre-writing activities. Hoch (n.d) further says that second language students need to be aware that their first draft does not have to be perfect and the purpose of this activity is to get words on paper.

- Revising or editing

Hoch (n.d) mentions that second language students need assistance during the revising or editing stage from lecturers and other students. For example, when students write something as an assignment, lecturers or students themselves need to assist each other by checking details, whether ideas are clear and forceful, the fulfilment of the intention of what is to be written, and the organisation of the entire document. Lecturers or students also need to check the style and language such as word choice, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

- Word-processing

Second language students should be encouraged to use word processing programmes throughout the writing process because they improve students' writing ability. Li and Cumming (2001) believe that computer assisted writing such as spelling and grammar checkers are significant for second language students because they can easily find their spelling errors and recognise the correct ones from a list of options and their fear of making

spelling errors may be eased. Consequently, their anxiety about writing in a second language maybe relieved to a certain extent. Wang (2012:2) argues that training practical writing ability such as corrective feedback is a pretty slow process, which requires scientific guidance and long term accumulation.

Many teachers or lecturers of L2 writing feel that responding through written corrective feedback helps in the improvement of the students' L2 writing accuracy (Brown, 2007). In addition, L2 writing students want, expect, and value teacher feedback on their written errors and prefer to receive written corrective feedback over alternative forms such as peer and oral feedback (Lee, 2004). Lee (2009) on the other hand observes mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written error correction practice. Lee (2009) reports on the findings from a study that investigated the teachers' beliefs and practice in written feedback from two sources: since feedback is an important task for teachers, she elicited the beliefs that underlie teachers' practices in order to help identify the factors that contribute to effective feedback. The key finding of her study is that while teachers tend to correct and locate errors for students, they actually believe that through teacher feedback students should learn to correct and locate their own errors. This demonstrates a mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and practices, suggesting that teachers' written error correction practice may not allow students to learn how to locate and correct their own errors, even though teachers believe that it does.

According to Wang (2012:2), the satisfying effects cannot be achieved just through a few hours of teaching as is the case at these institutions being studied; it is a long term thing. Wang (ibid) further argues that from the aspect of teaching materials, the majority of colleges and universities are still using general textbooks as is mostly the case at these institutions. Wang (2012:3) raises a valid point that these teaching materials such as textbooks are used too widely, most of them are confined to the original university teaching model and emphasise the integrality as a system, whereas they ignore analysis of various cases during practical application and lack individual guidance in writing practice. It probably leads to ineffective application in the reality, which is not the ideal teaching outcome. It is expected that the institution-based curriculum teaching materials could bring forth the new through the old. Because of these arguments, Wang (2012:4) proposes three aspects to improve students' ability to write competently: Firstly, a teaching plan should be designed scientifically and students' interest and motivation should be stimulated. For example, students can propose what content they would like to learn within a specific writing task but this method will not

work if the English course which entails a lot of learning skills is compressed into three months as is the case at the two institutions studied. Another suggestion which Wang (ibid) come up with was the establishment of a mechanism of competition in class, where a combination of writing and oral communication would be enforced. In this way, lecturers can, for example, arrange a contest in delivering tour guide or welcoming speeches. This way, students learn from the two skills simultaneously because they will be well prepared and want to fight for their honour. Furthermore, Wang (ibid) suggests that students should also play their role as “audience” in judging and marking.

Lastly, breaking the boundaries of traditional teaching to create a learning atmosphere with enthusiasm. Wang suggests that if we want the students to experience interest and joy from learning practical writing, we need to make them learn through use and make them acquire real skills. Wang (2012:2) gives an example of a power point presentation which provides a large number of sample essays and cases in a classroom. This way, students will appreciate good examples and make their own comments or conclusions, and correct mistakes and errors in certain samples after reading them thoroughly. If the boundaries of traditional teaching are broken then students cannot only easily comprehend the knowledge in textbooks, but also exercise skills of appreciation and evaluation. Also, students can use these samples as references for their papers.

Wang (2012:4) is of the opinion that lecturers should introduce a method that encourages students through showing, leading and guiding. Lecturers also need to intensify the idea of self-determination, exploration and cooperation in the process of teaching. Lastly, Wang advocates changing the methods from focusing on teaching to focusing on writing coupled with guidance. In addition to aspects proposed by Wang (2012), Klimova (2014) believes that writing has a unique position in language teaching since its acquisition involves a practice and knowledge of three other language skills namely listening, reading and speaking.

Moreover, it requires mastering other skills, such as metacognitive skills. Students need to set an objective for their writing, plan it carefully, think over its layout and logical structure, and revise it. In the process of writing they have to use cognitive skills; they have to analyse their sources and then synthesise them into a compact piece of writing. Therefore, knowing how to write in L2 is a valuable asset.

Nearly twenty years ago Ahmed (1996:8) argued that teaching strong writing skills reinforces and enhances what students are trying to express because they (students) have to write words down in print. Ahmed (ibid) says that when students speak, they can gesture, use facial expressions, ask questions or fumble their way through the communication, but when they write, they have to communicate with actual visual words. Robertson in Faculty and Staff (2015) thinks that students should engage in a weekly writing activity that focuses on developing a certain skill such as creative vocabulary use, the correct format of an essay or the peer editing process such as to check each other's style and language used in a document, word choice, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Robertson (ibid) believes that the ability to write effectively and accurately to convey a message is a very important skill for a college student and in most careers. Therefore, students need to have many positive opportunities to develop writing skills in a variety of formats in order to strengthen their communication skills. Robertson (ibid) further argues that to strengthen their communication skills depends on their writing skill level in their first language and their English language abilities, writing may be frustrating but students need to engage in a variety of writing to develop an understanding of different types of writing and to identify their strengths and weaknesses as a writer. Walsh (2010) argues that writing is important because it's used extensively in higher education and in the workplace. Walsh (2010) further says if students do not know how to express themselves in writing, they will not be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else. Much of professional communication is done in writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate.

Ahmed (1996:9) suggests some factors and activities that can help English Second Language students learn basic life skills that are critical in various daily situations. Writing gives students confidence with language and forces them to use a regular dictionary and therefore expand their vocabulary. Their other skills become sharpened as they think of how words are formed and spelled. Students need to be taught and practise among other things to:

- Write letters of reference and correspondence for schools and work. This practical ability will reveal whether they have the technical writing ability to handle their courses or job requirements;

- Discuss paying bills and general banking online and filling in forms for accounts and figures. In addition, Derakhshan (2015) concurs with Ahmed that students should be provided with opportunities for real practice in speaking by reading aloud reports from newspapers or books and hotel brochures, and preparing real topics for dialogue and role play. They should discuss the big moments in life such as applying for a job and then completing application forms for work, school, renting, leasing or buying a home or vehicle. A written project is a lot of fun, as each student can describe what type of house and car they are pretending to purchase on a made- up application form;
- Derakhshan (2015) suggests that lecturers should employ essential words or phrases to encourage students to make use of those words in real life. Ahmed (1996:9) adds that students need to develop and strengthen English writing and spelling to improve their spelling aptitude, which is a definite way to enhance their writing. Weak spelling will indicate that a student does not read and write often;
- Be exposed to many different types of books and read often so that they are exposed to different styles of writing, a wide range of words and sentence structures. This will help students discover different writing styles and choose those they like. You could take them to the library, read to them in class or talk about the writing style of the author and the genre of the book Ahmed (1996:9).

Minghe (2013) suggests that English lecturers should try to create a harmonious atmosphere in the oral English classroom. The environment of the class demonstrates a large impact on students' desire and interest in learning and practice. It is the basic management method for lecturers to maintain order and harmony by gaining and maintaining student cooperation in classroom activities. Some interesting and dynamic English games, role-plays, small talks, free discussions and drama activities not only give students the chance to communicate in English but also enhance their confidence in oral communication skills.

Ahmed (1996:9) further adds that students should take notes of how English-speaking people around them write their e-mails, notes and general correspondence, write exercises online and in books and punctuate correctly. When students form sentences, they will be surprised at how knowing punctuation can help and how it can change the meaning of the sentence completely; apply productive skills to writing chapters. Once students know how to put good paragraphs together, they will start to form chapters. Chapters are used in longer stories to

show a change of setting, time, place or happening. A chapter may go forward in time or shift and focus on another character completely. Wright (2011) argues that although people live in an era where the print media is faltering, and people write letters by hand and mail them as a novelty rather than a necessity, it remains important for professionals and academics to use proper grammar and communicate well in writing.

Lastly, Wright (ibid) points out that when building a story, students should be taught to have a plan as suggested by Hoch (ibid) on pre-writing that they can refer to in order to build steps to follow and keep their story on track such as the beginning, middle and end of a story. Writing skills are specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and mentally interact with a message.

These skills include firstly, comprehensibility skills where students need the understanding that writing is communicating messages or information. Secondly, fluency which includes recognising the linear sequence of sounds, writing quickly, and mastering writing motions and letter shapes. Lastly, creativity as writing includes the ability to write freely anything the student wants to (Ahmed 1996:9).

2.6.2 Syntax and Morphemes

As mentioned in the introduction in Chapter 1, morphemes and syntax are also barriers to learning English as a second language in that they (morphemes and syntaxes) impact on students' writing and speaking skills. However, this study did not look at morphemes and syntaxes as linguistic components on their own rather at whether students lack the skills to apply them in writing and speaking in English.

2.6.2.1 Syntax

This section explains syntax in detail. Syntax refers to the discipline that examines the rules of a language that dictate how the various parts of sentences go together and follow a sequence of words, according to The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995). In the sentence that follows, there is a subject and predicate. John often comes late to class. John is the subject and the other part is the predicate. This means a sentence should include a subject and a predicate.

Normally, a sentence should begin with either a subject (a doer) or object (something or somebody that receives the action) followed by a verb. In this case, the rule of how various parts of a sentence go together which follow a sequence of words needs to be applied. Fromkin, et al (2003:118) define syntax as “the part of grammar that represents a speaker’s knowledge for sentences and their structures.” Fromkin, et al (2003:123) point out that syntactic rules determine the order of words in a sentence and how the words are grouped such as: “The child found the puppy” word order. The word group “the child” forms the subject while “found the puppy” is the predicate. Or the child – subject, found – verb, the puppy – object. Also, the following sentences have different meanings which, according to Fromkin, et al (2003:118), depend largely on the order in which words occur in the sentence: “She has what a man wants. She wants what a man has”. ”In Fromkin, et al. (2003:118)’s view, there are different types of syntactic categories or parts of speech such as noun phrase – NP, verb phrase – VP and so on.

These are decomposed into other syntactic categories such as phrasal: lexical categories such as noun and verb or functional categories such as: det – determiner, aux – auxiliary verb and comp– complementizer if/whether for example “The teacher asked if the students understood the syntax lesson or I do not know whether I should talk about this”.

2.6.2.2 Morphemes

According to The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) “a morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit that has a meaning or grammatical function.” While morphology looks at how the smallest linguistic units (morphemes) are formed into complete words, syntax looks at how these words are formed into complete sentences. Hamawand (2011) states that morphology is an essential subfield of linguistics, and further describes the structure and patterns of words formation in a language.

Morphology aims specifically to:

- pin down the principles for relating the form and meaning of morphological expressions;
- explain how the morphological units are integrated and the resulting formations interpreted; and

- show how morphological units are organised in a particular language or subject in terms of affinity and contrast.

Dikuua-Fulkerson (2011:15) explains that English is a hybrid and it is crucial to understand its various roots or origins in order to understand exactly how words are formed. Dikuua-Fulkerson (2011:15) further defines morphology as a grammatical and linguistic study of the way in which words are constructed by various morphemes (units of meaning) to create a language.

According to Dikuua-Fulkerson (*ibid*), there are two types of word construction with regards to morphemes: monomorphemic, which contains one morpheme and polymorphemic, which contains more than one morpheme. Elturki (2011:1) discusses the type of morphology that poses difficulties to English as a second language learner. According to Elturki (*ibid*), a free morpheme can stand by itself as a single word and normally does not pose any problem to ESL learners, for example: “man” and “walk”. However a bound morpheme cannot stand by itself and according to him, this might pose a problem to ESL for example words that begin with the prefix ‘dis’ and words that end in the suffixes ‘ness’ and ‘tion’.

Yule (2010: 67) refers to morphology as the study of forms. This is a term originally used in biology but has also been used to describe the type of investigation that analyses ‘all the basic elements’ in the form of a linguistic message known as morphemes in a language. Yule (*ibid*) talks about two types of morphemes: free and bound morphemes and describes free morphemes as morphemes that can stand on their own, for example open and tour. Bound morphemes cannot stand on their own and are typically attached to another form (affixes). According to Yule (2010:69) there are two sets that make up the category of bound morphemes and they are called derivational and inflectional morphemes. The derivational morphemes include suffixes and prefixes. Suffixes and prefixes are linguistic units that are added to a root word either at the beginning or the end of the word, for example, the word ‘undressed’ prefix un and suffix ed. Inflectional morphemes serve as grammatical markers that indicate tense, number, possession, or comparison, for example, the suffixes -s (or -es); 's (or s'); -ed; -en; -er; -est; and -ing. This study aimed at investigating whether students use derivational and inflectional morphemes in their writing and speaking.

There are several questions regarding morphology. For example, Lieber (2010:6) asks, ‘why do languages have morphology?’ According to Lieber (2010:6) there are different reasons why morphology is used. One reason is to form new words, for example, turning verbs into nouns or adjectives, for example, the verb amuse can be turned into the noun amusement and into the adjective amusing. The other reason is that morphology is used when new words are not needed. For example, the word walk has many forms such as walk, walks, walked, walking. These different types of forms can be used in different grammatical contexts. When the word form is changed to fit in a particular grammatical context, this process is called inflection. According to Lieber (2010:7) inflectional word formation is word formation that expresses grammatical distinctions like number (singular vs. plural), tense, (present vs. past), person (first, second or third) and case (subject, object, possessive) and so on.

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003:107) define morphology as the study of word formation and the internal structure of words. Fromkin, et al.(2003:107) describe a morpheme as the minimal unit of linguistic meaning or grammatical function. According to Fromkin, et al. (2003:107), morphemes combine according to the morphological rules of the language, i.e. words that can be analysed into smaller parts.

Fromkin, et al. (2003:107) further say that lexical content morphemes that cannot be analysed into smaller parts are called root morphemes such as, free, king or bore. Fromkin, et al. (2003:76) mention that there are particular morphemes that must be attached to host morphemes (bound) which are called derivational morphemes when they are added to a root morpheme or stem, for example, -ify, -cation) to form a new word meaning and those that can stand alone (free).

According to Fromkin, et al. (2003:77), morphemes may be derivational or inflectional. Inflectional morphemes are also types of morphemes but have a strictly grammatical function in that they mark properties such a tense, number, gender case and so on. For example, He sails the ocean blue. The ‘s’ at the end of the verb shows that the subject of the verb is the third person singular and the verb is in the present tense. In He sailed the ocean blue, the ‘ed’ at the end of the verb shows the past tense of the verb. While this study looks at the use of morphological aspects by the students at tertiary level in writing and oral skills, Newton, Padak and Rasinski (2011:5-7) look at ‘building vocabulary through morphological study’ through Latin-Greek connections. Newton, et al. (2011:21) claim that a reader’s knowledge

of the meaning of words and concepts, is central to success in reading. They focused on elementary students' vocabulary. On this issue, Carlisle (2010:465) in Newton, et al. (2011:21) observes that "children learn morphemes as they learn the language." Hatch (1983:24) in Behjat and Sadighi (2011) argues that perhaps students who have problems in acquiring bound morphemes did not develop a good command of grammar rules at an early stage. In support of Hatch's (ibid) argument, Newton, et al. (2011:21) say that a very productive study of words that focuses on meaningful word patterns and the instruction in morphology awareness on literacy achievement should be developed at an early age of schooling.

Therefore, this study investigates the combination of the two (morphemes and syntaxes) on the following parts of speech: subject and verb agreement, copula, possessive case, progressive form, plural nouns and auxiliaries in writing skills and oral communication and in English.

In Namibia, students at tertiary level have been exposed to English and are in an environment where they have contact with, and opportunity to practice what they have learnt in classrooms, but the question is: if students show their incompetence in language usage, how are they expected to exhibit their competence of morphemes and syntaxes? This study examines how students use English morphemes and syntaxes in the English classroom setting. The following section discusses the research context of this study.

2.6.3 Research Context

The Namibia educational policy, educational practice, mother tongue/first language and how a second language is learned were used to describe the issues, concerns and interests that stimulated this study.

2.6.3.1 Educational Policy Context

In the context of education in Namibia, the researcher analysed the 'Draft proposal for education reform and renewal' (MECYS 1990b) where the main aim of this directive was found to describe the future content, methods and organisation of Namibian education

and also the document, *Education in transition: Nurturing our future* (MECYS 1990a). These outlined the reform measures that formed the foundation for change. In this directive, under the rubric of Language in Education, the proposed policies for schools were explained.

The researcher also considered the document ‘Change with continuity’ (MECYS 1990a) which outlined policy evolution, its direction and its implications. It aimed at setting up a framework for operations and parameters for the implementation of language in education. All these had to be done or implemented in English. All these directives could be good and well-planned but they brought some challenges such as the English language to be used during the implementation by both teachers and learners. This could be linked to the problems of students’ English at tertiary level.

2.6.3.2 Educational Practice

Although this study does not focus on mother tongue issues, this section tried to relate it to the beneficial effects of the mother tongue on second language learning (English). A mother tongue is perceived by many as the language that a child learns from birth. It is a language that a child hears at home, picks up and starts to speak.

As the world evolved, people needed to trade, they needed to communicate. How would they communicate if people did not know each other’s languages? At this point, the second language came in. There are many languages that can be regarded as second languages around the world but for this specific study, it is English.

Al-Harbi (2010) defines mother tongue (L1) as a language that is learned first while a second language (L2) is learned later in life. Al-Harbi (2010) further says research has shown that adult L2 learners do not acquire a new language as readily as children usually do. Unlike young children who pick up their first language naturally in a cultural and linguistic environment, adults learn a second language sometimes in isolation from the appropriate cultural-linguistic environment. Al-Harbi (ibid) asserts that based on the growing body of evidence, it is believed that learners with a strong mother tongue are far more successful in learning and functioning in another target language than those who continue to develop. Keeves and Darmawan (2007) concur with Al- Harbi (2010) and think that an adequate level of competence in the learning of the mother tongue L1 is achieved before any formal learning of a second language takes place through classroom instruction. The questions are: can a

person learn a second language the way he/she learnt the first language? What are the implications of learning a second language? How does the mother tongue help or hinder the learning of English in Namibia? Taylor and Coetzee (2013) argue that the mother tongue instruction in lower grades such as Grade 1, 2 and 3 leads to better English learning in the long run and it also strengthens the teaching of English as a subject in these grades, which would help to facilitate the transition to English in Grade 4. Jansen (2013) concurs with Taylor and Coetzee that instruction in English from as early as possible is the best way to become fluent in English. However, linguists such as Butzkamm (2003) Guvercin (2012) disagree with Jansen and argue that when it comes to learning a second language it is crucial to first have a solid foundation in one's first language. These theories predict that several years of mother-tongue instruction will lead to better second- language acquisition than being instructed in that second language from the first day of school. Krashen (2004:2-4) argues that research has shown that many skills acquired in the first language can be transferred to the second language. Krashen (2004:2-4) gives an example that if a child has developed good skills in Korean, he/she is likely to be able to apply these skills when reading English. Two skills apply here: one is the ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context. Another one is the ability to decide which new words in a text are important to look up in the dictionary and which can be ignored.

Butzkamm (2003:1) believes that “we learn to think, we learn to communicate and acquire an intuitive understanding of grammar, and therefore, the mother tongue is the greatest asset people bring to assists in second language learning and provides a Language Acquisition Support System”. In addition to what Butzkamm (2003:1) believes, Krashen (2004:2-4) says that the skills of being able to plan out a piece of writing or develop an argument in a persuasive essay can be applied in the second language once they have been learned in the mother tongue. In view of these theories, it seems that a second language learner first thinks in a mother tongue and transfers what he/she thought to a second language. Butzkamm (ibid) further mentions that mother tongue is the master key to second, third and even fourth languages, the tool which gives people the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing a second language. Butzkamm (2003:4) goes on to say that the mother tongue as a cognitive and pedagogical resource is more important for learners of seven or eight years. By this time, the mother tongue has taken root and will be more in evidence in the conventional classroom, where exposure to a second language is inevitably restricted.

Wolfaardt (2001:243) advises that if the mother tongue is not the official language and English is used as the medium of instruction, it should be taught competently by proficient teachers in order for learners' language to develop sufficiently. In support of Wolfaardt (2001:243), Oluwole (2008:48) researched the role of the mother tongue in learning English as a second language and discovered that there are factors that contribute to students' poor performance in English. These include the use of mother tongue, poor teaching methods, lack of textbooks, language background and lack of professional growth and development of teachers.

Kolawole (2002) in Oluwole (2008:42) confirms this and points out that the performance of primary school learners in English language was very poor due to a number of other reasons such as the use of tribal languages in the lower classes of the primary school; some learners do not understand the grammar because their teachers do not know it, and in most cases English language teachers from the senior primary school level up to the secondary school level resort to the use of mother tongue to teach and explain the English language. Oluwole (2008:49) therefore recommends that teachers and students should endeavour to improve their proficiency in the language.

Oluwole further recommends that schools should organise debate and essay competitions among students within and outside their schools. Students should also be given the opportunity to explain points and express views in class discussion and any error made should be corrected by the teacher without any intimidation as these will enhance a proper evaluation of learners' performance or progress in English language. Proper methods of teaching and appropriate instructional materials should be adopted to complement teachers' knowledge. This would influence the teaching and learning of the English language. Material(s) selected should be related to the maturity of students.

2.6.3.3 Methods to learn English as a second language

For the purpose of this research and in the Namibia context, this researcher considered how a second language is learned in the classroom which in the researcher's opinion can also be a barrier to learning a language. Although it is not among the identified barriers, which are problems being investigated in this study, it is included in the literature review and

forms part of data collection. The general teaching and learning in the Namibian education system is based on a 'communicative approach' where a lecturer/teacher is expected to talk less.

The Communicative Approach as discussed by Chomsky in Lighthouse (2012) encompasses all types of learning behaviours with the varied forms of teaching. The lecturers do not stand and issue instructions for the whole class in a singular style anymore but vary the lesson to encompass the many learning styles of their students. Communication within the classroom embraces discussion and expression either in pairs or in groups. Students' needs are being responded to through the communicative process as opposed to the will of the lecturer. Correction of errors is very subtle through this approach. For example, if a student cannot pronounce a word, instead of the lecturer asking the student to repeat and repeat till correct, the entire class is involved in repeating the word. This creates a bond within the classroom and the student with the difficulty is not singled out. This action raises the confidence of all the students as they can express themselves without fear of ridicule. The good thing about the communicative approach is that it makes students speak the language even at a beginner level and they are usually enthusiastic about this. One negative aspect is that the study of grammar is somewhat pushed to the side and pupils find it increasingly difficult to be aware of how a language works as it is the case at these institutions.

The Cognitive Approach is an approach defined by Chomsky in Lighthouse (2012). Chomsky (ibid) believes that language acquisition is a gradual build-up of knowledge that increases competence within the language. In Chomsky's view, a very important factor in language learning emerged, and that was allowing students to make errors in the language. This in turn empowered the students to create their own rules, and to most importantly learn from their mistakes. According to Chomsky in Lighthouse (2012), it is also a ground-breaking approach that turns the attention of the classroom from the teacher to the students. Rather than simply recite what the teacher wants to hear, the students are free to make errors and by these errors they understand more of the language and where they went wrong.

In English, a communicative approach comprises of grammatical, sociolinguistics and strategic competences. Canale and Swain in Shower (2010:1) suggest that grammatical competence involves developing students' knowledge of language features, which include vocabulary, word and sentence formation and spelling. Sociolinguistic competence suggests

developing the ability to use appropriate spoken and written language, whereas strategic competence involves developing students' communication strategies to overcome their communication problems. Wenden in Shaver (2010:2) is of the opinion that learning strategies in the communicative approach are steps or mental operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials in order to store, retrieve and use knowledge, whereas communication strategies are the techniques learners use when there is a gap between their knowledge of the language and their communicative intent. The communicative approach implies that students learn and discover on their own and at their own pace. The question is: should students such as Namibians whose English proficiency is relatively poor be left alone to discover and learn on their own at their own pace with little assistance from lecturers?

