CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO THE MASTERY OF THE SHONA ORTHOGRAPHY IN SCHOOLS

by

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in the subject

LANGUAGE, LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE
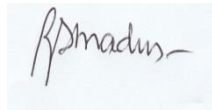
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Declaration

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I, **RAPHAEL MADUSISE** hereby declare that **CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO THE MASTERY OF THE SHONA ORTHOGRAPHY IN SCHOOLS** is my own work that has not been previously submitted for assessment at any university or institution for any degree or any other qualification.

Signature of candidate   **Date** August, 2022

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my work to

my soul friend and wife,

Sylvia

who instilled and encouraged in me the sense
of valuing

education,

and

the love for avid and dedicated reading.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The interconnection between language and culture makes language inherently linked to the society in which it is taught and learnt. In response to this affinity, learners are allowed to use a language that is relevant and sensitive to their socio-educational contexts. As the study revealed, Shona language teaching and learning in Zimbabwean secondary schools rarely brings the interconnection between language and culture in pedagogically inspired ways. This qualitative case study set out to problematize how the dissonance between language and culture causes some learners to commit orthographical errors when they write at school using the prescribed academic Shona language. The Shona language used to write at school is a product of standardisation of all the Shona dialects. Unfortunately, this Standard Shona has a heavy Zezuru bias making it somewhat culture free as regards all the other dialects that each did not feed much into the standard language used at school. The Zezuru bias has also resulted in dialects having a held-down functional space in education where the use of one's dialect language or the home language is penalisable. There is need to correct the mismatch between home language and school language. The researcher engaged with academics, teachers and learners through interviews and questionnaires in trying to find out possible causes of errors learners commit when writing at school. Apart from interviews, the researcher carried out documentary analysis of adverts to find out how they can be causes of poor mastery of orthography by learners. It is the emphasis on standard Shona among other reasons, which causes low scores in composition. Learners lose many marks allotted to orthography because of mother tongue interference.

Key terms

Dialect, first language, home language, standard language, second language, school language, standardisation, hegemony, emic view of language, etic view of language, nativise, orthography, transparent (shallow) orthography, multi-lingual and multi-cultural classroom discourse,

Abbreviations

ALP   Academic Language Proficiency

CLIL   Content and Language Integrated Learning

D   Dialect

HL   Home Language

IOG   Identity Orientation Group of errors

L$_1$ First Language

L$_2$ Second Language

NIG   Natural Inability Group of errors

SL   School Language

ZIMSEC Zimbabwe School Examinations Council

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GRAPHS

ETHICS……………………………………………………………… 238

CHAPTER 1

Setting the scene

1.1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, the researcher describes the background that sets the direction for this research. Aim and objectives of the study are stated. Research questions that chart the direction toward achieving the set aim and objectives are stated. An overview of the chapters in this research is given in this chapter. Serious consideration of research study ethics is made so that when engaging with participants, their participation is optimal because of respecting their rights. That will give this study the impetus to contribute to the debate about why pupils make orthographical errors when writing in Shona.

1.2 Background

Some researchers have estimated that two thirds of the world's children grow up in contexts where languages and their dialects exist. Sadly, when children go to school, they are forced to abandon their home languages (usually dialects) in preference for a standardized language. Often unsuccessfully, they struggle to learn in a language that they are barely proficient or competent in (Bender, et al., 2005). In this scenario the following dichotomy arises:

 a) Home language-**HL (**any dialect of Shona**)**, usually the mother tongue or a
     language intuitively and easily mastered and

 b) School language-**SL** or standardized language, usually learnt at school to fulfill certain
     linguistic educational demands, whereupon the right to language or "the right to use the
     language one is most proficient in…" (Mazrui, 1998 in Ndhlovu, 2008: 138) is stoutly
     denied when in fact, language proficiency is central in the education of language
     (Cummins, 2012).

Home and school contexts represent different cultures that can influence or affect language use. This is consistent with The Verbal Deficit Perspective that states that, not anyone who does not use standard form of a language has a language (Winch, 1985; Yao et al, 2016). **HL** and **SL** can complement each other or compete and disturb mastery and use of either. Kellaghan and Greaney (1992) argue that students who hail from such linguistic environments have low competence levels in language proficiency. This affects their performance in language work at school, specifically composition writing. The way Shona is learnt at school resembles the learning of a second language. That is very difficult. Saville-Troike (2006) explains that it is made difficult because language elements acquired in **HL** will be transferred to the target **SL**. Mother tongue transfer affects one's writing in the target school language. Ellis (2015) also explains that the learner's home language has influence on school language. The number of errors that a learner makes can explain the influence better. The interference of the learner's mother tongue causes the errors. The transfer usually has negative effects if the language elements in **HL** do not match those in **SL** or do not exist in **SL**. The mismatch between the elements transferred from **HL** and those of the target language, **SL**, usually leads to production of incorrect spelling and grammar structures. That affects learners' performance. Learners commit various orthographic errors emanating from such a relationship between the other dialects and "… the standard Shona that we have today [which] is mainly Zezuru-based…" (Chimhundu, 2005: 34) which is herein considered the school language (**SL**). Presumably, there are challenges that come along with the kind of status quo ..regarding learning Shona that has a heavy Zezuru bias. When "Doke selected Zezuru dialect as basis for both spelling and grammar" (Chimhundu, 2005:102), other Shona dialects were sidelined. In fact, he should have been "… guided by the desire to recognise and accommodate all languages and language groups," (Ndhlovu, 2008: 139). In Zambia too, Banda (2002) declares that missionaries also sidelined some dialects of the Zambian languages. This research is carried out in this light to find out how this mother tongue transfer leads to poor mastery of orthography. Besides mother tongue transfer being a cause of poor mastery of orthography, this research also interests itself in finding out what other factors cause poor mastery of the Shona orthography.

Adams (2016) warns that writing mistakes embarrass both teacher and learner. The marker ends up scoring a piece of work very low. It is, however, worth persisting with learning to spell correctly as poor spelling as per current orthography can be embarrassing for both marker and student. It can also become costly to students when they do not write well in Shona.

O-Level students make orthographical errors when writing in Shona. The following is a list of some of the orthographical errors students commit:

- All spelling errors

- Use of small letter for capital or vice versa

- Omissions of a word or words, and or even slips

- Wrong punctuation

- Wrongly completed parenthesis

- False concords

- Incorrect word division

- Incorrect use of hyphen

(Adapted from**:** *Zimbabwe School Examinations Council, Composition and Comprehension Marking Scheme, 2011:3*).

The marking scheme for O-Level Shona Paper 3159/1 instructs examiners to award marks to composition after considering orthography *(the underlining is for my own emphasis)*. The number of orthographical errors a student makes in writing that composition (Zimbabwe School Examinations Council, Composition and Comprehension Marking Scheme, 2011: 5-6) determines composition grades:

Table: 1.1: <u>Amplification of Essay Class Definitions</u>

Grade	Score	Category	Notation
A	43-50	**outstanding**	*No orthographical errors or very few of them. There should not be more than 15 different errors.*
B	35-42	**very good**	*Different orthographical errors should not exceed 20.*
C	30-34	**upper good (satisfactory)**	*Different orthographical errors do not exceed 25.*
C	25-29	**lower good (satisfactory)**	*Different orthographical errors are 26 – 30 or slightly more up to 33 or 34 <u>only</u> (underlined for emphasis).*
D	18-24	**unsatisfactory**	*There are many different orthographical errors.*
D	13-17	**poor**	*There are many different orthographical errors.*
E	7-12	**very poor**	*There are <u>too</u> (my own underlining for emphasis) many different orthographical errors.*
F	0-6	**off topic**	*All ideas are confused. There is no explanation of any of the ideas*

1.3 Statement of the problem

Many authorities have researched on the shortcomings of the current orthography and its limitations on consumers of a nation- wide nature. Its negativity at classroom level/ school level has not been rigorously looked at. It is within the province of this research to reveal the factors that lead to poor mastery of orthography and subsequent commission of errors by students when they write in Shona at school. An effort to find the factors could be a worthwhile move to mitigate the prevalence of orthographic errors in students' pieces of written work. Knowledge of the factors could help teachers encourage students to, as India Today Web Desk (2017) hints, put more effort into remembering correct spellings and master writing well. This can be pertinent in Shona writing as prescribed by the current Shona orthography so that learners do not lose a lot of marks in ZIMSEC O-Level Paper 3159/1 Shona examinations.

1.4 Aim of the study

The study aimed to find out the factors that lead to poor mastery of the Shona orthography by learners in schools when they write in Shona**.**

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 To find out the factors that lead to poor mastery of Shona orthography by learners.
1.5.2 To find out the types of orthographical errors that learners make.
1.5.3 To proffer solutions to the orthographical errors learners make when writing in Shona.

1.6 Research questions

1.6.1 What are the factors that lead to poor mastery of Shona orthography by learners when they write in Shona? This question invited attention to a reflection on the current Shona orthography firmly in use checking on 'how' the factors can lead to poor mastery of orthography, which subsequently causes learners to commit errors when writing in Shona.

1.6.2 What orthographical errors do students make when writing in Shona? This question provoked a critical analysis and evaluation of the orthographical errors committed by learners when writing in Shona.

1.6.3 What are the solutions to the orthographical errors learners make? This question focused on **how** the current Shona orthography and its engagement in the classroom can be interrogated and fine-tuned to ameliorate the challenges that come with it as a writing system. It is proposed that such an endeavor can help mitigate the prevalence of orthographical errors that learners commit when writing in Shona.

1.7   Justification

Many students in Shona classes lose many marks by committing numerous and various orthographical errors. This is a cause for concern to educators involved in the teaching and learning of Shona. This research argues that the cause of the errors should be investigated basing the investigations on sociocultural aspects of dialect and language which can determine how fluent a person becomes in each of the two languages when writing (Bender, et al., 2005). Writing demands a sense and awareness of the conventions of a particular writing system (orthography) which involve the vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and all those other orthographic conventions. Writing systems operate alongside spoken systems often with correspondence or close approximation. Is the proposition that if that approximation is missing in the conventionalised orthography, the users make errors, true? Do learners' dialect languages cause them to make errors when writing in Shona at school? The spoken system of the other dialects does not correspond with conventions of the current Shona orthography that has a heavy Zezuru bias. That is a fact. It remains to be established by this research if that lack of correspondence between spoken and written forms of a language could be a cause of errors that learners commit when writing in Shona. This could confirm the assertion that when children are at school they are forced to abandon their language and, often unsuccessfully struggle to learn in a language they are barely competent in causing them not to score well in language work at school (Bender, et al., 2005). The language in question here is Shona (**SL**) whose

orthography does not correspond, in many cases with spoken dialect (**HL**) language. The dialects of the Shona language could be presenting the mismatch and purportedly causing learners to make orthographic mistakes when writing at school. This also remains to be established by this research.

It was also investigated whether the literary environment of leaners could be a cause of some of the errors pupils commit when writing in Shona. Ehri and Wilce's (1987) proposition that knowledge of specific words depends on learners' exposure to those words in print, leaves this researcher with unquenchable interest to interrogate how far the literary environment affects learners' spelling bearing in mind that "…homes and local areas are replete with environmental print; advertising, labels on food stuffs and so on," (Mwansa, 2017). What learners therefore bring to school is knowledge of spelling of some words (seen on adverts etc.) and tacit knowledge of their language (**HL**)'s phonology. Mwansa (ibid) explains that phonology needs to be connected to school graphic system or learners will pay the prize if compatibility is non-existent between the two, **HL** and **SL**.

1.8   Definition of terms

1.8.1 Dixon (2018) defines a home language (**HL**) as the first language one learns after birth. It is the language of one's parents or community. It is one's first language or mother tongue or native language. The home language is used informally at home or anywhere outside school. There are no rules that govern the home language. It is acquired naturally and effortlessly.

1.8.2 Nag et. al,. (2018) define school language (**SL**) as the language used at school for academic purposes. It is a formal and a rule governed genre of language that requires a lot of effort to acquire and master.

1.8.3 **Orthography** is an agreed system of representing the sound of particular language using written symbols (Oketch, 2010). Jaffe (2000) also defines orthography as a tool in the symbolic fusion of language and identity. In that matrix he says identity is primordially attached to language and one thus gets an idea of self and his community. Basically, orthography is viewed as a group identity marker. It is for a particular people and their particular language. Pursuant to that, Coulmas (1996) says orthography is language specific and UK Essays (2018) asserts that language is rule-governed which covers placement of spellings, word breaks, punctuation, capitalization, hyphenation as regulated by the written standard. Merriam Webster, while defining orthography first breaks the word into two; *orthos* a Greek word meaning true or right and *graphien* a Greek word which means to write. Put together orthography therefore means to write well (right/true).

1.8.4 **Dialect** is an unstandardized language usually one's home language (**HL**). According to Merriam Webster (2018), dialect is distinguished by vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation features. Its identity is fixed by factors other than geography, factors such as culture, ethnicity and a host other un-geographical factors.

1.8.5 **Identity** refers to how one knows who he/she is; linguistic identity? Cultural identity? Social identity? Family identity? de Clercq (2018) presents that, "Linguistic identity means one considers self as belonging to a certain group of people who speak his/her language. As people think and speak in a certain way they create a culture hence the way they behave is determined by the language."

1.8.6 **Standard language** is a language that is standardized and has orthography. van Wyk (2012) explains standard language as the most correct or right and above all formal way of writing or speaking a language usually the school language (**SL**).

1.8.7 **Transparent** (**Shallow**) **orthographies** are orthographies with consistent sound–symbol correspondences. Such orthographies enhance correct spelling. Holland (2017: 11) relates that, "If a language has a phonetic alphabet, where the characters represent the pronunciation of words, it can be a benefit to students." Mwansa (2017) adds to this saying that, "…children in transparent orthographies have less problems working out connections between sounds and letters…", because between letters and sounds of a language the correspondences are univocal, for example letter 'o' always converts to the sound 'o' (Lallier *et al*., 2015). This is so for all letters in a shallow or transparent orthography.   This means students' performance at spelling correctly when they write at school is usually good and commendable in shallow orthographies.

1.8.8 **Environment** in this study it refers to literary environment. According to Hansen (1969), literary environment can refer to home, school or generally one's hood regarding availability of reading material that subsequently influences one's ability to become proficient in reading or writing in a language. This ties up well with Mwanza (2017: 127)'s claim that, "… homes and local areas are replete with environmental print; advertising, labels on food stuffs, and so on." Children in such environments are privileged early in life on how some words are spelt. For such children, spelling well is easier because of their exposure to that kind of literature.

1.9 Scope of the study

The study will contribute to the debate on why pupils make orthographical errors when writing in Shona. The research seeks to show some of the factors that lead to the errors so committed. In doing all that it will be established whether linguistic identity situates learners in some compromises in

Shona classes. The study will also interrogate the connection between language learning and real life experiences.

1.10 Layout of the thesis

The section gives overview of chapters in this research. The thesis will be divided into the following chapters:

    1.10.1 Chapter 1: Setting the scene

    1.10.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

    1.10.3 Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework, Research Design and Methodology

    1.10.4 Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

    1.10.5 Chapter 5: Study summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

1.11   Ethical Considerations

To meet requirements of acceptable research ethics, the following principles were adhered to:

    1.11.1 The researcher sought consent of the research participants by asking them to read through and sign informed consent letters.

    1.11.2 It was also imperative for the researcher to keep the identity of participants concealed.

    1.11.3 The participants were not coerced to give information but voluntarily offered it. It was explained in the informed consent letter.

    1.11.4 It was made very clear to the research participants that the information they would give would be treated as confidential. It was important to bring to the attention of the participants that the consent forms that they were asked to sign were not binding, they could however rescind the consent and the information they might have given would cease to be used in the research.

    1.1.1.5 An undertaking to communicate the results of the research to the participants who wished to know the outcome was made.

In the above outlined ethical principles, morality took centre stage. A researcher is thus, entreated to protect the dignity and rights of individuals and society at large (Chinemo, 2022). Polonsky

(1998) emphasizes that ethical considerations are a must when carrying out research studies. The ethical considerations are synonymous with the five ethical principles outlined above.

When the researcher finally applies for ethical clearance from the university, Covid -19 pandemic protocols of social distancing and sanitizing are outlined. This is pertinent in cases where face-to-face interviews are going to be conducted

1.12 Conclusion

To set the ball rolling, the **background** to the study was given. The background given foregrounded the study. The **statement of the problem** that the study set out to solve was formulated around the background about the challenges of the current Shona orthography. The study aimed to find out the factors that cause poor mastery of the Shona orthography by learners in schools. In order to achieve the **aim**, three **objectives** were stated to provide direction to answers for the three **research questions.** Parameters of the study **justification** were set out under justification. The parameters focused on finding out why learners lose many marks by committing orthographical errors and suggested ways of mitigating the commission of the errors. The study proposed to establish the relationship between ethnic identity and orthographic errors. In this regard the researcher set out to establish how one's dialect (the home language) affects spelling at school, bearing in mind that dialects like Karanga, Ndau, Manyika, Korekore do not have alphabets as does a standard Shona language (a result of unification and standardization of the dialects). The terms that are constantly made reference to in the study were defined under **definition of terms.** The study aims to make a footprint on the debate on why learners make orthographical errors when they write in Shona at school. The study has five chapters. Ethical considerations are outlined, emphasising how important they are in research.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter's focus is on world, African and Zimbabwean perspectives on orthography in broad and general ways. Such perspectives help in contextualising the present research. The context so established will form a firm foundation for interrogating the challenges of the Shona orthography as it is used in Zimbabwean schools. This is done for the sole purpose of establishing and revealing the knowledge gap in this body of study.

2.2 The nature of review of related literature

Literature review is very important when carrying out research. It helps the researcher become aware of what has already been researched on in that body of knowledge and what is not researched on yet, which is a gap a research seeks to fill. It becomes prudent then to fixate the current research focus on that area or areas that has/have not been researched on thereby discarding wheel reinvention. Shuttleworth (2009) weighs in with the idea that the review has to be extensive, intensive and rigorous. This will qualify a research so undertaken to fill the identified gap with new information never before collected or assembled, convincing anyone who reads the research that there is new, different and unique information contributed to the body of knowledge.

2.3 World perspectives

Language affects learners' daily lives socially, culturally and politically. As they seek to use their language in the written form, they are adjudged to have failed to correctly use the language and be marked wrong. It is their language but they are adjudged thus as facets, conventions and characteristics of a standard orthography of a language come into play for a writing system to be right.

This raises the question about orthography design or reform to circumvent such a challenge. The orthography so desired has to be one that will cause least amount of difficulty for indigenous speakers needing to achieve educationally. Taking cue from Cahill and Karan's (2008) averment that for orthography to be effective as a writing system it must be **acceptable**, **teachable** and **usable** in terms of its characters matching the sounds of a language, the Germans embarked on a grand orthography reform. The reform was premised on the following Wiese's (2004) Orthography Preferences, namely:

- One letter - one phoneme/sound
- Write as you speak
- One morpheme – one spelling
- Make the orthography easy to learn and
- Make the orthography easy to write

Smalley's in Friesen (1963) and Berry's (1975) in von Gleich and Wollf (1991) orthography maximums that guide design and development of orthographies inform the preferences. The maximums are:

- Maximum Motivation (most acceptable to learner)
- Maximum Representation (fullest representation of spoken language)
- Maximum Ease of learning (not too complex)
- Maximum Transfer (follow sound-symbol correspondence)
- Maximum Reproduction (ease of writing [typing, hand writing, printing])

Some foreign words received a 'Germanised' spelling, for example, /*photograph*/ became /*fotograf*/ in keeping with, as Lupke (2011) advises, the dictates and conventions of an ideal orthography, a shallow one that has a one to one correspondence between grapheme and phoneme (*one letter-one phoneme/sound as Wiese suggests*) such as the German orthography. They would also *write as they speak* (*as in fotograf*). Upward (1997) says this came about because of agonising efforts since 1991 to simplify German spelling because spelling in shallow orthographies is easier to master while a deep orthography, according to Sharma (2016), makes writing, reading and learning quite difficult. This

gives credence to Wiese's (ibid) assertion that orthography should be ***easy to learn***. Upward (ibid) says before the reform, two hundred rules regulated spelling. They were reduced to one hundred and twelve. Fifty-seven rules regulated punctuation. These were reduced to nine. Today, German has become so simplified that learning it has become a lot easier, Upward (ibid) argues. If learning German has become that easy, it follows that it can subsequently become easy to write (*Wiese, 2004 says orthography should be **easy to write***).

This research is predicated on such ideas and it becomes clear that the Shona orthography needs reforming. A one to one sound-grapheme correspondence should characterise it, just like German. Where the Germans threw away the English word /***photograph***/ for German /***fotograf***/, for Shona, it is not the case of throwing words away that is proposed. It is proposed that words from other dialects be accepted in this writing system, basing that stance on Grenoble's and Whaley's (2005) conviction that standard language must not be left to supplant dialects or language varieties.

Like Germany 'Germanized' some foreign words, Grot (1916) explains how Russia 'Russified' a Latin word /***collectivus***/ to become /***kollektiv***/ all in an effort to fulfil the linguistic goal of many languages the world over, that of having a phonetic representation of the spoken language (Holland, 2017). This was after a realisation that as a language gets into contact with other languages many loanwords come into existence. At the same time, they wanted such words to conform to how they speak and write because they have a shallow orthography (*one that has a one to one sound-letter correspondence*) like Germany has. The different orthographies of Italy and Russia cater for the same word differently in spelling as described above. However, in either country, further reforms in keeping with current literary trends are still on going. In 1917 in Russia, some letters were eliminated. It became possible for them to draw from literary and spoken forms of the language thereby bringing the forms closer than before. The strategy in a way eliminated quite a number of exceptions as regards how they spell words in their language. The total effect of it all was simplification of Russian spelling.

Upward (1997) has argued that learning German has become a lot easier because of spelling reform. Russia has many 'Russified' words in their orthography (Grot, 1916). This respective 'Germanisation' and 'Russification' of the languages is akin to phonologising words of a different language which a language has got contact with. Shona as a language, is invited to phonologise words and afford learners the latitude to use foreign words in their writing which practice is currently selectively done, placing learners at risk of making errors and be marked wrong.