2.7 Summary

What are the barriers that are preventing students from improving their oral and written skills in English? This chapter reviewed literature on the identified barriers to learning English, described ways to overcome these barriers and described the best ways to do that. Piaget's formal operational stage, where activities and approaches occur between a lecturer and students, has been applied in this study.

The interaction between lecturers and students has a great impact on how a second language is learned. This is especially the case if the students' writing and spoken skills are poor. This is a very important issue because this study tried to determine how the activities (in the syllabi) and approaches (teaching) to learning English can overcome the barriers to improve these skills. The researcher considered different barriers to learning writing and speaking skills in a second language and the improvement of teaching and learning as solutions to overcome the barriers. The researcher also considered the importance of the influence of the mother tongue on second language learning and whether, once a child has developed good skills in mother tongue he/she is able to apply those skills in English.

The next chapter presents the research methodology for data collection with regard to the barriers that were identified.

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

What are the barriers preventing undergraduate students (in all undergraduate English courses) from improving their oral and written skills in English? This chapter presents the research methodology that was used to gather information which answers the research question of this study. Research methodology refers to a process used to collect information and data for the purpose of finding solutions to a problem being investigated. A thorough description, justified and detailed research methodology was used in this study. This included the research methods, research design, research procedures, and the study area, sampling techniques, instruments, data collection procedures, research ethics, data analysis procedures, sources of data, validity and reliability and definitions of terms. This study sought to establish whether the course syllabi and the teaching methods of oral and writing skills were preventing students from improving their oral and writing skills in English. The techniques used in this study to collect data included questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and class observation.

3.2 Research design

A research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem will be effectively addressed (University of California Libraries, 2015). This study investigated barriers preventing undergraduate students from improving their oral and written skills in English at tertiary level as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. The qualitative approach was used as an overall strategy, where different types of instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, class observation and document analysis were used to collect data.

Three previous studies done by Wolfaardt (2001) and Frans (2007, 2009) on the generally poor performance of learners in content subjects at secondary level concluded that performance (examination results) was affected by English as a language. What exactly is preventing some students from writing and speaking English competently and correctly at tertiary level? This study sought to answer the research question; what are the barriers

preventing undergraduate students from improving their oral and written skills in English at the two tertiary institutions?

The study used information obtained from 40 students, 16 lecturers, eight syllabi or study guides, eight course coordinators in the English departments using a qualitative approach.

3.3. Data collection and procedure

Chapter 1 indicated that data was collected from the syllabi, lecturers teaching the courses, students studying the courses and students' written work at the institutions studied. This study is concerned with the primary data which were collected for the first time and is original. The non-probability sampling which was purposefully used included people (lecturers and students) who had knowledge of the topic of this study. Questionnaires, interview questions, class observations and analysis of students' written work were the techniques and instruments used to collect data. Information was gathered from three Heads of Departments of Languages, Communications and the Language Centre as well as from eight Course Coordinators, 16 lecturers, syllabi, students' written work and 40 students, that is, 20 English students from each institution. The students were deliberately sampled because they studied these courses, while coordinators and lecturers taught these courses.

The researcher first did a preliminary investigation on the same issue. The preliminary investigation included a few samples at the two institutions. This enabled the researcher to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the questions and thereafter to make adjustments before the main research was undertaken. The researcher had brief interviews with one Head of Department and two Course Coordinators. The researcher also handed out the questionnaires to few students and lecturers who were purposefully sampled because of their involvement in the problems of English second language learning being investigated. The participants were given one week to complete the questionnaires which were then collected after a week by the researcher. This enabled the researcher to verify the information given and address any questions that posed problems to the participants.

3.4 Research paradigm

Schumacher and McMillan (2010: 320) describe a paradigm as a set of assumptions about how things work, and qualitative research methods involve very different assumptions about how research should be conducted and the role of the researcher.

Schumacher and McMillan (ibid) point out that some of the major research paradigms used in education include positivist and constructivist. Constructivist paradigm is basically an idea based on observation about how people learn Schumacher and McMillan (ibid) and has been applied in this study. Constructivist means that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. According to Schumacher and McMillan (ibid), the emphasis for research into social phenomena is on the fact that the researchers would try to understand why people behave as they do in their settings. The methods used by the researchers to access people's understanding of their social reality include observations, questionnaires and interviews designed to collect data. The paradigm acts as a perspective that provides a rationale for the research and commits the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation, and interpretation. Paradigms are, therefore, important to the research design because they impact both on the nature of the research question, that is what is to be studied and also on the manner in which the question is to be studied. By ensuring that the research and methods used fit logically within the paradigm, the principle of coherence can be preserved when designing a research study. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach to collect data through questionnaires, interviews, class observation and document analysis.

This study was limited to two universities. It is a case study because this research requires the researcher to solve a problem by developing a new plan and is therefore problem oriented (UNSW Current Students 2013). A programme is proposed (see chapter 5) that could be used to solve the problem investigated. Rowley (2002) adds that in a case study like this one uses a variety of evidence from different sources. In view of this, the sources that were used were items such as documents, interviews and observations. In this sense, the University of California Libraries (2015) describes a case study as in-depth study of a particular research problem, for example the research problem of this study: the barriers that prevent students from improving their writing and speaking skills at two tertiary institutions. A case study

design can extend experience and add strength to what is already known through previous research.

Littlejohn (2000) asserts that human beings cannot be studied using models developed for the physical sciences because humans are qualitatively different from natural events. The interpretative paradigm supports the belief that reality is constructed by subjective perception and predictions cannot be made. The researcher agrees with this paradigm and is also interested in understanding the participants in this study because people have free will, purposes, goals, and intentions, so people should be studied as active agents.

3.5 Research approach

According to Williams (2011) a research methodology is a way used to find out the result of a given problem on a specific matter or problem that is also referred to as a research problem. In methodology, the researcher uses different criteria for solving or researching the given research problem. Different sources use different methods for solving the problem. Several methods or approaches are used to find solutions to a given problem. In this study, the qualitative method is used. The quantitative approach was not used in this study not because it cannot be used to find solutions to a problem but because in quantitative methods, researchers collect facts and study the relationship between sets of facts. In addition, Kelly (2006) points out that quantitative method is an important aspect of many action research studies and case studies undertaken by participants or even outsiders, whereas qualitative methods seek deep analysis, thus, a qualitative approach was used.

3.5.1. Qualitative approach

Crocker, (2009:5) defines qualitative research as an umbrella term used to refer to a complex and evolving research methodology. The approaches in qualitative research use a wide variety of data collection methods, such as observation, interviews, open-response questionnaire items and verbal reports.

Within each of these approaches and methods, a number of research techniques and strategies have been developed to help qualitative researchers do their day-to-day work, conceptualising the research project, collecting and analysing data and writing the findings

(Crocker, 2009:5). According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) in Murray, Bagby and Sulak (2010), qualitative research involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of narrative and visual data through methods such as ethnography, case study, in-depth interviews or focus groups.

The researcher collected narrative (in-depth interviews) data during face - to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings, and visual (documents) data. Gay et al (2009) mention that a number of participants in a research project using a qualitative approach can even be smaller or even a single individual in a case study. The quality of participants in a study using a qualitative approach can be assessed to determine if selected participants are appropriate for addressing the research question.

Furthermore, Schumacher and McMillan (2010:321-322) say that qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. Schumacher and McMillan (ibid) further contend that the researcher may use qualitative methods to understand the phenomenon and interpret meaning within social and cultural contexts. To understand and interpret the social and cultural setting, the researcher interacted with the people (heads of departments, lecturers, students and course coordinators) concerned, listened to them and tried to make sense of their perceptions and experiences in the field of the English language (Schumacher and McMillan, 2010:322).

Data in qualitative studies are overloaded and open-ended questions can sometimes generate lots of data which can take long to analyse, while transcribing interviews can take time and is costly. Besides these challenges, the researcher was able to balance her time for work and the research. The researcher was able to analyse the open-ended as well as the interview questions and come up with the criteria that made this study effective. The qualitative approach was selected because it focused on the kind of evidence about what people say and do, that enabled the researcher to interpret, make sense of and understand what the researcher had observed (Jackson 2012:86). The qualitative method was also decided upon to help the researcher to conceptualise the research project, collecting and analysing data and writing up findings.

3.5.2 Research typology

The English Oxford Dictionary (2010) defines typology as a system of dividing things into different types. This suggests that a research typology puts things into commonly used categories or types. The following is the typology of this study.

Table 6: Typology

Main categories and subcategories of the typology	Descriptors and connected Terms	Related Terms
1. Frameworks for research and design 1.1 Frameworks 1.2 Qualitative	Piaget's idea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual framework 	Cognitive constructivist classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research problem
2. Data 2.1 Data collection		
2.1.1 Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposefully
2.1.2 Interviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telephone • face to face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interviews
2.1.3 Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • question design • self-administered • questionnaire, structured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questionnaire
2.1.4 Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-participant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check lists
2.1.5 Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • syllabi, written work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check list
3. Data handling and analysis 3.1 Qualitative 3.2 Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interviews, • questionnaires, • observation • students' work • syllabi 	course coordinators heads of departments
Research management and application of research 4.1 Confidentiality and anonymity 4.2 Ethics	Pseudonyms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University A and B • permission 	Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all participants • University Registrars

3.6 Research methods

Driscoll and Brizee (n.d) advise that permission to carry out an investigation be sought at an early stage by making a formal, written approach to individuals and organisations concerned, outlining the plan of the investigation. In addition, Driscoll and Brizee (ibid) argue that not all research needs permission, but in research where observation, interviews, surveys and so on are used permission needs to be obtained.

This research was conducted in three stages. The first stage was a visit to the Dean of the School of Humanities and the head of the Language Centre to seek permission to visit the English departments at the two institutions. This was followed by a visit to three Heads of Department to seek permission to analyse the syllabi of the following courses: Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Academic Purposes, English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills, and English for Academic Purposes. Permission was also sought from the HODs to interview them, administer interview questions to Course Coordinators and to hand out questionnaire to students and lecturers in their departments. The third stage was a visit to classes to observe and listen to the interaction taking place in the actual environment, using the class observation check list items (Appendix F) and to analyse students' written work using a students' written work checklist (Appendix G).

3.6.1 Sampling

This study was carried out at two tertiary institutions of education in Khomas Region. Khomas is one of the 14 regions in Namibia and it was chosen because of the location of this researcher. The students at the two institutions come from the 14 regions of Namibia. Therefore, it is a diverse study which accommodates students from different cultural and language backgrounds. Mungenda and Mungenda (2003:44) define sampling as a process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the larger group from which they were selected to enable the researcher to obtain information about the population. Mungenda and Mungenda (2003:45) categorise sampling into two sections, namely probability and non-probability (purposively) which is applicable to this study. This means the participants were purposively sampled. They were mostly considered to contribute appropriate data both in terms of relevance and depth.

Forty students and 16 lecturers were selected from the English Department to reduce the chance that the results would be influenced due to factors related to the participants in the study. The number (40) of students was purposefully derived from the undergraduate courses (Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Academic Purposes (University A), English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills, and English for Academic Purposes (University B). Also the reason behind this research was to focus on undergraduate students because they (students) are not studying English as a profession/career but to use their competency in English in their different professions. The researcher believed the total number envisaged for the course would represent all students who were doing the English undergraduate courses.

In addition, the sample was purposefully selected to include people who had knowledge of the topic of this study. Two higher learning institutions, University A and University B were used. The study was limited to three Heads of Department who were responsible for planning courses for their departments and one course coordinator of a language centre. All these were among the lecturers who teach these courses. Eight course coordinators were sampled for this study because they coordinated and assigned duties within the course (course related activities). At the end of every semester, course coordinators compile students' results and are expected to come up with a summary of the results (how students performed).

Sixteen lecturers were also purposefully selected because they were the ones teaching the students these skills. The aim of including the lecturers was to get information from them as to how the students' language proficiency affected their teaching. For example if a lecturer planned to teach a particular lesson which could not be finished in a limited time, this lesson might have to be continued to the next day because some students were slow to understand the concepts being taught. This means the lecturer had to spend more time on those specific students to explain and bring them to the level of the rest of the class. Therefore students with poor language proficiency might affect lecturers' teaching from meeting their teaching targets. Therefore, the findings were not generalised.

3.6.2 Research instruments

Research instruments are tools used to collect data or information from participants. The instruments enable the researcher to keep track of what was observed and to report it. For these reasons, this researcher chose to collect data and divide it into primary and secondary data. Primary data came from a questionnaire, semi-structured interview questions and observation.

A questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection and was designed for the students and lecturers respectively. Semi-structured interview questions were designed for the Heads of Departments and Course Coordinators. Observation was done in different classes at both institutions. Secondary data included content analysis of documents including syllabi, study guides and students' written work.

There were two types of questionnaires, one for lecturers and one for students. The students' questionnaire was used to solicit views from 40 students on the problems they faced in learning oral and writing skills in English at the chosen institutions. The lecturers' questionnaire was designed to solicit their views regarding the problems they faced in teaching oral and written skills.

According to Schumacher and McMillan (2010:324), a questionnaire is economical to administer, usually easy to score and provides time for subjects to think about responses. A questionnaire also ensures anonymity and freedom of speech. Ballou (2008: 548-550) explains that open-ended questions:

- Build rapport and encourage participation, for example, asking an easy-to-answer question at the beginning of the questionnaire;
- Get factual information. The open-ended questions can address the problem because of the in-depth response;
- Explain a prior answer. An open-ended question can deepen the understanding of the response to a preceding question by obtaining additional details on the reason for the answer; and
- Explore new topics. This can be an opportunity to get suggestions for future research topics.

Interviews question were used for Heads of Departments and Course Coordinators in the School of Humanities and Language Centre. The heads of departments and course coordinators were mostly selected because they planned what students needed to learn. Using semi-structured interview questions, the participants had no choices from which to select the answer and the questions were phrased to allow for individual responses (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006). According to Schumacher and McMillan (ibid), this kind of interview technique is flexible and adaptable, because it can be used with many different problems and types of people. Responses can be probed, followed up, clarified and elaborated to achieve a specific accurate response. Semi- structured interview questions are also open– ended questions, but they are fairly specific in their intent (Schumacher and McMillan, 2006). The researcher drew up questions (Refer to Appendix D) that were used to obtain answers from Heads of Department and Course Coordinators. The interviews gave them the opportunity to discuss what they perceived as possible solutions to their difficulties. The interview also validated the important role they played in teaching as well as planning what students needed to know in order for the institutions to produce quality and competent students of English.

- Observation

This researcher observed 12 classes from the two institutions being studied namely: Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Academic Purposes, Professional Writing, Professional Communication, English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills, and English for Academic Purposes. From every course, the researcher planned to observe two classes. Sixteen hours were allocated to the observation which was spread over one month.

The researcher drew up an observation schedule (Appendix F) which allowed the researcher to tick categories that would allow her to focus more on what was going on in the classrooms. Gillham (2000: 134) regards observation as the most direct way of obtaining data on what people actually do. Gay et al (2009) put the emphasis of observation on understanding the natural environment as lived by participants, without altering or manipulating it.

Board (n.d) points out that one of the major strengths of using classroom observation is that it allows the researcher to do the following:

- permit him/her to study the processes of education in natural settings;
- provide more detailed and precise evidence than other data sources;
- stimulate change and verify that the change occurred; and
- the descriptions of instructional events that are provided by this method have also been found to lead to improved understanding and better models for improving teaching.

Leedy and Omrod (2001:158) state that observations have some disadvantages in that the presence of a researcher may change what people say and do and how significant events unfold. This researcher agrees with this idea but feels that observation also has some advantages. For example, a researcher can ask people what they would do in a certain situation, can observe and record people's behaviour in that situation, can easily shift focus as new data comes to light, and observation provides a permanent record of such behaviour.

In order to see what would actually be happening in the classrooms and validate data from lecturers, course coordinators and heads of departments, the researcher observed 10 lessons taught by the participants. That way, the researcher was a non-participant observer where behaviours of the participants were observed and recorded. The researcher focused on the use of morphology and syntaxes among students themselves on the following parts of speech: subject and verb agreement, possessive case, progressive form, active and passive form, and auxiliaries in oral communicating skills during interactions in English.

- Document/content analysis

Documents or content analysis such as some of the students' written work and syllabi (Refer to Appendix A and G) were used as a data-gathering technique. Maree and Pietersen (2007:82) mention that when using documents as data collection technique, one has to focus on all types of written communication that may shed light on the phenomenon under investigation. According to Leedy and Omrod (2001:155), content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of

identifying patterns, themes or bias. Accordingly, the researcher used content analysis to determine what the syllabi entail in terms of teaching writing and speaking skills.

In light of the above, all the English syllabi, study guides and some of the students' written work were analysed using a check list (Appendix A and G) and a students' written work check list (Appendix B). Regarding the syllabi, the focus was on whether the syllabi made provision for learning morphology and syntaxes. The aim was to see how these (writing, oral communication, and morphology and syntaxes) influenced students' writing and oral skills in English as a Second Language. Text analysis makes qualitative research faster and easier by highlighting important terms and allowing the researcher to categorise open-ended responses. The ability to analyse what participants say helps the researcher gain insight into their behaviours, concerns and motivations. According to Mckee (2003), content analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. In this study, McKee's idea is used to refer to a researcher trying to find what is being looked for in relation to students' written work and the syllabi. Mckee (2003) further says that it is a data gathering process.

3.6.3 Data analysis procedure

The data collected was described, analysed and presented according to the identified barriers. Two types of data analysis were used, document and text analysis. One has to use different types of strategies to analyse data. In this study, content analysis was used to analyse written documents (syllabi and students' work). Krippendorff (2003:18) defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the context of their use. Krippendorff (2003:30) further explains that a researcher using content analysis should set a research question that the researcher (analyst) seeks to answer by examining the body of the text that is meant to be read, interpreted and understood by people other than the analyst. In addition, the content analysis as seen by the Faculty and Staff at Colorado State University (2015) is that it can be used if a qualitative approach is used through document/text analysis. It can also be applied to examine any piece of writing. The researcher was mostly interested in students' knowledge as presented in their written work. To analyse data from questionnaires and interviews, data was transcribed in the form of a summary. That was done after interpreting and analysing responses question by question to

find similarities and differences. The findings were made according to these similarities and differences. The full transcription (written copies) of all the findings is available.

3.6.4 Trustworthiness

In order to achieve reliability and validity, the researcher made use of a multi-method approach (such as content analysis, interviews, questionnaires and students' written work) to gather data. This allowed the researcher to obtain views from different standpoints and to identify any discrepancies that might have arisen (Shenton, 2004:1). Guba and Lincoln in Shenton (2004:1) believe that to achieve reliability and validity, four criteria should be followed namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Guba and Lincoln (ibid) say that credibility is done in preference to internal validity, which seeks to ensure that the study measures or tests what is actually intended. Trochim (2006) adds that credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. In addition to these, the findings of this study were found to be trusted and believable because data from most of the participants and from both universities confirmed the same thing, namely, that students' language proficiency is relatively poor especially in the writing skills.

3.6.4.1 Transferability in preference to external validity / generalisability.

Transferability invites readers of research to make connections between the elements found in the study and their own experience. For example, lecturers can select what they think is best and apply it to their own classrooms. Merriam (1998) in Sheton (2004:1) writes that external validity "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations". Thus, upon completion of this study, this thesis will be available in libraries so that other researchers will be able to read it and make their judgments about the findings in order to apply them to other settings or contexts.

3.6.4.2 Dependability in preference to reliability.

Yin (2009) points out that the reliability of the results from data demonstrates the operators of a study such as the data collection procedures can be repeated with the same results while the credibility of a qualitative research paradigm depends on the ability and effort of the researcher.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) in Sheton (2004:1) stress the close ties between credibility and dependability, of which credibility ensures dependability. This may be achieved through the use of methods such as individual interviews and questionnaires. In support of Guba and Lincoln (1985) in Sheton (2004), Trochin (2008) believes that the idea of dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study.

3.6.4.3 Confirmability in preference to objectivity in pursuit of a trustworthy study.

Patton (1990) in Sheton (2004:1) recognises the difficulty of ensuring real objectivity, because since tests and questionnaires are designed by humans, the intrusion of the researcher's biases is inevitable. The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. Guba and Lincoln (ibid) emphasise that steps must be taken to ensure that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. It is also essential that data posited by this researcher can be confirmed by others (such as supervisors of the thesis) who read the research results.

3.6.5 Ethical measures

Permission was obtained from the institutions' Registrars and from the Dean of the School of Humanities and Head of the Language Centre. Before the researcher started with the actual process of collecting data, permission to observe lessons and conduct interviews was sought from lecturers concerned. At the beginning of each class observation, the researcher briefed the students on the nature and purpose of the visit. Robson (2002:65) defines ethical issues as a system of accepted rules of conduct or set of principles. Drew (2007:57) argues that

whoever a researcher is the primary responsibilities to participants are clear: obtain consent, protect from harm, and ensure privacy. To uphold confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms (false names), i.e. University A and University B.

On ethical issues, the information given by participants was treated with confidentiality and to protect the participants, their names were not disclosed. The researcher thanked the participants and tried to put them at ease by assuring them of the anonymity of their participation. Data collected was only used for this study. All data were collected under the guidance of the institutions' management. Time to administer the instruments was determined by the heads of departments together with the respective participants themselves so that conflict with the institutions and personal programmes could be avoided.

3.7 Summary

Chapter 3 explained the research methods, research design, research procedures, study area, sampling techniques, instruments, data collection procedures, research ethics, data analysis procedures, sources of data, research typology, validity and reliability of the study. These methods produced a more complete understanding of the barriers to English writing and speaking skills among students at two universities, The students carry the language deficiency from secondary to tertiary level as indicated by Wolfaardt (2000) and Frans (2009) in Chapter 1. When they (students) are at tertiary level, the courses that they are expected to master do not address these deficiencies. The researcher used a qualitative approach. In qualitative approach, there are a number of data collection methods that were employed such as observation, interviews (such as telephonic and face to face), questionnaires and document analysis. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather data while interacting with selected persons in their natural settings. The research methods were discussed which led the researcher to seek permission to carry out the investigation from the Registrars, the Dean of the School of Humanities and Head of the Language Centre. To uphold confidentiality, the researcher used the pseudonyms University A and University B. The information that was given by participants was treated with confidentiality and the participants' names were not disclosed to protect them. A number of specific individuals (purposefulness) were also selected as the researcher believed they could contribute appropriate data in terms of relevance and depth. Data was described,

analysed and presented according to the identified barriers. The next chapter discusses data analysis.

Chapter 4 Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents data analysis and discussion that answer the research question, namely what barriers prevent students from speaking and writing English fluently at tertiary level (macro- level). English continues to be the commonly accepted medium of teaching at all levels in Namibia. Tables 2 and 3 in Chapter 1 indicate that learners' results in English as a second language show a majority of students obtained between C and E symbols. This is an indication that the English competency of learners who enrol for English on Ordinary level, is poor. These are also some of the students who would enrol for tertiary education.

The findings from interviews, questionnaires, class observations, syllabi, study guides and students' written work were analysed and described according to the following barriers: English syllabi, lack of application of teaching skills and the acquisition of morphemes and syntaxes in oral communication and writing skills. Some insights were obtained from interviews, questionnaires, class observations, syllabi, study guides and students' written work. The researcher tried to articulate trends that emerged from the findings. The main finding from the interviews was that students still search for words when they speak. This was confirmed from data drawn from Heads of Departments and Course Coordinators. They mentioned that students lack grammar proficiency either in speaking or writing skills. When speaking, the language does not flow. Although the meaning is conveyed, students still have limited vocabulary. This might be caused by the lack of speaking activities in the syllabi or students' anxiety since they do not experience much exposure to speaking in front of other students. When it comes to writing, expression is poor. The students lack strong syntax usage. This is confirmed by the data from an essay in this chapter and other sentences shown under document analysis. From class observation, the teaching and learning of English as a second language at these institutions needs improvement. Lecturers mostly do not pay attention to what students say. Most of the answers from students are shouted out in a single word or every student shouts to give the answer. There is no proper control of how answers are articulated. Students' written work at these institutions showed strong indications that they were faced with a language problem.

This elicited a set of responses, through various instruments that were described in Chapter 3, which presented the views of students and lecturers that were involved in the learning and teaching of English at tertiary level. The findings from the questionnaire confirmed the findings from interviews. Students lack grammar accuracy. It was also surprising to learn that some students mentioned that they are poor in reading skills. Findings from syllabi revealed that the syllabi contain mainly basic English components such as parts of speech, writing and analysing essays, paragraphs analysis, vocabulary building, reading, speaking (presentations) leading to a high standard of English to be learned, but they lack practical activities that can overcome the barriers to learning English writing and speaking skills. Also, the time frame is very curtailed, especially regarding the courses that are offered for a semester only.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the sample should have comprised 64 participants at both Universities (16 Lecturers, 3 Heads of Departments, 8 Course Coordinators, and 50 Students) and eight syllabi. Thirteen class observations were planned. This did not materialise as anticipated. Some participants did not want to be interviewed or did not return the questionnaires. As a result, 57 participants took part in this study (12 lecturers, 3 heads of departments, 3 course coordinators and 39 students). Ten classes were observed and eight syllabi (in conjunction with their study guides) as well as students' written work from every course were analysed. The participants were told not to write their names on the questionnaire for confidentiality. The names of students on written documents were kept confidential to ensure anonymity.

This researcher analysed written communication of students that showed strong indications that the students at these institutions were faced with a language problem. This elicited a set of responses, through various instruments that were described in Chapter 3, which presented the views of students and lecturers who were involved in the learning and teaching of English at tertiary level. During the research, however, a number of issues that need further probing emerged; for example, it became clear that one should look into the relevance of the English syllabi at the institutions and do an analysis to equate them (syllabi) with the students' language proficiency.

4.2 Syllabi or study guide/content analysis (Appendix A)

The content in the syllabi and study guides from both institutions seem to fully cover the information for students to learn and master English as a Second Language. The syllabi include all basic English components such as parts of speech, reading comprehension, essay writing and analysis, summaries, vocabulary building, presentations and report writing, to ensure a high standard of English to be learned. The syllabi lack formal core activities such as formal debating.

Data revealed a lack of specific teaching objectives in oral communication and writing skills in the syllabi especially at University B. The syllabi did not make provision for how students were to be taught, for example, to generate high quality, precise and clear sentences. Also there was a lack of activities such as scrambled sentences, combining sentences and summarising to increase students' understanding of sentence structure while developing their ability to compose complex sentences. In addition to that, there was also a lack of practice in editing and revising, especially on individual essays such that, even after a piece of writing was marked, there was no follow up of how to avoid similar errors in future. Although lecturers wrote comments or compiled lists of errors made by students, students did not follow the advice. They continued to make the same errors.

This researcher is aware of the fact that lecturers mostly taught what was found in the study guide although they did some research to supplement their teaching. The point was that much of what was written in the syllabi or study guides did not provide many activities for students to practice, especially on speaking skills. For example, there were no speaking activities provided in all the units in the English in Practice study guide where students could work together to discuss and come up with answers. Almost everything was done individually. As a result, some lecturers just followed the instructions in the study guide.

Considering the fact that English is a second language to the students and also the fact that students' English proficiency is very poor in Namibia, the institution was not solving this problem but worsening it. The study guides did not make any provision for teaching speaking. If the institutions wanted to improve the students' language proficiency then communicative language teaching methods should have been applied. For example, lecturers should have based communicative language teaching of second language learning on real life

situations. The students at University B did not care whether they had a study guide to use in class or not. This could also be a concern because they did not follow what was being done in class.

Also, the findings revealed that study guides did not make provision to teach syntax and morphology. In Namibia, English as a medium of instruction was introduced in most schools 24 years ago and the way it was being taught was a matter of concern both at school and tertiary level. The following is the analysis of each syllabus at both universities.

4.2.1 Syllabi at University A

4.2.1.1 Language in Practice Course Level 4

There is a unit on grammar where different tenses and other elements are listed such as compound and complex sentences. The syllabus also covers parts of speech such as prepositions, pronouns and modal verbs. The students in this course are required to write descriptive and narrative essays. The oral communication is not part of this course which should, in the opinion of the researcher be part of this course. Students in this course need to build their speaking confidence through speaking in front of the class and debating, because it is the first English course to be done by the students after secondary school and those who obtained lower grades such as D and E symbols are enrolled for this course.

4.2.1.2 English in Practice Course Level 5

English in Practice is a level higher than Language in Practice. It is a repetition of Language in Practice (LIP) except conditionals, direct and indirect speech, gerunds and text summarizing are added. The students in this course are expected to write opinion and argumentative essays. The oral part is neglected although they do power point presentations once a semester. It seems University A is not concerned with the students' oral communication. Oral communication is a very important aspect of a student's life. That students are only doing power point presentations once a month and are not involved in some sort of debating is a matter for concern.

4.2.1.3 English for Academic Purposes Course (EAP) Level 6

The English for Academic Purposes Course is offered at both universities but differ in content. At University A, it is evaluated as level 6 while at University B, it is level 5. The prerequisites for EAP at University A are English in Practice, a “B” in English at Ordinary level or a 3 in English at Higher level in Grade 12. Students in this course write memorandums, business letters, reports and research writing. At University A, EAP aims to equip students to study effectively in an English medium learning environment. This aim should already have been emphasised during Language in Practice and English in Practice courses. In addition to this aim, English for Academic Purposes aims to assist students to improve and develop their English language proficiency within a framework of academic contexts in order to communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in academic speech and writing. Also, EAP aims to support creativity and intellectual development through reading, writing and speaking activities related to students’ fields of study and to encourage students to enjoy and appreciate a variety of language. How does this course address these aims? There are eleven units in the syllabus. Most of these units emphasise writing (for example memoranda, business letters, reports, research writing and so on) except the last unit, which caters for oral presentation. It is the opinion of the researcher that oral presentation should have been integrated into the different units. Furthermore grammar is not part of this course because the course focus is on writing memorandums, business letters, reports and research writing.

4.2.1.4 Professional Writing Course Level 7

This course is basically about professional writing. Students produce different types of business writing such as request and response letters, complaints, adjustments, tactful letters, memoranda and emails, reports, persuasive letters and business proposals. Grammar and sentence construction are not part of the course. The grammar and sentence construction are only assessed during marking of students’ written work and correction depends on whether the students take notice of the marker’s comments or not.

4.2.1.5 Professional Communication Course Level 7

This is the last course for the undergraduates and some students do not have to enroll for this course. Since it is a professional communication course, students are introduced to professional language use for three weeks, which the researcher found insufficient because they (students) are expected to communicate professionally.

The grammar aspects in the Professional Communication Course fall under the Unit on language usage. According to the syllabus, three weeks are set aside for grammar, where verb forms – basic do, does, did; verb – past; verb – ing; to be, am, is, are, was, were and verb – d-n-t, to be, passive form are taught. Fifty five minutes three times a week is the time allocated to the teaching of these courses. This is very short, given that English is a second language for 99% of Namibia's population.

The Professional Communication Course was designed to introduce students to oral and writing skills which are the focus of this study which should have been already done at school level. In addition, the course was designed to address the specific language needs of students' at different levels. By looking at the writing aspects, it was apparent that the writing process was focused on planning, organisation, presenting, rewriting, proofreading and editing, leaving out accuracy in grammar, which is most needed by the students. It is this researcher's opinion that all these processes need to be taught together with syntaxes. Otherwise, students would know how to correctly follow these processes but continue to make mistakes when it comes to sentence structures.

Some of the learning outcomes of the undergraduate courses at University A stated that upon completing these courses, the students would show the ability to use English across a variety of contexts and situations, demonstrate understanding of correct use of English in written and spoken forms and generate, plan and organise ideas for written and oral activities. This researcher's view is that the time allocated is too short for students to be able to show these abilities in courses such as Language in Practice and English in Practice.

4.2.2 Syllabi at University B

4.2.2.1 English for General Communication Course

English for General Communication is a year course designed for students who obtained a “D symbol” in English at NSSC Ordinary Level. At University A, students who obtained “C, D or E” symbols in English at NSSC Ordinary Level were only given a semester (that is about 14 to 15 weeks). It is very interesting to note that at University B the English for General Communication Course (level 4) study guide or the syllabus was set in such a way that it catered for a unit on vocabulary, which was not the case at University A.

The writing, syntaxes and speaking are integrated in this syllabus. There are five grammar units on the parts of speech because each part of speech has its function. The unit explained parts of speech as well as how they are used in English. There are several activities set on all skills. Apart from reading, the parts of speech in the grammar units are explained in detail and different activities are given. The writing and speaking skills are integrated where students have to illustrate what they were taught in grammar and in their writing and speaking skills.

4.2.2.2 English Communication and Study Skills Course

The English Communication and Study Skills course is a semester course which is taken by students who obtained a “C” symbol in Grade 12. This was comparable with Language in Practice. The difference is that students who obtained “C, D or E” symbols enroll for these courses for a semester at University A while at University B students who obtained an “E” symbol are given a special course (English Access) to prepare them to enrol for EAP course. As mentioned earlier those who obtained a “D” symbol have to enroll for English for General Communication for a year at University B. There are nine units in the study guide for the English Communication and Study Skills course, which have to be completed within 14-15 weeks. The English Communication and Study Skills Course introduces students to oral communication and have to be taken by those students who obtained a “C” symbol at NSSC Ordinary Level. Oral communication is assessed on its own, which is not the case in Language and Practice and English in Practice at University A. In the syllabus of this course, the criteria that lecturers use to assess oral communication is explained to students. The

rubrics for assessing oral communication are also given and explained in the syllabus. This gives students the motivation to work hard on this component. In this syllabus, students are given a chance to read through rubrics and decide on the part in which they thought they had difficulties and want to work on. Here, the emphasis is on student oriented ideas.

There is also a unit on vocabulary where students used the phonetic key or guide in their dictionaries to write the phonetic transcription of words. In the researcher's view, this teaches students how to pronounce words correctly. Another example found in the syllabus is that, students are given rubrics to work in groups on a certain topic. They then present the topic to the rest of the class, which use an evaluation check list to evaluate the presenters.

Most of these activities were not found in Language and Practice and English in Practice syllabi.

4.2.2.3 English for Academic Purposes (ULEA) Course

The prerequisite for the English for Academic Purposes (ULEA) course at University B are English for General Communication (ULEG), English Communication and Study Skills (ULCE), or B in English at Namibia senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSCO) or 4 in English at Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher Level (NSSCH level. Here, the English for Specific Purposes (ULEA) course aimed to focus on academic reading, writing, listening and oral presentation skills for academic purposes.

Upon completion of the module, students would among other things be able to write effectively and demonstrate official and basic academic speaking. The aims of the EAP course focused on academic reading, writing, listening and oral presentation skills for academic purposes, empower students with the skills necessary to produce a referenced and researched essay written in formal academic style in the context of university studies, and empower students with oral presentations, reading and listening skills.

The English for Academic Purposes course consisted of 12 units (listening comprehension and note taking, basic academic skills, reading, academic vocabulary, mechanics in academic writing, writing academic proposals, functional situations in academic writing, selecting and synthesizing, the APA Reference style, editing and revising and academic speaking). English

for Academic Purposes was found to be the only course that taught morphology, called “word-parts” and is regarded as an aid to learning vocabulary. There were lots of activities in the study guide which students had to do. For example, students were given a word and asked to analyse it by identifying the prefix, suffix and the word itself. Students then had to define the word without the prefix and suffix. After that they had to define the word with a suffix and prefix such as “pre-dominant-ly”. Most of these activities were not found in the EAP at University A. Professional Writing and Professional Communication are not offered at University B but are offered at University A.

4.3 Questionnaire Data

4.3.1 Students’ Questionnaire data (Appendix B)

This researcher planned to hand out 50 questionnaires to students at both institutions. This means 25 students at each university would receive 25 questionnaires. Unfortunately, this did not happen as planned. There were some lecturers who did not want their classes to be observed, which made it difficult to hand out the questionnaire to students. Therefore, the researcher only handed out 45 questionnaires. Not all students who received the questionnaires returned them and finally, only 39 questionnaires were received. Despite this, the researcher was able to go back to the students and oral discussion took place and the information gathered enriched the research.

Q1. What English symbol did you obtain in Grade 12?

Table 7: Symbols obtained in Grade 12 at both higher and ordinary levels and number of students who answered Question 1 at both Universities

Symbols	H 1	H 2	H 3	H 4	O A+	O A	O B	O C	O D	O E	
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	6	23 Total number of students who answered question 1

This table explained the number of students who obtained different symbols in English in Grade 12. The letter H stands for Higher level and O means Ordinary level. These are the two types of English examination levels taken by students in Grade 12. Also number 1, 2, 3 and 4 indicated in the table means grades obtained at English Higher level while letters A+ A, B, C, D and E symbolise grades obtained at English Ordinary level. Among 39 students who received the questionnaire, only 23 answered question one. The rest probably did not want to reveal the symbols they obtained in Grade 12. Among the students who answered this question, none wrote the Grade 12 English examination at Higher Level. Also there were no students who obtained an A+, A or B symbol at Ordinary Level. It is therefore suggested by this information that most students obtained lower grades in Grade 12 which is probably why their English proficiency is still poor at tertiary level.

Q2. Did you fail any English course at this institution? If yes, what do you think were the challenges that made you fail?

None of them failed any English course at these institutions except one student who indicated that she failed Language in Practice. The student who indicated she failed Language in Practice said that she took this course on distance and did not attend classes that were offered on weekends. Issues like enrolling for a course on distance can also be a barrier to English language learning. Such students are not exposed to “face-to-face” teaching (the actual teaching taking place in a classroom) where they listen to lecturers, participate in class discussion, do different activities and ask questions whenever they do not understand. This is risk for a second language learner to enroll for English course on distance as he or she must master the work without recourse to the support of a lecturer.

Q3. What English course are you currently enrolled for?

The sample of this study covered all students from both universities who enrolled for undergraduate English courses. Therefore students indicated different courses such as Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Specific Courses, Professional Writing, English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills, and Professional Communication.

Q4. What are the challenges do you face in this course?

Most of these students indicated that they faced challenges with grammar while some mentioned that they struggled with parts of speech and analysing paragraphs. Three students mentioned that they had problems with grammar, especially passive forms, reported forms, pronunciation, spelling and tenses. Two students mentioned that they had difficulties with conditional sentences, subject and verb agreement and how to write a proper summary. One student mentioned that she needed more help in constructing conditional sentences, subject and verb agreement and how to write a proper summary.

In addition, some students said that they had problems when speaking in class citing that they always become nervous and forgot what they wanted to say. In short, they were not confident enough to speak among many people. One student indicated that he struggled with pronunciation. Three students said they did not encounter any problems. One student mentioned that the English in Practice course was difficult because the things he was required to study were irrelevant to him. Five of them mentioned challenges they faced ranged from spelling of words, study guide materials to pronunciation of words and looking for answers in the text. The spelling problem was mentioned from information gathered from lecturers and was also evident from the students' written work. All these issues may prevent students from improving their writing skills and contribute immensely to the poor language proficiency of students. The trend that emerged from this question is that regardless of the course the students were enrolled for at these institutions, they were challenged by basic English either in writing or speaking.

Q5. Do you have any problem regarding oral communication in English? If yes, please elaborate

Most students indicated that they did not have any problems and that their oral communication skills were good because they think they speak English very well. One student said she had a problem but did not specify the problem. Another student said he did not know how to pronounce words and he got nervous when asked to present in front of the class. He felt that he was not confident enough to stand and talk in front of others. It is the opinion of this researcher that when students are not confident enough to speak in front of others. This is an indication that students have not been provided with opportunities to

improve their speaking skills in class because most syllabi studied by the researcher found that speaking skills are not included in the syllabi.

Q6. Do you have problems with writing skills in English? If yes, please elaborate.

Ten students said that they did not have any problems with writing in English that their writing skills in English were good. Six students said they had spelling problems and in addition to this, one student mentioned that whenever she listened to something and was then required to write about what she had heard she got confused.

One student said that he was too slow when writing. He was always the last person to finish and when he saw others finish, he got agitated and wrote unnecessary things. One student said that he did not know how to use punctuation marks and could not write short sentences, leading to poor marks for writing long sentences. One student felt that students' writing skills needed improvement and suggested that more time be allocated when doing presentations and that poems should be included. Another student thought that they should be given tasks to do, such as story-writing. It was not surprising to find that four students said they had problems when it came to writing skills in English. Students said that they had problems with spelling and basic grammar when writing proper sentences. One student said she had punctuation problems. This was also seen in students' written work; they wrote a paragraph consisting of only one sentence using only commas and sometimes capital letters in the middle of the sentence. Some of them began a sentence with a lower case instead of a capital letter. It is the opinion of the researcher that issues like these require the attention of these institutions, for example to establish extra classes for these kinds of students. It was also surprising to read some comments in which some students mentioned that they did not have any problems regarding English writing skills when their written work was not up to standard. They believe this because they know so little about correct English that they cannot see their mistakes as seen in their written work under the sub heading 'Students' written work' in this chapter. But some students indicated that to improve their writing skills, they needed to read books, magazines and articles frequently and see how words were spelt. In addition, they needed to consult lecturers on issues they did not understand. This answer was worrisome because it is obvious that students had to ask lecturers when they did not understand something. Two students mentioned that they needed more practical work, suggesting lecturers should give more practical exercises in class. What

emerged from the answers to this question was that students themselves believed that they have problems with writing skills and need more practical work to improve these skills, which correlates with evidence from their written work.

Q7. What suggestions can you make to solve the challenges you mentioned?

One student indicated that he could improve his time management. Three students said they needed to read more to be acquainted with the way words were spelt. The other students wanted to be given more practical exercises on writing.

One of these students added that she would avoid using 'cell phone/sms' language in her formal writing. The students who suggested solutions to the challenges they faced in writing and speaking skills said that phonology classes were needed with regard to pronunciation. Regarding the writing skills students mentioned that more exercises and explanations were needed. One student listed problematic areas including constructing sentences and writing verbs in the right tenses. One student said that it was better for students who did not understand anything to ask the lecturers for clarification. Additionally the student said students should practice more and attend class everyday y to make sure that they were not left behind. One student said written examinations should be done away with. What students suggested that in order to improve the challenges they had mentioned in Question 7 should not be ignored, because they could see that to solve their challenges in English, they needed to read more, practice more and attend class on a regular basis.

Q8. Do you think the time allocated to this course is sufficient to master what you are supposed to learn in English?

Nine students said that the time allocated to the course they are enrolled for was insufficient to develop the four English skills, especially for second language students. The students felt that second language students needed more time to improve their English and what they needed to be proficient in English could not be covered by discussing a lot of topics in one hour. Students who are enrolled for English for General Communication course mentioned that the time allocate was sufficient because it is a one year course

In addition, one student indicated that English was used in class on a daily basis because it is the language of teaching and learning, and that Language in Practice was a low level course that did not require much time to learn. The student thought that Language in Practice was a very easy course and one did not need a year to do this course. Three students mentioned that the time allocated to this course was sufficient. Another student said she felt that 55 minutes allocated to an English lesson per day was not enough while a semester would be quite enough. It seems that this student did not know what she was saying because the minutes allocated to the lesson daily were multiplied by the number of days in a semester.

Maybe the student wanted to say that a lesson should be allocated more time. If this was done, all the periods would be affected and the classes would be too long. One student felt that four hours a week was not enough and suggested that they should at least meet five times a week to cover more aspects needed in English. In addition, some students mentioned that they were very slow in writing; as a result they did not finish their work on time. Since English was their second language, they needed more time to improve it. Eight students felt that the time allocated was sufficient and one student pointed out that the time allocated to the course was sufficient because they were taught English only four days a week. She also said that the institution offered the type of English that improved students' writing and oral communication skills. Some students mentioned that the chapters in the study guides were not long and each topic was covered in approximately two weeks, therefore the time was sufficient. Students also mentioned that the time was sufficient because what they were studying was familiar content; therefore, they did not need much time for that. Also, their answers to this question contradicted the answers given in previous questions. If students felt that they needed more practical work and here they felt the time was sufficient to cover what they needed to know, how then could more practical work be covered? This also indicates their lack of understanding the questions they were asked – thus further evidence of their lack of a general understanding of English.

Q9. Why do you want to be educated further in English after Grade 12?

Four students indicated that English was an international language, the official language in many countries and medium of instruction in education including Namibia therefore; there was no choice on what language they wanted to be further educated in. The students, therefore, felt that it was very important to be educated in English to be able to

communicate with different people in every situation (for example, travelling, studying and in the job market) they found themselves in. Two students did not answer this question. Three students said that they wanted to improve their communication skills and one mentioned that she had hitherto been learning in English but her English proficiency was very low. Her view was that if she continued to be educated in English her language proficiency would improve. One student said that he did not have a choice because the books and educational resources were written in English.

Some students mentioned that it was important to be educated in English to be able to interact with people who did not speak their mother tongues. In addition one student said that she wanted to have a broader experience in English and be able to speak English as fluently as possible. They also wanted to improve their English, especially vocabulary, reading skills and communication capacity. One student said she wanted to improve her oral communication skills because this was an area in which she experienced anxiety when it came to speaking in front people.

Another reason the students indicated was that the English they were taught at school was limited. Previously, they were not exposed to as many aspects as they were being exposed to at university. The English that University B offered prepared them for the real world that included what they had to apply in their working environment after they graduated. One student indicated that English was an international language and one had to know it to communicate well with people outside Namibia. Students mentioned that English is an official language, medium of instruction and international language and these are among the reasons they want to be educated in English.

Q10. Does English at this institution meet your needs?

One student answered this in the negative way and claimed that they were being taught things in English which they already knew. The student did not give an example of things he referred to. The student wanted to be taught English related to her area of specialisation. One student said the institution did not offer the kind of English that met his needs but did not elaborate. Most students responded in the affirmative and said that they were learning things which they wanted to learn, for example, parts of speech and linking words and that they were learning new things which they had not learnt at school but the new things students

were referring to were not mentioned. They said English improved their vocabulary, and at school they were not offered the kind of English they were learning now. Most of the students felt that the institution offered the kind of English they wanted to know because it enabled them to communicate with other people politely, analyse situations and deal with conflict. In addition, one student said that the English at University A broadened her knowledge and understanding of the English language.

Another student mentioned that the English he was learning at University A was related to the future work environment. Ten students felt that University B offered the English that met their needs because they were taught how to communicate with other people in demanding situations such as during a job interview, writing a report or doing presentations. Two students said they could not comment because the course they were doing was new to them. Initially, it seemed that some students did not understand this question properly but when the researcher went back for more information, it transpired that they felt that they should be taught the kind of English which they would be using in the job environment.

Q11. Would you like to study the English terminologies that relate to your specialisation? Please elaborate.

All students wanted to learn English terminology related to their specialisation. It would also help them easily find solutions to problems in their careers. In addition, their view was that it would help them understand what they were studying. The students also said that they wanted to learn English terminology related to their fields of study to make it easier for them when they started working. One student further pointed out that she wanted to learn English terminology related to her area of specialisation because after she graduated and starts working, she would be able to communicate well with the company's clients. Three students indicated that they wanted to study English terminology related to their specialisations because it would make it easier for them to be familiar with other modules. One student did not respond to the question. One student said this would not help her because she was doing Mathematics and Statistics in Science. The students reasoned here that they wanted to learn English terminology related to fields of specialisation. They wanted this because when they started working they would then not face difficulties in understanding the terms used in their job.

Q12. How often do you write during the English lesson: daily, weekly or monthly?

Students indicated that they wrote on a daily basis. Students mentioned that they wrote things such as cell phone text messages to friends and family members, notes in class, answered comprehension questions and anything given by their lecturers. Four of them mentioned that they wrote assignments and notes on a daily basis. In addition, one student mentioned that they wrote English on a weekly basis but did not elaborate. One student said they did not write much in Professional Communication at University A because they focused mainly on speaking. According to these answers, it appears that there were lots of writing going on in classes but when one reflects on the previous answers that they needed more exercises, the answers here do not correlate with what they thought they needed to do. Also, writing cellphone messages is not part of the English class lesson, and the lecturer is not in the position to see what language mistakes students make when sending cellphone messages.