In Korea, Chinese vocabulary was replaced, equating its use to using a square handle in a round hole (King Sejong, 1442 in Today Translations, London, 2016). Loanwords from Japan were thus replaced

with native neologisms. While this sounded noble to the Korean leaders like King Sejong the Great, it tells any mind that a language was being suppressed of lexical expansion. It is mundane for a language to borrow from those languages it is in contact with if it should achieve lexical expansion. However, today the Korean language (Hangul) is famous worldwide for its peerlessness, its conciseness, its logicalness and its simplicity because its symbols match sound transparently (*this signifies a shallow/transparent orthography*). This is how simple it is to master the bespoke Korean language as King Sejong (1446), in Today Translations, London, 2016: 3 has this to say,

> A wise man can acquaint himself with [hangul] before the morning is over,
> a stupid man can learn [it] in the space of ten days.

This confirms King Sejong's vision of creating a writing system that is easy to learn and master since he was saddened by the high rate of illiteracy that characterised Korea in 1446. To this end he is credited for developing 28 letters that were easy to learn.

Coulmas (1989) mentions that mismatch between a language and its writing system emanates from the fact that usually when a writing system of a given language is adopted initially for use by another language, its characteristic principles are not fully comprehended resulting in an orthography which is ethnically divorced, inadequate and unrepresentative. A good example can be of the Chinese writing system whose characters did not represent the Korean language well. This gave currency to Sejong's initiatives of redesigning and re-standardising the Korean orthography. He was seized by the desire to do something to represent their language well particularly by scraping away all Chinese characters (which characters were ethnically divorced, inadequate and unrepresentative) from the Korean orthography.

There are two lessons that can be learnt from the Korean experience. The lessons are:

- there is need to 'nativise' a language and make it simple to learn and master and thus let it become as renowned for simplicity as the Korean language and
- there is need to allow a language to borrow from those languages it is in contact with by accepting the use of phonologised words thereby according it lexical expansion. In the Korean case, Japanese words received <u>native neologisms</u> (*This researcher chooses to equate this to phonologising*). This will minimise commission of errors by learners as they write at school or anywhere outside school. When learners use some certain words from different languages in their writing by way of phonologising they are considered to have erred. The phrase *different*

language as used by this researcher refers to languages like English, Ndebele and all the Shona dialects, which languages Shona is in contact with.

It remains to be established by this research if the Shona language is not 'nativised' enough (encompassing all its dialects) and lacks lexical expansion which causes learners to commit errors when writing.

Informed by the idea that foreign languages are not well endowed to capture the totality of the grammar of a language, Germany 'Germanised' its orthography to capture the total grammar of its language. Russia as well 'Russified' its orthography to capture the total grammar of its language and Korea nativised its own to achieve the same goal. Such undertakings were borne out of the realisation that learning in a foreign language predisposes learners to making errors when writing, diametric to Tegegne's (2015) claim that achievements in learning are greater, better and successful when done in the learners' mother tongue. That is usually caused by their refusal 'to do as those do' and never apply any serious effort in whatever they learn through that foreign language. Learners thus instinctively refuse to accept 'otherness' as shown by inscriptions in a bus shelter in Lancaster, England where two words '**K**RIS' and 'CHRIS' were written side by side in a bus shelter (Fig 1).

Adapted from
http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu

Bus shelter, Lancaster, 1997

Fig 2.1
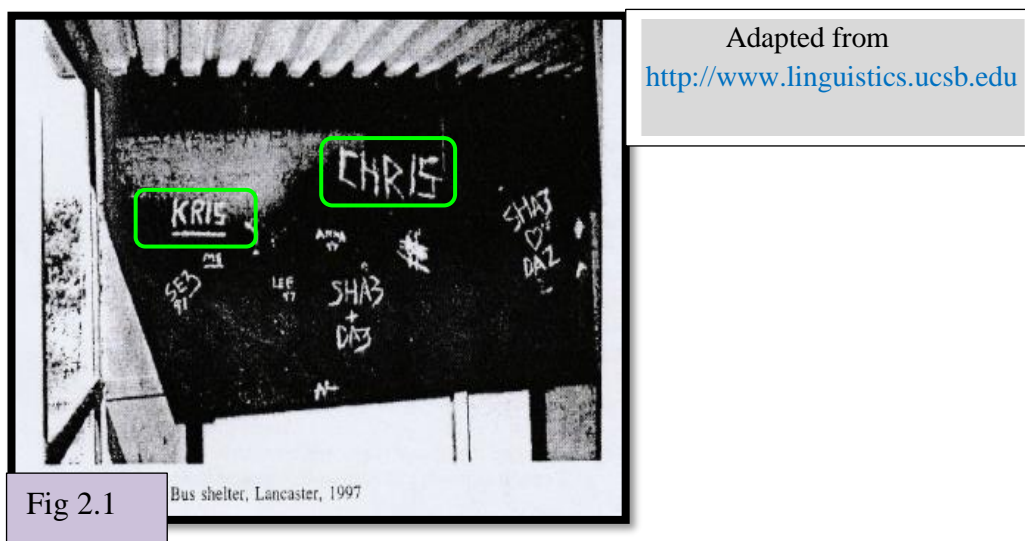
Kris is unusual in English. One might ask *Why Kris?* The answer could be that there is something symbolic attached to Kris and not to Chris. The 'K' is significant 'other'.

The symbolic significance attached to letter 'K' was also noticed in the mountain town of Ripoll in Spain on a building where the word 'O**K**UPACION' was written (Fig 2).

Fig 2.2   Wall in Ripoll, Spain (1997)

In standard Spanish, it should have been OCUPACION meaning that the building has already been occupied. In these particular and specific cases, the 'K' denotes 'otherness'. That invites resistance to Spanish or English orthographic conventions because Murakami (2018) in The Guardian (2018) notes that learning other people's language is tantamount to becoming another person. That is not accepted easily and passively. Are the errors learners commit when writing in Shona caused by learners' refusal to become other persons, one would ask?

Kaani (2014) posits that learners taught in shallow orthographies acquire reading and writing in a language effortlessly and faster than those taught in deep orthographies do. English is wrought with glaring inconsistencies in sound-grapheme correspondence. In such cases, learners have more challenges in pronouncin or writing words like *phone* and *find* in which words the sound of phoneme /**f**/ is represented by /f/ in <**f**ind>, /gh/ in <enou**gh**> and /**ph**/ in <**ph**one>; and the sound of phoneme /**s**/ is represented by /s/ in <**s**ite> and /c/ in <**c**ite>. The list is long. Essberger (2009) illustrates the inconsistences, humorously though, in the following example of the contrived word, '*Ghoti*', based on the English spelling oddities:
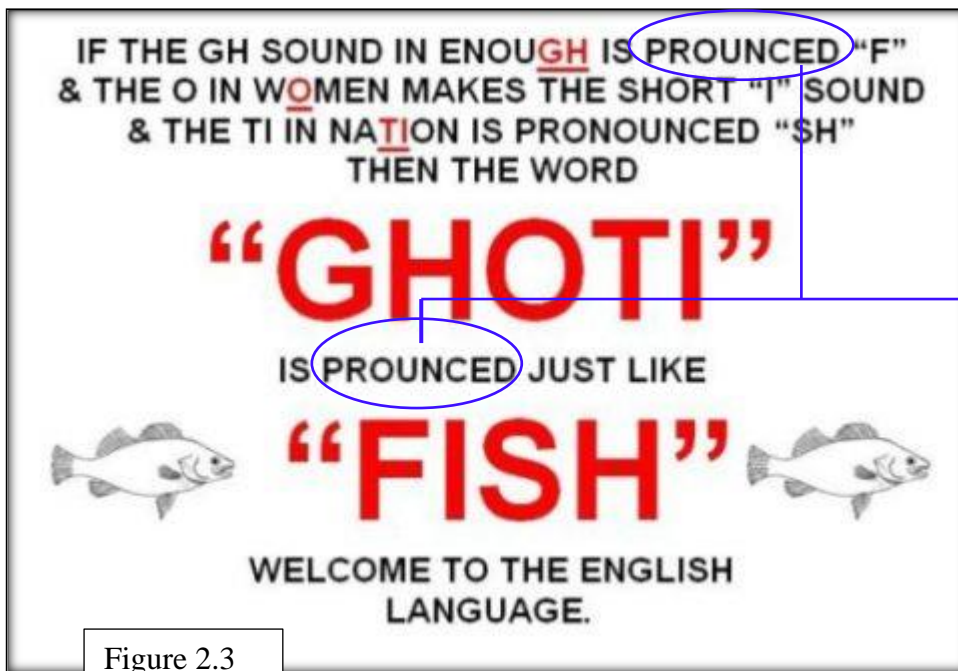
Fig 3: Ghoti", a word constructed to illustrate irregularities & shortcomings of the English orthography

Cookson (1997: 34) writing on the British orthography says, "Something else is required and that something else is spelling reform." This assertion comes in the wake of an observation that English spelling is awful and needs to be reformed so that British children do not lag behind continental European children in terms of literacy. Inconsistent spelling, a result of the opacity of their orthography, causes them to lag behind. In their study, Seymour et. al., (2003) in Galletly & Knight (2013) comment that learners from countries with transparent orthographies had almost 100% reading and writing accuracy compared to English learners' 34% accuracy. The inaccuracy arose from the opacity of their orthography which has such inconsistencies like the /**th**/ in <fif**th**> is pronounced differently to /**th**/ in <mo**th**er>. The short /**oo**/ sound is represented in different ways in different words for example: <f**oo**t>, <p**u**t>, <c**ou**ld> (Marian, 2001).

This current research endeavours to investigate and interrogate similar issues of spelling inconsistency that plague the current Shona orthography. Whereas the inconsistencies of the English spelling arise from its opacity as pointed out by Cookson (1997), the inconsistencies of the Shona spelling purportedly arise from its incomplete and disobliging standardisation of its dialects. The Department of Education and Employment in Britain undertook to improve on that by adopting the stance of a grand reform of the orthography. Similarly, 'something else' is required to be done to the Shona orthography. That something is in the form of spelling reform. The reformed orthography so envisioned is expected to incorporate all Shona dialect-phonologies. It should cease to be biased toward one dialect, Zezuru.

Apart from inconsistent spelling as a cause of writing problems for learners, many in Britain view adverts as another cause of writing problems. Crystal (2017) states that in commercial advertising, the breaking of grammar and spelling rules is very privileged and common. Playing with the rules of spelling and grammar, when incorrectly done, results in bad and poor writing. Lanir (2011) adds on to this argument saying that exposure to wrong spelling and wrong grammar found in adverts confuses learners and negatively affects proficiency. The following pictures of adverts (Figs 5, 6, 7 and 8) bear testimony to both views.

BoredPanda, an organisation in Britain, has gone around the country compiling unfortunate typographical errors on adverts like the one shown in Figure 5. Such a grammatical error causes a sentence to have an insolent meaning than the one intended. Such a slip has resulted in an unfortunate irony, like the one indicated here.

SHOPLIFTERS WILL BE PROSTITUTED

Fig 2.4

Adapted from: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-4113368

The correct verb for the intended meaning is *prosecuted*

This advert has an error in it. The subject in this sentence is a singular one - 'Your King Country…' and as such the correct verb should be a singular one-'*needs*'-not '*need*'. Learners getting into contact with such errors, only one of many different ones awash in their environment are likely to carry these errors over to school because usually for learners anything in print is correct as Mwansa (2017) contends.

Wrong spellings in adverts are sometimes intentional as that cleverly generates buzz for brands, so claims Digioia (2020).

In advert **A** the spelling of handle is wrongly spelt as *handel.* The order of letters in a word has been confused; a case of dyslexia.
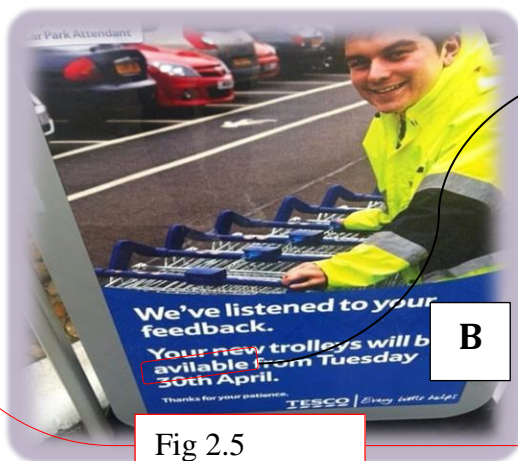
In advert **B** the spelling of available is wrongly written as *avilable*. This is a dyslexic omission of a letter in a word.

Fig 2.5

Some mistakes are of a careless nature and one wonders how such errors slip the notice of director, printer or client. This makes one believe such errors are deliberate for the purpose of catching the attention of buyers which agenda Nyota and Mutasa (2010) call presenting agenda.

Foregoing presenting agendas in advertising as causes of errors, dyslexia can also be a cause because one of its distinguishing features is confusing the order of letters in a word (Kelly, 2016). In picture **A** /c/ should come before /t/ for the correct spelling of *contradiction.* In picture **B** dyslexia shows up being described by wrong spelling. Correct spelling is *battered.* Dyslexia as a condition causes one to make many spelling errors. As such some of the errors encountered in adverts are not necessarily caused by the desire to entice buyers but dyslexic. Noticeable in picture **C** is the dyslexic omission of /**r**/ in *everything*

Figure 2.6
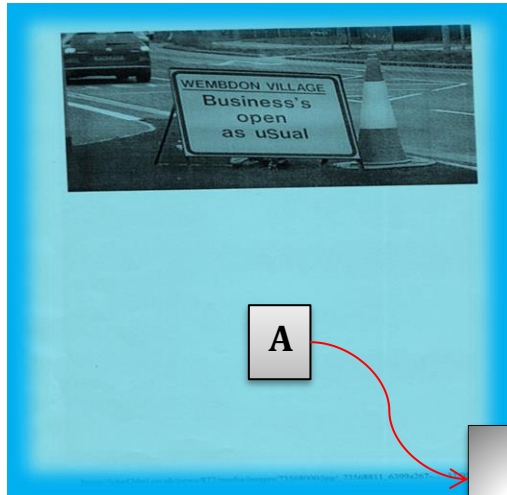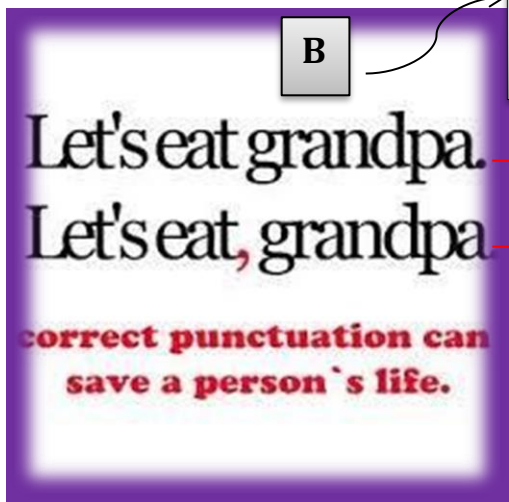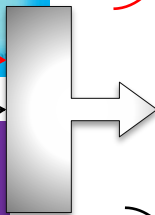
Misuse of punctuation marks can affect the message intended to be put across.

In picture **A**, someone intended to mean that '*Business is open as usual*' but that was not put across because of the misuse of an apostrophe. The word ***Business*** was personified resulting in bad grammar. It is interpretatively senseless to imply '***Business***' owns '*open as usual*'.

Commas are the most diverse punctuation marks with multiple uses. The more the number of ways they can be used, the more the number of mistakes can be made. One misplaced comma can change the meaning of the entire sentence.

The caption in red in picture **B** humorously portrays the effect of misuse of a punctuation mark, the comma. **B** (i) suggests that grandpa is going to be eaten, putting his life in danger. In **B** (ii), because of the correct use of the comma, grandpa is being invited to eat some food. Food sustains life not endanger it as suggested in the prior sentence where the comma has not been used.

Adapted from: https://unlimitedcuts.files.wordpress.com

Figure 2.7

To cap it all, Williamson (1983) in Abdulrahman (2015) states that adverts affect everyone even those who do not read newspapers or do not have access to television and social media gadgets. Such individuals will get into contact with adverts awash in their surroundings that are posted on walls of buildings, electricity poles or even trees.

Thurlow (2003) in Waldron and Wood (2003) argues that individuals who have access to gadgets like mobile phones used in social media use shorthand when they text in a bid to save time and space. There are a lot of unconventional spellings of words found in the texts of young learners. This affects the quality of learners' writing when intrusions into formal writing show up (Grace, Kemp, Martin, & Parrila, 2015, Saberi, 2016). The following words cited by Thurlow (2013), are only but a few examples of some of the intrusions: 'nite' for night; 'pliz' for please; 'u' for you; 'thru' for through;' lite' for light. The words given in the above examples are phonologically sound, but the spellings are notoriously unconventional as is the norm with a degenerate language form, textism. This language form, according to Thurlows (2006) in Durkin et. al., (2010) harms linguistic skills of its users. Learners writing thus, usually commit errors when they carry that over to school. Thurlows in Durkin, et. al., (ibid) gives some of the causes of the shorthand. They are:

- Contractions, where vowels are omitted from the middle of words e.g. 'txt' for 'text',
- Clippings, where other letters are left off word endings e.g. 'hav' for 'have',
- Initialisms, where sentences are shortened to the first letter of each word e.g. 'lol' for 'laugh out loud',
- Letter/number homophones, these use numbers or individual letters to represent sounds in words e.g. '2night' for 'tonight,' or 'u' for 'you',
- Non-conventional spellings, these are words with differing orthography to the formal version of the word, but with intact phonology e.g. 'nite' for 'night'

Aventajado (2016) adds some of the causes of the shorthand, which are:

- emoticons
- onomatopoeic spelling
- initialisms
- omitted apostrophes

If business adverts in Britain and texts in general are that infested with errors, bearing in mind that businesses and mobile phones exist all over the world, then Africa cannot be an exception. It is argued that no writing system can exist unaffected by adverts and texts.

Students in African schools, Zimbabwean schools to be particular, are not spared. They can be affected by adverts that they get into contact with in their environment with Mwansa (2017) attesting that, "The homes and local areas are replete with environmental print; advertising, labels on food stuffs and so on." In some of the environmental prints one can notice varying grammatical errors, spelling errors or and misused punctuation marks. Learners perceive what they see in print as correct. If they carry that

over to school, they will make errors when they write. Nyota and Mutasa (2010) would say, advertisements have communicative impact looking at them through text linguistics lenses. The Shona commercial advertisements have presenting agendas, which is the surface meaning intended to entice would-be buyers of brands. The grammatical errors that appear on adverts are not realised by students who think that everything and anything in print is correct. The odd sounding phrases or sentences in adverts have become common parlance so much that young learners think it is the right thing to do.

The researcher thus sets out to find out if Shona adverts are replete in students' environments. Do the adverts and text messages have errors in them that may end up confusing the learners' spelling, their correct use of punctuation marks and their construction of grammatically correct sentences?

However, adverts and texts alone cannot be blamed for poor mastery of orthography and subsequent errors students make when writing. There are other causes that need to be investigated premising the investigation on Pareto Principle, which states that 80% of effects on any phenomenon in life come from 20% of causes (Tracy, 2012).

2.4 African perspectives

Cognisant of the reforms on orthographies that have happened in some parts of the world like Germany, Russia, Britain, Africa could not be any exception. Orthographies of various countries in Africa have not and cannot be spared from reform should their orthographies become acceptable, teachable and usable and cause least problems as writing systems. In any history of orthography, a stage of standardisation of the literary language is reached, at which stage rules of orthography are made. African languages experienced this stage when missionaries championed the standardisation process. Rules were made, but bearing in mind that these missionaries were of European descent, it is apparent that they were dealing with languages they were not competent in. As such, they created many problems in these writing systems, a premonition that Ur Bantu languages were, at some stage, going to reveal inadequacies in them. Today Tanzania struggles to redesign an orthography that causes least problems in its use.

In Tanzania, spelling problems caused by mother- tongue interference are experienced (Msanjila, 2005). They are caused by the different phonological manifestations of the many and varied dialects

of Swahili. Below are some Swahili words that students may spell wrongly because of mother tongue (**HL** or dialect) interference.

Table 2.1: Different Swahili & ethnic spelling for the same word

Correct Standard Swahili Spelling	Wrong Ethnic Spelling
dhahabu (gold)	**th**ahabu (gold)
hayupo (absent)	**a**yupo (absent)
ka**l**amu (pencil)	ka**r**amu (pencil)

The difference in spelling of certain words arises because some ethnic languages in Tanzania use /**th**/ instead of standard Swahili spelling /**dh**/ (Massamba, 1986). Indigenous Zaramo and Ndengereko living near Dar es Salaam drop /**h**/ whereas standard Swahili word should begin with letter /**h**/ as exemplified by *hayupo* and *ayupo*. Ethnic groups living around Mara region do not have the /l/ sound, instead they have the /**r**/sound yet standard Swahili prescribes the use of /l/ as exemplified by *kalamu* and ka**r**amu (Massamba, ibid). The list is long. When learners use ethnic spelling at school they will be adjudged to have committed spelling errors, confirming Komba et. al.'s (2012) averment that poor achievement by secondary school learners in Tanzania is blamed on low language proficiency as a result of inaccurate application of orthography. They further argue that achievements in academic work and language proficiency are closely linked. This low language proficiency could be attributed to the fact that modern Swahili is based on Kiunguja, a higher status dialect spoken in Zanzibar town. This side-lines many other dialects like Mombasa Swahili, Lamu Swahili, Kimrima Swahili, Mambrui Swahili, Chichifundi Swahili and Chwaka Swahili, only to mention a few. This Tanzanian case is consistent with Giglioli's (1987) assertion that in a speech community, two or more varieties of the same language can exist. We have an identifying standard language, Swahili, and its many dialects. Observing such a linguistic landscape, Msanjila (2005) submits that students usually display writing problems as they write in Swahili like the way they speak at home (using **HL** or **D**ialect). In that case, mother- tongue interference can be realised in wrong spelling as per Swahili conventions.

Zambia has similar experiences. The missionaries sidelined some dialects during the standardisation process of the Zambian languages (Banda, 2008). He further presents that the rules are too many and illogical in some instances and at worst difficult to teach to mother tongue speakers and writers. Learners that hail from the sidelined dialects have their mother tongue interfering in the language of school thereby causing costly writing problems. There is need to redesign or reform orthography and come up with one that demands least effort to learn and master like the one Sejong designed for Korea.