Q13. What do you normally write: notes, essays, reports or assignments?

The students mentioned that what they wrote in the English lessons include exercises, summaries, notes, reports, short messages and grammar. Some indicated that they wrote essays on a monthly basis. One student said what she was asked to write in class was not sufficient and felt that more work should be given to students although the student mentioned that they wrote essays almost every day. Two students indicated that they wrote almost every day and wrote things such as assignments, tests, poems, letters and cell phone messages. One student said that they were given tests and class activities to write once or twice a week. Seven students indicated that they wrote essays, assignments and notes on a weekly basis. The writing which takes place in classes does not cover syntax (basic grammar such as sentence construction) and morphology usage. It only covers aspects such as essay assignments without grammar based exercises which students need to apply in their essay writing.

Q14. What language do you normally speak during the English lessons?

The students said that they spoke English when assisting each other on issues they did not understand and when asking a lecturer to explain something. Students also said that they engaged in conversation with other students when a lecturer asked them to complete a task

that required discussion. Eight students indicated that they spoke in English during the English class. One added that if she sat next to someone who spoke her mother tongue, she would prefer that. She mentioned that she did not see any reason for speaking in English if there was someone spoke her mother tongue. The students mentioned that during the English lesson, they often discussed content-based activities. One student mentioned that he spoke in English only if the lecturer asked him to do so. Some students mentioned that they discussed class work in English.

One student said that if he sat next to a person who spoke his mother tongue, he normally mixed English and his mother tongue to discuss class work. According to this student, he first wanted to understand what he was required to do in his mother tongue before he did it in English because he did not want to make mistakes. One student mentioned that they talked about issues based on the course outline as well as social issues during the English lessons. One of the major problems faced by the students in improving their English proficiency is sitting and talking to someone who speaks the same language. On the other hand one could say it is a good thing. If one student does not understand the instruction properly and the other student understands it well, then in this regard a clear explanation can be obtained in the first student's mother tongue who understood the instruction given in English. It is also a good thing for some students who indicated that they spoke and discussed their class work in English during the lesson. By doing this, many students would benefit in improving their language through others who spoke better English.

Q15. What language do you normally speak with your fellow students outside the classroom and why?

Some students indicated that they spoke English with their fellow students because they wanted to improve their speaking skills and learn new words. Additionally, one student said that he wanted to prepare himself for future examinations especially when writing essays therefore he spoke English with his fellow students. Three students said they preferred speaking in their home language because they could express themselves freely. In addition to this, these students mentioned that whenever they were with students who spoke the same mother tongue, they preferred mother tongue. One of the students explained that she knew more words in her home language than in English. It seemed that this student only spent time with fellow students who spoke her language. Other students also

said they spoke their home languages because most of their friends spoke similar languages. One student mentioned that she spoke English and Afrikaans with fellow students outside the classroom because that was the only way to communicate with each other as they (students) spoke different home languages. One student added that English was understood by everyone and was also flexible. Therefore, she preferred English to any other language. Another student said that he liked to interact with other students who did not speak the same language as his because he wanted to improve his speaking skills.

He further mentioned that his mother tongue was different from those of his friends. Therefore, the only way to communicate with his friends was through English. In addition to this, this student thought that since students were from different language groups, they should communicate in English because it was also the official language. Most students mentioned that they communicated in English and in their mother tongues when they are outside the classroom. The students who indicated that they spoke English with their fellow students to improve their English proficiency were benefiting from this process unlike those who mentioned that they prefer to speak in their home language because they feel comfortable and able to express themselves freely. By doing this they disadvantaged themselves.

Q16. What changes would you like to see concerning your own oral and writing skills in English?

Six students indicated they wanted to be given more time to practice especially on essay and paragraph writing so that they gained more knowledge. One student wanted to be taught proper grammar and be given more time for tests and examinations writing. The rest said that they were not very confident when speaking and wanted more sessions to practice in order to improve their speaking skills. Three students mentioned that reading skills were needed that would help them improve their speaking and writing skills. According to one student, she noticed that not all students could appropriately read and write English and as a result, she felt that she wanted to see an improvement on the side of the students but did not mention how the improvement could come about. Two students did not answer this question. Two students mentioned that they wanted their speaking skills improve through being taught how to spell words which would make them confident in their oral communication. Two students said that writing skills were very important to

them. Therefore, they needed improvement through lots of practical work. One student said that more time should be allocated to oral communication. The student felt that most students were not confident to speak in English; as a result, they should be given more time when presenting orally. One student added that in order to improve their writing, story-writing should be part of the English courses. One student supported this statement and was of the opinion that in order for them to improve their writing, students should be given more exercises on writing especially 'grammar' as the majority of students had problems with grammar.

Some students wanted to see more spelling tests and more oral activities offered to students. They wanted more time to be allocated to pronunciation, grammar and spelling. The students felt that to improve their English proficiency, they needed more time to practice, especially on essay and paragraph writing as well as oral activities, so that they gained more knowledge. This again contradicted those who felt that the time given to the courses was sufficient. When the researcher went back for more information, most students felt that they did not cover basic things in English, which would enable them to face the English outside the classroom environment.

4.3.2 Lecturers' Questionnaire data (Appendix C)

The table below indicated twelve lecturers who completed the questionnaire. They were named lecturer A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, and L. This gave this researcher the overall representation of all the courses offered at both universities. Other lecturers were not willing to complete the questionnaire and some did not return the questionnaire. The reason they provided was that they did not have time as they were attending workshops.

Table 8: Number of lecturers who completed the questionnaire and the courses they taught
(Appendix C)

Gender	Lecturer	Position	Course
Female	A	Tutor	Language in Practice and English in Practice
Female	B	Lecturer	Language in Practice
Female	C	Junior lecturer	English in Practice
Male	D	Junior lecturer	English for Academic Purposes
Male	E	Junior lecturer	English for Academic Purposes
Male	F	Junior lecturer	Professional Communication
Female	G	Lecturer	Professional Writing and
Male	H	Tutor	Professional Writing
Male	I	Junior Lecturer	English in Practice
Male	J	Lecturer	English for General Communication
Female	K	Lecturer	English Communication and Study Skills
Male	L	Lecturer	English for Academic Purposes

The answers given to Questions 1, 2 and 3 are summarised in Table 11 above.

Q4. Were you involved in the planning of the syllabus in this course? If yes what was considered when planning the syllabus?

On this question, six lecturers said that they were not involved. One lecturer who was a planner was involved in the planning of the English for Academic Purposes syllabus. Lecturer F mentioned that lecturers in her course made contributions to the syllabus. Other lecturers were only responsible for writing certain chapters of the study guide. Lecturer I mentioned that in the English in Practice course, lecturers discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the English in Practice study guide with regard to what was achieved as positive learning outcomes. Lecturers also deliberated on materials that needed to be included or excluded from the next study guide. Lecturer K and L were not involved in the planning of their syllabus because they were both new that is why they had no knowledge on how often the syllabi were planned. Lecturer F said she was involved with setting course

objectives and wrote units for the study guide. The information from this question indicated that not every lecturer was involved in the planning of the syllabi for the English course they taught. Some new lecturers found the syllabi had already been planned; they indicated that they were not part of the syllabi planning. It was clearly stated afterwards that the syllabi were planned a long time ago, and what was happening at present was only revision to meet the current job market. As a result, lecturers were only involved in the revision of the English syllabi they were responsible for.

Q5. How often is the syllabus of this course revised?

Some lecturers indicated that revision was done every three years and others every four years. Lecturer A added that when they revised the syllabi they looked at what was useful and what was lacking in the syllabus and worked on that. Lecturer F said that when review the English syllabus they looked at the following issues: the needs of students and the industry, new developments in teaching, technology and industry, and similar courses offered locally and internationally. It seemed that some lecturers did not have knowledge of how often the syllabi were revised.

Then when this researcher contacted the Heads of Department to provide more information about this, it was mentioned that the syllabi were revised every three years.

Q6. In your opinion, what are the specific areas in oral and writing skills which you think are challenging to students?

- Lack of confidence in speaking

When asked to air their views on the specific areas in oral skills which lecturers thought were challenging to students, Lecturers A and D said that students were not confident in speaking. Lecturer F concurred and added that the way the English in Practice syllabus was designed did not make provision for students to do oral communication. Lecturer F added that most of the activities found in the English in Practice study guide only required students to write. Lecturer A added that students' vocabulary was very limited and mother tongue affected most of the students' pronunciation. Lecturer C found students' colloquialism/slang to be a problem but did not elaborate. Lecturer G and C said that most students at University

A spoke 'Namlish', an adulterated version of British English. According to her, whatever they were exposed to, they learnt to communicate and only a few tried to improve on what they were taught. Lecturer E said that students' oral communication was normally good and some students were able to express themselves fluently. Lecturer G mentioned that students that were studying English for Academic Writing struggled with writing. Lecturer H and I said that students had a variety of problems. One of the most commonly observed mistakes was the interference of their mother tongue. According to him, some students wrote as follows: "The people they went to church yesterday."

Students also did not differentiate between words like "this/these, thing/ think and the articles 'a' and 'the'. Lecturer H said that since the oral component of English in Practice was not formally tested, it was impossible to assess students' accuracy but in his opinion, it was generally weak. On the other hand, Lecturer K said students were challenged by pronunciation, concord and tense usage in oral communication. Her suggested solutions to the challenges included the introduction of intensive language training supplemented with vocabulary instruction and extensive reading. In addition to this, lecturers at University B said students could express themselves orally but needed to improve on formal language and logical flow of ideas when they spoke.

One lecturer mentioned that students were generally fluent in oral communication and felt that students struggled with spelling, concord, basic grammar, essay structure, passive voice and punctuation. Lecturer L said students struggled with academic writing, academic vocabulary and when they acknowledged sources. All lecturers suggested that if students wrote intensively they could improve their English proficiency. Some lecturers mentioned that students had basic proficiency in oral communication but errors in grammar and pronunciation were still present though they communicated meaningfully. There were mixed feelings on this question. Some lecturers mentioned students' inadequate vocabulary, students were not confident in speaking English, the interference of mother tongues and a lack of understanding of basic grammar. This gave an indication that there were language problems which needed attention. However, although the lecturers were aware of the problems it seemed that they were not trying to solve them despite the revision of syllabi every three years.

- Writing skills a problem

According to Lecturer K, writing skills were and remained below standard of what was expected at tertiary level. She suggested the institution introduce a unit on writing skills. Lecturer K also mentioned specific aspects that challenged students included concord, tense usage and sentence structure in writing.

On the writing skills, Lecturer E said that some students struggled with grammar. Eight lecturers said that students made many grammatical mistakes when writing related to sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, and mostly subject and verb agreement.

Lecturer C was of the opinion that to solve these challenges, realignment or restructuring of the language courses and communication courses should be done so that the elementary courses are tailored to deal with the elementary problems of second language development. Lecturer A thought that more practice in speaking and writing should be done while Lecturer B said that the time allocated to these courses was very short. Lecturer B advised that since English was a second language to these students, it would be good if the institution could revisit the time allocated to it so that proper teaching of these skills could be done. Lecturer G mentioned that some students did not use punctuation marks correctly and could not write coherently. Lecturer L said that students in his course had problems with choosing appropriate words for provided contexts.

Lecturer D said that students' accuracy in oral communication skills in his course was poor; the message could be communicated but there was gross lack of register such as professional and technical jargon. Lecturer I stated that students expressed themselves well in English but struggled with technical language. Lecturer I said that although students did not struggle with written communication, they found it difficult to use formal language and to follow different writing formats. Lecturers K, I, E and F said the writing skill was fair but at times not quite clear and this could lead to miscommunication. Lecturer F said that writing was normally worse than oral communication with often poor sentence construction, incorrect concord, tenses and limited vocabulary. Lecturer H mentioned that most students' writing skills were generally weak even though there were some brilliant students whose writing skills were at the required level. Lecturer I mentioned that students in his course were challenged by formal writing and had limited vocabulary. Lecturers also encouraged

them to grasp writing opportunities such as blogs or social networking. The lecturers felt that the main issues regarding writing skills were sentence structure, punctuation and spelling, and they felt that students' writing in English was worse than their speech.

Q7. What can you suggest to solve these challenges/problems?

Lecturers suggested remedies to overcome challenges they mentioned. However, the researcher was of the opinion that lecturers were aware of the challenges faced by the students and when the syllabi were revised these challenges were not addressed.

Lecturers were asked to suggest remedies to problems faced in writing and speaking. Lecturer C suggested that realignment or restructuring of the language courses and communication courses be done so that the elementary courses were tailored to deal with elementary problems of second language development. Lecturer A said that students needed to be given more practical lessons and write more. Lecturer G suggested that students should be given direct instruction in writing and a chance to speak in various situations. Also students needed to read extensively. Lecturer H suggested that lecturers needed to do drill exercises and correction of mistakes on a regular basis. Lecturer I was of the opinion that emphasis should be put on the teaching of different genres and parts of speech and that students needed to be encouraged to read a lot. Lecturers K and M suggested that registers had to be thoroughly taught. In addition to that there was a need for more practical sessions to train students to use academic vocabulary, as well as practice synthesis of ideas and using different sources.

Q8. Do you incorporate oral communication into writing lessons?

Lecturers A and B said that it was very difficult to do because the study guides did not specify that. They all felt that the time was not enough. Lecturer C said it was difficult to incorporate oral communication into writing because the study guide did not provide for that and when he tried to do it, there was not enough time. Lecturer F incorporated oral communication into writing lessons only sometimes because the time allocated was very short. Lecturer H said he did not incorporate speaking activities into writing lessons because the time was not enough and that the study guide did not provide for that. Lecturer I mentioned that he incorporated oral communication into writing lessons because at times students generated ideas through discussion and also discussed different writing formats

before they wrote. Lecturer D said he tried to do that, but the period was too short to achieve what he intended, which pushed his lesson into the following period. Lecturer K said spoken activities could support the focus on writing when students discussed a topic, for example, “one-on-one, a debate on a certain issue or group activities” before writing about it. Lecturer L said oral presentation was used as a way to support the focus on written work in her class. Lecturer M said talking about text or a topic beforehand not only activated background knowledge, but identified any misinterpretation of a topic.

This would then be followed by a written activity. It appeared that most lecturers felt that the time allocated to the English courses was too limited to incorporate oral communication into writing lessons otherwise the syllabus would not be completed before students write the examination. It is, however, clear that lecturers mostly teach for examination only.

Q9. In what ways could speaking activities support your focus on writing?

Lecturer A did not understand this question properly because she mentioned that when students do a writing exercise she allowed students to speak to each other. Some lecturers said that speaking or discussing an issue before writing helped students to remember what was said during the speaking activity. One lecturer mentioned that as a lecturer, she preferred to discuss an issue before writing. Lecturer C said that brainstorming at the beginning of a writing assignment could help focus what one wanted the students to produce. Lecturer E did not answer this question. Some lecturers were not sure of how speaking activities could support the focus on writing. Lecturer F mentioned that speaking activities supported or gave students confidence to use the language in writing.

Lecturer G felt that speaking activities helped students to generate ideas that could be used in writing. Lecturer H mentioned that speaking activities could greatly improve writing because the observed speaking mistakes could be used to improve students' writing skills. The trend that emerged from this question indicated that when speaking precedes writing, students were confident to use the language in writing as well as to generate ideas of what to write.

Q10. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking and writing abilities? If so, what strategies might you use to do this?

All lecturers felt that it was their role to help students build confidence in speaking. Lecturer A said that she encouraged students to speak by introducing some topics of interest, for example breaking news from the newspapers, news of famous people or news from TV. In this way, students became motivated and started to speak. Lecturer B and C said that they tried to create a situation in which they could make everyone to speak. Lecturer E said that her class atmosphere was supportive. According to Lecturer E whenever she made a mistake she acknowledged it and corrected herself. Also, students in her class took turns to be group leaders or report back.

It was not left to the more talkative ones. Lecturer E added that subtle praise also helped in boosting the confidence of students when they spoke. Lecturer F added that during the oral communication lesson, she used general class discussions of topics or news specifically asking certain individuals to respond. This means she used a question-answer approach to teaching. In the writing component, a writing topic was firstly discussed, brainstorming of ideas orally in order to build their confidence to put their ideas in writing. Lecturer G provided good samples of oral speeches and encouraged students to speak freely without much concern about grammatical errors. He also asked students to write about anything that interested them. Lecturer G also mentioned that he provided sample pieces of writing to students and encouraged them to write often and provided feedback on their writing progress. Lecturer H said that he wanted to introduce 'role play' to improve students' speaking skills as one of the strategies. According to him, the role play would involve familiar situations meant to improve their speaking skills. When writing, Lecturer H gave regular essays and analysed specific errors, after which he incorporated similar errors in future lessons. Lecturer I said that before students wrote any task, they discussed issues related to writing. Lecturer M saw it as his role to help students build confidence in their spoken and written abilities by promoting class participation from all the students, in terms of questions responded to or asked as well as in problems solving through collaborative learning. Lecturer 1 used oral presentation to build students' confidence in spoken abilities. Lecturer J said in her classes, the text was discussed and read in class. Students gave opinions and sometimes debates were held so that students could practice using English in a variety of contexts. In addition, presentations were scheduled. When it came to writing,

Lecturer L mentioned how he strategised by giving students abundant opportunities to write and then showing the class some of the best academic features that were found in written work. Lecturer K used free flow written essays and encouraged students to keep a journal to write down everything from trivial things to important issues. Every lecturer has his or her strategies on how to build confidence in students' speaking and writing abilities and what works for his or her class.

Q11. Can you describe the grammar accuracy of students?

Regarding the accuracy of the students' grammar, Lecturer D said it was passable but rather pedestrian and inaccurate. Lecturer D mentioned that concord was one aspect that troubled students.

His view was that all lecturers should make concerted efforts that they should not just focus on the examination, but should teach English that would benefit students in the long run. Lecturer E believed that students' grammar was varied in the sense that some students were near perfect depending on their primary and secondary school background. However, most of them were still poor. Lecturer C said students from one big region in Namibia were very poor in grammar without elaborating. The lecturer added that students struggled with tenses and subject/verb agreement. Lecturer C felt that tenses and subject/verb agreement should be taught at the beginning of every semester. In addition to this, lecturers said the students' grammar was poor, especially with respect to sentence structure.

Most lecturers thought that the solution to this problem would be to set aside a whole semester to deal with grammar. The lecturers also said the syllabi needed to be revised. Lecturer B believed that the English problem was inherited from school and carried through to tertiary level, adding that students who obtained C, E and D symbols at secondary school would have to do English for one year. Lecturer F mentioned that students' grammar was poor especially with regards to tenses and concord and felt that tenses and sentences construction troubled students.

Lecturer F suggested that students needed more writing practise. Lecturer G said when it came to grammar, some students were good and others struggled especially when choosing the correct form of a verb concord. Lecturer H mentioned that students' grammar was

seriously limited by their vocabulary. Students did not express themselves accurately. For instance, they used the word 'nice' to describe all pleasant things in life instead of using words such as 'delicious', 'exciting', 'pleasant', 'thrilling' and so on. Lecturer H also said that the students' inability to differentiate between definite and indefinite articles and certain homophones hampered their accuracy. The lecturers suggested that t h e y (lecturers) needed to put emphasis on spelling and the use of dictionaries to enable them to see the difference in meaning between words.

Lecturer I said that when it came to speaking, he afforded students opportunities to present on certain topics through group discussions and feedback and he encouraged writing in his classes. All lecturers felt that students' grammar accuracy was poor, which was also indicated in the students' questionnaire.

This indicated that there was a problem which was well known by the students and lecturers. It seemed there were no solutions to these problems on the side of the lecturers. Although lecturers suggested some remedies to curb this it was probably difficult to implement them because of time and since every after three years the syllabi were revised and the problem still existed.

Q12. What are the instructional methods that you use when teaching syntax and morphology?

Lecturer A explained she did not have any special methods to teach syntax and morphology, but just explained what a sentence and a run-on sentence were, as well as how to punctuate a sentence. The lecturer added that the syllabus and study guide did not make any provision for teaching syntax and morphology. Meanwhile, Lecturer B said that the Language in Practice and English in Practice syllabi focused on grammar revision. According to Lecturer B, the department assumed that students would know syntax and morphology from secondary school, but since they did not, revision was emphasised. Lecturers C, D and E said they did not have any methods to teach either syntax or morphology.

Lecturer F said she first taught the rules and then gave examples after which students had to practice what they had been taught. Lecturer G said syntax and morphology were not part of his course. Lecturer H mentioned he used the 'subject/verb/object' (SVO) approach because it allowed him to place emphasis on the various parts of speech in a sentence whether simple,

complex or compound. To teach morphology, he looked at the origin of words with heavy emphasis on a word with a Greek or Latin root. Words such as ‘prerequisite,’ ‘undrinkable,’ ‘cats/dishes,’ ‘goose/geese’ where prefixes, suffixes and inflections were important, were employed to teach morphology. Lecturer I did not answer this question. Lecturer K used demonstration, cooperative learning and simulation, while Lecturer L used tenses to teach syntax. When it came to instructional methods of teaching morphology, Lecturer K used vocabulary building and Lecturer M again used demonstration and cooperative learning. In teaching syntax Lecturer L used extensive explanation on types of sentences and utilised linking words and cohesive devices.

She also used ‘build up’ methods and the process genre approach. Lecturer L explained that when teaching vocabulary, for example academic words, she introduced morphology with reflections and derivatives of words. When the syllabi were analysed, in most of them, there were no parts to teach syntax and morphology. It seems as it is an assumption from English departments that students should have already known these. The syllabi that covered these aspects, lecturers used their methods to teach them.

Q13. Do you think the time frame allocated to this course is sufficient to prepare students for the job market after they graduate?

Most lecturers mentioned that the time was very short, considering the fact that English was students’ second language. Lecturer D suggested that it was good to synthesise courses so they would build on each other. Teaching aims would be on a competitive and not on an examination basis. Lecturers at University A also mentioned that the time allocated was insufficient because lecturers had to rush to complete the modules, which left no time for students to practice new skills. They suggested a one year basic foundation course be introduced that would combine Language in Practice and English in Practice. In addition, Lecturer G said that more time was needed for English courses so that lecturers could have adequate time to tackle challenges faced by students.

Lecturer H mentioned that lecturers always argued that too little time was allocated to English and the issue was not helped by the students’ lack of oral practice outside of classrooms as well as the non- existence of a reading culture. The lecturer suggested a lot of tutorial classes were needed together, with a compulsory reading list for all students who

undertook English courses at the institution. One lecturer felt that since English for Academic Purposes at University A focused more on academic language usage, the time allocated was not enough to cover all aspects of language in academic discourse but fell short of giving any suggestions to the problem. Lecturer K felt that time allocated to English Communication and Study Skills was insufficient and suggested the course be a “year course,” while Lecturer L and J felt the time allocated was sufficient because proper placement procedures were in place. Lecturer M suggested that time allocated to English courses be extended by at least one more year, and English Special Course should be planned. The lecturers felt that the time allocated to the English courses was insufficient as they teach to finish the syllabus not the students to be fully equipped with proper English. Therefore the interventions are needed here as suggested in Chapter five.

4.4 Interview Data

The researcher and the lecturers concerned discussed students’ oral and written work in English; therefore, the findings of this study are not generalized to include all tertiary institutions, all lecturers, heads of departments, students, syllabi, course coordinators and language centres in Namibia.

4.4.1 Heads of Departments’ interview questions (Appendix D)

Q1. Which English course/s are you responsible for?

Two Heads of Department (HODs) of the Language, Communication and Language Centre were interviewed for this study. They were named HOD1 (Communication), who was responsible for English for Academic Purposes, Professional Writing and Professional Communication. She was also responsible for degree courses in English and had been in this position for three years. HOD 2 (Languages) who was responsible for the service courses, namely: Language in Practice and English in Practice.

HOD 3 was responsible for the Language Centre which covers the following courses: English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills, and English for Academic Purposes.

Q2. What are your duties and responsibilities regarding the position you have mentioned?

Two heads of departments said that they were supervised by the Executive Dean of their schools and then they supervised the department, staff and they also teach. HOD1: *“under the supervision of the Executive Dean, I provide the general supervision of the department, academic staff and the teaching and training of students, and have the powers and duties assigned by the dean”*. In addition, HOD2: *“The primary internal responsibilities include strategic planning and quality assurance, the overseeing and implementation of academic processes to ensure excellence in teaching and learning and encouraging research and scholarship”*. HOD3 said that she was the acting Head of Language Centre. She was responsible for English for Academic Purposes, English Communication and Study Skills, as well as English for General Communication. HOD3: *“My duties and responsibility in the Language Centre are to report to the director, to coordinate with the help of coordinators in the courses mentioned earlier, and other duties as spelled out in the job description,”* which she did not mention.

Q3. What is the time frame allocated to the course/s you are responsible for?

Regarding the time allocated to the courses they supervised they all felt that the time allocated to the course was insufficient because of the students' English background. Their feelings here mean that enough time is needed to teach English at these institutions. HOD1: *“14-15 weeks were allocated to the courses under my supervision and that the time allocated for English for Academic Purposes was not enough because time was needed to finish the academic presentation and writing.* HOD2: *“For most students, English is a third, even fourth language and I feel that the time allocated to the service courses is not sufficient for all students to prepare them for the job market or the next English course”*. HOD3: *“English for Academic Purposes and English Communication and Study Skills courses at University B last six months, while English for General Communication lasts a year. I feel that time allocated to English for Academic Purposes and English Communication and Study Skills is insufficient considering the students' English background”*.

Q4. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?

All Heads of Departments were involved in the planning of the syllabi of the courses they supervised. Student learning outcomes, their needs, the level of students who enrolled for the course and the course outcomes were considered when planning syllabi.

HOD1: “Student learning outcomes and the needs of industries are considered. HOD2: *“I was involved in planning the Language in Practice syllabus about five years ago and the Language in Practice team do a quick annual review. However, the course needs to be fully reviewed. Aspects such as the level and needs of students who registered for the course, how English was taught at school and how much of the school syllabi was actually taught in particular Namibian schools were considered when planning the English syllabus”*. HOD1: *“I was involved in the planning of the syllabus as were all lecturers, coordinators and heads of department involved in the planning of the syllabus for their course”*. HOD3: *“The syllabi are reviewed every three years as well as course outcomes based on improving skills that include reading, writing, speaking and listening that were considered when planning the syllabi”*.

Q5. Are you satisfied with students’ performance in the course/s? If, not what do you do?

HOD1 and 2 confirmed that they were satisfied with students’ performance while HOD3 said students’ performance was not satisfactory. HOD3 mentioned that unless the time allocated to the English courses is improved, then it is only when more teaching would be done and is when one can be satisfied with their performance and address plagiarism. HOD2: *“For part-time students, time was an issue as they had less tuition time compared to full time students”*. HOD1” *“The student-lecturer ratio is good and those who fail have only themselves to blame”*. HOD3: *“Students’ performance is not satisfactory because they plagiarise when they are given tasks, losing marks as a result”*.

Q6. How do you determine that the syllabi achieved their objectives?

All Heads of Department mentioned that the students evaluate lecturers to determine whether the syllabi achieved their objectives. Students were given forms to evaluate lecturers, which

in the opinion of this researcher was not an effective way of determining that, as some students would not be bothered to complete the forms effectively and objectively. The issues of looking at the assessment results and visit classes could be some of the ways to determine that especially for the newly recruited lecturers. *HOD1: "Internal quality assurance is done once every semester and the curriculum is revised every three years". HOD2: "One way to determine whether the syllabus achieves its objectives is to look at all assessment results".*

HOD3: "Students evaluate lecturers to determine whether the syllabus is achieving its objectives". HOD1: "I supervise lecturers that are on probation to ensure quality and ensure compliance with the aims and objectives of the syllabus. In addition, I moderate examination papers". HOD2: "I visit classes often unannounced to see if students are progressing well". HOD3: "I conduct unexpected class visits and assess students' work".

Q7. How would you describe grammatical accuracy of students?

All Heads of Department felt that the students' grammar accuracy is below standard ranging from incorrect tenses in spoken and written language to inadequate punctuation in written work. HOD1 suggested that students should do weekly library research to find out things they do not know. In the researcher's opinion, this would not solve grammatical problems as, despite the fact that these students are at tertiary institutions and might be expected to undertake such library research independently, it must be kept in mind that English is their second language and their English proficiency is relatively poor, therefore it is unlikely that they will successfully be able to find out 'things they do not know' on line. *HOD1: "The grammar of students doing English for Academic Purposes is very poor compared to that of the students in Professional Writing and Professional Communication and I feel that referencing, paraphrasing, summary and how to do research is a big challenge for students. I suggest that students should do weekly library research to learn how to use the online resources and find out things which they do not know. They also need to do practical tutorials"*

HOD2: "I feel that students have certainly improved their oral skills. However, the written (English) skills leave much to be desired. In addition to this, students find it difficult to apply correct tenses in spoken and written exercises, and to apply theory in practice. Therefore I suggest that remedial work be done with those identified as experiencing these challenges".

HOD3: *“Students’ grammar is average in the sense that sentences are readable and understandable, although aspects such as concord, tenses, word ending and punctuation are challenging. I feel that teaching of grammar at schools should have received priority”.*

Q8. As a Head of Department, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?

The Heads of Departments’ sentiments were similar to those of lecturers. They all felt that speaking activities benefit students in writing activities; therefore it should be done first before writing. HOD1: *“Speaking activities such as making a speech could help to reinforce writing activities such as the writing and editing of speeches. In addition, oral debating has helped students develop critical thinking skills and argumentation in their writing activities. I do not have any reservations when it comes to both writing and speaking because they are equally important”.*

HOD2: *“In some ways speaking activities could benefit students in writing as students would be able to think about the topic before they write, speaking activities allow for arranging of ideas, speaking activities allow students to do research on topics and by so doing improve their writing. In addition to that, writing and speaking are influenced by a student’s reading abilities”.*

HOD3: *“Speaking precedes writing; therefore writing should reinforce speaking skills. All spoken activities should be followed by written work”.*

Q9. Can you briefly describe the students’ accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English?

All Heads of Department felt that students’ speaking skills are better than their writing skills although one could read and hear the use of incorrect sentences. However, the message is clear. At the same time, the students’ should not be allowed to produce work containing lots of grammatical errors but be put across in perfectly correct English, since these are tertiary institutions. It appeared that when students used incorrect language nothing was done about it. Tertiary education should not produce students with poor language proficiency.

HOD1: “*I believe that the students’ speaking skills are better because they are taught presentation skills. When it comes to the writing skills, students plagiarized and have problems with sentence structure*”. HOD2: “*Students are fairly proficient in their oral communication skills and their message comes across fairly well. When it comes to writing skills, it is difficult to understand the written work of the students because their sentences often make very little or no sense at all*”. HOD3: “*Students’ oral communication is quite fluent compared to writing and those students’ writing skills are poor because they write incorrect and long sentences. Most of the students’ work is incomplete. The problem the department faces in teaching oral communication is time allocation and large classes. In addition, giving feedback on time between writing tasks, class sizes and short semesters are also challenges to teaching oral and writing skills*”.

Q10. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking abilities? What strategies do you use to help the students?

HODs felt that students must speak in front of other students because the more they speak, the less anxious they become, and such activities will help students improve their writing. In addition, HOD2 and 3 were confident that lecturers taught what should be taught but students did not seem to internalise what they had been taught. HOD 1: “*I consider it my role to help students build their self-esteem and overall confidence. This could be done through doing reflective exercises and practicing speaking. Role-modelling and role- playing could also help to strengthen speaking abilities*”. HOD2: “*It is imperative for any language lecturer to build confidence in his/her students’ speaking abilities. My concern is not so much with speaking as with writing. For some reasons, the students at this institution cannot write well. In some ways, students have to take responsibility for their learning*”. HOD1: “*I feel that students must write whenever writing activity or class work is given by lecturers, or should write and bring their writing activities to the lecturers to correct the errors made*”.

4.4.2 Course Coordinators’ interview questions (Appendix E)

Three course coordinators agreed to be interviewed regarding Language in Practice, English in Practice and English for General Communication. They were named Coordinator 1, Coordinator 2 and Coordinator 3.

Q1. Which English course/s are you responsible for?

Coordinator 1 was responsible for the Language in Practice Course. Coordinator 2 coordinated the English in Practice Course while Coordinator 3 coordinated the activities of the English for General Communication Course. Coordinator 1: *“I coordinate two courses, namely Language in Practice full time and part time and distance students who are enrolled for African Literature”*, which did not form part of this study. Coordinator 3: *“I coordinate the activities of English for General Communication”*. Coordinator 1: *“I was a lecturer who had been in this position for six years now I coordinate Language in Practice”*. Coordinator 2: *“I have been a junior lecturer who coordinated English in Practice and had been in this position for just a year”*.

Q2. What are your duties and responsibilities regarding the course you are responsible for?

All Course Coordinators' responsibilities were stipulated in the course outline such as setting of assignments and tests, making sure tests and assignments were printed and distributed among lecturers for implementation and making sure test and examination papers were set on time. Coordinator 1: *“My duties include delivering lectures as stipulated in the course outline, setting and marking assignments and examinations, and supervising classroom-based activities”*. Coordinator 2: *“My duties include coordinating the setting of assignments and tests, making sure they are printed, distributing them amongst lecturers and formatting question papers”*. Coordinator 3: *“I am a coordinator who has been in this position for two years. I coordinate all the responsibilities as stipulated in the course outline, for example, making sure that the test and examination papers are set on time, memos are set and standardised, arranging and chairing the course meeting”*.

Q3. Were you involved in the planning of the syllabus of the course you are responsible for? If yes, elaborate! If no, who is?

Coordinators 1 and 2 were involved in planning the existing syllabus. Coordinator 3 had not been involved in the planning of the syllabus they were currently using but were involved during the revision process. Coordinator 3: *“I was not involved in the planning of the syllabus we are currently using because I just joined the Institution. The syllabus is planned and*

reviewed every five years". This answer contradicted the answer from HOD 3 (who said the syllabi are reviewed every three years) perhaps because she recently joined the institution.

Q4. What do you consider when planning the English syllabus?

The coordinators mentioned that they look at the job market and how the content in the syllabi meets the market needs. In addition, during the revision process, they also look at what did not work properly in the syllabi in the previous years and improve on that. Coordinator 1: *"We look at the job market and work on how the content meets its needs"*. The researcher wanted clarification from the coordinator to explain "we". Coordinator 1: *"I mean lecturers I supervise and myself"*. Coordinator 2: *we look at the job market and improve on what was difficult in previous years.*

Q5. Considering the fact that English is the second language for most of the students at this institution, in your opinion, do you think the time frame allocated to this course is sufficient to prepare students for the job market after they graduate? Please motivate your answer.

Coordinator 1 and 2 felt the time was insufficient because one cannot become proficient in a language in a semester. They therefore felt that the time was too short. These two coordinators coordinated the courses which took four months (a semester). Coordinator 3: *"I feel the time is sufficient because the time allocated to the courses is one year. Coordinator 3 coordinated English for General Communication. English for General Communication is a compulsory one year English course. In the researcher's opinion, a one year English course is sufficient. It was designed for students who were enrolled for diploma programmes and those who meet the requirements to enroll for degree courses but obtained lower than a D symbol in English at secondary school. Coordinator 3: In addition, I think the time allocation is sufficient because we are able to cover course activities in the time allocated. On the other hand, I think it insufficient, because a language cannot be learned in a year"*.

Q6. How would you describe the grammatical accuracy of students?

The Course Coordinators felt about the grammatical accuracy of students was similar to the feelings of lecturers, students and Heads of Departments, that the students' grammatical

accuracy was poor. This indicated that it was a general problem that was shared by Heads of Department, lecturers as well as Course Coordinators. Coordinator 1: *“Students need a lot of practice for them to improve. The grammar aspects that I think trouble students in Language in Practice are subject and verb agreement, verb tenses, singular and plural forms, and prepositions”*. Coordinator 2: *“Students’ skills are very poor especially when it comes to subject and verb agreement, conditionals and reported speech”*.

Coordinator 1: *“I feel that more practice in both written and oral should be done”*.

Coordinator 2: *I think that lecturers could share best practices to help each other”*.

Coordinator 3: *“When it comes to the grammar of students, some are good and some are bad. Aspects such as reported speech and passive forms challenge the students. I don’t have any solution to these challenges because I am very satisfied with students’ performances in the English for General Communication course because the assessment done is deemed satisfactory. I also don’t do class visits, it is the duty of the Head of Department”*.

Q7. Can you briefly describe the students’ accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English?

The way the Course Coordinators felt about the students’ accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English was again similar to the feelings of lecturers and Heads of Departments i.e. that it was passable but inaccurate as students struggled with tenses. This indicated that it was a general problem that was felt by all. Coordinator 1: *“The students communicate well orally without hesitation even when the structures they are uttering are incorrect. With respect to writing, there are numerous errors in students’ written work, for example, some of the errors are very simple and students could correct them themselves if they were more careful but they just ignore them”*. Coordinator 2: *“In English in Practice, oral communication proficiency is not tested but from the interactions in class it is evident that the majority of students are not accurate”*. The researcher then asked the lecturer to elaborate on what she does when she notices the language errors in students. *“I just ignore it because of the time”*. *“Although in English in Practice writing proficiency is tested, the majority of students have problems when writing in the correct tense”*. Coordinator 3: *“Students speak fairly English because one is able to get the message they want to put across, the only problem is writing. They don’t write what they speak”*.

Q8. What are the problems you face in the teaching of oral communication and writing skills?

The problems the Course Coordinators were challenged with correlate with what some students mentioned, namely that students prefer to discuss class activities with those who speak the same language. The Course Coordinators' sentiments were that students make simple and unnecessary mistakes. Students do not seem to care what they write. In addition, the Course Coordinators were concerned about the time allocated to the English courses, citing that students could not produce quality work in such a short time. Coordinator 1: The problems I face in teaching oral and written communication are that students tend to speak in their first languages when doing group work. Students also make careless grammar and spelling mistakes. In addition, students lack commitment and sometimes they are reluctant to do corrections on language errors in marked essays. Also the time allocated for oral activities is too short and for Language in Practice, no semester mark is derived from oral activities". Coordinator 2: "*The time is very limited to assist students thoroughly when writing and the class groups are too big to enable lecturers to give individual students attention*". Coordinator 3: "*Oral communication is as challenging as writing skills because the time is very short, one cannot produce quality writing in it*".

Q9. As a Course Coordinator, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?

Again the Course Coordinators' sentiments on this question were the same as of the lecturers and Heads of Department i.e. students should first speak before they write. The researcher is of the opinion that there is little correlation between speaking a language and writing it accurately, in the sense that students could come up with good points during the speaking activities, but to put them in writing, is still a question. Coordinator 2: "*Speaking activities could help to give students the opportunity to practice language structures. I don't have any reservations incorporating speaking into the writing activity because it enables students to speak and discuss issues before writing*". Coordinator 1: "*Speaking activities also help students to explore some topics and to have a clear picture of what they are going to write about*". Coordinator 3: "*Speaking precedes writing in English for General Communication so there is no problem*".

Q10. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking abilities? What strategies do you use to help the students?

All coordinators felt it is their duty and responsibility to help students build confidence in their speaking. Since one of their duties is to teach, it is an absolute norm to build confidence in their students. Although most of the syllabi do not make provision for teaching oral communication, some lecturers and Course Coordinators mentioned that they try to build students' self confidence in speaking by introducing topics of interest from newspapers or TV. In such a way students participate in the discussion. Coordinator 1: "Yes, it is my role to help students; I am a lecturer and that is part of my duty. So if I don't do it then I neglect what I am paid for". Coordinator 2: I believe it is my role to help students build confidence in speaking. *"The strategy I am using includes interesting topics from current news to get everyone participation. I also motivate them, boost their self-confidence by convincing them that it is fine to make mistakes because one learns from that"*. Coordinator 3 did not answer as she was rushing to something.

4.5 Class Observation Data (Appendix F)

This researcher planned to visit 14 classes, being two classes per course and using the class observation check list items (Appendix: F). These classes were Language in Practice, English in Practice, English for Academic Purposes, Professional Writing and Professional Communication at University A, and English for General Communication, English for Academic Purposes; and English Communication and Study Skills at University B. Twelve classes were actually observed. The duration of each lesson was 55 minutes, three times a week (face to face). The English for General Communication class at University B and the Professional Writing Course at University A were not observed. Lecturers in these courses were not willing to allow this researcher to observe their classes. The findings are analysed according to each course because each course had its own characteristics and different approaches.

It is also considered to be in the interest of the readers of this study to know how students performed in every English course at different levels at University A (refer to Table 4). In addition, topics that were observed differed and were therefore analysed as such.

Generally at University A, five classes are conducted every week - three or four are face-to-face where students meet lecturers assigned to specific groups. Another lesson is called “website or practical” in which students practiced what they are taught during face-to-face lessons. During these lessons, students are given activities to practice online. Following this lesson is a “tutorial lesson” in which students joined any slot where students in that slot are not necessarily from their face-to-face group. Here students have to follow up what they had done during the website lesson. At University B, a tutorial lesson does not take place.

4.5.1 Language in Practice

Two Languages in Practice classes were observed. The total number of students in the first class visited was 16, but only 10 attended the lesson. The lecturer was also surprised that some students did not turn up for the lesson while three of them arrived late. The lesson was a follow-up on essay-writing. Three activities took place and all the English skills were integrated. The first activity was to correct misspelled words found in essays written by the students. For example: disturbing, mischievous, definitely and so on.

The second activity was on correcting errors found in sentences made by students. For example:

- poverty is cause by lack of education
- people must learn many language.
- childrens must be respective
- this is my massage to the world
- they need more informations
- their know how to deal with this problems

Students were also told to choose the correct word (homophones) to complete each sentence and explain the meaning of the remaining word. The students completed these activities in groups of three.

As this researcher moved around the class to listen to the interaction taking place, sentence structure was satisfactory in the sense that no major grammatical mistakes could be detected.

One student wrongly pronounced the word “write” as “light”. This researcher waited for the other students to leave the class and asked the student what her mother tongue was and the student said it was Oshiwambo. The Oshiwambo alphabet does not have the “r”- sound. Therefore this specific student’s pronunciation was affected by the mother tongue. All students spoke in English and this means the oral or speaking skill was practiced. The only thing that was not observed was the use of bound or derivational morphemes. The inflectional morphemes could be heard for example the addition of ‘s’ to the word to show plural such as problem/s. The question is: were the students consciously using them as morphemes or just in keeping with the rules of English? The lecturer asked groups to report back on the passive form.

One group came up with two versions of the sentence: *Somebody stole my car*. These students were not sure which sentence was actually correct.

- My car was stolen by.....
- My car got stolen by.....

The lecturer explained that when converting a sentence from active to passive form, the same tense should be maintained and words that are there should be the only ones used, and the position of the subject and the object need to exchange.

In addition, the lecturer said that the first thing they had to do was to check the tense in which the sentence was written. Although students knew the formula, some still had doubts about whether sentences in active form should use the same tense.

The oral communication was done in such a way that any student in the group was given the opportunity to answer. However, due to the methodology used, it was difficult to really determine whether the student’s English proficiency was fluent, clear and appropriate. The lecturer’s English proficiency was very good. Other items on the check list were not done, such as debate and proper oral presentation. Both the lecturer and students were involved and participate in the lesson. Students were given homework, namely to go through the examination paper of June 2013, which consisted of comprehension, grammar, an essay and paragraph analysis, and essay- writing.

The second class visited was for engineering students and 28 students attended the lesson. The lesson was a follow-up and continuation of the previous lesson on adjectives. Students were asked to summarise what they had learned previously. The students who responded to the question summarised the adjectives correctly.

The prescribed study guide was the only teaching aid used, but not all the students had e books because they apparently were out of print. The lecturer asked the students to complete an activity using comparative adjectives where students had to compare two or more items.

Students took five minutes to complete the activity. They worked in pairs or in groups. The lecturer also moved around the class to listen to what students were discussing. As feedback, the lecturer asked individual students for the correct answer. The first sentence was: *This road is..... than the high (safe)*. The first student said 'more safer.' Some students supported this answer while others protested. The lecturer then asked those who said that the answer was wrong to support their view. One student explained that 'safe' cannot take 'more' because it is short and has two syllables. The student further explained that 'more' could only be used with longer words in comparison and that the superlative 'most' is added to a longer word and 'est' to shorter words.

4.5.2 English in Practice

The students' and lecturer's English proficiency was good. No grammatical error was detected as feedback was given. All students participated well during the lesson. Students' sentences were clear and lengthy answers were given when they justified their answers. The answers were not that appropriate because students continued making mistakes when it came to comparative and superlative adjectives. Students spoke with enthusiasm, their accent and pronunciation were not affected by their mother tongues. Their grammar was satisfactory in that most of the answers given were correct although it seemed they did not know the rules of converting the adjectives into comparatives and superlatives. At the end of the lesson, students were given homework to read notes on adverbs for the next lesson.

These findings such as converting adjectives into comparatives and superlatives seem to support the interview data that students doing this course need more time to learn English because of the simple mistakes they are making.

In the third class, 27 out of 30 students turned up for the class. It was a lesson on summarising a text. According to the lecturer, students in English in Practice were taught two types of summary: a main point summary where students had to identify main ideas in every paragraph in a text and another type called a directed summary. Students were directed to look for specific information in the text and write a directed summary of 100 words from nine paragraphs of the text (The qualities of a good father). Students were asked to summarise the qualities of a good father. The qualities were clearly stated, which means they were all to be found at the beginning of each paragraph as the topic sentence. What students needed to do was to identify them, write them (qualities) in their own words and come up with a paragraph of 100 words. This researcher collected two summaries which were later analysed in “students’ written work data”. Not much was done in the class. The lecturer simply told students to go to a certain page in the study guide, read the instructions and follow them. This researcher asked the lecturer how she was going to mark the work (summary). She said that she would mark the papers using the content and grammar marking grid, bring it to class, give it to the students and go through the rubrics with them. Most of the items on the class observation check list were not applicable to this lesson.

The fourth class had 26 students, of whom 24 turned up for the lesson. The lesson was on the third conditional. The lecturer introduced the lesson by revising the second conditional. Students seemed to be confused between the first and the second conditionals. In the second conditional the “*if clause*” should consist of the simple past tense and the result clause should consist of “*would + infinitive*”, for example: *If I washed the dishes he would dry them. In the first conditional, the sentence should be: If I wash the dishes he will dry them.*

Students were confused because the “*if clause*” in the first conditional takes the simple present tense and the result clause “*will + infinitive*” and the result clause in the second conditional. The lecturer explained that the first conditional describes real or probable situations while the second conditional describes fantasy or unlikely situations.

The lecturer then moved to the third conditional which describes possibilities in the past that did not happen. In addition to this, the lecturer made it clear that the third conditional

expresses an imaginary connection between one event that never happened (if + past perfect) and another event that also never happened (would have + past participle).

The following example was given: *If I had known her phone number I would have phoned her.* The lecturer wrote some sentences on the chalkboard and asked individual students to write them in the third conditional. The result was disastrous. It seemed that the students did not know how to use the past perfect tense.

When students were asked to report back, not many of them could come up with correct sentences. The problem was the perfect tenses themselves. The students became confused because in the third conditional, the resulting clause uses “would + have + the present perfect tense” while the “If clause” uses the past perfect tense.

Students were then given three sentences to practice and came up with correct answers. The last activity entailed the students commenting on the sentences by using the third conditional. Students could not really refer to the explanation given earlier despite the lecturer’s emphasis on the possibilities which were there. Students practiced oral skills by reporting back and commenting on sentences given to them.

The lecturer did not correct the students when they came up with wrong tenses. The lesson seemed to follow the “communicative approach” where students just needed to give the right answer. The lecturer did not bother about correct grammar. The home work was to interview one person in class by completing sentences using the first, second and third conditional sentences.

The lecturer used the study guide as a teaching aid and most students participated well in the lesson although some students did not participate. The students who tried to explain or comment on something were the ones that shouted out answers to the class. Students’ language proficiency was satisfactory, but one cannot say all students were proficient in English because some did not participate. Those who participate had problems with subject and verb agreement and would say “he have” instead of “he has.” No derivational morphemes were heard. Words were pronounced well by both lecturer and students who spoke. Students also spoke with enthusiasm and their accents were not affected by their mother tongue.