Banda (2002) narrates that Lestrade, Doke, Englebrecht and van Warmelo met in 1937 and resolved that spelling of Bantu languages should not deviate too much from English spelling formats. Resolving thus, meant that inconsistencies that characterise European orthographies were transplanted onto African orthographies. This made the written formats of African languages unfamiliar to indigenous speaker-writers. Dr. Hastings Banda once accused Chief Mwase of the Nyanja/Cewa in Malawi of speaking (or writing) *chimishoni* (Kamwendo, 2003 in Banda, 2002) meaning that the chief spoke ciNyanja like a missionary. From this analogy one can see a departure from a life itinerary where language is understood as representational. that is, it should represent one's culture, identity and how one communicates by way of writing or speaking. Also, worth noting on Banda's (ibid) assessment is the inconsistency of written African languages by the Europeans, particularly missionaries. Zambia was not spared on this.

Kashoki (1978) and Banda (2002) argue that a solution to this inconsistency in representing the same sound in Zambian languages would be the use of /**c**/ consistently across all the seven languages of Zambia to represent voiceless unaspirated palatal affricate; /**ch**/ for the aspirated voiceless palatal affricate and /**j**/ for the voiced sound. All such efforts point at reforming Zambian languages orthographies to familiarise them to mother tongue speakers and make these languages easy to learn, master and write in*.* Mwansa (2017) says that when a child learns in mother tongue, it is essentially easy to match letters to sound and subsequently spell well. This is apparent in shallow orthographies like the Zambian orthography. However, it is interesting to note that although different phonemes from different dialects are used to represent the same sound, it does not obscure or prevent intelligibility. Cannot Shona pluck a leaf from the Zambian arrangement and incorporate into the orthography different dialect phonemes that represent the same sound? This could lead to acceptance of words with a dialect flavour as correctly spelled thereby minimising errors learners make when writing in Shona. Does the selective adoption of different Shona dialect phonemes into the orthography have any bearing on the errors learners commit when writing in Shona? The undertaken research sets out to prove how true that could be.

Kashoki (1978) also noted another area that needs reform as well on Zambian orthography. Lozi should cease perpetuating Protestant Paris Missionary Society legacy of writing an agglutinating language disjunctively. The missionaries based the then orthography on French, for example,

- *Ni ni utwisisi* (I don't understand)
- *Ni kupa u bulele hape* (Please say that again)

However, reform efforts were stoutly resisted at one of the many meetings where one old Lozi man said he was ready to sacrifice a spear through his heart rather than suffer the sacredness of language being tampered with (Kashoki, 1978). At times it is this kind of resistance that stands in the way of linguists' efforts in coming up with an acceptable, teachable and usable orthography. Decolonising such minds is daunting especially so when people think that that which was given them by the white man is perfect. Alas! Luckily for Shona, conjunctive writing of words is upheld. However, its application at times is not done well. Does this poor application of conjunctive writing have any bearing on some of the errors learners at the research case make? It remains to be established by this research.

2.5 Zimbabwean perspectives

Spelling changes from one stage of orthography development to another. The change in the mind of people is usually characteristically gradual, so much that spelling formats from the former stage can coexist with spelling formats of the later stage. However, learners are not allowed to vacillate between the stages. This can lead students to apply the current orthography's conventions inappropriately thereby making errors when writing. Are some of the errors learners commit when writing in Shona caused by such a scenario, one may ask? It remains to be established as the research unfolds.

Teachers play an important role in developing learners' writing skills. They are expected to teach pupils to represent specific sound with specific and accurate graphemes. This is practically possible since Shona has a shallow orthography. The problem of erring as regards spelling arises from the fact that right from childhood the first sound learners hear is dialect based which may affect how they spell at school because to some learners Shona is like learning in a second language. Shona as the school language is therefore then realised as a barrier to learners' academic achievements. This study sets out to establish to what extend mother tongues are appropriated in the Zimbabwean education system regarding languages, Shona in particular.

If teachers give regular written exercises, learners can improve their knowledge of orthographically accepted and correct spelling while writing stories, letters, poems and comprehension work. If teachers, then indicate errors when marking learners' work they will help learners a lot in improving their spelling competency. It is queried, however, if such language teachers exist at the case school? Are these teachers doing enough of what is required of them to improve students' spelling knowledge and competency? Are they not perpetuating lack of spelling knowledge and incompetency thereof? The study will attend to such queries.

Bilingualism has two forms, the additive and the subtractive model. It is in the additive model where values of the L_1 and the L_2 are upheld in education. In the subtractive model, L_1 values are not accommodated in education at all. Borich and Tombari (1997) in Ndamba (2008) unequivocally state that bilingualism that is additive has no negative effect on learners' linguistic achievement. What then has? One asks. Concerning errors that learners commit when writing in Shona, bilingualism that is subtractive accounts for the errors learners commit when writing in Shona.

Dialect disposition affects learners spelling competency. Magwa (2007) highlights the problems caused by using an orthography that excludes some letters from other dialects. He does not come down to the classroom level to show how the orthography in use affects students' spelling for instance. He operates at the national and public level describing how the present orthography is affecting people in general. I propose to find out what other factors apart from individual eccentricities (varying dialect dispositions) cause the errors students commit when writing in Shona.

Despite a not so perfect letter-to-sound correlation, the Shona orthography is essentially a shallow orthography. When Bird (2002) says that phonetic transcription suits writing in shallow orthographies, the advice given is that words should be written as they are pronounced. Taking cue from this, we realise the need to modify the Shona orthography by incorporating into it all letters that will please all people from all other dialects and allow them to write as they speak.

The origins of our writing system led to many oddities of spelling. Over the years, native speakers have realised the disadvantaging nature of the current orthography. Many scholars propose an overhaul of the orthography to make it more emancipating and more inclusive of its dialects. Spelling forms in source dialects are accommodated in an orthography so envisaged. That might liberate students who may end up committing less orthographical errors when they write in Shona at school, foregoing the inconsistencies and irregularities that exist in the present Shona orthography that exude dialect variances.

A Karanga student, for example, is adjudged to have committed a spelling error if he/she writes /*maxewu*/ or /*gwendo*/ as he/she would speak at home. He/she will be penalised when his/her piece of written work is marked. Errors of this nature can be common to a Karanga, Manyika, Ndau or Korekore student who thinks in the home dialect. Unfortunately, the student is expected to write in Standard Shona, which has a heavy Zezuru bias. Writing in this 'foreign' language of school is associated with trampling of students' recognised, deeply held beliefs and important linguistic rights of writing in a language one is most proficient in, the mother tongue (Lupke, 2011). Sallabank (2002) warns of a

cultural and identity loss that goes along with the use of a standard language. Back home the researcher would say language standardisation orbits around perceptions of the foreignness of Zezuru.

An international organisation called Summer Institute of Linguistics (**SIL**) was founded in 1934 on the principle that communities should use their language to pursue their social, cultural, political and spiritual goals without sacrificing their ethnolinguistic identity (Sebba, 2007). This kind of language development addresses challenging areas of people's daily lives. Such challenges, in the case of learners at school, could be their being forced to write the way they never speak. However, Mazuruse (2015) argues that African linguists are in unison about the idea that people should write as they speak. The language they speak is the language they would have acquired naturally through assimilation, intuition and subconscious learning. The language (family language or dialect language) so acquired could interfere with the second language learnt at school, being standardized Shona, which has a heavy bias towards Zezuru. More often than not they make mistakes when they write in Shona at school because of mother tongue interference.

Standard Shona is the (**SL**) and the dialect is (**HL/D**). Ellis (1997) in Ochieng (2016) notes that language transfer happens when a learner's (**HL/D**) maps onto (**SL**). Errors in the learner's use of (**SL**) can be understood and explained in light of this interference. Marton in Ellis (1999) in Ochieng (2016: 26) argues that;

"…there is never peaceful co-existence between two languages in the learner, but rather constant warfare…"

as the mother tongue negatively influences the learning of L_2 (Ochieng, 2016). This holds true as regards the learning of Shona, herein regarded as L_2 /**SL.** Mother tongue transfer effects are unavoidable in this matrix because, according to Shahrebabaki (2018), L_1 is formative of one's identity and as such very difficult and next to impossible to replace or change. Does this cause learners to commit errors when writing in standard Shona, which is not a mother tongue to some who hail from dialects of Shona other than Zezuru?

It is a desideratum that the present Shona orthography has to be modified or overhauled in order to accommodate the missing letters from other dialects other than Zezuru. At present this orthography forbids learners to write as they speak at home. Do features of their home language show up in their writing as a result of this interference? This is going to be confirmed or refuted by findings of this research.

It is an undeniable fact that in the course of their life, learners will come into contact with advertisements on which printed words may appear with errors. They could be spelling, word-division or punctuation errors. Do learners get into contact with such kind of literature in their environment? If it is so, its impact on their competence on spelling, word-division, punctuation or orthography in general is queried. This research sets out to establish if this contact with wrong spelling of words, wrong punctuation and various grammatical inaccuracies in adverts and texts causes learners to commit errors when they write in Shona.

Treiman (2004) carried out a study in America and observed that the pronunciation of final consonant /**d**/ by African American Vernacular English speakers in words like rigi**d** sounded like /**t**/. This resulted from their characteristic devoicing of final consonant in pronunciation. American Whites did not show that devoicing characteristic when they pronounced the same final consonant. African Americans were more likely, when spelling, to confuse /d/ and /t/ than Whites. That **d/t** confusion emanating from phonology of either dialect caused African American to make spelling errors. Does this observation have some substance with regard to standard Shona and its relationship with its dialects, sixteen of them?

Proficient spelling ability requires phonological knowledge usually described by one's dialect/mother tongue. The Grain Size Theory espoused by Davis (2005) amply describes how phonology and orthography relate. Figure 2.8 is a diagrammatic explanation of how these concepts relate.

<u>**Grain- Size Theory**</u> by Davis, C. (2005)

Figure 2.8

29
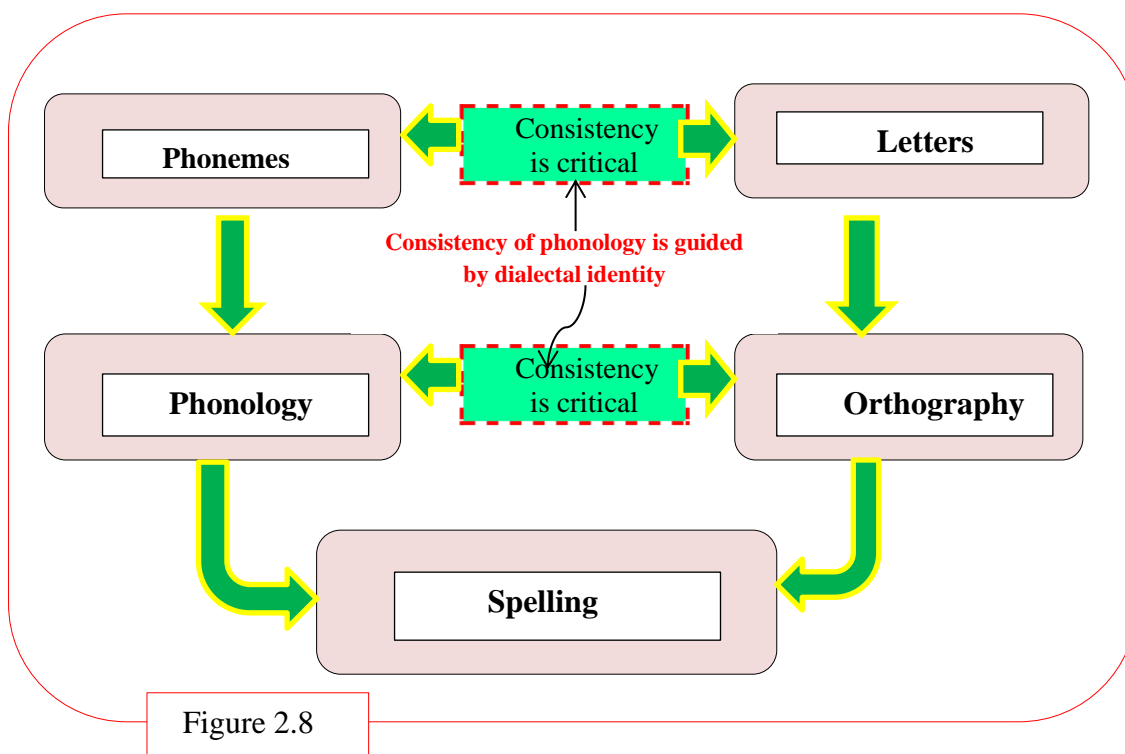
The above presentation depicts how important it is for letters to correspond to phonemes. Phonology is the way the phonemes are pronounced. The three components (phonology, phonemes, and letters) form orthography/spelling. This kind of relationship can help learners from dialects of Shona to write as they speak and most likely produce correct spellings because in shallow orthographies there is a one to one phoneme (sound) - grapheme (letter) correspondence. Put simply; the spelling of every word is negotiated from its pronunciation. This confirms Mazuruse (2015)'s argument that people should write as they speak, which idea has seized many a linguist in Zimbabwe today. The removal of the restrictions by the 1982 Circular bears testimony to the fact that the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe is aware that not writing as one speaks affects one's competency in Shona written work. It subsequently affects performance in 3159 O-Level Shona examinations especially so when standard Shona orthography conventions and dialect conventions are not in accord. Liberman (2008) argues that irregularities and inconsistencies of orthography pose problems to learners. What problems would be pertinent to Shona learners? It remains to be established by this research what the problems are. Are they related to the mismatch between dialect and standard language spelling? One queries.

The research intends to establish if such a state of affairs obtains at the case school concerning commission of errors when writing in Shona. The present Shona orthography is heavily skewed towards Zezuru. This resulted from Doke's sidelining of the many other Shona dialects during the standardisation process. Are there learners of different dialects at the case school? If there are such learners at the school, does their linguistic background cause them to make spelling errors as purported by scholars like Chimhundu (1992), Dube (2000), Treiman (2004), Randall (2005), Magwa (2007) and Liberman (2008).

Carney (1994: 449) contends that the world over, names especially

> surnames are totem poles of language.

Their spelling is informed by local indigenous language. This contention could explain why at times people have spellings that distance themselves from the conventions of a particular language's standard orthography (Sebba, 2017). Carney (1994:450) further argues that,

> family names [usually] do not have to correspond to
> standard spelling conventions, and are allowed to vary…

Zhang and Treiman (2019) assert that names can influence spelling. In English, according to Sebba (2007), one may witness names like ***Featherstonehaugh.*** This is apparent use of un-English convention. The same can be said about Shona names that put value on bizarre spelling according to standard Shona orthography's conventions. One observes names like ***Zhiradzago.*** In standard Shona

that would have been *Nziradzarwo.* That would be a completely new and different name altogether. The spellings of such names have ethnolinguistic identities attached to them. *Zhiradzago* has a Karanga identity while *Nziradzarwo* has a Zezuru identity. The Zezuru are quite comfortable with the current Shona orthography constructed with a heavy bias towards Zezuru (Dube, 2000 in Mazuruse, 2015). A learner who hails from a family that encounters the use of /*zh*/ for /*nz*/ and /*g*/ for /*rw*/ is likely to write using unacceptable spellings that have Karanga dialect overtones inscribed in his/her mind by the spelling of the name or surname as indicated in *Zhiradzago*. Committing errors of that nature leads to subsequent loss of marks allotted to spelling by ZIMSEC. Are there learners at the case school who confuse standard phonemes with dialect phonemes? It remains to be established by this research.

In a bid to help regularise Shona written form, Fortune (1972) outlined rules that govern Shona spelling and punctuation in his book, <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling</u> (see fig 13). The rules were many and above all confusing and difficult to understand particularly for learners. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2012) say if rules on how a language is written are too many, learners get confused and falter in applying the rules correctly. Worse off, the rules were written in English, a language too difficult to be understood and interpreted by black African Shona learners, for example,. **'…or defective verb in a compound tense, or a verb equivalent.'** (see rule № 2 in Fig 2.9). This is not easy to decipher.

1. A speech form is written as a separate word, if it can mean something by itself, but cannot be divided into lesser units which all make sense when spoken by themselves.

2. A speech form, even though it may not make sense by itself, is written as a separate word if it is a verb, including an auxiliary or defective verb in a compound tense or a verb equivalent.

3. A speech form, even though it may not make sense by itself, is written as a separate word if it joins words, phrases or clauses and consists of more than one syllable.

4. A speech form, even though it may not make sense by itself, is written as a separate word if it is an interjection, e.g. /Ko? / at the beginning of a sentence, or /here/ at the end, or is the adverbial /zve/.

5. Reduplicated verb stems are always separated by a hyphen.

6. Reduplicated substantive stems of more than two syllables are always separated by a hyphen

Fig 2.9: Source: *A Guide to Shona Spelling* *(Fortune, G., 1972: 40-50*

Confusion is also on when to infix consonants /**w**/ and /**y**/ between vowels e.g.

- *aenda* or *ayenda* (he/she has gone)
- *aipa* or *ayipa*
- *aora* or *avora* } they have gone bad/ they are rotten

The use of the hyphen poses problems to many learners, e.g.

a) *vana vakurukuru*
b) *vana vakasiyana-siyana*

The interpretation of the rule that governs hyphenation or non-hyphenation of words is dicey. Why <u>vakurukuru</u> is not hyphenated is very unclear when <u>*vakasiyana-siyana*</u> is hyphenated. Both are describing words. Both words have each more than two syllables. The rule on hyphenation states: ***Reduplicated substantive stems of more than two syllables are <u>always separated by a</u> <u>hyphen</u>***. This leaves learners at the mercy of guesswork or memorisation as to the use of a hyphen, when;

> True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
> As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance

as the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools (1951:13) advises. The rules governing how Shona is written are too many. Leaners end up forgetting which rule to apply, where. Even intellectuals forget to list these rules, at least all of them. The intellectual in question here (Figure 2.10) failed to account for the rule on when and when not to use a hyphen. The segments of the pie chart in Fig 2.10 are of equal size indicating that all the rules are equally important in the writing of Shona. This implies that if learners of Shona language, particularly at an educational set up like school, miss out on the application of any of the rules, they will not produce flawlessly well-written pieces of work. The segments of the pie chart in Figure 2.10 also represent the many rules that need attention should a learner become competent and proficient in writing in Shona. The missing segment for how and when the hyphen should be used is clear testimony that the rules are too many such that the mind becomes overwhelmed. Saville-Troike (2006) argues that, even the most highly educated adult can never expect to master all the resources of a language. To expect the fragile minds of our young learners to master all the potential language resources, is unrealistic. If an intellectual mind could not account for all the rules, we surely must compassionately excuse the young and novice writers, the learners.

MANYORERWO ECHISHONA

Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora
mutauro wedu

Kushandisa Kuru
Kushandisa zviratidzamutauri
Bumbiro ranyorerwo
Kushandisa chimiso
Kushandisa chikavo
Kupatsanura mazwi
Kukosha komutauro weChishona
Kushandisa chijuramubvunzo
Kushandisa chiturabefu
Chii chinonzi ChiShona?
Kubatanidza mazwi
Mabasa Pyakunidisa vedzidzviondo

Wiseman Magwa

Fig 2.10: Source: *Magwa (1999)*

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter 2 highlights the importance of literature review as a way of foregrounding the research. Works on orthography in European countries (Germany, England, and Russia), Asian countries (Korea, China, and Japan), African countries (Tanzania, Zambia) and Zimbabwe are reviewed. Particular attention is given to the standardisation of languages for purposes of writing. The process of standardisation is depicted as a polemic one. The review revealed the failure of the process to realise the dynamic link between written and spoken language prompts re-standardisation and redesigning of orthographies the world over. The drive to re-standardize or re-design aims to fulfil the emic view of orthography, which bases such efforts on native perceptions about orthography. Written and spoken forms of language, undeniably, influence or complement each other. The failure of the standardisation process to incorporate all dialects into the writing system, choosing to base the writing system on one dialect out of many, is an affront to the rights of languages and the rights of indigenous speakers of languages. It suffocates other dialects' functional space in the domain of education. Learners fail to write correctly in a standard language because their dialect language interferes, causing them to make errors. Writing in one's mother tongue improves and enhances learning outcomes (Daby, 2015). In addition, it mitigates commission of errors when writing at school.

Chapter 3

Conceptual framework & Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on conceptual framework and research methodology. Firstly, the chapter describes the conceptual underpinnings of two approaches that are going to guide the analysis of the data that is going to be collected. Critical Theory and Theory of Alphabetic Writing will guide the data analysing procedures. Critical Theory directs the emancipation attribute of a writing system that fosters and encourages writing as one speaks. Theory of Alphabetic Writing directs and encourages the same attribute by associating graphemes and phonemes with speech sounds. This confirms linguistic, cultural, social and political identities of a people. This has become a buzzword for Zimbabwean linguists. This has the power to embolden and bolster linguistic rights of people of different languages or language varieties/dialects. No language or language variety is better than the other. Affording domineering power to a language or language variety amounts to trampling linguistic rights of a group of people. The hegemony of Zezuru dialect must not be perpetuated by any language policy. People's linguistic rights must be upheld by dismantling inequality in the use of a language (dialect for purposes of this research) by giving space to other Shona dialects in the Zimbabwean language continuum, space for use in dominant areas of society like education. Secondly, the chapter delineates how this research is going to be carried out. In doing so, the best data collecting methods will be determined. Issues of the paradigm that underpins this study (a case) are highlighted. The research design that is adopted for this study is described and outlined in this chapter. Data collecting techniques are also given. The intended data collecting techniques will include documentary analysis, observation, vignettes, interviews, questionnaires and learners' journals. A diagrammatic summary of the research design and data collecting ways is given. A detailed description and commenting on the research tools is done. A diagrammatic summary of purpose, strategies and data analysis systems is given. Best method of sampling, purposive sampling, which will guide the choice of research participants whose data will form the core of the study findings is also outlined in this chapter.

3.2 Research orientation

A paradigm, as Neuman (1997) puts it, is the research orientation. One can use four paradigms for inquiry in research. These are:

- Positivism
- Post-positivism
- Critical theory
- Constructivism

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that no researcher must go out to research without acquainting oneself with the paradigm that will guide and inform the research to be undertaken. There needs to be some congruency in the opted paradigm between ontology and epistemology. According to Khan (2015), **ontology** relates to knowing reality and putting bare one's viewpoint about that reality. In doing so one answers the question, 'what is there that can be known about it?' **Epistemology** answers the question, 'how can we carry out the study in order to prove the view-point so that it becomes reality?' This relates to the knower and would-be-knower and that subsumes methodological issues which explain how the enquirer can go about finding whatever there is that he/she believes has to be and can be known.