4.5.3 English for Academic Purposes

Two English for Academic classes at University A were observed. Students who did English as a first language did not do English for Academic Purposes. It was only done by those who had completed English in Practice and those who had obtained 1, 2, and 3 at higher level at secondary school or those who obtained an A symbol at ordinary level at secondary school. The course was taught through five contact hours per week. Students had four hours of face-to-face interaction and a one hour tutorial where they were assisted by their lecturer to read and understand what they had not understood during the face-to-face lecture.

The first class consists of 18 students, but only 8 turned up for the lesson. Some students arrived 25 minutes late because they were apparently writing a test in a different subject. The class attendance is mentioned here because it contributes to poor language proficiency as students miss classes where English is taught which could also be a barrier to learn English. The lesson was on essay-writing on “Studying in one’s country or abroad” where they had to compare and contrast. The lesson took place in the English laboratory. This lesson was a follow-up to a project for which they had to write a draft on the topic and come to class and read their draft to the rest of the class. Individual students read their drafts to the class.

As one student read his draft, this researcher could detect lots of grammatical errors. This researcher asked the student for his draft and made a copy to analyse it. This draft was analysed under students’ written work in this chapter.

The second class of English for Academic Purposes observed consisted of a total of 10 students but only five turned up for the lesson. The class was introduced to “an oral presentation” lesson. The lecturer asked the students if they knew what an oral presentation was. One student said that “it is when you give a speech in public.” The lecturer then asked what the elements of oral presentation were. Some students gave answers while some did not participate. Those who gave answers did not use full sentences which made it impossible for this researcher to evaluate the sentence structure. The lecturer did not encourage the use of full sentences. The lecturer used a power point presentation to illustrate and explain different elements of oral presentation.

The lecturer did most of the talking. As the lecturer was explaining the concepts, he also asked questions to check whether students were following what he was saying. It was noted that three students fully participated while the other two looked bored perhaps because of too much talking by the lecturer. The lecturer also paid too much attention to the students who were active in the lesson. It was apparent that the nature of the lesson required the lecturer to do much of the talking. The students' English proficiency could not be properly evaluated because they were not given an activity to do which would have allowed this researcher to listen to their English sentence structure.

4.5.4 Professional Communication course

The students who were doing the Professional Communication Course were introduced to business communication. This researcher visited one class of 35 students in total but only 20 of them turned up for the lesson. The lesson was a follow-up on an "interview skills" lesson, to prepare a person who was invited to an interview. The lecturer randomly asked the students what one should do when hiring the right candidate for a job. Some students seemed clueless at first but later on when the lecturer continued to explain, they started to answer the questions correctly.

Just like in other classes, students mostly shouted out answers. The students' grammar proficiency could not be analysed because they shouted answers which were very short, sometimes just a word or two. Another problem experienced in this class was that students spoke very softly despite the lecturer asking them to speak loudly. The lecturer tried hard to get everyone involved in the lesson.

The lecturer explained that during an interview "anything can be asked or an unusual question can come up." The aim was to see whether the person being interviewed could think critically. The lecturer asked individual students that if they were animals, which animal they would be. Those students responded well by mentioning the type of animal they preferred to be and gave reasons. Here, one of the check list items "length of the answer" was applied. This researcher could not find any use of derivational morphemes or inaccurate grammar. It was concluded that the students could think quickly and come up with appropriate answers.

Students were also asked to define the following words (vocabulary) in the context of the lesson, enthusiasm and accomplishment where they gave different meanings and not in the context of the lesson. The lecturer advised the students that when attending an interview one should not exaggerate as that could reveal the interviewee's weakness and jeopardize their chances of being hired. Lastly, the lecturer asked students to turn to page 106-109 of the study guide, read the comprehension text on oral presentation and individually answer the multiple choice questions on the text as home work. Students were given a chance to ask questions if they had not understood something.

4.5.5 English Communication and Study Skills course

There were 40 students in the English Communication and Study Skills class and 33 of them turned up for the lesson. The topic of the lesson was 'reading strategies.' The study guide was the only teaching aid used. Students had been given home work during the previous lesson and most of them had not done it. The lecturer continued with the new lesson in which students were given five minutes to complete an activity by ticking true or false against statements related to reading strategies. Students shouted answers as feedback was given. They were told to read the passage to confirm the statements they had ticked. Instead of the students justifying the choice for their answers, the lecturer did that. This made it nearly impossible for this researcher to assess the students' language proficiency.

The next activity was to explain certain concepts such as what critical reading meant. The students were unable to do this and the lecturer explained what the concept meant. As a result, this class observation did not really answer most of the class observation check list but students participated very well, while the lecturer was very much involved in the lesson and her English proficiency was up to standard. This researcher could hear from some students who were shouting answers that the English was clear and language errors were not detected.

4.5.6 English for Academic Purposes course

The English for Academic Purposes class at University B was the last to be visited. In this class there were 39 students and 27 turned up for the lesson. Speed reading in academic texts was the lesson topic and the study guide was the only teaching aid used. The lecturer reminded students of the previous lesson (skimming). Very few students had study guides

and it was difficult to follow what was being done in class. The lecturer read the introduction and explained what it was about. The first activity was to look for the relationship and find the meaning in a text. The students who gave answers demonstrated good English proficiency perhaps because they had done a special course in English for a year or they had completed the English for General Communication course for a year, or had obtained a B symbol at ordinary level in Grade 12.

The next activity was to read a paragraph, underline pronouns and relative pronouns, and indicate what they referred to in the paragraph. Students worked together to complete the activity.

Each group reported back and if another group had a different answer this triggered a discussion. This enabled this researcher to listen attentively to the students' English proficiency, which was good. Morphemes were used. The last activity was on critical reading (comprehension) whereby students read the text and answered the questions. When feedback was given, each student who gave an answer justified the answer. This lesson focused on a combination of all the skills. The only negative aspect observed in this class was the fact that not all students had study guides, which eliminated them from participating. Students who gave answers met most of the criteria in the check list (appendix F).

4.6 Students' written work data (Appendix G)

Students' written work from different courses was analysed to determine or to confirm whether students had poor language proficiency in writing. It included essays, letters, summaries and reports. Some lecturers refused to give the researcher their students' written work.

The focus of essay writing was to develop good writing techniques when presenting opinions on both sides of an argument in a topic. When marking essays, a marking grid is used on which content and form is marked using letters as symbols from A to E and language and style are marked using numbers 1 to 5. Where the letters and numbers meet on the grid they determine the mark the student is supposed to get. When marking grammar, verb tenses, wrong choices of words, spelling, sentence construction, fragments and run-on sentences, unclear sentences and so on are looked at. When marking the content and form, aspects such

as paragraphs or essay structure, basic content development, content limitation, thesis statement, writing off topic and detailed support ideas are looked at.

4.6.1 Essays

The first essay was a descriptive one entitled “My imaginary world.” The student wrote about 200 words, and lost marks because the essay was too short. The required length of an essay is between 250-300 words. The essay contained two paragraphs. It had no introduction and no conclusion. Also, the student should have written an introduction with a thesis statement to indicate what was required in the body of the essay.

The content of the essay was a description of an ‘imaginary house’. The house was described using the following aspects: the location, what the sitting room should look like, the design and the colour of the inside and outside. The essay was supposed to be written in four paragraphs according to the aspects identified. The only adjectives found to have been used in the essay were the following:

- cool breeze
- mixture of old and modern architecture
- ocean waters
- ancient Asian art

The subject and verb agreement used in the sentences were correct. The possessive and progressive forms were not used in the essay. The auxiliary modal verbs such as ‘*would ensure*’, ‘*should be*’ and ‘*can view*’ were correctly used. Most of the sentences were well-written in the active form. Only one sentence was written in the passive form. It read: “*The design should be a mixture of old and modern architecture and rise above the ground to be held by large beacons.*” The subject “*the design does not agree with the verb “rise*’.

The sentence was too long and lacked meaning to a certain extent. Again, the student misspelled the words, ‘*exhibitions as exbitions*’ and ‘world’ as ‘word’. Good vocabulary was used such as architecture, sculptures ancient and beacons.

The researcher also found a fragment sentence and misspelled words in the following sentence. ‘*In the inside, the plan white color would brace. the walls with painting from the*

exhibitions. The student just inserted a full stop where it was not supposed to be. Derivational and inflectional morphemes were used.

The second essay was a descriptive one on “Arranged marriage.” The student wrote the essay in four paragraphs. The following is the introduction of this essay.

“Arranged marriages are interesting and enjoyable. The couples look smart and more beautiful and a lot of people will like it and wish to look like them. For the marriage to be perfect is costly but people try their levels best”. The exposition does not include the thesis statement.

This researcher is of the opinion that this essay is off topic. The student did not understand the topic at all. Therefore, it can be said that some students do not do well in English because they do not read the question properly and do not have sufficient vocabulary to understand the meaning of the question. As a result they misinterpret questions and end up writing wrong things. The student was supposed to describe how a marriage is arranged between the parents of two people before they get married. This means the two people who are getting married do not have a say in their relationship, or that love is not an issue in this kind of marriage. It is arranged between two families of the people who are getting married. Again, the content is very limited in what has been described. There are language mistakes in the following sentence. “The couples look smart and more beautiful and a lot of people will like it and wish to look like them”. First of all, the sentence is too long and clumsy constructed with too many ‘ands’. Is the student referring to one couple or more than one couple? “The people will like it”. What is to be liked? The sentence is not clear. There are also spelling mistakes such as ‘*witness*’ and ‘*beatiful*’. There are few problems with subject and verb agreement, and the auxiliary verbs are correctly used. There are no possessive, progressive form and passive form sentences found.

The third essay was a narrative one. One student chose the topic, “*The day I decided to show my true colour.*” The introduction was well structured in the sense that the student wrote introductory sentences. The only problem was the thesis statement, which was written in three sentences instead of one. The essay was written in four paragraphs and good linking words were used.

There were lots of punctuation mistakes and the student wrote long sentences. There were grammar mistakes, for example, in the sentence: “*But as I had self confident I never pay attention to them, so I just tried my best to them that I’m, means I passed with flying colours*”. It seemed that the student did not know the difference between a noun and an adjective. This is apparent in “I had self confident” instead of “*I have self confidence.*” Also, the student was supposed to put a comma after self-confident and continue with the other clause in the past tense, followed by a full stop. In formal writing the word ‘just’ should not be used. The new sentence should have started with: I tried my best to show them that....Again, this is academic writing. Accordingly y the student was not supposed to use the short form ‘I’m’. The comma after “I am” should also not be there. It was noted that most students liked to use “meaning/means” in their writing. This is not acceptable in academic writing. Do the lecturers pay attention to these mistakes or do they turn a blind eye to them?

The conclusion is written in only one sentence: It reads “*In conclusion I would like to say never say never, meaning just be self-confident in everything, you are doing and always remember to be kind and friendly*”. The sentence is too long which show a certain sophistication in writing. However, the language errors are unacceptable. There should be a comma after conclusion and “*everything*” should be one word. The students who were doing this course really need a bridging English course. Three opinions and three argumentative essays were also written. The first three are argumentative essays followed by three opinion essays. The first argumentative essay is entitled: “*Romantic love is a poor basis for marriage*”.

Students were required to discuss this statement and support their viewpoints. This essay was to be between 300 and 350 words in length. One student wrote the essay in five paragraphs. The general statement opened up the introduction, followed by supporting sentences. The thesis statement was well written in question form but the student did not put a question mark at the end of every question. It seemed that the student did not write an argumentative essay, instead she wrote an opinion essay. The student was supposed to argue whether romantic love was a proper basis for marriage or not. Instead the student just gave her opinion on the positive side of romantic love that leads to marriage. This student did not follow the instructions.

What prevented this student from following the instructions carefully? Was it poor comprehension of the instructions or did the student not know what an argumentative essay entails? It was apparent that the student had problems with tenses, subject and verb agreement, and spelling. The misspelled words included: *fourtuem/fortune*, */achieve*, *fauiler/failure*, *chossing/choosing*, *spaues/spouses*, *competttable/compatible*, *rish/rich*. These mistakes affect writing and understanding. The student also experienced problems with the possessive form. The student wrote: *“It is very important to have your families approvel (family’s approval) when it comes to your spouse”*. Approval is misspelled.

The following sentence is full of mistakes that include misspelled words, sentence construction and short forms. *“Its better to marry someone your are compettbable with eg financaly, good values”*. *“Its”* shows possessive and not a short form of *“it is”*. It should be *“it is better”* in the context of this sentence. It seems that the student did not know the difference between the possessive case and the short form of *“it is.”*

It is not advisable or even allowed to write the abbreviation *“eg”* instead of *“for example”* in formal writing. Also, the comma which is inserted after the word *“financially”* and before the word *“good”* should not be there. There were no sentences in progressive and passive form found in the text. Given that this student was at a higher learning of institution and wrote this kind of English, it is unclear whether there were many students with similarly poor language proficiency or the institution was not doing its best to properly teach even basic rules of English to its students.

The next topic for an argumentative essay was: *“In Namibia, the poor are getting poorer and the rich richer.”* The essay was written in five well-constructed paragraphs. Linking words from one paragraph to the other were properly used. There was no thesis statement in the introduction. Long sentences and very poor sentence construction were found, which may have caused the student to write run-on sentences. For example, there were only two sentences in the introduction. The following is an example of a long sentence that is poorly constructed. *“At” (which should be “on”) the other hand “its” (the student again used possessive to mean “it is”) easy to become rich in Namibia since everyone is free to start his or her own business in order to generate income, or else you go to school and get your master degree then you have a settled future.”*

Although the sentence is understandable, the grammar is very wrong. Also the referral of “his/her to you” in this sentence is wrong. The students should not have used “you” instead of a third person singular “he/she and his/her in the sentence.

The student has also a problem of repeating the subject of the sentence for example: “*the graduated students they*”, “*people they.*” There were no misspelled words or passive form sentences found. Wrongly used subject and verb agreement phrases were found. They included “*who have*” instead of “*who has.*” The sentences in progressive form were correctly used although the student seems to have encountered problems with adverbs and adjectives.

The student used linking phrases such as “on the other hand” to show the other side of the argument. The essay topic did not reflect the information in the body which means the information in the introduction should have been expanded on in the body paragraphs. This may have been due to the fact that the student did not write the thesis statement to guide him on what to write in the body paragraphs. The student touched on a lot of aspects, ranging from competition, hard work, survival and energy price.

The last argumentative essay topic was: “Should tertiary education be virtually free and more heavily subsidised by the government or not?” The essay was written in four paragraphs. There was a thesis statement of many advantages and disadvantages on the topic. The word “*many*” was repeatedly many times in the thesis statement.

The first body paragraph focused on education which people discuss daily. There were subject and verb agreement mistakes. The student wrote “*the people have to study hard and cuts the poverty...*” The word “cuts” does not agree with the subject “people.” It only agrees with the third person singular that is he/she/it cuts and so on. Another mistake was “*statistic show*” instead of “*statistics show.*”

Also, there was a sentence in the present progressive form which was wrong. It read: “*Poor people are not affording tertiary education since its very expensive.*” Firstly, the word afford does not take the “ing” form.

It can only be used with a modal verb such as “the poor people can afford...” Secondly, “its” is used as possessive instead of “it is” as a subject and its verb. It seems that students have problems with this concept of contraction. The student used good transitional words (on the other hand) to show the other side of the argument. Some main ideas were apparent but required more specific examples and explanations.

In the opinion essay, students were expected to express their viewpoints on a definite subject while supporting them with coherent arguments. The first topic for an opinion essay was: “To stop the increase of crime rate (sic), the death penalty should be reinstated.” The following is the whole essay as it was written.

“To my way of thinking, I agree that it should be reinstated to stop the increasing of it. The crime of death penalty is the most think that is decreasing the population of people in the world. It will be better if it gets an end”. To put it briefly, the crime of death penalty need to be taken as a serious crime and the governments must be interfering in it and take serious cases. The governments must come up with the rules that will be followed by people. So, the governments and courts should be always in connection to deal with people who did such a crime.

In addition, the population of people in the world is always decreasing day by day. Therefore, people need to be protected by avoiding bad things to happen to them. Everybody in the world need peace and living freely. So, the criminals must be taken away from peaceful people. The police should do their jobs by arresting the criminals, especially those who are murdering,

I think or feel that, if the crime of death penalty restituted, everybody in the world will not be against the restitute unless the criminals. All people will be living good and peaceful with one another. The number of crimes will be reduced and the police will no more work hard. Anyway, even the use of drugs and alcohol will not be higher because nobody will be stressful and having bad feeling. Drugs and alcohol are the most thinks that contribute to the cause of crime.

In short, the death of people through crimes will be low if the governments come up with serious rules and decisions in touch with the laws. In conclusion, laws are the most important

things which can be against the crimes and they will prevent crimes to happen everywhere and regularly. Crime the death penalty should get an end in the world to avoid the decrease of our population.

Firstly, the student stated that he agreed with the statement that to stop the increase of the crime rate, the death penalty should be reinstated. It seems that this student did not understand the topic well or may have failed to understand the words “*reinstated*” and “*death penalty*.” By looking at the whole essay, it is clear that the student did not know what he was talking about and there was limited understanding of the topic.

Secondly, there is no thesis statement and too many grammar mistakes. In the body paragraphs, there are too many incoherent ideas as a result of no thesis statement. Also, there are too many poor sentence structures, awkward syntax and some wrong verb tenses which hinder understanding. Transitional words from paragraph to paragraph are well used. There are few misspelled words and wrong words used in the text. In addition to these, subject and verb agreement mistakes were noticed for example: “everybody in the world need (needs) peace and living freely.” The sentence does not make sense. This student had passed grade 12 and passed Language in Practice level one. This type of writing was an indication that something needed to be done to help such students improve their English proficiency.

The second opinion essay topic was: “People attend university for many reasons. Why do you think people attend college or university?” The student started off well with an introductory sentence followed by good supporting sentences. Two aspects were mentioned in the thesis statement, namely, different courses and entertainment.

There are four body paragraphs which means, two aspects which were covered were not mentioned in the thesis statement. This presents a problem when it comes to writing. In Unit 4 of the English in Practice study guide, students are introduced to introduction writing, where a thesis statement is clearly explained and examples given. It is explained that whatever is written in the body paragraphs should reflect the thesis statement. The student used linking words from paragraph to paragraph appropriately.

The student discussed two aspects, sport and culture which were not mentioned in the thesis statement. This caused the student to lose marks. There were misspelled words in the essay including *peoples/people, priveledge/privilege and thier/their*.

Some sentences were too long, for example, the second paragraph was one sentence stretching over seven lines. Incomplete sentences were also found. For example, “*Firstly, Pursuing a career I’d say is a lot of peoples dreams and attending university can help cater for this. you can gain a lot of knowledge*”. The first letter for the word ‘pursuing’ should not be a capital letter because it is a word in the sentence and also not a proper noun. The phrase “*a lot of peoples dreams*” should show the possessive form. An apostrophe should have been inserted between the letters ‘e’ and ‘s’ (people’s) to show that dreams belong to the people. Also, in formal writing the contracted of ‘I’d’ and ‘I m’ is not acceptable. It should be written in full. The phrase “this are people” is wrong. This means that the verb ‘are’ does not agree with the subject ‘this’. It should have read ‘these are people’. “They attend university to come play sports as they are student or they just play for the university for fun”. The phrase ‘they are student’ in the sentence is wrong. It should be ‘they are students’.

Also, when there are two verbs following each other in a sentence, for example ‘come play’ there should be a link between the two, ‘come and play’. It was apparent that this student had a problem with adjectives such as ‘culture club’. The word culture is a noun not a word that describes a noun therefore in this case it should be ‘cultural club’. The last sentence in the concluding paragraph in the opinion essay should have been the final comment that suggested or recommended something to the reader. In this essay, the student failed to come up with a suggestion or recommendation to the reader.

It seems as if the students did not make use of the progressive form much. Of all the essays analysed, the simple present tense was mostly used. The use of passive form was not found in this essay. Both inflectional and derivational morphemes were used.

The last opinion essay topic was similar to the previous one: “People attend university for many different reasons.” The essay was written in seven paragraphs. There was a general statement in the introductory paragraph. There were no sentences that supported the general

statement. Two aspects in the thesis statement were mentioned: “people need universities for qualifications and some simply for knowledge.”

There were no transitional words linking paragraphs. Too many punctuation errors were detected in the text. For example, the first letter of the word ‘football’ was capitalized and the letter ‘p’ for the Polytechnic of Namibia was written in lower case, and Biblical Studies is the name of a course which was supposed to be written in upper case yet the student wrote it in lower case.

The student put an apostrophe after the last letter ‘e’ and before the letter ‘s’ on the word ‘degrees’ to show the plural form. The word ‘its’ in the following sentence is wrongly used. “When the word university comes to mind, one would usually think ‘its’ about going to attend classes”. The word is used to show possessive, but in the context of the sentence, it should be used as subject and verb ‘it is’. The verb tense in the following sentence is wrong: “*He mention how it was never his intention....*” Students are encouraged to use a consistent tense throughout the essay. This student used both Simple present and Past tenses. The sentence is also grammatically wrong, therefore, the student did not know whether to use past or present tense. Some of the sentences were too long and it seemed as if the students struggled with writing long sentences.

The student exhibited referral problems, for example, in the following sentence: “Around *the world you would find celebrity icons attending class even though he has millions already.*” The phrase ‘celebrity icons’ and ‘he has millions’ do not go together in the sense that celebrity icons refers to more than one person while ‘he has’ means one person. Another referral problem found was in “philosophers who work at the university as a lecturer.” ‘Philosophers’ refers to more than one while ‘as a lecturer’ to one person. The preposition in the following sentence is wrongly used: “people suffering of hunger”. The preposition (of) in this context means felt by. The student should have used the preposition ‘from’ which is used to show the cause of something or the reason why something happens.

The student wrote the name of the institution in an abbreviated form when the student had not written the institution’s name in full when it was mentioned for the first time. The last paragraph, which was supposed to be the conclusion of the essay looks like a part of the preceding paragraph.

There was no concluding sentence and the student did not come up with any suggestion or recommendation for the reader. It ended abruptly. Derivational morphemes, passive and progressive forms of sentences were not found. It is this researcher's opinion that English in Practice students need a one year English course.

Other essays were also analysed. It seemed that students were first given an article to read. Based on the information from the article read as well as their own experience, students had to write an essay of between 250-300 words on the following topic: "The causes and effects of drinking among University B students." The essay should have consisted of four paragraphs namely, an introduction, two body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph. The students were also informed that the marks would be allocated for content of the essay, organisation of the paragraphs, concord, sentence construction and mechanical accuracy in spelling and tenses. The following is an example of an essay written by one of the students.

In University B there are some Students who consume alcohol too much. The Students who consumes alcohol including those who accommodated in University and the daily students (students who are not accommodated). Alcohol has any causes and effects among us. The causes of alcohol or drinking among our students in university. the first one can cause poor performance, lack of discipline among our students, dodging classes and lack of consideration e.g. sleepless and make body weak during the lessons and it is also causing fighting,

There are also effect for drinking among our students such as hurting or injury each others or institutional premises, death and driving leckless or careless because they under alcohol, In my conclusion in order to reduce the drinking among the students the university council should implement New laws and policies which can foster and reduce the drinking behavior among students.

Firstly, the essay was not well laid out in the sense that there were no open lines between paragraphs. There were mistakes in the first sentence of the introduction. The preposition used "in university" was wrong because 'in' here meant inside of something. This student should have used 'at' which showed a particular place.

The word students was capitalised which was wrong because it was in the middle of a sentence. Also, the word order is wrong: the words 'too much' should come before 'alcohol'. The following sentence was wrong *'The students who consumes alcohol including those who accomodated in University and the daily students (students who are not accomodated)'*. The subject 'students' does not agree with the verb consumes. The word 'including' should have been 'includes'. The auxiliary 'are' between the words 'who and accomodated' was missing. Students who were not accommodated on campus were not referred to as "daily students" but instead, as "*day scholars.*" The construction of the thesis statement: "*alcohol has any causes and effects among us*" was also wrong. The word 'any' was not supposed to be there.

The first sentence in the first body paragraph was fragmented, that is, it is an incomplete sentence. The next sentence that followed the fragmented sentence began with a lower case instead of a capital letter. The following words were misspelled *displine/discipline, considaration/consideration, accomodated/accommodated, leckless/reckless, favor/favour*. It seemed that the student did not know the meaning of the word 'causes.' The student wrote 'poor performance, lack of discipline, dodging classes' and so on as causes but these were the effects or results of alcohol. The word 'consideration' was wrongly used instead of concentration as one of the effects of alcohol. The effects the student mentioned were correct but the last sentence on the effects was wrong. It was written as: "because they under alcohol.

The student used a comma at the end the sentence; this is found in both the second and third paragraphs. In academic writing, the word "for example" is not abbreviated as the student did. The length of the essay was only 145 words instead of 250 to 300 words, which suggested the content was limited and the student had little or no understanding of the topic.

The following essay was on the same topic (The causes and effects of drinking among University B students). The student came up with a proper introduction and had a good thesis statement "the essay focused on the causes and effects of drinking among the university students." Below is the first body paragraph that was based on the causes of alcohol abuse.

When students are at the universities, parents work hard to support their children at high institutions financially. However, these parents they turn to over spend to their children. At the students have a lot of money and they decide to use some money for socialization purpose. They buy clothes, going out with friends for movies and clubbing. Freedom of movement at university also encourage drinking among students because no one to stop them from going out of cumps. The position of the adverb ‘financially’ in the first sentence was wrong. Normally, it should have come before the verb ‘support’ because an adverb modifies verbs. The sentence should read ‘When students are at university’ – there is no need for the article or plural form as university indicates a general term in this context. The following sentence was wrong: “*these parents they turn to over spend to their children.*” The subject ‘parents they’ was repeated and the sentence does not make sense because the student used the word ‘turn’ instead of ‘tend’ This is a common mistake – the writer had heard a word that sounds vaguely like another word (turn/tend in this case) and writes what she/he thinks is the word she/he has heard. The construction of the third sentence was also wrong. The subject and verb did not agree, while in the following sentence “*freedom of movement at university also ‘encourage’ drinking...*” the word ‘encourage’ should be encourages. The words ‘*clubing and cumps*’ were misspelled; they should be *clubbing and campus*. Also, the preposition ‘at’ at the beginning of the third sentence should have been ‘As’ while the ‘and’ before ‘they decide’ is incorrectly used and should be deleted.

The following essay was titled: “Let us rise above illiteracy, Namibia”. A very good introduction with a good thesis statement pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of illiteracy was written. The content was interesting, convincing and well-structured with adequate details and development. This researcher found that reflective morphology and not derivational morphemes were used in all the essays. This essay was fairly coherent and sentences were generally clear. The written message was communicated but sentence structure was a serious problem. Grammatical errors did not always interfere with meaning although they were found.

Below is a paragraph from the essay written by a student in English for Academic Purposes Course.

“After matriculating with flying marks detemna invades them, they are now left with choices of whether to study in ones country or to study abroad. What makes me choose the comparisons draw between studing in local universities and studying abroad. The comparisons they draw are costs, evaluation of educational quality of the university and their reconitions by National Qualification Authority and the adptability in terms of the weather and other conditions that has to do with health”.

It is not clear what this student is trying to say. When one looks at the criteria of admitting students to this course and finds someone writing like this, you might wonder what kind of an employee such a student would be? There are many language errors, spelling mistakes, run-on sentences, comma splices and unclear sentences in the essay. Both derivational and inflectional morphemes are used, but mostly incorrectly. This was the only class during which writing was revised by the lecturer. The writing competence was observed. The students revised their initial drafts using rubrics which contained the elements of reviewing the initial draft before writing and turning in the final work for evaluation.

4.6.2 Letters

This researcher was able to obtain three tasks; an enquiry letter, a report and a memorandum. Below is an official letter which was written by a student asking the First National Bank to donate money to build a library. The letter is written in eight paragraphs. It is a very well-structured letter. The introduction of this letter is as follows: *“We, the Shekelitisa Primary School, with great honour on behalf of the entire school, I, John Segusu decided to wrote you this letter, regarding the above subject. It was discussed with the School and you were selected among the list so that you may help in funding us finance capital so that we build the school library”.*

There is poor sentence structure and run-on sentences. Wrong verb tense “decided to wrote” is used instead of “decided to write.” The preposition “among” is also incorrectly used as is the word ‘honour’. The student should have used “from” as a preposition in this sentence. Wrong words (such as funding us finance capital) are used in the last sentence. Punctuation

is poor. For example, the word 'school' which is in the middle of the sentence is capitalized. Again, in the body paragraphs words like 'English' and 'all' at the beginning of a sentence are written in lower case. The student had a problem with demonstrative singular and plural pronouns such as 'those reason' and 'this students'. The following progressive sentence is wrong. "*We therefore requesting your...*" The student left out the auxiliary verb 'are' to make the sentence correct. The word 'whether' is misspelled as 'whether.'

The content is interesting and convincing, with adequate details and focused on one idea. No transitional words are used and the incorrect use of words in this letter. It is an eight paragraph letter but derivational morphemes are not used. Sentences in the passive form are found which were correct. There were no mistakes when it came to subject and verb agreement.

The second letter is also the persuasive one which is written in four paragraphs. The content is satisfactory and the format is clear. The writer's problem is the use of prepositions. The student seems to have a problem with when or how to use 'within' and 'between' as prepositions. Repetition of the word 'cost' in the following sentence is incorrect i.e. "*the cost of a new library will cost about N\$ 100 000.*"

In some of these courses, students are also taught business writing skills, which will help them to communicate effectively. The emphasis is placed on correct format, style, register and language usage. In a response letter to enquiry letter, the format included the addresses of the sender and the receiver, the date, the salutation and the subject of the letter, which is right way to write this kind of letters.

In the introduction the words writing and accommodate are misspelled as '*writting*' and '*accomodate*'. The thesis statement focused on one idea which is the company that was unable to offer the car rental service to another company that requested the car. The three body paragraphs justified the company's inability to render service to another company.

Wrong words were used in the text, for example, "*we are unable to accept your request.*" 'Accept' should not have been used in this context. Perhaps words such as authorised, accommodated, conceded and approved should have been used. Another wrong word 'mediams' is used in the following sentence: "The reasons why we are unable to accept

your request is due to a Shortage in the number of transport mediums needed by your institution.” The word ‘shortage’ is capitalised which should not be the case because it is in the middle of the sentence.

The writing of this letter is coherent and the student at this level should not have misspelled common words such as ‘writing’ and ‘accommodate’. The student at least used ‘unable’ which is a derivational morpheme. There was no wrong subject and verb agreement used. Sentences in progressive and passive form and the use of possessive case were not found.

4.6.3 Memorandum

Two memorandums were analysed and was part of the test written. The question demanded that students should come up with a memo to the employees in the company where they had to instruct or inform them about the gala dinner to be held for fundraising. The first memo contained lot of format mistakes. The students were taught to use block letters for the identification section and the student did not use block letters for this section. Also, the student did not write the subject of the memo. It seems that the student did not understand the instruction because the content did not include what the instruction required. Normally, the salutation is not part of the memo but this student wrote it. The identification section in the second memo included all the information required but written in lower case. The student has punctuation problems. For example, in the following sentence “*The Attendance of the dinner is very Compulsory to every employees*” There is no full stop at the end of the sentence, the words attendance and compulsory are written in upper case. In addition, spelling mistake was noticed. The student misspelled the word “*enquiries*” as “*enquiries*”.

4.6.4 Reports

The following is a report analysis. The report should have been from the Department of Hydrological Services to the Head of Hydrology in the Ministry of Agriculture. It covered five aspects, namely, terms of reference, procedures, findings, conclusion and recommendations. The layout was clear and well-structured.

The introduction which covers nine lines is written in two sentences, leading to run-on sentences. The student does not know how to make a statement from a question. For

example, “to educate the general public regarding the problems caused by drought and report back on how the public reaction did” should be “how the public reacted.” Most of the sentences are in the passive form which is correctly used. Subject and verb agreement mistakes are found, such as ‘the country have’ instead of the ‘country has’. Another grammatical mistake is *‘people haven’t cultivate.’*

This is a report which is an official letter and should be written as such. Therefore the use of the short form is not acceptable and the phrase is also wrong in itself. The sentence should read ‘people have not cultivated their field early because it did not rain’. The language used is fairly cohesive while sentences are generally clear. No many misspelled words and derivational morphemes were found.

The other task was to explain different steps in report writing. The student did not put a comma after the linking word before continuing with the rest of the sentence. The following sentence is an explanation of a step which is one sentence and grammatically wrong. *“You need to put the right information in the right place because people are use to having certain information as the headlines since they are important than have matters which are less important in the middle and last have matters which are not that important.”*

The sentence is not clear and the phrase *‘people are use to having’* is wrong. It should be ‘people are used to have.’ The phrase “are use” is wrong it should be “are used.” The following sentence is wrong: *“these is were the background is sketched and also why the report is important”*. Firstly, the sentence begins with a small letter. Secondly the subject ‘these’ does not agree with the verb ‘is.

The way the word ‘were’ (which is a verb) is used is wrong. It should be used to mean ‘in what place that is ‘where’. Also, ‘we’ as the subject of the sentence does not agree with ‘goes’ as a verb in the sentence. The student had a referral problem. This is shown in the following sentence: *“Here we have the facts and goes in detail as to what you have discovered about the problem”*. The word ‘we’ does not agree with ‘goes’ while at the same time ‘you’ is not referred back to ‘we.’

The students were asked to explain every step in writing a report. Under ‘recommendation’, one student explained what needs to be done. The explanation was done in the form of a

question “what do you suggest should be done”. This is a question and needs a question mark at the end. The student was supposed to write a statement like this: ‘what you suggest should be done.’

Many sentences could have been written in passive form but the student wrote them in active form. Sentences are generally clear but the language use is rather ordinary. At this level, the student should have avoided making simple mistakes with respect to subject and verb agreement and making statements instead asking of questions. The last task was on memorandum writing. This practical memorandum writing was from the chief executive officer to the staff of the company. It was about a complaint from customers about the lack of good customer service in the company. It was written in six paragraphs and its format was clear. In the introduction, there is a wrong sentence which read: “*Ifeel it is not good for these customers are the reason we are succeeding*”. Firstly, the sentence does not make sense. The first part of the sentence is incomplete. There should be a reason given after the word ‘customers’ as a sentence on its own. Another sentence on the justification of the company’s success should have followed. The student wrote these two ideas in one sentence and it became a run-on sentence. Secondly, the student also had problems when it came to the splitting of words, for example ‘*Ifeel and forgranted*’. One wonders whether this was due to carelessness or poor knowledge of writing. Words that were misspelled were also found. For example, *interupt/interrupt, attentively/attentively*. There was nothing wrong with subject and verb agreement. Possessive form was well applied but the student opted to write sentences in active rather than passive form. Also, the use of the progressive form was not found.

Overall, the content was satisfactory and sentences were generally clear. The only problem with this student was that she/he made simple mistakes such as with respect to the splitting of words. One wondered how these students were taught business writing skills which would help them to communicate effectively with such poor English proficiency!

4.6.5 Summaries

Students were taught how to summarise a text in two different ways, namely, directed and main point. In a directed summary, students are directed to find specific information in the text and come up with a paragraph depending on the number of words specified in the

instruction. In the main point summary, students have to read the whole text and come up with main ideas found in each paragraph. This researcher looked at six summaries.

The following analysis is based on the work of students who wrote a directed summary. The instruction stipulated that the summary should be 110 words but one student used 156 words. This shows that the student did not follow the instruction. Whatever is written after 120 words will not be marked. If the most important points are after 120 words students lose marks.

The students were asked to write a summary on the qualities that a child would like his/her father to possess. It was a nine-paragraph text and the qualities were clearly stated at the beginning of every paragraph. There were subject and verb agreement mistakes. For example, one student wrote: *“as long he have self respect”*. “Have” does not agree with “he”. Another one is: *“a child expect his father to do things”* instead of *“a child expects his father...”* Lots of sentences began with lower cases instead of capital letters. Long sentences were also found that led to run-on sentences. Passive form sentences were found and were well-structured. According to the summary rules, students were expected to use their own words but some students copied and pasted. There were no spelling mistakes detected and no sentences in progressive form found. Both derivational and inflectional morphemes were used.

The next summary was also on the qualities that a child would like his/her father to possess. One student listed all the qualities as single words, thus not in the form of sentences. There were no linking words used from one quality to another. Subject and verb agreement mistakes were also detected, for example *“a child have desire to...”* Spelling mistakes were also detected, for example *“load”* instead of *“road.”*

Furthermore, the student only listed four qualities in single words instead of seven and in proper sentences. A correct possessive sentence was found but there were no sentences in progressive form or passive form. There were few problems with sentence structure. The question was, if these students were from different class groups and were making the same mistakes, where was the problem?

The third summary was on “What must be done to apply for a scholarship?” One student started all sentences with lower case letters, and subject and verb agreement mistakes were also found. Linking words were properly used. The only problem was that the summary was supposed to be written in 100 words but it was written in 70 words. This means the summary was too short and the student lost marks. Sentence construction was a minor problem.

Two students summarised a text on the “influence of excessive use of the Internet on the brain and mental functions of its users.” This researcher was not given the original text to see whether students had used their own words or had plagiarised. The students produced almost similar points and length of summaries. The summaries were both written in one paragraph. The mistakes found in one summary were: the subject ‘information’ in the following sentence “*when the information loads exceeds our minds....*” Information loads (plural) did not agree with the verb ‘exceeds.’ The following sentence was also wrong: “*one can also distrust the brain by mental facts of healthiness.*” The sentence began with a lower case letter and the words ‘*distrust*’ and ‘*healthiness*’ were misspelled. “*Distrust*’ could also be either ‘*disrupt*’ or ‘*disturb*’, thus distorting the intended meaning. They should have been disrupt and healthiness. These summaries were long enough and the students obtained 13 and 15 out of 25. The lecturer who marked this essay did not indicate how she/he came up with the marks allocated, unlike the lecturer who marked the two essays and explained the criteria used which looked at coherence, register and content.

The last summary was on “Integrating reading into the English for Academic Purposes programme.” This is a programme offered at the institution. The summary was written in two paragraphs, which was wrong. The word English in the title was written in small letters. Unfortunately, the researcher did not have access to the original text to be able to check whether the student had used his or her own words as required. Some misspelled words were found such as *maid/made*, *writting/writing*, *though/thought*. This student was awarded eight out of 25.

4.7 The Writing Centre at University A

There is a Writing Centre at University A to remedy students’ poor language proficiency. This researcher conducted a telephonic and informal interview with the coordinator concerned in the Writing Centre on 12 March 2014. The coordinator explained that the

writing unit dealt with grammar and research for all courses offered at this institution. Students are informed and encouraged to make use of this unit if they realised that they were faced with writing challenges in their specific courses. Students make an appointment to see the coordinator, who then refers them to a specific tutor depending on what the problem was.

Tutoring then takes place and a student has to inform the tutor of the challenges she or he faced. The tutor helps the student by explaining or teaching how the student could overcome such a problem. The lecturers are also encouraged to refer students in their groups who they thought had writing problems to this unit. The coordinator informed this researcher that many students made use of the unit and they received many reports from both lecturers and students on the improvement made after consulting the unit. The question remained, how often did English students make use of this centre? If the English students made use of this unit, would they still have such poor English proficiency? Further research is needed to determine whether the centre should continue operating as a writing centre or if it should be turned into a one year, compulsory bridging course to solve the problem of students' poor language proficiency.

This researcher also had a brief discussion with the Director of the Language Centre at University B on 10 March 2014 on the effectiveness of the English Access Course for students who obtained an E symbol in English Ordinary level in Grade 12. The Director said he received good reports from lecturers who teach these students after they had completed this course. They apparently inform him on a regular basis that the students who did the English Access course were doing much better in comparison with the ones who had completed Grade 12 and obtained better symbols in English.

4.8 Synthesis of key findings

The synthesis of this study covered all aspects investigated, namely document analysis/syllabi, lack of teaching of oral writing skills and morphology and syntax. From the findings the following synthesis can be made.

To start with, two types of barriers to learn English as a second language at the two universities in Namibia are identified namely the syllabi and lack of practical teaching of writing and speaking skills inter alia syntax and morphemes. The cognitive constructivist

classroom framework which guided this study is about the interaction taking place between students and lecturers in the classroom. A constructivist classroom situation that must provide a variety of activities to challenge students, increase their learning, help them to discover new ideas and construct their own knowledge occurred mostly in a superficial manner in the classes observed. The syllabi do not provide a variety of activities that could enhance or overcome the students' barriers to writing and speaking skills. It is the classroom site where instruction and learning serve as the starting point for identifying specific curricular needs and selecting relevant tasks that would challenge students to learn. The problem that was found to hamper a variety of activities in classrooms was time frame. The time allocated to the courses was very short, when looking at the fact that English is a second or even third language to most students and also considering that although these students had completed secondary education, their English proficiency was still poor. This was also confirmed by the participants (students and lectures) during the data collection from interviews and questionnaires presented in this chapter. Also, the results in Chapter 1, table 4 show that the pass rate of students in the Language in Practice Course and the Professional Writing Course in 2012 to 2014 was low compared to other courses taken during the same period. As a consequence, some of these students enrolled for Professional Writing course graduated with poor English competency.

The researcher also learned from observation data that poor lecturing was another issue to cause concern. Lecturers were worried about time in terms of completing the syllabi, and as a result, they mostly taught for the examination where they are not supposed to cope with this scenario. It is the researcher's opinion that to teach a second language is not easy. Lots of issues need to be considered, for example, the purpose (why students are learning a second language), time, syllabi, teaching and learning methods and very importantly who teaches this language and especially how competent they themselves are in the language.

4.8.1 Writing competence

This section presents a reflection of teaching of students' oral and writing competence at both universities. Kane, Bryne and Scheepers (2006:13) said that writing has many purposes, which are shaped by varying conventions and expectations. Kane, et al. (2006) are of the opinion that "every writing" has specific conventions and strategies which can be used to create effective expression of understanding and thought. In view of this,

one can conclude that writing competence is a very important and crucial part of second language learning, not only to the second language learner, but also to anyone who communicates through writing. Therefore, when writing, one needs to know the purpose for writing. Also, writing competence is shown in the physical production of writing, mechanics and conventions of writing, written content, preparation and revision.

One needs to get communication right to avoid misinterpretation of what you want to convey. At the same time, communication through writing provides an opportunity to assess one's knowledge and intellectuality and has a direct impact on one's career and future development.

In writing, plagiarism was identified and emphasised in the syllabi, but there are no sufficient examples to show students' acceptable vs. unacceptable incorporation of others' words or ideas into written compositions. Students are well-prepared for writing purposes, for example, on how to plan an essay and brainstorm but they do not choose topics that interest them. As a result, they end up writing an essay for the sake of writing

Before the final writing is handed in, students first produce a draft of their final submission. It is in this initial draft where the elements of writing are created and students use a rubric which contains these elements to review the initial draft before writing and turning in the final work for evaluation. In all the syllabi and study guides that were analysed, this process was not indicated as such. Lastly, the students' writing competence at all levels was very poor. Something needs to be drastically done to rescue the situation.

4.8.2 Oral communication competence

Speaking competence was not given much attention by lecturers in the study guides at University A. There are no speaking activities in the study guides and the syllabi also do not cover this skill. According to some lecturers, since the study guides do not make provision for speaking activities, it would be difficult for them to give much attention to it because of the time constraints. Therefore the lecturers are simply following what is in the syllabi. Even the Professional Communication course, which was regarded as the course that deals with this component (speaking), emphasized only writing competence. Also, the way the writing competency was emphasized did not really help students, especially regarding

grammar. This was shown in the way the activities were set out in the syllabi, with students mostly asked to “*match, fill in the gap and identify*” without being given a chance to produce their own work, practicing what they were being taught. Writing and speaking skills were not incorporated.

This researcher is of the opinion that English oral communication entails the ability to explain and present ideas in clear English to different types of people, using appropriate styles and approaches. If there is lack of practical teaching of speaking skills in classes and if the syllabi do not specify this, the students will not have confidence in speaking situations. Therefore, it is the duty of lecturers to help students build confidence and self-esteem in their speaking abilities by encouraging them to prepare to speak in different situations, because some of them might have communication anxiety.

In general, too much emphasis was put on writing skills at University A. The writing components which are mentioned here do not enhance the discovery and use of syntaxes in writing. This researcher agrees with Wang (2012:12) who believes that the task-driven and project-oriented approaches should be introduced. Students need to be given tasks and projects, and then asked to report back to the class through presentations. In this way, the incorporation of writing and speaking skills takes place. Competence in speaking is seriously neglected at this institution because traditional teaching methods are still being practiced. Students are not given an opportunity to discover things on their own and report back. Some of the learning outcomes of the undergraduate courses at University A stated that upon completing these courses, the students would show the ability to use English across a variety of contexts and situations, demonstrate understanding of the correct use of English in written and spoken forms and generate, plan and organise ideas for written and oral activities.

This researcher’s view is that the time is too short for students to be able to show these abilities, especially in the service courses. Referring back to the findings of Frans’s (2007) research on the impact of second language on learners in Grade 12, it seems that the language problem persists to tertiary level.

4.9 Emerging trends from data

This section describes the common trends that emerged from data with regards to participants' responses to questions. The trends reflect the participants' views (students, heads of departments, lecturers and course coordinators). The trends that emerged from the participants were:

4.9.1 Time

All participants were concerned about the time allocated to the English courses. It is also a worrying factor that lecturers mentioned that they teach for the examination because they are concerned that the syllabi will not be completed before the students write the examination. Namibia has been faced with students' poor language proficiency problem since independence, and factors such as the inheritance of the language issues from schools, time to develop all four language skills in too large groups to pay attention to individuals are some of the challenges that hinder the teaching and learning of oral and writing skills.

4.9.2 Teaching methods

It was also noticed that the way students were taught in the classrooms does not enhance the students' language proficiency. Firstly, students shouted out answers and lecturers did not point out mistakes made by students especially to correct sentence construction. It seemed lecturers taught as if they were teaching content subjects where one did not need to pay attention to issues such as concord, sentence construction, word order and so on. However, in a language teaching environment, these are the most important factors to pay attention to. Secondly, lecturers mostly used only study guides. Another trend which caused concern was the students making careless mistakes and not paying serious attention to what they said. For example, after an assignment had been marked and it was returned to the students to check the errors, instead of the students correcting such errors, he or she paid no attention to the marked errors, which in fact means students do not edit their work and certainly learn nothing from their marked assignments and the mistakes they made in them.

4.9.3 Syllabi and study guide

The syllabi lack a variety of activities which could overcome the students' barriers to writing and speaking, especially at University A. Very few writing activities were found in the study guides. The most disturbing factor was that the syllabi are revised after every three years and lecturers are aware that students need to improve their English proficiency. Again, the syllabi do not have clear teaching objectives for teaching writing and speaking skills. If lecturers know how to approach a certain objective then some improvement would be evident.

4.9.4 Syllabi revision

The syllabi are revised after three years. Some lecturers, Heads of Departments and Course Coordinators indicated that they were involved in the revision of the syllabi and paid attention to the needs in the job market. As one Head of Departments mentioned, when students speak one understands what they want to convey - unlike when they write. The writing seemed to be the only problem this Head of Department was concerned with, and she was not worried about students' English fluency and whether they were able to convey messages well. This implies that the Head of Department felt that oral skills are not a problem and could be ignored. This was also evident in one of the syllabi where oral presentation was done only once a semester and in some syllabi this did not take place at all.

4.9.5 Sitting in classrooms

One of the major trends that emerged from data is the seating of students in classrooms. Some students prefer to sit with and talk to someone who speaks the same language (not English). These are adult students and one cannot dictate where they should sit in class. It is also difficult for lecturers to know who speaks what language.

4.9.6 Basic grammar

It also emerged from data that students lack basic English skills. Students realised and mentioned that they needed more exercises or practical work to improve their English proficiency. Also some lecturers felt that the students' English is passable although

inaccurate, which means as long as students pass there is no problem. All these trends can bar students from improving their writing and speaking skills and need to be addressed.

4.10 Summary

This chapter discusses the findings from data collected. Some insights were obtained from this research. Students still search for words when they speak. This was confirmed from data drawn from heads of departments and course coordinators indicating that students lack grammar proficiency in speaking and writing skills. When speaking, the language does not flow. Although the meaning is conveyed still the vocabulary is limited.