Morgan (2007) contends that setting up a robust metaphysical paradigm that links ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs is fundamental. That gives the researcher a good way to organise ideas. Morgan's view contrasts Guba and Lincoln's. While Guba and Lincoln tend to talk rigorously about quantitative methodologies, Morgan talks about qualitative methodologies where knowledge is constructed depending on what meaning of their world people have. That is subjective by nature. It brings out only but emic views. That liberates instead of being dictated to. Usually, the virtual reality is underpinned by <u>social</u>, <u>political</u>, <u>cultural</u> and <u>ethnic</u> values (my underlining for emphasis). Morgan (ibid) also advocates twinning of qualitative and quantitative methodologies arguing that these methods can appropriately be applied in any research paradigm, taking from either methodology those characteristics that are appropriate to a study. He focuses on methodology as the area that connects actual methods and epistemology. In a way, he places methodology at the centre, thus crippling and rejecting the top-down privileging of ontological assumptions by way of his pragmatic approach as Fig 3.1 illustrates.

Fig 3.1**: Placing Methodology at the Centre** [Morgan's (2007) ideas diagrammed]
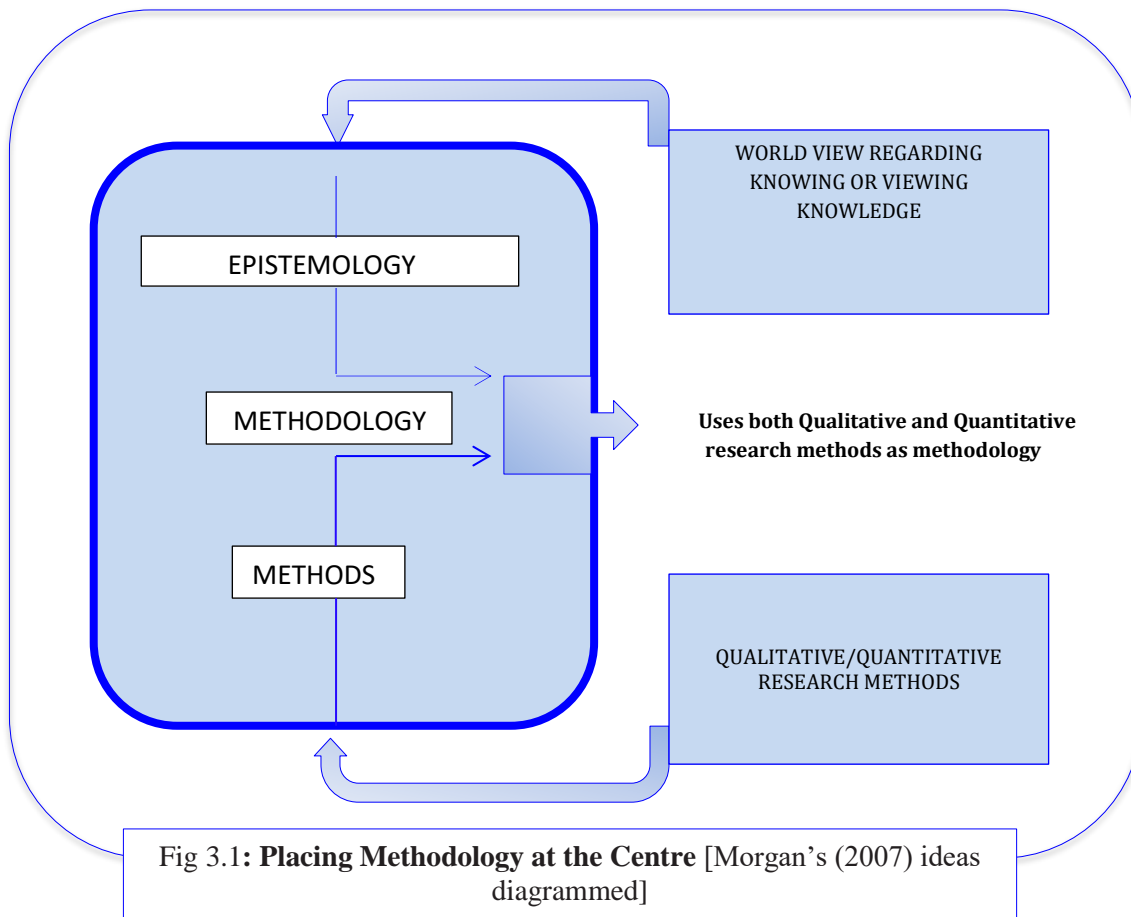
The study will adopt critical theory paradigm. The choice of the paradigm is premised on its subjectivity; a matter of individual preferences and tastes. The paradigm also assumes naturalistic settings in which direct experiences and behaviours are studied. Stufflebeam (2008) indicates that phenomenology and critical theory are embraced by constructivism. This becomes relevant to this study since the phenomenon of orthography is at the centre of this particular study. Critical theory is also relevant because of its applications that are emancipatory in nature. These proposed value-mediated, subjective characteristics account for ethnic and cultural insights. This is in tandem with this study.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

Creswell (2014) notes that since the 1980s qualitative inquirers have increasingly popularized the use of theoretical perspective to give an orienting lens to their studies. The lens directs the questions that need to be asked to collect data that will be analyzed.

A conceptual framework guides a research. Like the compass that will show one direction, it determines for the researcher what things to investigate (Borgatti & Foster, 2003 in Madusise, 2013). Further to that, it provides some explanation of certain observations and how best they could be studied, analyzed or interpreted (Niss, 2007). A Conceptual Framework sheds clarity on a set of data and if it is in educational circles, ground will be laid for change or reform.

3.3.1 Critical Theory and Theory of Alphabetic Writing

Of the following theoretical positions, neither of them can explain everything hence the need to partner or twin the theories. An orthography borne out of this could please all and sundry and can up pupils' performance by minimizing orthographical errors when writing. The orthography so developed could be **acceptable, teachable** and **usable** in terms of new more characters that match the sounds of the language that are introduced into it.

The Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt am Main in Germany evolved **Critical Theory** after 1933. Critical is derived from a Greek word 'kriticos', which means deep thinking or solve problems. A different view suggests the ability to critique social life and solve society's problems (Luke et al., 2009). Therefore, the thrust of this theory is to address and solve problems in society. Its major attributes of (**a**) social emancipation and contentment for all citizens (Nowlan, 2001), (**b**) extrapolating relationship between psychoanalysis (*people's perceptions about a phenomenon*) and social change, qualify it to be a useful tool to address perceived linguistic pathologies of society. A theoretical framework that is critical is a welcome one hence, the adoption of **Critical Theory,** which Freire (1970) and Nowlan (2001) view as an internationally revered pathway to intellectual enquiry.

According to Freire (1970) in Luke et al., (2009), Critical Theory has devolved into Critical Literacy /Critical Pedagogy. This has of late become a major and diverse educational project. It draws from critical linguistics, post-colonial and cultural studies, which have incubated varying approaches that have been followed in different countries' school curricula concerning the teaching and learning of languages.

The ideas raised in the preceding paragraph are critical in that they imply the following:

- The learning of any language has to have a cultural 'voice' (Luke et al., 2009). The learning and writing of a language reflects a people's speech, which leads to identity formation by providing learners a chance to link their school experiences with their day-to-day lives in their cultures. Orthography is important to society. A uniform representation of speech (words, grammatical forms, rules and spelling system) that disregards individual and dialect differences facilitates the egalitarian use of written language. It relinquishes the ***etic*** view of orthography (*one that is thoroughly standardized and prescriptive*) and gravitates towards an ***emic*** view of orthography that takes into account the language users' perceptions. The perceptions are that the existing orthography is not user friendly for natives. It is fraught with omissions of needed letters. Learners hailing from varying dialects are forced to write the language not as they speak it. The learners are thus, denied the chance to connect school life to everyday living. Kufakunesu (2015) views this as a denial of functional space for a people's language, contrary to the UN declaration on linguistic rights of minority groups where people should be accorded the right to use and learn their language and or even have instruction in it.

- The learning of a language has to be 'critical', meaning critiquing or thinking deep about how it (language) is taught and learnt. By introspecting the way the language is taught, changes that are seen fit are instituted in order to improve its use by society, including learners. Usually this entails orthography reform so that it becomes liberating to learners and emancipatory to society in terms of writing. The orthography so envisaged should index political, national, ethnic and or linguistic identities because we are born into relationships that are settled in a place. This 'placeable' binding is fundamental and important. Being placed outside this orthographic or linguistic binding is artificial (Bhabha, 1990) and not so easy to embrace hence the errors committed by learners when writing in Shona.

- Orthography for any given language entails attention to such sociological issues and pedagogical issues too. In addition, Perfetti & Liu (2005) weigh in with their Universal Writing System Constraint, which states that all writing systems encode language and reflect properties of the language so encoded. Properties that come to mind are political, ethnical, sociological and pedagogical. These four properties culminate in identity (a student's linguistic identity). Expected to relinquish this identity because of orthography is not accepted or welcome. It is this natural clinging to one's identity, the researcher argues, that causes some students to commit some errors when writing in Shona when they sidestep, unawares anyway, and write as they would talk/speak at home using their home language (dialect).

Quite a number of theories are advanced about the origin of the alphabet. Hirschfeld (1911) mentions that ideo-grammatic and syllabic writing were practised way way before alphabetic writing. Alphabetic writing has made writing spread to low lying strata of mankind which its predecessors could not do. This rate of permeability of writing in society in modern day writing should be enhanced and upheld. People could be assisted to master and perfect the art of writing and cause it to spread even wider by say allowing them to write as they speak. This is achievable by devising simple signs (letters) to use to represent sounds of a language. Mindful that writing systems evolved from pictographs to the alphabet (Faigley, 1999 in Grosswiler, 2004), Diringer & Olson (2020) outline the milestones in the evolution of the alphabet, which are:

- the invention by the Phoenicians of the consonantal writing system called the North Semitic and
- the invention by the Greeks of characters that represent vowels

Although some scholars treat the Semitic Writing System as <u>unvocalised syllabary</u> and the Greek Writing System as the <u>true vocalized alphabet,</u> both should be viewed as complements of the present day Alphabetic Writing System that makes use of both consonants and vowels. It is used by society in the business and purposes of writing, making it a social construct (see Fig 4.3:71). Orthography, as a social construct, roundly described by the **Theory of Alphabetic Writing**, concerns itself with associating graphemes and phonemes with speech sounds of a people. Mwansa (2017) further explains that Alphabetic Writing Systems are based on Alphabetic Principle which states that phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters) should have a one-to-one correspondence (a characteristic of shallow/transparent orthographies). Languages employ this theory's certain conventions that index linguistic, social, political identities. Certain of these conventions become spectacles of focal awareness of users of the orthography. Some sound-grapheme correspondences in orthography can be representative of the said identities. Being unrepresentative is inconsistent with grapheme- phoneme association described by the Theory of Alphabetic Writing given above. People are, in this case where there is inconsistence and dissonance of grapheme-phoneme association, forced to write not as they speak. The researcher chooses to refer to this as linguistic pathology, and **Critical Theory** then becomes handy with its attribute of social emancipation. People of the other Shona dialects are emancipated and are allowed to write as they speak. To this, Treiman and Kessler (2014 argue that for any vital success to be realizable, children should be allowed and made to listen, **speak** and write a language. This will reveal their identity, their language and their culture. The 'speak and write' attributes mentioned above connote transparency of orthography. The Shona orthography is transparent. It is usually, according to Upward (1997) and Mwansa (2017), easier to get correct

spellings in such orthographies. Students who come from these other dialect zones are prone to committing errors when writing in Shona at school; it is my argument. This could be so since they will be writing not as they speak. Is it true for all people that hail from the other Shona dialects in Zimbabwe? It remains to be investigated.

People from the other Shona dialects will again welcome social change to address yet another linguistic pathology brought to bear by the use of an onerous orthography that does not please them. It is unpleasant and unwelcome for a people to use an orthography that disregards their linguistic, political and or social identity. As such, **Critical Theory** becomes handy in that it emancipates people, dialectally, as it confirms their linguistic, political and social identity. **Theory of Alphabetic Writing** by associating graphemes and phonemes with speech sounds also confirms the indexed linguistic, social and political identities of orthography. With these two theories collaborating, an argument is given for an orthography so developed to be one that needs least effort to learn and master. Least effort implies shortest time needed to learn and highest percentage of persons who succeed in learning it or learning in it (Simons, 2017). With this point in mind, a new reformed orthography is welcome - one that will allow people and pupils alike to write at as they speak and succeed in learning as Simons (2017) and Treiman and Kessler (2014) purport. Neuman (2014) would like to view that as an effort to connect home life to school experiences. Mwakapenda (2000) concurs with Neuman's (2014) view when he too says learning should be relevant, appropriate, and connected to real life situations. Kufakunesu (2015) would applaud this provision of functional space in the public space of education. As such, we should realise and develop school language as language of the learners' lives. Failing to do so is tantamount to imposing 'a life sentence' on pupils as Machel (1977) views it. Instead, we should indeed help them acquire, develop and be competent in a language that will serve them in and for life.

Views as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph underpin cultural and social components of orthography. These underpinnings are integral in **Critical Theory** and **Theory of Alphabetic Writing.** The two theories are interrelated since the very components are inherent in both and thus collaborating them gets the job done.

Orthography as a system, is linked to the history of any language's way of writing. In the case of languages with a written tradition, usually such languages have adapted the alphabet of a different language. The Shona language adapted the Roman alphabet which was modified from 1931, 1955, through 1967. In the modification journey, rules were set and fixed. However, there is need to review the rules in order to improve the orthographic system by eliminating some letters (as was done in 1955

when special symbols in the orthography were eliminated) and introduce into it new letters and consonant combinations. This can be done through harmonisation. It is through this that we can realise a good orthography, one that represents all and significant sounds of a language (Bamgbose, 1965 in Dube, 2000). Bamgbose (1965), suggests the use of one symbol for each sound. Fortune (1972) however, argues that although there is a close connection between the spoken and written forms of a language, it has remained an ideal. It could be why Doke could only do so much and never came up with a perfect Shona orthography in 1931. Orthography as defined in Collins Discovery Encyclopedia (2005) is a system of spelling and rules that determine uniformity of the means of representing speech in writing. It goes on to explain that a good orthography is one that disregards individual and dialect differences in writing. This ties up well with Hans Wolf (1954) cited in Dube (2000) who suggests that a good orthography should be consistent, accurate and similar to other orthographies. Shona is rather rigid when it comes to similarity with other contiguous languages (dialects) (Dube, 2000). This lends it to its failure of lexical expansion hence its limitation on students wanting to express themselves as they would in their own home languages – the dialects. This confirms Goody's (1996) assertion that, the world over, alphabets or orthographies are ethnocentric. This is polemic. As a result, many students have complied, grudgingly with the pressure to change brought to bear by linguistic discrimination. Speaker–writers from the other Shona dialects other than Zezuru experience problems of spelling and word-division as they use the current Shona orthography (Chimhundu, 2005) which is not ethnocentric. Spelling problems are a result of symbol shortage that glaringly characterises the Shona orthography that is in use. Word–division problems are a result of the too many complicated rules that govern it (see Fig 2.9). There are too few characters in the orthography to cater for all the sounds of all the Shona dialects and too many word-division rules that are difficult to interpret making it very difficult and impossible to write flawlessly in Shona.

The success, effectiveness and adequacy of orthography is measured against such parameters like

- The use of the mother tongue in education
- Favourability of government policies on indigenous languages in respect of Shona and its dialects.

In the absence of these, Longtau (2014), states that any effort to develop an accommodative and all-encompassing orthography cannot at all be matched with any sincere success. It will ever be a tale of frustrations.

3.4 Research Design

According to Gay (1980) in Patton (1990), there are five research designs, namely: Action Research, Case Study Research, Descriptive Research, Survey Research, and Observational Research. **DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH** is designed to depict participants doing '*things*' in an accurate and natural way. The three major ways to collect information in this design are survey, observation and case study. The Descriptive Research has two big subgroups visa vis ***Quantitative*** and ***Qualitative.***

Coolican (1990) in Strauss (1999) says that, quantitative design emphasizes figures that are analyzed and conclusions made. Creswell (1980) in Kufakunesu (2017) notes that quantitative research explains a phenomenon by collecting quantifiable data, which is statistically analyzed. Numbers and percentages are the cog of this research design in gathering, analysing and discussing data.

On the contrary, Qualitative design emphasizes observation of lived experiences. The lived experiences are described, analyzed and conclusions about a phenomenon in people's life are drawn. The choice of the qualitative research design is premised on Cameron's (1963:70) assertion that,

> Not everything that counts can be counted,
> and not everything that can be counted counts.

This research is going to be a **Descriptive/Qualitative Design**. Because the researcher intends to depict participants in their natural way of doing things they do, the research will be assigned to a ***Case Study*** which is an in-depth study of an identified situation making it very different to a sweeping statistical survey. A pertinent question that readers may ask is *why a case study?* This research is going to be assigned to a case study because according to Cohen et. al., (2000), the goal of an educational study is to gain knowledge about the different ways learners learn and verify, improve and build those means by which educational centres can and must employ to achieve goals optimally. This research approach, which strives to understand and interpret the world in terms of actors, is interpretive and subjective making it fit for a case study. Case studies use a plethora of data collecting methods. These have the capability of giving insights in education and for education. The insights are critically required to improve education qualitatively. The information so got provides for informed educational reform and or change (Mwakapenda, 2000).

Guba and Wolf in Bogdan and Biklen (1992) present that qualitative design demands that the researcher presents himself/herself at where the phenomenon being researched on naturally occurs. The researcher observes the participants doing what they do naturally, then inductively draws conclusions and makes

generalisations. This, according to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) in Strauss (1999), allows the researcher to get honest and natural information about the phenomenon being researched on. In the case of this research, pupils at the case school may be committing orthographic errors in a natural way. The researcher hopes that honest conclusions may be made about the factors that cause poor mastery of orthography. The poor mastery of orthography may be causing the orthographic errors that students commit when writing in Shona.

The following Figure 3.2 is a diagrammatic summary of the research design and the tools of research.
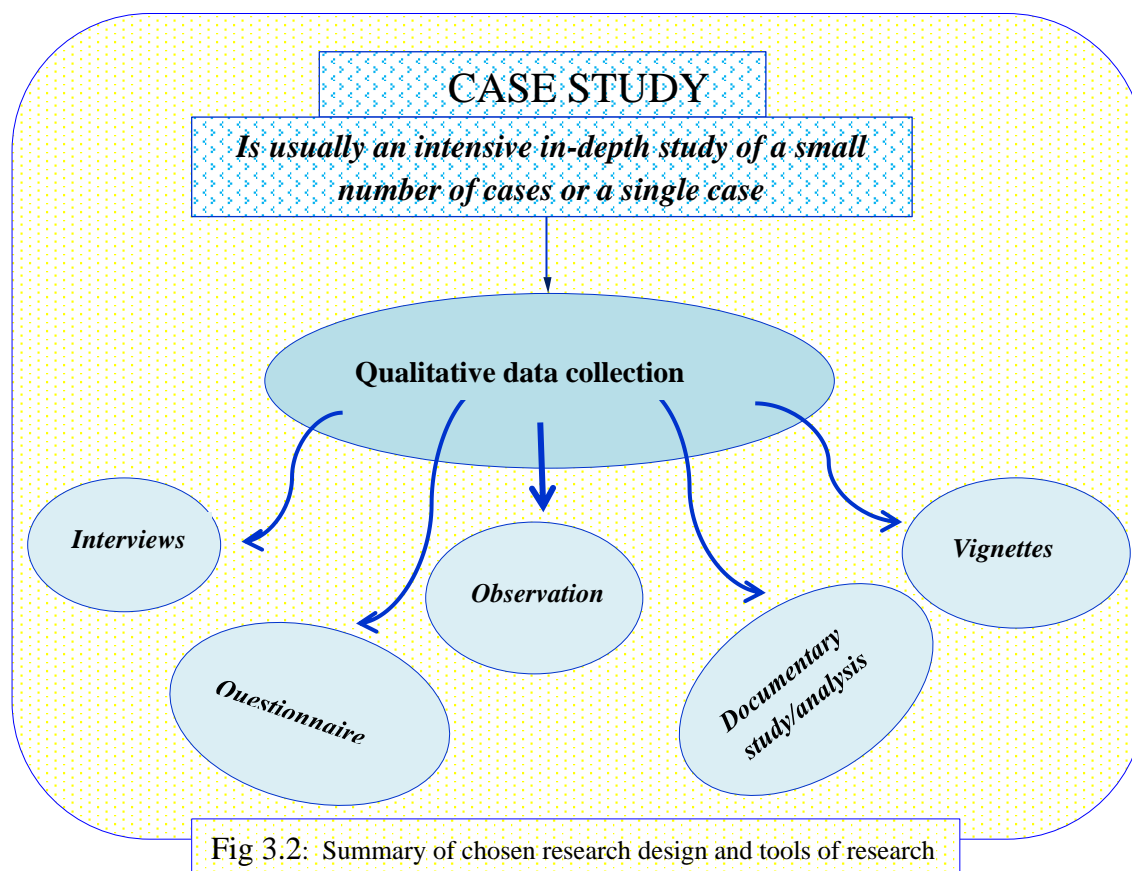
Fig 3.2: Summary of chosen research design and tools of research

3.5 Tools of research

The research is going to be largely a qualitative one. Interviews, questionnaires, documentary analyses are some of the methods that are used to collect data. A voice recorder and camera augment these data collection methods. As it stands, triangulation cannot slip through the fingers, owing to the fact that a plethora of different data collecting methods or tools is used. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) correspondingly advise that qualitative researchers need to use varied methods or tools to collect empirical data that together or separately provide significant insights.

3.3.1 Interview is the most common format of data collection in qualitative research (Oakley, 2014). Merriam (2001) contends that there is a purpose behind the interview conversation. Both parties to the interview purpose meaning making, which tenet is in tandem with critical theory and constructivist aspects of this research. Interview conversation offers a researcher the room to probe for clarity on issues about a phenomenon being researched on. People are also interviewed to elicit what is in their mind that is educing those things we cannot observe; things like feelings, thoughts and their intentions. These things can be very meaningful. Interviews then become handy as tools for these things' knowability. Interviews can make these things explicit. Interviews fall into the following categories of structured, unstructured (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and semi-structured (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992). In the structured interviews category, wording as well as the order of the questions is determined prior the interview. Unstructured interviews do not have specific questions or an order of the question that is predetermined. In the semi-structured interview, Merriam (ibid) states that there is use of mixture of more unstructured and less structured questions.If the study then uses the face-to-face semi- structured interview questions, a researcher will be in a better position to take care of unforeseen arisings which might crop up during interview episodes. It is because the participant's answers to questions determine how and which questions a researcher asks next, possibly giving birth to focus groups through which more pertinent information can be elicited. This research instrument, according to Social Group (2019), has its own shortcomings that can be explained best from responder and interviewer perspectives. Interviews give less chances of anonymity, for example, the engagement of focus groups by a researcher. This is of big concern to research subjects. Anonymity is not guaranteed in this setting. Interviews can be time consuming as the researcher at times probes, sometimes unnecessarily at certain points in the interview session. In face-to-face interviews, bias can be rife since it is in human nature to say one thing and do another, breeding inconsistency and inaccuracy in the responses one will get. This may also come about because of deliberate choice to lie because the subject may not want to give an answer that he/she thinks is not what the researcher may be expecting. If, also, a respondent in a research misunderstands the question he/she might give an incorrect answer thereby affecting the results of a study.

3.5.2 Documentary analysis: Bowen (2009) says document analysis aims at evaluating documents. Primarily, this involves any written document. The documents could take varying forms like advertisements, books, newspapers or magazines, notices, letters, pictures, drawings or photographs. These will be analyzed and relevant information elicited to gain more and better understanding of a phenomenon under study. Atkinson & Coffey (1997) in Bowen (2009) emphasize that documentary sources are social facts that need to be studied as "socially situated products" (Scott, 1990: 34). The sources act like a Seismograph, an instrument for recording earthquakes. The work of this instrument is extended to include documents. For example, documents such as the ones listed by Bowen have the characteristic of a

seismograph only that this one records about society, about man and try to depict, imitate and analyse society itself. For example, why and how orthography affects society, is what this study is investigating. Document analysis as a means of triangulating data, is often used in combination with several other data collecting methods. Triangulation in research is a virtue. It saves a researcher from being accused of single investigator bias that stems from the use of a single method to collect data and a single source of data that suit intended conclusions. Document analysis has both advantages and disadvantages. It is not time-consuming. Instead of data collection, it is renowned for data selection and that way it saves time. The documents to be analyzed are replete in the public space, for example adverts are obtainable without author's permission all because of the advent of internet and print media. That enhances availability and accessibility. Research Participants can modify their behaviour or natural way of doing things once they realise that they are being observed (the Hawthorne Effect). Document analysis is not affected by that since it is non-reactive. It is mute data. However, this research tool has its fair share of limitations. Documents, when produced, are meant for a completely different purpose not for research. That may cause accessibility challenges when documents are blocked, deliberately so. At the start of documentary study, the **national and school syllabuses** will be analyzed to find out:

- what exactly about Shona orthography these documents emphasize which impacts man in society.
- what these documents propose concerning correct application of the Shona orthography by man in society and
- the repercussions of not adhering to the statutes of the documents

particularly at O-level. Bernstein (1990) argues that it is quite prudent to analyse these documents to see how a nation state views a certain educational phenomenon. In the case presented here, it is intended to see how the state views the use of mother languages in education. It also affords one the chance to know how much functional space, at school level, is given to mother tongues. He sheds light to these explanations based on what he refers to as The Field of Recontextualision that has the subgroups of;

- Official Recontextualisation Field where the state is major player in the provision of education and
- Pedagogic Recontextualisation Field where local educational authorities like schools, universities, examination boards make certain decisions in educational discourse guided by state's position on a phenomenon or an item in the curricula.

Other important documents worth analysing are **textbooks**. Okeeffe (2013) states that analysis of textbooks is very critical and important as it supports educational reform where there is dissonance. Like in the case of the Shona orthography, dissonance manifests when people are not allowed to write as they

speak culminating in some learners committing errors thereby having their literacy and proficiency affected. If the textbooks are thus analyzed, positions regarding orthography can be determined justifying decisions to be made. Okeeffe (ibid) adds that the content and structure of textbooks are important in the promotion of specifics of a curriculum. This raises concerns about textbooks. There is need to analyse and review them to keep pace with evolving trends in an area of study such as the learning and teaching of Shona. The other set of documents to be analyzed are **learners' exercise books** to see how learners' writing is affected by the current Shona orthography. This will also give this researcher an appreciation of:

- what exactly is on the dance-floor in terms of application of the Shona orthography?
- which aspects of the Shona orthography pose problems to learners?

There are other documents not listed in the above section that the researcher chooses to refer to as **Document paraphernalia.** It is anticipated that the researcher might stumble upon such documents, which when scrutinised might prove important as data sources in respect of the phenomenon under study. This is done in order not to leave anything to chance in the search for what causes poor mastery of the Shona orthography.

3.5.3 Vignettes: A vignette can be a short piece of narration or photo meant to add depth to the understanding of a phenomenon. It is short and usually packed with emotions. A vignette is a critical and flexible tool in research because it adds depth to the picture of the phenomenon being researched on. In essence, vignettes illuminate significant information creating insight about circumstances. Summarily, vignettes have the critical purpose of adding insight, enabling deep dialogue and robust discussions from which subtle information is elicited (Nordquist, 2018). On the use of vignettes, participants need assurance that their renditions are going to be highly anonymised. Barter and Renold (2000) explain vignettes as instruments for enhancement of qualitative interviews. They illuminate certain elements of the topic under investigation by unpacking, interrogating and highlighting factors pertinent to the inquiry.

3.5.4 Observation: Marshall & Rossman (1989) in Kawulich (2012) explain observation as a way of documenting artifacts, behaviours, events and general goings-on of a chosen social setting. The technique evokes sense of sight and hearing that are respectively physical and sensual. There are two broad types of observation, namely:

- Participant Observation - the (**P**) model
- Direct Observation - the(**D**) model

The **P** model occurs when researcher gets into the setting as both participant and observer, overtly so (**overt observation**). Overt observation is an amenable and most preferred way of collecting data

through observation. The participants will be aware that they are being observed and that can influence them to give it all, since sometimes people tend to be apt to share information with a stranger than someone they are familiar with (Gold, 1958 in Kawulich, 2012). This kind of observation assumes two theoretical roles of fieldwork where the researcher has a declared role and identity, visa vis *complete observer* and *observer as participant*

In the **D** model, the researcher observes while not interacting with people in the study or objects in the study setting. Observees are unaware that they are being observed (**covert observation**). Covert Observations are unsuitable in research. However, in some instances they are vital as a stop gate measure against Hawthorne effect in research. The knowledge of the presence of the researcher can trigger reclusiveness when participants change their actions, behaviours and their usual way of doing the things they do in a particular setting. This model of observation assumes two theoretical roles of *complete participant* and *participant as observer.*

Ciesielska et.al., (2018) declared that it is critically important to identify a specific observation field. The field for this study is a case school in Zvishavane, Zimbabwe. In the observation matrix, as advised by Spradley (1980) in Ciesielska (2018), the researcher gives attention to the physical place, players in that place, activities of the players, events at the place and emotions expressed over what is being observed

Sotirin (1999) in Ciesielska (ibid) suggest that one must observe territory, stuff, people and talk.

Spradley and Sotirin inspire this researcher to choose what has to be observed, how that has to be observed in order to sufficiently answer the research questions especially after reflection and analysis of observation notes and recordings.

Observation as a data collection method has advantages and disadvantages. When the researcher sort of gets immersed in the setting, the tendency is gaining knowledge and insight about those aspects of a setting that one cannot get from the public. This hands-on experience is insightful and immensely builds on knowledge needed, knowledge about a phenomenon under study. However, observations whatever their form are susceptible to researcher-bias. Hawthorne Effect is usually a common feature in observation research techniques.

3.5.5 A **Questionnaire,** in any research work**,** is a tool for data collection. It is the first tool that researchers often consider when undertaking a research project. Questionnaires were used to collect data after realising those interviews, whether individual or group, are time consuming. It was also reached at after some reflection as to whether the interviewees were going to be representative enough

of the group of learners to be studied. Questionnaires were more appropriate to capture a wide spectrum of the learners' views and to make up for anticipated time loss. The use of openended questions generated word-based data. Open-ended questions are appropriate in site-specific case studies (Cohen et.al, 2000). They also can capture specific details that otherwise would be missed by structured questions. They too lead to a greater discovery. However, open-ended questions are difficult to analyse (Gillham, 2000 in Zohrabi, 2013).

The type and quality of questions determines the credibility of data collected. The type of questions comprises two categories, which are:

- Structured (closed) questions and
- Unstructured (open) questions.

Structured questions are real source of research bias. They do not afford respondents spontaneity in their responses because they are sort of guided and caged as to what kind of information they should give. Since there is some element of bias in this type of questions, a researcher must devise ways of avoiding that where possible. One way of avoiding the element of bias, as Gillham (2000) in Zohrabi (2013) advises, is including both closed and open questions in the questionnaire. The different types of questions complement each other. Adopting unstructured questions affords respondents the freedom to speak out their minds. This type of questions affords the researcher a window to probe further for clarity. That kind of clarity is achieved by conducting focus group interviews. However, unstructured questions have a disadvantage of being time consuming as the researcher probes, sometimes unnecessarily (Wilson & McClean, 1994). A glaring limitation of this research tool, the questionnaire, is that it excludes illiterates from participating in a research study.

3.6 Summary of methodology procedures

Below, is atabular illustration of the adopted methodology procedures. It is a summary of purposes, strategies and data analysis.

Table 3.1: *Summary of Methodology procedures*

Purpose	Strategies for data collection	Source of data	Analysis coding system
Extrapolation of how the Shona orthography is viewed, proposed and applied in the O-level Shona curriculum -the Official Recontextualisation Field (**ORF**) which involves the <u>State</u> **&** Pedagogic Recontextualisation Field (**PRF**) which involves the <u>Local Educational Authority</u> -Bernstein (1990)	Documentary analysis	**a)** National Syllabus (The State) & **b)** School Syllabus (The Local Educational Authorities **c)** Learners' text books and exercise books **d)** Any other teaching and learning materials	**a)** Deductive and Inductive- Bernstein's (1990), principles of classification and framing **b)** Valverde et al's., (2002) unit of analysis **c)** Curry (2015) says inductive approaches are used to interpret textual information that will be gathered in qualitative research
Exploring teacher's and learners' views about Shona orthography and its application	**a)** Interviews **b)** Questionnaires **c)** Learner journals	O-level **a)** teachers and **b)** learners at the case school	**a)** Curry (2015) says inductive approaches are used to interpret textual information that will be gathered in qualitative research **b)** Deductive and Inductive- Bernstein's (1990), principles of classification and framing
Understanding how dialect nuances may influence and affect the teaching and learning of Shona that is standardized	**a)** Lesson observations **b)** Digital voice recordings	O-level Shona classes	Inductive approaches
Exploring the influence of dialect identities on learners and the pedagogical repertoire of teachers	**a)** Questionnaires **b)** Semi-structured group interviews **c)** voice recordings	a) O-level learners b) O-level teachers	Inductive and Deductive approaches

3.7 Sampling method

Marshall (1996) advises that it is important to choose a sample when carrying out research because it is rare, impossible and impractical to study whole populations. Sampling makes research procedure possible and realistic. Not only that, the study will be in-depth and focused.

The sampled participants, however, should be representative enough of the population under study so that truthful conclusions are made. Purposive sampling suits qualitative research paradigm best. There are two major sampling procedures identified by Ritchie et. al., (2003). These are:

- Probability sampling and
- Non-probability sampling.

In probability sampling, the sample gives each element in the research population an equal chance for selection. This kind of sampling is ideal in a quantitative research. The use of numbers distinguishes it from non-probability kind of sampling.

In non-probability sampling, the choice of elements of the sample is deliberate and trivializes idea of giving elements of the study population equal chance of selection to participate in the study at the stages of collection of data, its presentation and its analysis. Participants are chosen on basis of distinctive relevance to the matter under investigation. This sampling method is ideal in qualitative research. The aspect of *distinctive relevance* is critical in that the researcher has to be rigorous and thorough in sampling so that relevant, reliable data is obtained and collected for the purposes of replication, the core of qualitative researches. This suggests purposive choice of participants. **Purposive sampling** (criterion-based) is used for this particular research study. The choice of participants is deliberate in order to gather data that is relevant and adequate to answer research questions sufficiently. Sufficiency comes from adequacy and diversity of data that is collected. Purposive sampling assures these characteristics.

Purposive sampling characterizes the Qualitative Research Paradigm in which a researcher chooses his/her participants deliberately on the strength of their relevance to the studied phenomenon. This is premised on Frey et.al.,'s (2006) idea that a sample is a sub-group of a population; Bernstein (2003) who describes a sample as a 'taste' of a group and Latham's (2007) assertion that a sample should be able to represent an entire population as source of data for a research study. All these ideas deductively view a sample as comprising research subjects with uniform characteristics and features relevant to a research study. Every member of the sample can be considered a reliable data source that can aid the drawing up of dependable and generalisable conclusions in a qualitative research like the one to be undertaken by this researcher. Choosing participants because of relevance gives rise to sampling bias in research study. It can also give rise to social desirability bias brought to bear by choosing O-Level students as a social group relevant to work with in this research. If not handled carefully, bias could lead one to making unrepresentative conclusions about a phenomenon under investigation

In this research, purposive sampling guides the choice of O-level learners and O-level teachers at a selected case school to participate. The choice of <u>a case</u> (my own underlining) is in itself purposive. These parameters assure the researcher of having, in his sample, participants that will give reliable data that make it possible to answer research questions. This can be possible because the purposive method of collecting data, if managed aptly, can get to 'saturation point' making way for robust and rigorous data discussion, data interpretation and data analysis making a clear case of the challenges to the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools.

The choice of participants at the case school, learners and teachers, may not be exhaustive enough to get to saturation point in terms of data collection. In such a research as this one, the researcher needs different minds with a wealth of experience and exposure on the phenomenon under study. A group of people like academics needs to be engaged. It is this researcher's hope that one academic engaged could suggest another real guru in the area under study, and so on. That way the sample size grows and the amount of data collected is enriched. This kind of research subjects identification is what Ritchie, Lewis and Ellam (2003) call **snowball sampling.** This sampling method asks interviewed participants to identify others they know who can be of value in the study at hand while the sample size increases (Vogt, 1999). More data is collected primarily through referrals or networking.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter outlined the various data collecting procedures that are suitable for this qualitative study. A critique of the procedures was done. The data collecting methods described are interview, documentary analysis, vignettes, observation and questionnaire. In qualitative research, inductive approaches are used to interpret textual information that will be gathered to generate insights about a phenomenon being researched on. In this research, qualitative and quantitative methods were partnered in order that they complement each other in analysing the data for this study. These are Critical Theory and Theory of Alphabetic Writing. The theories form the lens that will be used to see the limitations and deficiencies of the present Shona orthography in school writing.The limitations and deficiencies were caused by the onerous choice of one dialect, Zezuru, over other dialects and christian it 'a lingua franca'. This has resulted in compelling people from other dialects to write not as they speak despite the fact that we are speaker writers. Learners commit errors when writing at school all because they do not use their mother tongue.

Chapter 4

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, data are presented, analyzed and discussed. This is done in parts. They are analyzed to determine their fit to the study. Their fit and none of it are the determinant coordinates of the direction of the ensuing discussion. An exposé of the errors learners commit and the causes of writing errors is given. Print media like advertisements and foodstuff packages, electronic media like phone messages are analyzed. A fine-grained analysis of the said documents awash in the learners' hoods is done to indicate that they are causes of the errors learners commit when engaged in academic writing. Learners' exercise books are analyzed to get an appreciation of the errors they make when writing. Learners', teachers' and academics' views on causes of the errors are discussed. Measures taken to mitigate the occurrence of the errors are also discussed. In doing all this, the directing beacon is the national Shona (3159) syllabus which states that learners "…will be required to write…in Standard Shona orthography and will be expected to conform to the rules for word-division and spelling recommended by the Shona Language Committee…" (O-Level Syllabus, Shona 3159: 2). An evaluation of the reference books used in schools in respect of the topic under investigation is also done. This evaluation and appraisal will help map out the way forward for mitigating the poor mastery of the Shona orthography in Zimbabwean schools.

4.2 Research findings from interviews with academics

The following is the presentation of data from interviews with academics A_1 and A_2 and the subsequent analysis and discussion of the data.

4.2.1 Voice Recorded Interview with Academic (A_1) done on 25/8/2020

The questions for the interview are contained in Appendix A.

<u>Key</u>: **R** (Researcher)

    A_1 (First Academic)

Researcher (R): What is your dialect?

Academic A_1: Karanga is my dialect.

Researcher: Is your home language (your dialect) used in academic writing?

Academic A_1: In academic writing, mostly, I use English. I use Shona less than I use English and never use my dialect.

Researcher: Are there any problems that you encounter by not using it in academic writing?

Academic A_1: There are big problems that can be encountered especially at different levels of education from primary through secondary and even university. Materials are in English yet learners are not good in the English language. In some institutions, they use the African language to teach it but that again presents many problems.

Researcher: Can you cite some of these problems?

Academic A_1: The problems are… grammars and dictionaries give a language unlimited expressibility. We have these now, but they in the main support the existing word inventory in our language. We get stuck when wanting to say certain things and may end up mixing codes.

Researcher: You have worked in schools, colleges and now universities. How problematic are/have been spelling, word division and punctuation to your learners?

Academic A₁: Because there are certain letters that are not included in our orthography like /l, q, x/ and many more others some words present spelling challenges. But this may be different from Ndau dialect because these letters are used. Ndau pulled out as per present constitution. But what I am getting at is that there is lack of standardisation or it is and has not been complete. We should discourage Ivory Tower Approach in orthography development where someone works in his or her office and then impose orthography on people. You will find out that we come up with different spelling for the same, (saka) so that is a problem. And then (tochienda kuti izvo a-ah) we get to the point that our language is not standardized completely. In that case we can argue for better changes in the day so that we come up with uniform way of writing. For our standardisation to be complete we need, , dictionaries and grammars, but the dictionaries support existing orthography which does not have some needed letters. This has to change if we are to get a uniform way of writing, standard writing.

ResearcherCan the home language or dialect affect academic writing?

Academic A₁: A learner can write in Manyika, Karanga …as long as consistency is upheld, there won't be a problem.

Researcher: Professor Chimhundu once alluded to the fact that dialect overtones in academic writing are sparingly tolerated for learners only for ZIMSEC Examination purposes. What about at school level?

Academic A₁: Unfortunately, not all of us go to mark. But when they standardize marking at ZIMSEC they talk about these things but…when at school, they don't emphasize that. They stick to standard way. They emphasize use of standard Shona. Use of one's dialect becomes penalisable. Are all the big brains in this area numb? I don't think so. Something should be wrong somewhere. What is the Language Committee doing? What has become of organisations like Shona Language and Culture Association (SLCA)? What are they doing?

Researcher: Would you explain further on the problem of word division?

Academic A₁: The Language Committee that came into being after Doke recommended its setting up and existence compounded the problem of word division. It came up with complicated rules, some of which govern word division. Doke had introduced a straightforward and smart way of avoiding word division problems. It stipulated that '***write as you speak***'. Shona is a tonal language. Even as we speak, you see that in between words there is this penultimate stress on the last syllable of a word. That indicates a word has ended and separated from the word that follows it, for example:
- *vari-i kudya-a sadza-a*

- *vanhu-u ava-a vari-i kufara-a*
- *tine-e mari-i*
- *imombe-e dzevakadzi-i vamambo-o*

Even auxiliary verbs that pause many problems to most learners would cease to do so. This is how I would teach word division, you write as you speak. We drag the last syllable of every word, always, and that signals, as I have said, the end of a word and the beginning of the new one.

Researcher: You have raised a pertinent point here about rules. We know that any language is rule-governed. How do these rules become a problem in terms of writing?

Academic A₁: Man makes Rules. However, that does not mean each and every rule works to our advantage. If it does not work to our advantage and there is an alternative to that rule, it means there is something wrong with that rule. It has to be attended to. Here we have to consider two groups; Doke said write as you speak and word division was not at all a problem. Then later on came the second group, the Language Committee. They came up with these many complicated rules. At first, these rules were in English, a difficult language to understand for many of us. It means their interpretation and application was and is not up to scratch. Even those who tried to explain them in Shona have not done a thorough job anyway. There are some grey areas on this issue about rules. It is difficult to conceptualise them. They are not like rules about road usage…it is easy to conceptualise that you should not go when the robot is red. That is straightforward and easy to follow. I am not sure if the teachers who teach these rules understand them themselves. There should be a new Language Committee comprised of scholarship that is at grips with the current language situation bedevilling us.

Researcher: Can you also explain further on punctuation as a writing problem?

Academic A₁: The problem of punctuation, I think emanates from teachers not emphasising when to put a stop, a comma, a capital letter, a question mark or any other punctuation mark. I think they have to drill that. They should go further to explain the purposes served by these different punctuation marks. If that is taught properly, there cannot be a challenge there.

Researcher: Do you think the print media (adverts included) and electronic media can influence and affect how a learner may end up spelling, dividing words or constructing sentences?

Academic A₁: Those areas are notorious for making those errors we are talking about especially word division and punctuation. If those in those medias approached experts on language matters before they print, our young ones would not be exposed to such 'dangerous' (gesticulating single quotes on the word dangerous) literature. Our young learners who are still learning see these adverts and it cannot be doubted that they get influenced and affected, negatively so, we should add. They see that in print. They are still young and learning and they think it is correct because it is in print. Once they see things in print they say this is the right thing.

Researcher: In your opinion, who should be the stakeholders in the revision or reform of our Shona orthography?

Academic A₁: All the students of Shona. They should comment even on T.V. This we see everyday people being corrected when they use broken English. It is commented upon we have not come across anyone being corrected for using broken Shona.

Researcher: What other suggestions and comments have you that can help spruce up the image of the current Shona orthography?

Academic A₁: Like I have said, if you see advertisers misspell, mispunctuate Shona words you have to point it out there and then. If you see Shona being used inappropriately, for instance in the media or in some big gatherings, then…if you are not there you have the liberty to write about it and publish for all to see and present that at a conference.

4.2.2 Voice Recorded Interview with Academic A₂ done on 25/8/2020

The questions for the interview are contained in Appendix A.

Key: **R** (Researcher)

   A₂ (Second Academic)

Researcher: What is your home language or dialect?

Academic A₂: E-e-e, it's an interesting question. My dialect is Karanga but ethnically I am from Ndau but I grew up in the Karanga area so Karanga is my dialect.

Researcher: Do you use this dialect in academic writing?

Academic A₂: Not wholly but partially. Karanga dialect is not wholly represented in the current Shona Orthography. I use some elements of it that are accepted in the orthography in use. I can say I use about 30% of Karanga in my academic writing. We can consider the 30% of Karanga aspects as those aspects that are refined and accepted by the current orthography.The aspects were based on the principle of majoty rule. A sound that featured in the majority of the dialiects is the one that was acquired. After sieving, only thirty percent of Karanga was acceptable. The rest of the sounds could not be adopted as illustrated in the diagram below.
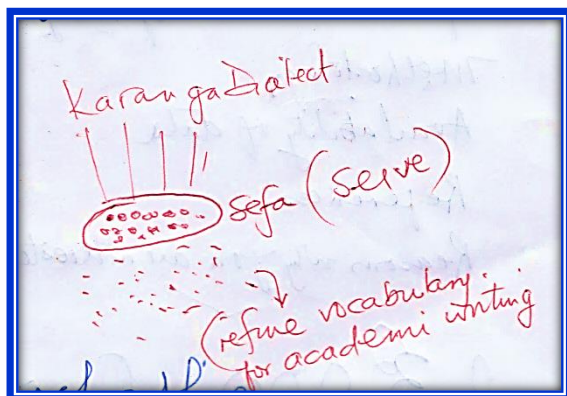
Researcher: If, by accident, you use those aspects that are not accepted in the orthography, what will be the repercussions?

Academic A₂: It is not allowed. Interestingly, when I was a chief examiner for ZIMSEC, I discovered that the current orthography does not allow the use of dialect language in writing but there is a circular, 1982 circular. This circular is only for examiners not for teaching or learning. When we are teaching, we are directed to enforce the current orthography, the 1967 orthography. This circular is only for examiners. When students use Ndau, Manyika or whatever, they are not marked wrong.

Researcher: You are saying they are not marked wrong, but I was once a ZIMSEC marker and I remember marking wrong some spellings that had dialect flavour. Do you mean I was missing out here?

Academic A₂: Such candidates are those who were not consistent on using their dialect for writing. They probably mixed standard Shona and their dialect. Vacillating between standard Shona and dialect is not condoned. This is where they were getting it all wrong. If they stick to standard Shona or dialect, they will not be marked wrong.

Researcher: What do you say about the standardization of our orthography?

Academic A₂: The standardisation is not complete. The orthography disadvantages those not Zezuru because this current orthography is based only on Zezuru dialect. Shona is a phonemic language, people should write the way they speak, and from experience, you know, when I was teaching in schools, I did not know about this circular, so I was disappointed by one of my best students who lost orthography marks for writing **w**ana instead of **v**ana. I said the spelling is wrong. That experience, I later realised that this student, when speaking says **w**ana. There is something that needs to be done to our orthography. It punishes students who should not be. Your dialect is your mother tongue, the language you think in, dream in, conceptualise things better in. Your mother tongue also reaffirms your esteem, your confidence, your identity, and your self-belief. You should also learn in it, but when you go to school you learn another, a completely different language. This reverses the positives that characterise a mother tongue that I tried to enumerate prior.

Researcher: This transition from mother tongue to school language, what advantages go with it as a process, concerning academic writing in schools?

Academic A₂: There are no advantages but very many disadvantages, I must say.

Researcher: Can you cite one or two of the disadvantages that you are alluding to?

Academic A₂: Especially in learning. Because normally when you learn you think in your mother tongue and when you learn you understand things better when you use your mother tongue. When you use another language, you struggle here and there although they are mutually intelligible. However, some words may be different and may be difficult to get meaning of. You can also make some errors when writing in the language that is different to your language.

Researcher: Considering the problems and disadvantages you have highlighted thus far, if it is suggested that the way we write Shona should be changed what will be your take?

Academic A₂: Surely, I agree with that, strongly so I must admit. The present orthography was established in 1967 and a lot of things have happened thereafter. A lot of changes have taken place occasioned by new things, words rather, that have come into our language. Language changes as you would know. It's dynamic and fluid. In view of that there is need to reform the orthography. We need to accommodate the changes to keep up with times. When Doke designed the Shona Orthography he used what we call a Single Standard Dialect Approach -a unitary approach- where all other Shona dialects or varieties were forced to follow the Zezuru way of writing. Reforming the current orthography is a very good idea because it gives the other varieties a chance to have their input in the writing system.

Researcher: Of what benefit can such a move be to writing in school?
Academic A₂: There are a lot of benefits. Each dialect is a language on its own, its vocabulary is the storehouse of its culture, their social life, their identity. All that, if their dialect is excluded in the writing system, is lost. That part of life is excluded. Two, it will afford these other dialects a chance to be written. The other advantage for students is that their learning will improve since mother tongue helps with understanding concepts, learning and internalising vocabulary and become competent. Their achievement in language work will be bettered because of their educational intellect being developed, enhanced, and sharpened. Discrimination based on language will be decimated.

Researcher: What could be the benefits of the same move to language development?

Academic A₂: The language will borrow within itself since it becomes an expansive language, borrowing from its varieties. That way the language will grow and develop. The move also enhances confidence. It also harmonises people's minds so that people will tolerate other people's languages or dialects. I tell you; I was once laughed at when I went to mark in Harare. They found fun in my Karanga, those speaking Zezuru. I felt bad. I lost confidence throughout the exercise. Adding to this, according to Magwa, if people use their language to learn, it will help to develop their country. Realistic ideas

will flow from the use of mother tongue. There are ideas too that can help with the development of the language.

Researcher: You have worked in schools, colleges and now universities. How problematic are or have been the following to your learners? Spelling? Word Division? Punctuation?

Academic A₂: <u>**Spelling**</u>: I have discovered that students unknowingly write what will be considered as wrong spellings because of their mother tongue. Our standardization has excluded some phonemes from other dialects, phonemes like */l, mp, dhl, x, gw, zh* /, only to mention a few. As I see it, this was a result of the understanding that orthography is about the way people write not the way people speak. But some scholars have advanced a reformist argument that Shona is a phonemic language. People should approximate sound and letter, that is. they should write as they speak. Also, new words are coming into our language, and we don't have equivalents for them. Spelling of some of these new words are not and never accepted whether phonologised or rephonologised. This is worsened by the fact that our language is found wanting when it comes to lexical expansion. We are having an unfortunate and regrettable situation because of lack of lexical expansion where new words from other languages or Shona dialects remain illegitimate yet they have, by daily use by speakers, become so much a part of Shona vocabulary inventory. This is probably why some authorities say the standardisation is not complete while others submit that unless and until certain words and the new words that have come into our language are legitimized by orthography and policy decree, learners will make errors, be they spelling or grammatical errors.

<u>**Word Division**</u>:
That is a grey area. Even at university, this is problematic for quite a number. Word division is a problem to even journalists. Have you read *Kwayedza*? There is quite a number of word division errors made there. I think rules about word division are not easy to interpret. Very confusing. You get a situation where you do not know what and how to apply where and therefore, end up making these word division errors, . Worse, auxiliaries are a big problem However, they shouldn't be a problem if people write as they speak. Where you pause, that is where the word ends and a new one starts. This is a natural way of separating/dividing words.

<u>**Punctuation**</u>:
It is a very big problem caused by failure to interpret rules about it, where to put comma, colon, semi colon. Even a full stop, there are some who don't put it at the end of a sentence. Teachers should press it upon students to punctuate properly.

Researcher: Do you think print media, electronic media can influence and affect how learners spell or divide words?

Academic A₂: Hari ya madzisahwira – I saw this on a TV advert for Chibuku beer. These media are very influential in shaping how people write. Therefore, people follow the wrong things just because they are printed. If you look at these adverts, like the one I saw at Nyaradzo written ***Mainomwana wayo,*** you see errors on them. The problem is that these people employ people who are not conversant with how Shona should be written. Adverts are very influential so much that people end up copying wrong things. The adverts have the latitude to use anti-languages, to use slang or even colloquial language and people copy those colloquial languages ending up making errors. But those who produce these adverts are free to break the rules of grammar or orthography. They have the licence to 'brutalise'

(gesticulating single quotes) the grammar to achieve the effect they want when they advertise, and our students think it is right because it is in print.

Researcher: In your opinion, who should be the stakeholders in the revision and reform of the Shona orthography?

Academic A₂: I like the word stakeholders. This should not be a one-man thing. Many people should come in here. The experts should be there. They should spearhead that because they are privileged with theoretical knowledge about good and bad orthographies. Here we have theoretical linguistics where the experts are crucial and critical in that sense, there is phonetics here, but we need the speakers because the speakers will give you the spoken aspect of the language. They know the language more than the experts. From what they give, experts become equipped with the requisite information about the language with which they can reform or redesign orthographies. The experts only translate what speakers say….they give the graphemes that symbolise the spoken. We need wide consultations right up to students at school, the urbanites, the village man and the elderly…we need them all. Their input is vital. There should be government input as well because it is the government that endorses everything…it champions policy too. These three (Speakers, Government, Experts) are pivotal in coming up with a good orthography.

Researcher: What other suggestions and comments have you that can help spruce up the image of the Shona orthography?

Academic A₂: The current Shona orthography must be harmonised. There should be literature for all other varieties…we have it, so let's include them in harmonising the writing of Shona. The 1982 Circular (yandanga ndichitaura) I was referring to should become law instead of only accepting dialect phonemes in examination, they should accept them in toto for all everyday writing. Errors can be minimised by that move. All dialects should be accommodated. This should apply in learning e-e-e in education. People should emphasize similarities more than differences. We should encourage involvement of all people, the Democracy Approach to orthography reform and desist from Ivory Tower Approach where someone works in isolation in his or her office and then impose orthography on people. This is evident in the 2006 orthography, which some friend of mine, a Ndau, has claimed it does not represent them because many significant sounds are not there in it. Yes, they are not represented in the orthography. There are no clicks in it. They are not
there. They did not consult them, Ndau speakers. Therefore, it is not inclusive. The standardisation is not complete. It is not exhaustive. Yes, it is not complete. It should be a process. It should be gradual. It should not be taken as a one day off thing but a process until we have a representative orthography.

4.2.3 Analysis and discussion of the data from interviews with Academics A₁ and A₂.

The achievement of learners in language work improves if they write as they speak. The interviewed academics concur on this viewpoint. Academic **A₂** argues that home languages develop, enhance and

sharpen learners' educational intellect. Academic **A₂** also contends that learners "… understand things better…" when they use their mother tongue. Academic **A₁** postulates that Doke had introduced a straightforward and smart way of writing which stipulated that *'write as you speak'* which can be interpreted to mean the use of home language when writing by way of approximating sound and letter. When learners approximate sound and letter, they usually and normally do not get their spelling wrong. This is the inferential argument of these academics regarding spelling errors that result from the selective adoption of different Shona dialects' phonemes into the orthography. We, thus, have Academic **A₁** regretting that the use of one's dialect is penalisable. A good example can be drawn from Academic **A₂**'s confession that, "I was disappointed by one of my best students who lost orthography marks for writing **w**ana instead of **v**ana. I said the spelling is wrong. That experience, I later on realised that this student, when speaking says **w**ana. Later now I see that there is something that needs to be done to our orthography because it punishes students who shouldn't be," by marking them down. The fact that Academic **A₂** considered this as wrong spelling confirms the argument made by Academic **A₁** that we usually come up with different spelling for the same. Regrettably, some spelling that exude dialect overtones are penalised because of the use of certain letters that are not included in our orthography. Definitely, some words present spelling challenges as indicated above. Both academics share the view that the 1982 Circular should become law instead of accepting dialect phonemes only in examination. This shared view speaks to the reform of the Shona orthography considering Academic **A₂**'s assertion that "Karanga dialect is not wholly represented in the current Shona Orthography" and Academic **A₁**'s assertion that the "use of one's dialect becomes penalisable." The use of standard Shona is emphasized in academic circles. A conclusion worth drawing up is that, it is not the Karanga dialect alone that is not wholly represented in the Shona orthography. All the other Shona dialects save Zezuru are handicapped. They, very selectively, feed into an orthography that is biased towards Zezuru that feeds quite heavily into this Shona orthography as depicted by Figure 4.1.

Zezuru Dialect

vana

nzira

nokuti

tumbudzi

Other Shona Dialects

wana (Manyika)

zhira (Karanga)

ngekuti (Ndau)

xumbudzi (Korekore)

*Karanga's and other dialects' feeding into Standard Shona is **selective**. In many cases, it is **not acceptable** as indicated*

Zezuru <u>heavily</u> feeds

Into Standard Shona

STANDARD SHONA

/vana, nzira, nokuti, tumbudzi/

Fig 4.1: *Dialect feeding into Standard Shona*

Key

Heavy feeding

Selective/not acceptable feeding

Rate of dialect feeding into Standard Shona explained

Figure 4.1 helps to explain explicitly why it can be true that mother tongue interference can cause learners to commit errors when writing in standard Shona. Many of their dialect words are not accepted in standard Shona yet learners have a tendency of writing as they speak. Academic **A₂** argues that the tendency of writing as you speak thrives because "Your dialect is your mother tongue, the language you think in, dream in, conceptualise things better in."

Treiman (2004), in her study in America, observed that there exists a **d/t** confusion between African Americans and White Americans respectively. She concluded that when spelling the former were likely to confuse **d** and **t**. Where we have the **d**/**t** confusion for African Americans and Whites, there is a likelihood of a **tu**-/**xu**-; **zh**-/**nz**-; **ne**-/**nge**; **w**-/**v** confusion between standard Shona spelling and Shona dialects spelling as depicted in Figure 4.1. These are only few of the many examples of the differences in spelling of words that exist for standard Shona and Shona dialects. There too are differences in the grammar of the two types of languages, confirming Coulmas's (1989) assertion that foreign languages cannot capture total grammars of other languages. To this end, Achebe (1987) referred to a bible verse,

1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 2 that says that when a person speaks in another language, no one understands him.

This is because word never exists in an impersonal or a neutral language. There is a 'mother' in all of us. As such, no language is taught successfully and effectively in another language. This limiting aspect of the current Shona orthography makes it inadequate, inappropriate, and irrelevant. It needs reform.

This lack of understanding or lack of communication implies lack of commitment to learn to apply orthography of a 'foreign' language correctly. There is not that zeal and urge to do that well in a 'foreign' thing. Figure 4.1 aptly depicts how the two languages (Standard Shona and Dialects of Shona) differ in their word forms so much that when dialect flair shows up in a learner's piece of work because of L_1 interference, he/she commits an error.

All such challenges emanate from, as argued by Academic A_2, the adoption of the Single Standard Dialect Approach -a unitary approach- where all other Shona dialects or varieties were forced to follow the Zezuru way of writing. The standardization is not complete. The orthography disadvantages those not Zezuru because this current orthography is based chiefly on Zezuru dialect. In that case, Academic A_1 argues for better changes in the day so that we come up with an accommodative system of writing that tolerates dialectal differences in the meanings and spellings of words. Concerning Shona today, we do not usually come up with acceptable different meaning and spelling for the same. Certain words are pronounced and spelled differently in standard Shona and in dialects, yet they mean the same. This is explained diagrammatically thus:
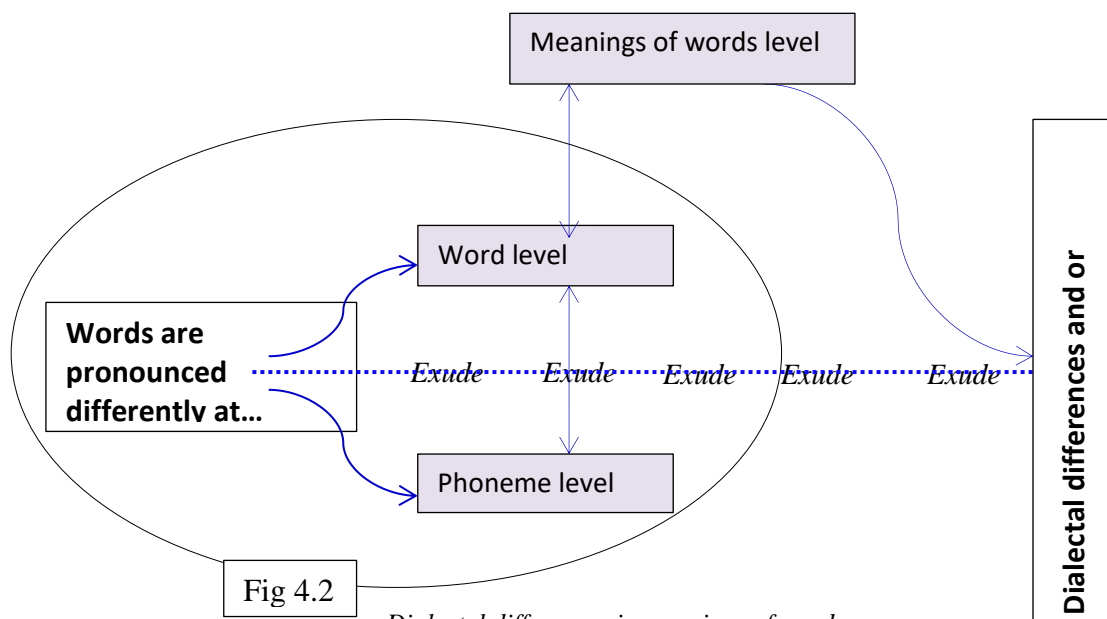
Fig 4.2   *Dialectal differences in meanings of words*

How words are pronounced at phoneme level

*w*ana (children) in Manyika

*v*ana (children) in Zezuru

> The phonemes **/w; v/** are dialectally different but in the cited case they mean exactly the same

How words are pronounced at **word level**

uswa (mealie meal) in Ndau

uswa (grass) in Zezuru

> The word **/uswa/** is pronounced and spelt exactly the same but means dialectally different things

Words are pronounced and spelt the same at **meaning of word level** as in the case of */uswa/* but mean different things. They can also be pronounced and spelt differently but mean the same at **meaning of word level** because of subtle variances at **phoneme level** as in the case of */vana/*. The Shona orthography has to find space for this subtlety and save learners from committing spelling errors when their different dialects' phonologies show up in the way they spell. Academic **A2** confesses that the Shona orthography punishes learners who should not be punished, with Academic **A1** categorically stating that it is regrettable that the use of one's dialect in academic writing is penalisable. The standardisation of the Shona orthography needs revisiting to make it complete and accommodative of all the dialects.

Where Kashoki (1978) and Banda (2002) note that different Zambian languages use different graphemes to represent the same sound as shown in Table 4.1,

Table 4.1: *Different graphemes for same sound for Zambian languages*

Grapheme	Zambian Language
/c/	Bemba Lozi Nyanja
/ch/	Kaonde Lunda Luvale
/cc/, /c/, /j/	Tonga

Magwa (1999) notes that different Zimbabwean Shona dialects use different graphemes to represent the same sound as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: *Comparison of standard Shona spellingand ethnic dialect spelling*

Standard Shona Spelling	Ethnic Language Spelling
ma**h**ewu	ma**x**ewu (Karanga dialect)
rwendo	**gw**endo (Karanga dialect)
vana	**w**ana (Manyika dialect)

This is consistent with Banda's (2016) findings that major differences characterise African written languages and their spoken forms. Banda (ibid) found out that speech uses dialect and the written form uses the standard language.

A closer look at the happenstance leads to a conclusion that communication takes place whether,

a) Dialect language is used when writing or
b) Dialects and standard languages are mixed, which is akin to code switching or code mixing.

For a) above, spoken ciBemba dialect uses such word forms like ***baliba, balisa, kubelela.*** When writing, the orthography stipulates that the words are written as baliiba, baliisa, kubeelela. The dialect word forms are used conveniently for ease of writing and reading. It is practical to use short vowels. For b) above, the following phrase serves as a good example: …yakosa inkhani… where '**yakosa**' is a

ciNsenga word form, '**i-**' is a ciBemba prefix and '**-nkhani**' is ciNyanja. Three dialects have been mixed or switched. However, there is intelligibility and furtherance of communication. Mastery and acceptance of using many dialects thus becomes an asset in enriching a language for use by present and successive generations.

For Shona this can be a noble thing to copy. Karanga dialect is mixed with Ndau to have a phrase like '…*zviro zvashata*….' <*Zviro*> is Ndau and <*zvashata*> is Karanga. A Zezuru can understand that. A Manyika can understand that too, meaning there should not be anything standing in the way of efforts to incorporate all Shona dialects into the way the language is written. It enriches the language. Examples in Table 4.2 do not cause any communication unintelligibility. This is why in Figure 4.20 the teacher at the case school indicated the need to replace Karanga phoneme /-gw-/ with standard Shona (with heavy Zezuru bias) phoneme /-rw-/, meaning that he/she understands Karanga suppose it is not his/her dialect. This validates the idea that the meaning of a word does not change even if a word is pronounced and spelt differently (Kelly, 2000). People can still understand one another.

Writing systems evolved from pictographs to the alphabet. Faigley (1999) in Grosswiler (2004), Diringer & Olson (2020) outline the milestones in the evolution of the alphabet, which are:

- the invention by the Phoenicians of the consonantal writing system called the North Semitic and
- the invention by the Greeks of characters that represent vowels

Although some scholars treat the Semitic Writing System as <u>unvocalised syllabary</u> and the Greek Writing System as the <u>true vocalized alphabet,</u> both are complements of the present day Alphabetic Writing System that makes use of both consonants and vowels. These ideas about word formation in alphabetic systems (even dialects, for purposes of this research) can be diagrammed thus:
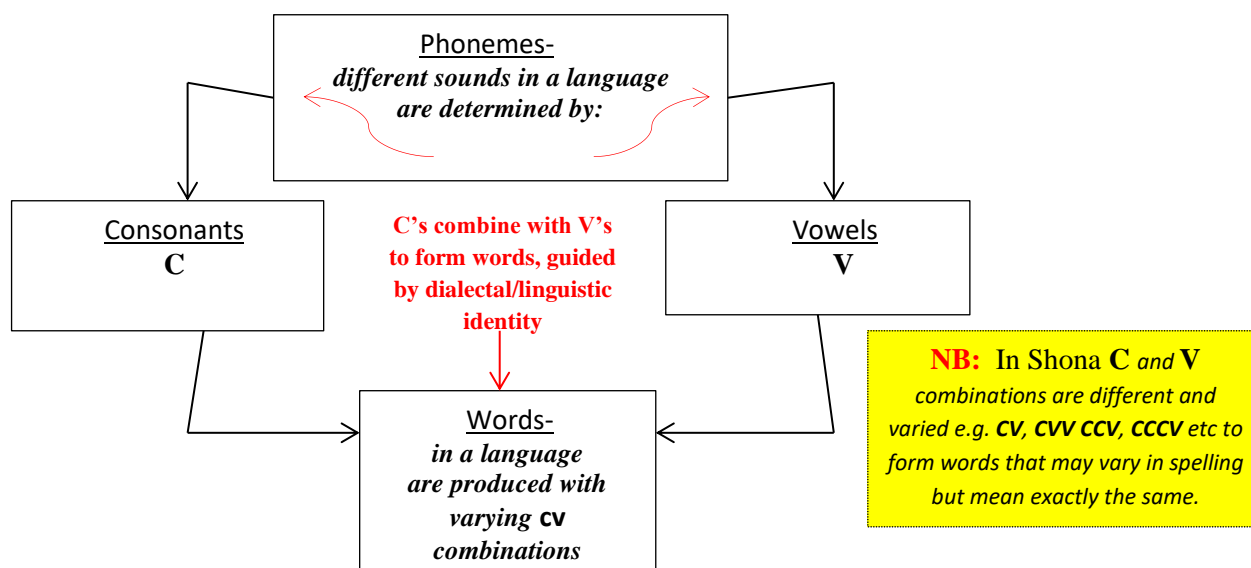
Fig 4.3: <u>The Complementarity of consonants and vowels</u>
(As informed by Phoenician North Semitic Consonantal writing system & Greek Vowel representation)

Because of the differences in languages (dialects for the purposes of this research), different consonant-vowel combinations for words that mean the same are encountered. Linguistic/dialectal identities guide the consonant-vowel combinations that go with word formation. Academic A_2 presents that, "Each and every dialect is a language on its own [and] its vocabulary is the storehouse of…their identity." That explains and justifies how and why words that mean the same have different consonant-vowel combinations. Academic A_1 also argues that it is why, "You will find out that we come up with different spelling for the same." Let it be realised that it is the spelling only that is different but what the word means is the same. In that case that is when we get learners like Learner E (L_E) querying why they are not allowed writing the way they speak to their parents and relatives at home?"

In view of the differences in spelling and grammar between Shona and its dialects, Chimhundu (1992) in Magwa (2002:7) notes that;

> …in 1982, the Ministry of Education issued a directive removing the restrictions on the use of letters and diagraphs that are otherwise permitted by the alphabet allowing controlled flexibility in spellings.

The removal of the restrictions only allowed controlled flexibility of dialect overtones in learners' pieces of written work. Although this was some reprieve to learners, it was <u>only</u> (my own underlining for emphasis) considered in the marking of O-Level Shona examinations confirming Academic A_2's declaration that, "This circular is only for examiners." Teachers are "…directed to enforce the current orthography." In concurrence, Academic A_1 supportively explains that when at school, teachers by

instruction stick to standard way of writing. The phrase '…controlled flexibility…' in the observation by Chimhundu implies **selective** consideration of which dialect spelling to accept or reject. Learners instinctively write as they speak. Their disposition to home language (dialect) dominates their linguistic mental faculties. The dialect inclinations can destabilise memories of standard Shona spellings leading learners to commit errors. The errors that they commit, as Alonso (2019) asseverates, evince mother tongue transfer and interference (see Figure 4.18).

MacKay (1967) and Randall (2005) concur that first language (L_1) literacy (skill of using words) causes the errors produced by second language (L_2) learners. Errors are caused by the mother tongue (L_1) mapping onto the (L_2) language as proved by Randall's study carried out in Malaysia. Provision of successful learning experience to learners averts commission of errors. Learners must build on known language foundation and experience of their first language, the mother tongue. This implies incorporation of dialects into the orthography. Later, learners can expand their experience and knowledge and learn even more and better through other languages in their wider linguistic environment. This could hold true in multi-dialectal settings. True this could be for Zimbabwe as regards Shona dialects, sixteen of them. Learners learn the Shona language that has Zezuru biased. The phonologies of the dialects differ and that can affect spelling, much so in the transparent Shona orthography. According to Stegen in Kashmir (2005), as biodiversity is vitally important for the balance of life, language diversity is vitally important for the balance and maintenance of language, culture, ethnicity and identity. In the Zimbabwean case, this will promote adaptation to standard language, Shona that has Zezuru bias. Defining features of the other dialects will not be lost. This will as well reduce regionalisation, loss of linguistic diversity and cultural diversity while enhancing identity and unity. The bottom line is, as argued by Academic A_2, "…there is need to reform the orthography" to make it accommodative of dialect phonologies.

On a different note both Academic A_1 and Academic A_2 concur that rules about word division are very complicated, very confusing and not easy to interpret. Academic A_1 argues that even those who tried to explain them in Shona have not done a thorough job anyway. There are some grey areas on this issue about rules. It is generally difficult to conceptualise them. However, these rules should not be a problem considering that Shona is a tonal language, Academic A_2 insists. Academic A_1 while giving examples says that even as we speak, in between words, there is this penultimate stress on the last syllable of a word. That indicates that a word has ended and a new and separate word begins. This is a natural way of separating/dividing words, for example:

- vari-i / kudya-a / sadza-a… [*vari kudya sadza*]

Doubled vowels signal <u>penultimate stress</u> ⟹

- vanhu-u / ava-a / vari-i / kufara-a… [*vanhu ava vari kufara*] tine-e / mari-i… [*tine mari*]

- imombe-e / dzevakadzi-i / vamambo-o… [*imombe dzevakadzi vamambo*]

Punctuation is another very big problem caused by failure to interpret rules, as asserted by the same academics. Academic **A₁** was quick to suggest that teachers should emphasize when and where to put a stop, a comma, a capital letter, a question mark or any other punctuation mark. One way is to drill that. Another way is going further to explain the purposes served by these different punctuation marks. If that is drilled and taught properly, there cannot be a challenge. Academic **A₂** supports similar strategies for teachers in teaching punctuation to learners. The academic categorically states that teachers should press it upon students to punctuate properly. This is akin to the drilling that Academic **A₁** proposes.

One more idea that the academics raised as a cause of quotidian error commission by learners is the learners' transitioning from home language to school language. The use of standard Shona is emphasized at school where the use of one's dialect is penalisable as was observed by Academic **A₁**. While Mwansa (2017) argues that learners spell well when they match letters to the sound of a language, Saville-Troike (2006) has an assumption that there is usually always a potential mismatch between **L₁** and **L₂** structures. The potential mismatch is an attendant circumstance to the errors learners commit when engaged in academic writing. Academic **A₂** argues that some learners make some errors because, when at school, they write in a language that is different to their usual home language. In that case, letter to sound approximation is non-existent and spelling errors are therefore imminently inevitable for learners whose home languages differ from Zezuru. In support of this view too, Academic **A₁** contends that some words present spelling challenges because there are certain letters that are not in our orthography like /l, q, x/ and many more others. Learners make some errors when writing in the language (school language-**SL**) that is different to their usual home language (**HL**), Academic **A₂** argues. They should learn in it but unfortunately, when they go to school they learn in 'another different language'.

Academics **A₁** and A₂ concur that print media especially adverts are blamed as a cause of errors learners commit when writing. Academic **A₂** argues that because adverts have the latitude to use anti-languages, to use slang or even colloquial language people may copy those colloquial languages ending up making errors. These adverts can influence and shape how people write the academic further argues. Print

media in general seem to have the licence to 'brutalise' the grammar to achieve the effect they want when they advertise. Academic **A₁** contends that our learners who are still young and learning think that everything they see in adverts is right because it is in print. The same academic summarily states that adverts are notorious for making those errors especially those of word division and punctuation. Academic **A₁** further presents that if the media fraternity approached experts on language matters before they print, the young learners would not be exposed to such 'dangerous' literature.

4.3   Teachers' and learners' interviews

Shona language was used in the interviews with teachers and learners.The use of the respondents' local language makes them feel free to share their stories and experiences. Kaya and Lyana (2014) assert that holding interviews in the participants' local language allows clear, articulate communication and maximum participation. However, only the English translation is given.

4.3.1 Research findings from teachers' interviews

The three teachers were code-named T_A, T_B and T_C. Their responses are the raw data. The data are analyzed and discussed in the sections that follow.

4.3.2 Data from interview with Teacher A (T_A)

The name of the teacher indicated in the following presented interview data is a pseudonym for the teacher who felt free talking in Shona. Only the English translation is given. Teacher A (T_A) was interviewed. The interview guidelines are those set out in Appendix G.

Researcher: What problems do you encounter in the teaching of Shona at this school?

Teacher T_A:
There is a lot of work to do.

Researcher: Why do you say there is a lot of work to do?

Teacher T_A: There is a lot of work to do because our classes are too big, with fifty five students per class. Marking fifty five times five compositions is too much work. Therefore, I am saying there is a

lot of work to do. This is when you will realise how overwhelming the work is. You will not be marking compositions only; you also have grammar work and comprehension work to mark.

Researcher: How often do you give the different kinds of written work?

Teacher T$_A$: Composition is once per fortnight, grammar work twice per week and comprehension once per fortnight.

Researcher: So, your week is a busy one loaded with a lot of marking.

Teacher T$_A$: Every week is a busy one with a lot of marking. You can never have any free time; it is not possible.

Researcher: I know you are the Head of Department, how do you balance marking and heading the department?

Teacher T$_A$: It is very difficult. That affects the amount of written work I can give. It also compromises my marking, which will not be thorough as I rush to finish marking the exercise books.
Researcher: What do you suggest should be done*?*

Teacher T$_A$: If our load is reduced, we can get some reprieve.

Researcher: Amongst your students, are those of languages other than Shona finding it difficult to write in standard Shona?

Teacher T$_A$: They find it difficult to write in standard Shona. Some cannot construct a good meaningful sentence. When you try to find out their background that is when you realise that they are not of Shona background.

Researcher: What other language backgrounds do you come across?

Teacher T$_A$: Especially students of Ndebele background present lots of writing problems. Those of other language backgrounds are better off.

4.3.3 Analysis and discussion of data from the interview with Teacher A (T$_A$)

Teacher A (**T$_A$**) lamented the overwhelming amount of work involved in teaching Shona at the school. Teaching at least five classes per week is insurmountable. The teacher submitted that the amount of written work given to learners is negatively affected. The quality of marking is compromised as well as the teacher rushes to finish marking the exercise books. The teacher says that learners of linguistic

backgrounds other than Shona find it difficult to write in standard Shona. Learners of Ndebele background present lots of writing problems and that complicates marking. Learners' failure to balance the two principles that govern spelling causes spelling related problems. The principles are phoneme-grapheme correspondence principle and orthographic cueing principle. The two principles need balancing all the time for the production of correct spelling. If the two principles are asynchronously consulted, some spellings come out wrong. However, the concerned teacher offers mitigatory suggestions to the challenges faced. One of the suggestions is downsizing the teaching load so that they have time for quality marking of the many exercise books.

4.4 Data from interview with Teacher B (T_B)

Teacher B (T_B) was intervied.The teacher felt free talking in Shona. Only the English translation is given. The interview guidelines are those set out in Appendix G.

Researcher: How do you help your students to perform well in Shona?

Teacher T_B: I indicate how I arrive at a mark awarded to composition or comprehension work as given in the table below. This is knowledge I got from colleagues who are ZIMSEC O-Level Paper 1 markers. I mark Paper 2. I also emphasize to my students the importance of correct word division, correct spelling, correct punctuation and all those important language aspects that make one a good and successful writer.

- Content (**Cont**)   25
- Orthography (**Orth**)   10
- Coherence/Readability/Paragraphing/Tidiness (**CRPT**)   10
- **Style**   5

| Zvose zvinopa zvibodzwa | 50 |

Researcher: Can you give examples of other important language aspects you are referring to?
Teacher T_B: The other important language aspect I am referring to is the correct use of concordial agreement that allows good flow of ideas and smooth reading of one's piece of written work.

Researcher: How difficult for your students are the language aspects you have enumerated?

Teacher T_B: Many students struggle with word division. They also have problems with paragraphing.

Researcher: Amongst your students are there any who are of language backgrounds other than Shona.

Teacher Tᴮ: Many students are Shona. Ndebele students are very few. Students of Malawian and Zambian ethnicity are few.

Researcher: Which Shona dialect has the biggest number of students?

Teacher Tᴮ: Many students are Karanga and those of other dialects do exist as well.

Researcher: Do their home languages interfere with their academic writing?

Teacher Tᴮ: No, but I have observed some Ndebele interference in the way such learners write.

Researcher: Can you cite examples?

Teacher Tᴮ: A Ndebele word that often appears is 'futhi'. Many students have problems with English interfering with their writing.

Researcher: How often do you give discussion work?
Teacher Tᴮ: Rarely.
Researcher: Why do you rarely give discussion work?

Teacher Tᴮ: If we adopt discussion, we will not cover the syllabus because we do not have enough time for all that is involved in our teaching.

Researcher: Why do you say you do not have enough time? What overwhelms the teacher?
Teacher Tᴮ: Time is not enough because the teaching load is big. This means you teach many classes that have written work in Literature, Grammar, Comprehension, Summary and Composition. Marking all that is unmanageable. It requires a lot of time and that we do not have. The teacher is overwhelmed.
Researcher: How often do you give composition work?

Teacher Tᴮ: Because the classes are too big, I give composition work once in three weeks instead of the stipulated once per fortnight.

Researcher: Faced with such challenges, what do you suggest should be done to help students perform better in composition work?

Teacher Tᴮ: Students need to be encouraged to read many storybooks where they will see how to spell or divide words correctly. There are many novels in the school, but the students are very lazy to read the books.

4.4.1 An analysis and discussion of data from the interview with Teacher B (T_B)

Despite the many work-related challenges, the teacher faces, **T_B** perseveres to help learners perform better in written Shona, particularly in composition work.

One of the challenges the teacher faces has to do with big class size. This means a lot of marking since each class has an average of at least fifty students and she teaches four classes. This also compromises the amount of written composition work she administers. She gives composition work <u>once in three weeks</u> instead of the stipulated <u>once per fortnight</u> because she cannot cope up with marking.

Despite the challenges, the teacher remains focussed on helping her students perform better in Shona. **T_B** outlined what she does to help students. Firstly, although overwhelmed by the marking, she however made the claim that she assiduously marks students' work by indicating all the errors made. Secondly, teacher **T_B** encourages her students to read a lot of story books in which they can see how words are correctly divided, how words are correctly spelled, how different punctuation marks are correctly used and the essence of correct use of concordial agreement in sentences.

Teacher **T_B** knows the value of discussion as a teaching method (oral mode). However, the method is rarely adopted because it is time consuming, the teacher remonstrates. Enough time is one commodity she does not have for all that is involved in her teaching. In her own words she states that, "If we adopt discussion we won't cover the syllabus because we do not have enough time…" However, Teacher **T_B** and all other teachers elsewhere are entreated to adopt oral interactive teaching methods like discussion since it enhances academic competence as observed by Saville-Troike (2006). The following table (Table 4.3) tabulates dimensions and the modes that convey them in enhanced language teaching and learning:

Table 4.3

Dimensions of R & P	Sectional activities in language learning	
	Written Mode	Oral Mode
Receptive	Reading	Listening
Productive	Writing	Speaking

The four activities of language learning (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) are classified around dimensions that are receptive and productive. Written and oral methods of communication convey the dimensions. For academic competence, it is the receptive dimension (*a dimension that*

incorporates Reading, and Listening in discussions) that teachers must give highest priority. The development and adoption of the receptive dimension must precede productive dimension. Teachers are therefore encouraged to adopt discussion as a teaching method wherein learners speak and listen to each other. If they notice mistakes in the speeches, they can learn by correcting each other. When they then write (in the productive dimension), the expectation is that they produce proficient pieces of written work, because, as Koross (2012) argues, oral approaches in language teaching and learning help a lot in writing-skills development.

4.5 Data from interview with Teacher C (T$_C$)

The teacher indicated in the following presented interview data felt free talking in Shona. Only English translation is given. Teacher C (**T$_C$**) was interviewed. The interview guidelines are those set out in Appendix G.

Researcher: How heavy or manageable is your workload?

Teacher T$_C$: There is a lot of work to do.

Researcher: Can you estimate how big your classes are and do you cope up with the marking involved?
Teacher T$_C$: I teach four classes, A, B, D and E. Each class has fifty students, so we are talking of two hundred students in total. There is written comprehension work every week meaning you mark two hundred exercise books each week. You add two hundred more exercise books for written grammar work onto that, making it four hundred exercise books to be marked in the same week. If the week's written work coincides with the week that a composition is written, it will add up to six hundredexercise books to be marked. In short, I am saying you will always be marking**.**

Researcher: In what ways do class sizes affect your work?

Teacher T$_C$: This implies that at times thorough marking is not possible as you rush to give learners another exercise to write. The large sizes of the classes can also mean that there is no room for individual attention given to learners (gesticulating absence of individual attention by wiping palms).

Researcher: What do you suggest should be done to improve your marking?

Teacher T$_C$: If the number of lessons for Shona is increased to 6 like it is for English, the number of classes for a teacher will be reduced and that will mean more time can be devoted to marking by the Shona teachers.

Researcher: What do you suggest should be done to help students in their language learning especially when the teacher is that much overwhelmed?

Teacher T_C: There is nothing more apart from encouraging students to read a lot on their own. This helps to augment the bit the teacher can do.

4.5.1 An analysis and discussion of data from the interview with Teacher C (T_C)

Teacher C (T_C) admitted that he encounters some challenges in the teaching of Shona at the school. The big class sizes affect T_C's marking. T_C teaches four classes of an average of fifty students each. Every week he gives written comprehension exercise and written grammar exercise giving four hundred exercise books to mark. Considering a week when composition work coincides with these exercises, the teacher laments marking six hundred exercise books. This implies that, as he says,"…thorough marking is not possible… rush[ing] to give learners another exercise to write." In the absence of thorough marking, students are encouraged to read extensively on their own to augment the bit the teacher can do in the trying circumstances. For the mollification of the challenges, T_C suggests increasing the number of lessons for Shona per week from four to six. That would mean teaching at most three classes. The number of classes allocated to a teacher will reduce meaning more time can be devoted to marking.

4.6 Research findings from audio-recorded learners' focus group interviews

Three learners interviewed were code-named, for example L_B. All the code-named learners were free talking in Shona. Only the English translation is given. Their responses are the raw data. The data are analyzed and discussed in the sections that follow. The interview guidelines are those set out in Appendix H.

4.6.1 Data from interview with learners' focus group

Researcher: What is the ethnicity of your parents?

Learner L_A: They are Shona.

Researcher: *Anybody else?*

Learner L_B: They are Shona but they grew up in Bulawayo.

Researcher: So, what language do you speak at home?

Learner L_B: We speak Ndebele mostly. I used Ndebele at school as from Grade 4 up to Form 3. We, however, occasionally speak Shona at home.

Researcher: When did you start learning Shona at school?

Learner L_C: Last year during the mid-year when I was in form 3.

Researcher: Before then, what language were you learning?

Learner L_C: Ndebele

Researcher: Where were you learning?
Learner L_C: I was attending school at Chizungu in Mberengwa.

Researcher: What about you? When did you start learning Shona?

Learner L_B: I started learning Shona this year.

Researcher: Before attending school here, where were you learning?

Learner L_B: I was learning in Bulawayo.

Researcher: Which language were you learning?

Learner L_B: I was learning Ndebele from Grade 4 up to Form 2.

Researcher: When did you start learning Shona?

Learner L_B: I started learning Shona last year when I was in Form 3.

Researcher: Do you encounter any problems in learning Shona?

Learner L_B: There are problems.
Researcher: Which language aspects give you problems?

Learner L_B: I have problems with word-division, spelling and not understanding what certain words mean.

Researcher: You do not know what certain words mean…like which ones?

Learner L_B: I do not know the meaning of many Shona words.

Researcher: And you, do you enjoy learning Shona?

Learner L_D: I enjoy learning Shona because that is my home language.

Researcher: What else shows that you enjoy learning Shona, you?
Learner L_E: I always pass Shona. May ask please? Why are we not allowed to write the way we speak to our parents and relatives at home? We never err in our speech. If we had the books that explain how Shona is written properly, that could help us a lot.

Researcher: There are rules and regulations that govern the way we write. Some of the words we use when at home are not supposed to be used when we write. We have to follow that or we will be marked wrong. And you… (Researcher appoints at another student)

Learner L_F: I enjoy Shona composition writing because I always pass it.

Learner L_G: I do not know what certain words mean and when I write I misuse them and mean what I do not intend to mean but all the same I pass it because I am good at Shona.

Researcher: So, you are saying you are very good at composition…after this session can I have a look at your exercise book?

Learner L$_G$: You can, with pleasure.

Researcher: Anyone else who can tell us their ethnicity and why they like or do not like learning Shona…you (researcher appoints another student)

L$_H$: I am Karanga but I don't enjoy learning Shona.

Researcher: Why?

L$_H$: I make many spelling errors when I write and fail composition. My book will be literally bleeding.

Researcher: Which errors do you normally make?

Learner L$_H$: I have problems writing in Shona. I make many errors.

Researcher: How much effort do you apply and what do you think you can do to improve your performance in Shona?

Learner L$_H$: I put a lot of effort in my learning. Probably I must read many novels to complement the effort. I think this can help me improve my performance.

Researcher: Knowing so well that novels can help you improve your performance, how many novels have you read so far this term?

Learner L$_H$: I read two

Researcher: And you, how many novels have you read this term?

Learner L$_I$: I have read three with some withdrawn zeal because some of the novels are too big. You shudder to think if ever you will finish reading it.

M$_J$/L$_J$: I have not read any novel.

M$_K$/L$_K$: One.

M$_L$/L$_L$: I have not read any novel.

4.6.2. An analysis and discussion of data from audio-recorded learners' focus group interview

From the audio-recorded learners' focus group interview, three pointing ideas stick out. These are the interference of home language, interest to learn a second language and the value of reading storybooks.

Learner B (**L_B**) and Learner C (**L_C**) who have a Ndebele background have problems when writing in Shona. Both learners began learning Shona at form three. This sounds quite late to learn a new and different language. As such, the said learners have problems with word division, spelling and not knowing the meaning of many Shona words. This really causes writing problems for them.

L_B's, **L_C**'s and **L_H**'s sentiments are representative of all other learners whose interest in learning Shona is on the wane because they make many errors when writing in Shona. **L_H** categorically says, "I don't enjoy learning Shona… [because]… I make many errors and fail composition."

However, there are students who enjoy learning Shona. Learner D (**L_D**) enjoys learning Shona because it bolsters her/his identity because it is the home language. Learner E (**L_E**) always passes Shona, which is why he/she likes and enjoys learning Shona. Learner F (**L_F**) enjoys learning and writing Shona composition because he/she always passes it. Such sentiments could be representative of all the students who perform well in Shona or have a Shona background.

L_H's conviction that "Probably I must read many novels to complement the effort highlights the value of reading. I think this can help me improve my performance." Other students like **L_I, L_K** know the value of reading novels, but they had not read as many novels as liked by the time of the interview. **L_I** has a withdrawn zeal in reading novels because some of the novels are too big. She/he shudders to think if ever she/he finishes reading such a novel. Generally, the learners are not avid readers as indicated by the deplorable four sampled learners' state of readership by the time of the interview:

- **L_H** had read two novels
- **L_I** had read three novels
- **L_J** had read none
- **L_K** had read one novel
- **L_L** had read none

Reading novels is important as it affords learners the chance to observe correct spelling of words. They can also observe correct word division. Learners will miss the mentioned benefits of reading if they do not become avid readers of novels.

4.7 Research findings from audio-recorded focus interview with Learner B (L_B)

The learner interviewed was code-named L_B. The learner was free talking in Shona. Only the English translation of the learner's responses is given. The responses are the raw data. The data are analyzed and discussed in the sections that follow. The interview guidelines are those set out in Appendix H.

4.7.1 Data from audio-recorded interview with Learner B (L_B)

Researcher: Which aspects of the language give you worst problems when writing?

Learner L_B: I have serious problems with consonant combinations like /mh/. For example, where it must be /mhuri/ I omit /h/and then we have muri.

Researcher: You omit /h/?
Learner L_B: I have problems with consonant combination of /kh/ that is /k/ over here as opposed to /kh/ in Ndebele. Every time I write, I always make the mistake. I also have word division problems.

Researcher: What do you think should be done to improve the way you write in Shona?

Learner L_B: Talking to friends can help me. One of my friends listed for me those aspects of Shona language I must take note of. Our teacher does not have enough time for us.If he had the time, I would ask him to explain to me what I need to do to improve my performance. My Ndebele interferes with the way I write Shona, but I will overcome that because I have a positive attitude.

4.7.2 An analysis and discussion of data from the audio-recorded focus interview with Learner B (L_B)

Apart from word division, Leaner B (**L_B**) has spelling problems of words with consonant combinations. **L_B**'s admission that, "I have serious problem with consonant combinations…[and] every time I write I always make the mistake," confirms the gravity of the problem. **L_B** has problems with consonant combinations like /**mh/**. Where it should be /***mh**uri*/ the learner omits /**h**/ and then makes a spelling

error by writing /*muri*/. Another consonant combination that gives the learner problems is Ndebele /**kh**/. We have /**k**/ as its equivalent in Shona. Where in Shona it is /*kukara*/ the learner's Ndebele interferes and causes him to commit a spelling error by writing /kukhara/. Because spelling in alphabetic writing is ineradicably linked to phonology, optimal performance in spelling is not achievable when a learner's home language's phonology interferes. Errors in spelling are bound to be committed because the home language's phonology, in this case, is different to standard school language's phonology.

4.8 Views of Informant Academic A₃

Academic A3

1. Which dialect do you speak?

   Karanga

2. Would you say your dialect is well represented in the current Shona orthography?

   Yes it is, especially now that x can be used (2006 Harmonisation orthography), for example I can write *maxeu* (sour African drink), *xwarara* (edible flying ants), *chixuruxudhu* (hardened scone), and *xarani* (sewing thread) but not yet popularized across users of the language. Consonant combinations like /rh/ in *rhori*, *rheza*, *rhekeni* can be used, but unfortunately this is in principle. However, general users of the language like school learners cannot use these consonant combinations. It is unfortunate that the use of one's dialect in school writing is penalisable.

3. If you do not use your own dialect in writing your works, do you encounter challenges/ problems with the adopted dialect? Cite some of the problems.

   N/A

4. How do you then go about the problem/problems?

   N/A

5. In your opinion, should the Shona orthography be based on one dialect?

    It already allows people even learners in schools to write as they speak and just be consistent. It already caters for all dialects. It has been caused by realising the disadvantages associated with basing it on one dialect. If it is based on one dialect it affects fluency and flow of ideas and expression when writing.

6. If your response to *question 5* above is NO, what do you propose to improve the Shona orthography's outlook?

    Harmonization has already taken care of that.

7. What are the effects of basing Shona orthography on one dialect to the following?
    a) Learners

    Because the orthography does not borrow from other languages, it does not grow.
    It limits their expression and fluency.

    b) The development of Shona language?

        N/A

8. What is your view about the rules that govern the writing of Shona language?

    The rules are okay as they have allowed for lots of developments in Shona language, that is the development of grammars, dictionaries and literary works.

9. Indicate where you have observed errors of word-division or grammar mistakes among the following.

    *   Newspapers (e.g. *Kwayedza*)
    *   Adverts
    *   Instructions on items we buy for home use
    *   Television

    NB: Please**,** be specific about the errors and mistakes you observed.

    Adverts, mostly word division

10. Do you think we should change or reform the way we write our language?

    There is no need to change but rather further development to capture new trends in Language development.

4.8.1 Analysis and discussion of the views of Informant Academic A₃

I code-named the informant <u>Academic **A₃**</u>. A question-by-question presentation, analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the informantwas adopted.

4.8.1.1 Question 2: Representativeness of of the orthography to Informant Academic **A₃**'s dialect

Subsequent to answering question 1 that solicited knowledge of the respondent's home dialect that is Karanga, Informant Academic **A₃** acceded that her dialect is well represented in the Shona orthography. Her accedence is premised on her argument that "…now…x can be used". She also argues that after the 2006 Harmonisation orthography, she can write maxewu (sour African drink), xwarara (edible flying ants), xarani (sewing thread) and even chixuruxudhu (hardened scone). How far true this is in practice is another question, bearing in mind that year- in- year- out the 1982 Ministry of Education Circular instructs ZIMSEC Shona examinations markers to condone the use of dialect language in examinations <u>ONLY</u>. Concisely this means that the Shona orthography does not cater for all dialects as purported by academic **A₃**. An all-encompassing and good orthography, one that represents all and significant sounds of a language can be achieved through harmonisation. However, the concept has remained an ideal up to today. It has not been popularized among learners in schools where the use of standard Shona is encouraged.

4.8.1.2 Question 3: <u>Challenges caused by not using own dialect</u>

In response to question 3, Academic **A₃** gave 'Not Applicable' (N/A) as the answer to mean that she does not encounter any problems by not using her dialect in academic writing. In a way the respondent is contradicting her opinion about the Shona orthography. In answering question 2 the respondent admitted that although she can write spellings like chixuruxudhu, this is "…not yet popularized across users of the language" as she further presents that, "…unfortunately this is in principle. It has not been communicated to general users of the language like school learners." The argument here is that there are problems connected to not using own dialect because essentially it is not popularized among language users. So, the status quo still holds where dialect language is not acceptable in academic writing. Academic **A₃** could not give any suggestion on how to solve writing challenges attendant to

academic writing today as demanded by question 4 because when she responded to question 2 she said that her dialect is well represented in the Shona orthography. Is it? This is questionable and begs rethinking and reconsideration, this researcher suggests.

4.8.1.3 Question 5: <u>Opinion on whether the Shona orthography should be based on one dialect</u>

Academic **A₃** concedes that there are disadvantages associated with basing the Shona orthography on one dialect. Upon realising the disadvantages such as "…affecting flow of ideas and limit[ing] expression when writing" as **A₃** sees it, the remedy suggested came by way of having the Shona orthography reformed to cater for all dialects. The academic argues that the orthography "…already allows people even learners in schools to write as they speak…" as long as they remain consistent. This is arguably a fallacy in view of the promulgation of the 1982 Circular which condones use of dialect language only in examinations. In a nutshell this means that the Shona orthography does not cater for all dialects as purported by academic **A₃.** The other effects of basing the Shona orthography on one dialect can be extrapolated from **A₃**'s response to question 7 (a) where she unequivocally stated that "It limits their [learners] expression and fluency" because "the orthography does not borrow from other languages…", specifically dialects for the purposes of this study. The Shona language has a very lean lexical stock because of its failure to borrow from within itself (from dialects) or from languages that it is in contact with. The Shona language could however expand its word inventory if it legitimised borrowing from languages (and dialects) it is in contact with. The current orthography has no room for the use of phonologised foreign/borrowed words or adoptives. A language like Shona should be flexible and realise its growth from contact with other languages (and dialects) by embracing lexical expansion.

4.8.1.4 Question 6: <u>Proposals for improving the outlook of the Shona orthography</u>

When asked in question 6 what she proposes to improve the outlook of the Shona orthography, the academic was at loss of other proposals apart from explaining that harmonisation has already taken

care of that. It has to be mentioned that the 2006 Harmonised orthography has remained ideal. There is nothing on the ground that indicates its applicability, particularly so when at ZIMSEC examination marking sessions, examiners are always reminded of the 1982 Circular that instructs them to condone the use of dialect languages in the examination only. Anywhere else outside the examination learners are required to write in Standard Shona Orthography by conforming to the rules of spelling that are recommended by the Shona Language Committee. If harmonisation had been taken seriously it would have occasioned the development of the Shona language, cancelling out the negative effects of basing the Shona orthography on one dialect. Academic **A₃** failed to realise that. The academic insinuated that basing the orthography on one dialect does not affect the development of the Shona language by giving Not Applicable (N/A) as her response to question 7 (b) which solicited the respondent's view regarding the effects of basing the orthography on one dialect on the development of the Shona language.

4.8.1.5 Question 8: Views about the rules that govern the writing of Shona

Any language in this world is rule-governed. Rules extricate people from writing the language in an unacceptable manner. Some of the confusion lies in the misunderstanding of the rules that govern the writing of the language. Academic **A₃** views the current rules differently and says that the rules are, in her own words, "…okay…" The view that the rules are alright is not well placed considering that the same academic, when answering question 9, blamed adverts as the items where rules are not properly applied. Word-division errors are the worst committed errors on adverts. Other errors are however, also observed on adverts. This state of affairs confirms the fact that the rules that govern how Shona should be written do not absorb the explanation given by academic **A₃**, the explanation that the rules are okay. On the contrary, the rules are largely misinterpreted and poorly applied.

4.8.1.6 Question 10: <u>On reforming the Shona orthograohy</u>

The last question on the questionnaire for academics inquired about the need to change the way Shona is written. Informant Academic **A₃** states that there is no need to change the way Shona is written but rather further its capacity to capture new trends in language development. By capturing new trends in language development, are we not reforming the orthography? This seems to squash away the academic's notion that there is no need to change or reform the Shona orthography. On the contrary, there surely must be undeniable need to change the way Shona is written, bearing in mind that the 'goodness of fit' of a language's orthography is optimal soon after its design and development. It deteriorates with time. In support of this view Academic **A₂** observes that, "The present

orthography…was established in 1967 and a lot of things have happened thereafter. …new words have come into our language." As such, "…there is need to reform the orthography…to keep up with times." Many authorities like Chimhundu (2005), Dube (2000) and Magwa (1999), argue that the Shona orthography has deteriorated over time now, and inevitably needs reform. To this, Magwa (2007) would say the current orthography does not please all people living in different dialect zones in Zimbabwe because many of their word forms are excluded in the orthography. In this case, linguistic pathology of society is brought bare by the use and application of an onerous orthography. It surely must be reformed so that it keeps up with times. It has to embrace all the new words that have come into our language, as claimed by Academic **A₂**, either by way of phonologising foreign words and or borrowing from its dialects and the languages it is in contact with. Academic A₃ also argues for further development of the Shona language so that it is able to capture new trends in language development.

4.9 Analysis and discussion of the data from teachers' questionnaire

The questionnaire is contained in Appendix C

The Questionnaires were administered to six teachers. The return rate for the questionnaire was 100%. A question by question analysis and discussion was done.

4.9.1 Question1: Teachers' Qualifications and work experience

Of the six teachers to whom the questionnaire was administered, two were females. The female teachers are the most experienced. One of them is the current Head of Shona Department. The remaining four male teachers have work experience of at least three years and a maximum of four years. This wealth of experience of the six teachers must have a bearing on their view about the Shona orthography as can be deduced from some of their responses to question 2 that suggest reform of the orthography.

Table 4.4

Qualification	Number of teachers
Certificate in Education/Diploma in Education	0
Bachelor of Education or higher	6
Work Experience in years	**Number of teachers**
Under a year	0
1-2	0
3-4	4
5-9	1
10⁺	1

4.9.2 Question 2: Teachers' views about the Shona orthography

The views of the teachers were varied. 33.3% raised the idea of uniformity that comes along with the use of Standard Shona in the way the language is written. One of them said, "…it is good to write in the same way." The other teacher as it pertains to uniformity stated that, "Standard Shona brings uniformity in the writing system." The view that Standard Shona although it "… is good for writing at school, it must be improved…" was raised by one of the respondents to the questionnaire. 33.33% of the teachers pampered the present standard Shona orthography currently in use. One teacher responded with a single adjective 'good', while the other one said, "Standard Shona is okay. The questionnaire considered last had the following response that categorically stated that, "The orthography (which is Standard Shona-*my annotation*) needs revamping." The views raised by the teachers represent two pertinent ideas that they have about orthography. Their ideas suggest that:

- Standardisation of a language is good since it brings uniformity and repeatability in the way people write and
- Standard Shona must be reformed which idea is implied by the phrases given by 33.33% of the teachers. The phrases are 1) …it must be improved… 2) …needs revamping

 66.67% who okayed the current orthography live in a comfort zone. They went through an education system that used Standard Shona in academic writing. To them, the need for change is not necessary. They are comfortable with Standard Shona. However, there are, among the teachers, 'apostles' of orthography reform who wish that the orthography must be reformed so that it accommodates and accepts dialect nuances when writing at school. To these teachers, the reformed orthography they talk about is one that will accommodate and accept dialect language in academic writing. This, as for now,

does not obtain since dialect languages are tolerated only at examination time as sanctioned by the 1982 Circular.

Responses to **Question 2** are relevant in answering **Question 4.** The idea of changing how we write came out while answering question 2. 66.67% of the teachers living in the comfort zone, as mentioned earlier, are guessed to have given the answers that hinted that there is no need of changing the way we write when they were answering question 4. 33.33% of the teachers who raised the idea of uniformity suggested that there is no need for changing the way we write. This conclusion derives from four responses that said there is no need of changing the way we write.

4.9.2 Question 3 and 5: Language aspects that affect learners' writing competence the worst

Table 4.5	Number of teachers who say…			
	…is **not confusing** and **does not affect competence**	…is **a bit confusing** and **affects competence a bi**t	…**is confusing** and **affects competence**	…**is very confusing** and **affects competence very much**
Spelling…	0	0	4	2
Punctuation…	2	4	0	0
Word Division…	0	0	0	6
Mechanical Accuracy…	1	5	0	0

Spelling, punctuation, word-division and mechanical accuracy are language constituents that affect learners' writing competency in different ways and at varying degrees. 66.7% of teachers rated spelling as 'confusing and affects competency'. 33.3% of teachers rated spelling as 'very confusing and affects competence very much'. The conclusion that can be made is that spelling straddles the 'confusing and affects competence' and 'very confusing and affects competence very much' categories. This effectively means spelling negatively affects writing competence. Its effect is high, and to be exact it is 66.7%.

33.3% of the teachers rated punctuation as 'not confusing and does not affect writing competence'. 66.7% of the teachers rated punctuation as 'a bit confusing and affects competence a bit'. A closer scrutiny of the statistics regarding punctuation's impact on competence shows that punctuation is skewed towards the negative side.

Word-division affects competence badly. All the teachers, (100%), concurred that word-division is the worst culprit. It affects competence very much. Word-division is very confusing, they agreed.

Mechanical accuracy was rated 'confusing and affects competence' by 83.3% of teachers. This is a very strong indication that mechanical accuracy affects competence. Only 16.7% of teachers said that mechanical accuracy (which includes things like agreement markers) is not confusing and does not affect competence. The given statistics of 83.3% and 16.7% show that mechanical accuracy affects competence. The magnitude is best described by the phrase '**…**a bit confusing and affects competence a bit,' so to say that mechanical accuracy is not confusing and does not affect competence is fallacious.

All put together, the mentioned language constituents affect writing competence in one way or another at varying degrees of negativeness.

4.9.3 Question 6: Demography of learners by dialect languages

Table 4.6	Number of teachers who say…		
	...very few	…few	…many
Karanga learners are…	0	0	6
Ndau learners are …	2	4	0
Manyika learners are…	2	4	0
Zezuru learners are…	2	4	0

Although six teachers (100%) said, there are many Karanga learners in the school; learners of other dialects are found as well, though in smaller numbers. Zvishavane being a mining town draws people from all over Zimbabwe coming to work in the mine, Shabanie and Mashaba Mines (SMM). It is therefore expected to have people of different linguistic backgrounds settling there. Four teachers

(66.7%) said Ndau, Manyika and Zezuru learners are also found in the school, but they are few. Two teachers (33.3%) said Ndau, Manyika and Zezuru learners are very few in the school. Whatever the case may be, the bottom line is that learners of other dialect languages do exist in the school. Does this have any bearing on the competence of learners, one would ask. A document analysis of learners' exercise books will be summoned to verify facts.

4.9.4 Question 7: Demography of learners by mother languages

Table 4.7	Number of teachers who say…		
	...very few	…few	…many
Shona learners are…	0	0	6
Nyanja learners are …	2	4	0
Cewa learners are…	2	4	0
Ndebele learners are…	2	4	0

100% of teachers who answered the questionnaire said that there are many Shona learners in the school. Learners of other linguistic backgrounds are found as well, though in smaller numbers. Zvishavane is a mining town. It draws people from all over Zimbabwe and from across borders as they come to work in the mine. They bring their families. It is therefore expected to have learners of different linguistic backgrounds attend school at Mandava. 66.7% of teachers said Nyanja, Cewa and Ndebele learners are also found in the school, but they are few. 33.3% of teachers said Nyanja, Cewa and Ndebele learners are very few in the school. Whatever the case may be, the bottom line is that learners of different mother tongues do exist in the school. Does this have any bearing on the competence of learners, one would ask. A document analysis of learners' exercise books was summoned to verify facts.

4.9.5 Question 8: The role of a learner's home language (dialect) or mother language on causing errors that a learner commits when writing in the standard orthography

The 5 teachers out of the possible 6 that cared to answer question 8 had different views about how one's dialect language or mother language causes errors that he or she commits when writing at school. They are in agreement that one's mother tongue (L_1) can cause writing problems to some of the learners as it interferes in the way they spell certain words. Their views are given below.

The teachers were code-named as follows:

NB: Codes: Teacher A, B, C, D, E, F on Teacher Questionnaire: (**T$_A$TQ**, **T$_B$TQ**, **T$_C$TQ**), **T$_D$TQ**, **T$_E$TQ, T$_F$TQ**

Teacher A (**T$_A$TQ**): *Home languages can cause errors, it's true. Some of the words they use at home should not be used when writing here. I can give an example of words like <u>bwirira, svina, chigwere</u> that are Karanga. Even Ndebele words you come across them.*

Teacher B (**T$_B$TQ**): *The issues raised in questions 6 and 7 affect some of my students. They mix home language and school language when they write.*

Teacher C (**T$_C$TQ**): *The issues raised have something to do with the errors students make when writing.*

Teacher D (**T$_D$TQ**): *It is not easy for some students to separate being at home from being at school. As a result, they make some mistakes when they write.*

Teacher E (**T$_E$TQ**): *Dialect language or mother language affect how students write at times. If they write as Mr Chikwandefa speaks, they fail. I encourage my students to use Standard Shona when they write.*

Teacher F (**T$_F$TQ**): *[The respondent did not answer this question.]*

The above views of 83.33% of teachers show that they are aware of the negative effects of crosslinguistics where dialect language or mother language interferes with and affects how students spell. One of the teachers, teacher **T$_E$TQ**, said that he/she encourages students to use standard Shona when writing at school. To avoid making writing errors, teacher **T$_D$TQ** said that he/she encourages students to separate being at home from being at school when they write. The views of these teachers are premised on the fact that school writing uses standard language not home or individual language. Teacher **T$_A$TQ** emphatically pointed out that, "*Home languages can cause errors, it's true.*" Word forms of home languages like *bwirira* (to return/go back) which is a Karanga dialect word, are not accepted in the standard Shona orthography. When such words show up in students' written work, they

are considered as errors. Students should never "…mix home and school language when they write," teacher **T$_B$TQ** advises.

4.9.6 Question 9: The importance of conducting departmental meetings

Table 4.8

	The number of teachers who say meetings are…		
	Never held	Held at times	Always held
Are Departmental meetings ever conducted?	6	0	0

As was shown in Question 1 Table 5, all the 6 (100%) O-Level teachers at the case school have at least three years' work experience. They are old enough in the service to know the value of routine meetings in any organisation. They should be holding such meetings quite regularly to discuss issues about correct application of the Shona orthography that arise in the course of their duties. The fact that all the six teachers said meetings are never held is deplorably disturbing and regrettable. The HOD should call for such meetings where they strategize how best they can help their learners write competently. Competent writing at the school is a pipe dream if the views expressed by the teachers when they responded to question 8 are anything to go by. One of the responses that piqued my interest was given by teacher **T$_E$TQ** that goes thus:

- *If they write as Mr Chikwandefa speaks, they fail.*

Mr Chikwandefa is mildly mentally challenged. He speaks in deep Karanga. His expression is very good and interesting. This researcher has known and heard him speak as he roams the streets of Zvishavane. When it comes to academic writing, judging by the statement given above by teacher **T$_E$TQ**, anyone who aims to pass at school should never imitate Mr Chikwandefa who speaks Karanga