Students find it difficult to express themselves adequately, they do not use morphemes and lack strong syntax usage. From class observation, most of the answers from students are shouted out in a single word or every student shouts to give the answer and lecturers do not pay attention to what students say in terms of grammar accuracy. There is no proper control of how answers are articulated. Some syllabi concentrate mainly on basic English components such as parts of speech, writing essays and paragraph analysis while other syllabi concentrate on vocabulary building, reading, and speaking (presentations) leading to a high standard of English to be learned, but they lack practical activities that can help students overcome the barriers to learning English writing and speaking skills. Also, the time frame is very curtailed, especially regarding the courses that are offered for a semester only. The next chapter contains the summary, recommendations and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Summary, recommendations and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings from the questionnaire, interviews, document analysis and class observations concerning written as well as spoken skills at the institutions that were investigated. Some conclusions were drawn, recommendations made and programmes for improvement provided.

Writing and speaking skills are essential not only in the working environment, but also in a person's life. One needs to communicate by writing or speaking. This is also applicable to students who are learning a second language (English) or learning through a second language. This can only be achieved if the information which is given is organised, logical, comprehensive, interesting, relevant, accurate, original and well-structured.

Every problem is distinctive, therefore when addressing the problem investigated in this research in the Namibian context, the researcher took note of what other scholars had to say in terms of the barriers that prevent second language students from writing and speaking English well (see this chapter page 175: 54) The barriers that were investigated in this study were:

- English syllabi or study guides;
- Lack of teaching oral and written skills, and
- The inability of students to use morphemes and syntaxes correctly in oral and writing skills.

In order to answer the research question, criteria were established for each of the barriers that were investigated. Thereafter evidence of practices used in a cognitive constructivist classroom in writing and speaking skills was presented.

5.2 Summary of research findings

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the literature review as well as the research done and data collected by means of interviews, questionnaires, observations and

document analysis regarding the oral and written communication skills of students at tertiary level and the ability of lecturers to transfer those skills to the students.

Several discrepancies at the two universities regarding learning English as a second language as suggested by different authors in Chapter 2 were seen. The students mostly lacked cognitive commitment to specify grammatical factors which could be used to communicate effects in producing written and oral communication. In other words, the development of students' knowledge of language feature was lacking because students were not provided opportunities to build, extend and refine oral language in order to improve their written output.

5.2.1 Syllabi/study guides

It was stated in Chapter 2 that each syllabus was analysed in conjunction with its study guide. Most syllabi or study guides do not contain a unit on oral communication except in some syllabi or study guides where presentation was emphasised. Core activities including issues such as discussions, debating and oral presentations were not found in most syllabi (see Chapters 1 and 2). The only opportunity students had to debate or discuss something as a class was when a lecturer tried to help students build their confidence in speaking by introducing a topic of interest, for example from TV or a newspaper. There was also a lack of specific teaching objectives in writing skills in the syllabi especially at University A. The syllabi did not set out the objectives for teaching, for example, to generate high quality, precise and clear sentences. For oral communication in most of the syllabi at University A, teaching objectives do not exist.

5.2.2 Lack of teaching oral and writing skills

This refers to the methods employed by lecturers to teach oral and written skills to their students.

5.2.2.1 Oral opportunities

Pathan (2013:396) mentions that when communicating orally in English, students usually encounter varied linguistic problems that evidently handicap and hamper their

communication and negatively affect their general proficiency. Hence, understanding their problems in communicating as well as finding the best solutions to address the problems is important in order to help students in oral language development. Pathan (ibid) further argues that there is value in studying the kinds of problems that students encounter during oral communication and the strategic steps they might take to resolve these problems.

The understanding achieved can contribute to the effective teaching and learning of oral skills in the language classroom. The oral assessments, such as giving students the opportunity to communicate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes orally, not only helps the lecturers to reach their various students but also provides them with an ongoing opportunity to improve their language skills. This type of assessment was lacking at University A. Students were not given an opportunity to communicate with each other in the targeted language. For example, they were not given activities (such as discussion, brainstorming and reporting) and meaningful tasks that promoted oral speaking. Some of the students raised this concern and said that they needed more practical work to improve their English proficiency.

The findings revealed that spoken English was generally neglected at University A. It was not tested nor was it practiced well enough at this institution, while at University B, on the other hand, it was tested. At University A students were only taught how to speak in public, for example, by introducing a presentation, body language, audience, the content and what the language should be like (clear and precise). They were not taught what they should say; for example, they were not given enough practical exercises where a particular topic was given and they had to do a speech presentation while a lecturer listened and corrected them in terms of grammar mistakes. In most of the classes visited at both universities, students only spoke when they shouted out answers. Another problem was that most other students referred to speak with a person who speaks the same language as theirs (mother tongue). One cannot compel students to speak with other students who do not speak the same language as theirs but, if students prefer that, then there will always be inadequacies in and outside the classrooms as they will not practice English. Mostly, lecturers ignored the skills of interrelating oral and writing skills in their teaching for the students to learn from the two skills simultaneously. Also, lecturers lacked the skills of setting up an environment where students could be supported and not be afraid to make mistakes when speaking. Lastly, it emerged that speaking skills among students were not much of a problem especially for

those who spoke in class. Unfortunately, there were no oral presentation lessons to confirm this from all the classes observed.

5.2.2.2 Writing opportunities

The inability of students to write correct sentences (syntax) was noticed in their written work. This was a concern for both lecturers and students. It emerged from lecturers that students had difficulties with syntaxes especially when writing. Although students spoke fluently, there was still much work to be done regarding writing. The students themselves confirmed that they needed to master basic grammar that would enable them to improve their English proficiency in written and speaking skills. This was further confirmed by the exhibition of essays in Chapter 4 and also mentioned when students completed the questionnaire. Not many students used morphemes in their spoken or written skills. Writing skills were given more attention at University A, which was not related to syntax and morphology use. Students were simply told to “write a paragraph or an essay on a topic”. This was confirmed by the students who mentioned that they have problems with written skills ranging from constructing proper sentences to spelling. This was also evident in the students’ written work from both institutions, which was analysed. Students did not use proper grammar to write accurately and the application of grammar rules was lacking.

5.3 The inability of students to use morphemes in oral and writing skills

In the student’s work that was analysed, there was coherence and organisation but in most cases the writing lacked clarity. There were too many language mistakes that ranged from incorrect sentences, spelling, bad punctuation and poor choice of vocabulary. Students also wrote sentences that were too long. This means that syntax was a problem. Morphemes were not taught with the result that most students did not utilise them, especially derivational morphemes in written or spoken English. Some inflectional morphemes were seen in students’ written work. Some students who used inflectional morphemes inserted an apostrophe before the ‘s’ at the end of a word to create a plural form. Activities such as to create word clouds from students’ individual essays and use them for self-assessment purposes, which could be one of the steps lecturers could take to resolve certain writing problems were not seen at either institution.

5.4 Research conclusion

The purpose of this section is to present the conclusions of this research in accordance with the three sub-questions and the main research question underpinning this study.

Bearing in mind the background of English in Namibian schools as well as tertiary education, two major conclusions are drawn:

- Firstly, there are the syllabi. A syllabus is a detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements. Therefore, it is concluded that the syllabi at both institutions lack proper guidelines or objectives on how to teach oral and writing skills to second language students. However, further research is needed in this context to identify ways in which English as a second language can be best organised and presented to the students in an instructional setting.
- Secondly, time allocated to English courses. When students enroll at these institutions from secondary schools, many of them obtain C, D and E symbols in English. This leads to the conclusion that students' English proficiency on leaving secondary school is relatively low.

When students enter tertiary education with a low English proficiency level, they cannot be expected to become proficient in English in a short period of time. This problem is exacerbated when the English courses they have enrolled for at these institutions have a duration of a mere three to four months in a semester. In addition, time allocated to these courses has a great impact on teaching English courses in the sense that lecturers are prevented from employing good instructional methods because the time allowed is too short to accommodate such methods; lecturers must rush to finish the syllabus and as a result the situation remains unchanged.

To understand the teaching and learning processes of oral and written communication skills, the following research question and sub-questions were formulated. (see Chapter 1)

5.4.1 The main research question

What are the barriers preventing undergraduate students (in all graduate English courses) from improving their oral and written skills in English?

The main barriers that prevented students from improving their oral and writing skills in English at both universities that emerged from this research were: a lack of specific teaching and learning objectives in the syllabi that prevented the enhancement of the learning of a second language (English), inadequate teaching methods employed by lecturers to teach oral communication and writing skills, the inability of students to write correct sentences, the inadequate time allocated to these English courses that prevent the achievement of the outcomes of learning effective oral and writing skills (this includes lecturers teaching in a rush to finish the syllabi for the students to write examinations), students lacking learning motivation, students' perception of English, and all the aspects that have to be learned by second language students, given that English is a factor of general concern in education in Namibia. Therefore a programme is proposed in this chapter that could be the solution to the research problem in this study.

Above all, the tertiary institutions inherit students with poor English proficiency from schools. In order to overcome the barriers mentioned above, the author in Chapter 2 suggested that students need to develop the skills to understand that writing is about communicating messages or information. In addition, lecturers should use "interaction" to teach speaking to English second language students such as communicative language teaching, which is based on real-life situations such as authentic activities and meaningful tasks (e.g. debate) that promote oral language. By using this method in L2 classes, students are given the opportunity to communicate with each other in the target language.

Some good suggestions also came from lecturers that students should be given abundant opportunities to write and then lecturers could show the class some of the best academic features that were found in this written work. Lastly, some lecturers advised that structural methods could also be used to help in improving students' language proficiency by using methods such as vocabulary-building, build-up methods and the 'process genre' approach to teach syntax. Finally, the genre approach teaches students to determine the importance of correct spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, the difference between written and spoken language, the use of cohesive devices and synthesizing ideas.

5.4.1.1 Sub-research question 1

How will students be able to improve their English oral and writing skills through this research?

There is poor English competence among students at the two universities investigated. It is indicated in this study that tertiary level continually inherits this problem from secondary schools. Since English is a second language to most students, much has to be done to improve their English competence. The contribution this study could make to benefit the students goes beyond the classroom and the institutions. It needs to begin at national level with the Namibia Qualifications Framework, which approves common standards which need to be applied in the assessment of the quality and validity of qualifications as well as the quality of training programmes and courses, including English, offered by educational institutions.

Since data has revealed that students lack English competence at these institutions, this researcher feels the obligation to inform the heads of departments of these courses about these research findings. In addition, the researcher would invite staff in the English field at both institutions and do presentations on the findings and improved programme. Once this has been done, the institutions should then restructure all the language and communication courses so that elementary courses are tailored to deal with the issue of students' second language proficiency that could alleviate their problems in oral and writing skills. When the proposed programme has been implemented, students would benefit from this study by becoming confident speakers of English in any situation, and by becoming competent writers of English in their chosen field of employment.

5.4.1.2. Sub-research question 2

Do the syllabi meet the criteria for language (English) teaching and learning?

English as medium of instruction in education in Namibia is a problem which needs to be tackled by all stake holders in education. The syllabi content is rich when it is used by second language students who do not have problems in English like the students at these institutions, but since English is generally a problem in Namibia the syllabi do not meet the criteria for teaching of oral and writing skills in English to second language students.

Although some criteria as set out in Appendix A such as specific learning outcomes, materials to be used to enhance writing skills and analysis of content were met to a certain extent, some criteria such as objectives, instructional methods to teach both oral and writing skills, exercises in teaching syntax and morphemes, and basic grammar were not met. Sub-question 1 mentions that the institutions have inherited the problem from secondary schools. The syllabi at the institutions have been drawn up in such a way as to not address the second language teaching. In accordance with international teaching standards of teaching English as a second language (see Chapter 2) the schools and tertiary institutions should synthesis syllabi which build on each other to avoid oral and writing problems among students.

5.4.1.3 Sub-research question 3

How can a lack of teaching of oral and writing skills in English as a second language affect students?

Traditional teaching still exists and some poor instructional methods were observed. Although data revealed that there are websites and online activities for students, this type of lecturing was not seen during the class observations. Also, students are negatively affected by the lecturers when feedback on written work is only given using lecturer's written comments. No face-to-face explanations were given to students on how students could avoid making such mistakes. Students' grammar accuracy is neglected because it is not done face-to-face. Normally, students act on face-to-face error feedback by lecturers. Students do not write drafts on which lecturers can give feedback, which has to give an accurate and comprehensive picture of what the lecturers' comments to student writing. Lecturers do not encourage the idea of self-determination, exploration and cooperation in the process of teaching. Students are not taught to dig deeply to find the right words on their own, to use appropriate words and the correct spelling in order to form proper sentences. When it comes to oral skills students at these institutions are also negatively affected because they are not given opportunities to engage in formal discussion/debate activities. All these have a negative impact on learning oral and writing skills.

5.5 Recommendations

The research revealed some glitches that kept students from improving their oral and writing skills in English at the two tertiary institutions. Three major concerns were identified and they were

- A lack of specific teaching and learning objectives in oral communication and written skills
- The inability of students to write correct sentences and
- The time allocated to these English courses was too short to achieve the outcomes of effective oral and writing skills.

It is recommended in this study what can be done in the Namibian context, regarding the improvement of students' oral and writing problems. This depends on the Namibians themselves. Therefore, an intervention programme is proposed that can address the barriers that prevent students from improving their oral and writing proficiency at the institutions studied. This intervention programme comprises the following:

1. The introduction of a full one year bridging course to address the language proficiency of students. This is aimed at students who obtained D and E symbols in Grade 12, and those who entered tertiary level through a mature age entry test.
2. The revision of the syllabi by the English Departments of the two universities (via the faculty boards) with the aim of introducing a tailor-made syllabus for the bridging course that will include a combination of reading, writing and speaking skills for students in all courses.
3. While it is difficult to change an institution's rules and even programmes, this researcher believes this possibility does exist and most institutions will be willing to make limited provision if it is beneficial for all. In this case, the institutions will be informed by the researcher of the benefits of incorporating a bridging course in English and a pass rate of a C symbol before students are allowed to carry on studying English in the main courses.

Below are the interventions proposed that could be used to solve writing and speaking skills amongst students at the institutions studied.

4. What the institutions could do:

- Improving of writing skills: This could be done through a developed writing intervention programme, by requiring students to write assignments and submit them to lecturers for marking. This can build students' written skills;
- Improving of speaking skills: This could be done by identifying students with specific lack of speaking skills, and tutors or lecturers to give them extra classes;
- Improving time frame: more lecturing time should be allocated especially for the "Language in Practice" and "English in Practice" courses at University A. This can be done by taking away some time from other courses and adding it to these courses. This should not change the nominal hours required by the programme.

5. Lecturers could:

- Require students to do pre-writing beforehand, especially when writing essays (this could be incorporated into the extra classes).
- Emphasise the seriousness of the offence of plagiarism by giving them the correct information. This can be done by inserting the information into each study guide.
- Require students to undertake spoken activities before their written activities.
- construct informal assignments that allow students to practice their speaking skills such as pair work, group discussions, impromptu presentations and debates. In this way, students are given opportunities to practice formal speaking.
- Provide feedback on errors in written essays and require students to correct these errors in written work.

6. English Departments could

- Identify and monitor students in need of supplementary instruction and arrange extra classes (at least one a week) for those with barriers by contracted editors or lecturers;
- Provide the opportunities for extra debate and speaking classes at least once a week;

- Inform lecturers (via the dean or motivational presentations by the
- Researcher) regarding the benefits of teaching, guiding and correcting students in syntax instead of ignoring these problems. They should be made aware that such activities will benefit all role players.
- Encourage lecturers to combine writing and oral communication skills in their lessons by giving written or oral homework and giving more written assignments or activities as well as allowing more time for interaction in the class between and among students. However, this will only be of value if the necessary follow-up is done in the classroom by marking such homework regularly and pointing out errors and how to avoid making them!
- Make sure that during the revision of the syllabi, all the skills required to master English are included. Special attention should also be given to the teaching of oral and writing skills, as well as teaching of syntax.
- Encourage students to make more use of technology such as the Internet and social media (such as Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp) because technology can increase students' writing skills if used correctly.

7. Students could:

- Try to use a range of technologies such as word processing and software
- Try to do away with the mentality of being with someone who speaks the same language
- Take the responsibility for their own learning, expose themselves to the use of English in a variety of situations and recognise that an inadequate knowledge of how language is used in different types of texts can affect their writing proficiency and understanding.

5.6 Contribution to the body of knowledge

Much has been explored in this study regarding the learning and teaching of oral and writing skills in English. In Namibia to date, there is no research done on the writing and oral skills of students at tertiary level. Some research has, however, been done on Namibian student teachers' methods of teaching writing skills to Grade 11 and 12 English second language Ordinary and Higher level learners, and writing errors made by Grade 11 learners in English

(see Chapter 1). Since the main finding of this research was that learners were not performing well in L2 at secondary schools, a fact that obstructs their chances of pursuing further studies at institutions of higher learning (such as the institutions investigated in this study), it was deemed necessary to conduct a study on students' writing and speaking skills at tertiary level.

This may lead to a better understanding of the barriers that prevent students from improving their speaking and writing skills in English. The contribution of this study highlights the problem areas in teaching writing and oral skills, which will give lecturers at these institutions fresh ideas on how to teach these skills effectively. This not only applies to these institutions but to the field of knowledge as well as to the English field in Namibia.

It is also in this regard that the recommendations for an intervention programme are made that will enable students to improve their speaking and writing skills in English at these institutions. It is generally accepted that English lecturers play a leading role in ensuring that students are equipped with the right knowledge in writing and speaking skills, which would empower them to face future challenges in writing and speaking. It is hoped that through this study the proposed programme will help lecturers to create beneficial milieus of teaching and learning English writing and speaking to ensure the proficiency required by students in their studies in a demanding and competitive world.

5.7 Suggestions for future research

In view of this research, some issues of concern were raised which led this researcher to suggest that there was a need for further studies in this field. For example, if there was anyone who was interested in going beyond where this researcher stopped he/she could consider the following topics:

- Research is needed to identify ways in which a language can best be taught to students at tertiary level
- The combination of teaching the four skills in English to tertiary education students
- A thorough investigation regarding barriers to learning English from schools to tertiary education
- The impact of the use of technology in teaching English as a second language

This study confirms students' lack of English proficiency at these institutions, therefore, the institutions in collaboration with the English departments should consider the proposed programme in this study to solve this problem.

Changing beliefs, attitudes and policies do not happen overnight and because the success of teaching students English (written and orally) is imperative, all the stake holders should be convinced to take more interest in teaching and learning at all levels of Education in Namibia. Since the future success of all students in Namibia is at stake, we as a nation must be rigorously involved. We as a nation must make a decision on how we see the future of our youth in a developing world and that of our country.

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Appendices

Appendix A : Syllabus Checklist Items

Course: -----

	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Are there clear aims that form the outline for the specific learning outcomes (speaking and writing skills)?				
2. Are there clear objectives that are carefully designed and clearly present learning outcomes in speaking and writing skills?				
3. Does the content match with aims and objectives in writing and speaking skills?				
4. Are there instructional methods stipulated for oral communication skills?				
5. Are there instructional methods stipulated for writing skills?				
6. Are there specific materials to be used for certain activities in writing skills?				
7. Are there specific materials to be used for certain activities in speaking skills?				
8. Are there exercises set on text coherence?				
9. Are there exercises set on essay content, for example, to analyse the content?				
10. Are there exercises set on the language use in the essay?				
11. Are there instructional methods stipulated for teaching syntaxes?				
12. Are there instructional methods stipulated for teaching morphology?				

13. Is basic punctuation given attention in the syllabus?				
14. Are the following parts of speech: subject and verb agreement, possessive case, progressive form active and passive form, and auxiliary given adequate attention?				
16. Does the syllabus specify what reading materials should be used to enhance writing skills?				

Appendix B: Students' questionnaire

Q1. What English symbol did you obtain in Grade 12?

Q2. Did you any English course at this institution? If yes, what do you think were the challenges that made you fail?

Q3. What English course are you currently enrolled for?

Q4. What are the challenges do you face in this course?

Q5. Do you have any problem regarding oral communication in English? If yes, please elaborate.

Q6. Do you have problems with writing skills? If yes please elaborate

Q7. What suggestions can you make to solve the challenges you mentioned?

Q8. Do you think the time allocated to this course is sufficient to master what you are supposed to learn in English? Please elaborate!

Q9. Why do you want to be educated further in English after Grade 12?

Q10. Does English at this institution meet your needs?

Q11. Would you like to study the English terminologies that relate to your specialisation?

Elaborate

Q12. How often do you write during the English lesson: daily, weekly or monthly?

Q13. What do you normally write, notes, letters, essays, reports or assignment?

Q14. What language do you normally speak during the English lessons?

Q15. What language do you normally speak with your fellow students outside the classroom, and why?

Q16. What changes would you like to see concerning your own oral and writing skills in English?

THANK YOU

Appendix D: Heads of Departments' Interview questions

Q1. Which English course/s are you responsible for?

Q2. What are your duties and responsibilities regarding the position you have mentioned?

Q3. What is the time frame allocated to the course/s you are responsible for?

Q4. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?

Q5. Are you satisfied with students' performance in your course/s? If not what do you do?

Q6. How do you determine that the syllabus achieves its objectives?

Q7. How would you describe the grammatical accuracy of students?

Q8. As head of department, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?

Q 9. Can you briefly describe the students' accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English?

- Oral-----

- Writing-----

- Q10. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking abilities?
What strategies do you use to help the students?

----- THANK YOU-----

Appendix E: Course Coordinator's interview questions

Q1. Which English course/s are you responsible for?

Q2. What are your duties and responsibilities regarding the position you are responsible for?

- Q3. Were you involved in the planning of the syllabus for the course you are responsible for? If yes, please elaborate! If not who is?

Q4. What do you consider when planning the English syllabus?

Q5. Considering the fact that English is the second language for most of the students at this institution, in your opinion, do you think the time allocated to this course is sufficient to prepare students for the job market after they graduate? Please motivate your answer.

Q6. How would you describe the grammatical accuracy of students?

Q7. Can you briefly describe the students' accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English?

Oral-----

Writing-----

Q8. What are the problems you face concerning the teaching of oral communication and writing skills?

Oral:-----

- Writing:-----

Q9. As course coordinator, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?

Q10. Do you see it as your role to help students build self-confidence in their speaking abilities? What strategies do you use to help the students?

- THANK YOU-

Appendix F: Class observation check list items

Course: ----- Number of students:----- Lesson topic:-----

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Best
1. Teaching aids				
2. Discussion /debate (students)				
3. Problem-solving (students)				
4. Oral presentation (students)				
5. Group work activities				
6. Student participation				
7. Articulation (students and lecturer)				
8. Proficiency (lecturer)				
9. Confidence (students)				
10. Sentence structure (students)				
11. The use of morphology (students)				
12. Clear sentences (students)				
13. Lecturer involvement				
14. Length of the answer (students)				
15. Appropriateness of answer (students)				
16. Speak with enthusiasm (students)				
17. Accent neutralization (students)				
18. Word pronunciation (students)				
19. Fluency (lecturer and students)				
20. Grammar accuracy (students)				

Appendix G: Students' written work checklist

Course----- Type of written work-----

	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Best
1. Brevity				
2. Clarity				
3. Communication				
4. Emphasis				
5. Essay structure (beginning, middle,				
6. Control of the language				
7. Good organization of an essay				
8. Planning				
9. Accurate words				
10. Effect				
11. Appearance				
12. Spelling				
13. Morphology used				
14. Sentence structure				
15. Vocabulary				
16. Word choice				
17. Essay content				
18. Punctuation				
19. Quoting (summary)				
20. Maturity				

Appendix H: Acronyms

SWAPO – South West Africa People’s Organization

MBE - Ministry of Basic Education

MECYS- Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

MBEC - Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

MED - Ministry of Education

IGCSE - International General Cambridge Secondary Education

HIGCSE - Higher International General Cambridge Secondary Education

NSSC - Namibia Secondary School Certificate

ESL - English as Second Language

DVD - Digital Video Disc

NQF - Namibia Qualification Framework

CD - Compact Disc

NAMCOL - Namibia College of Open Learning

n.d. - no date

L2 - Second Language

CL - Cognitive Linguistics

ECD - Early childhood Development

ICT - Information Communication Technology

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization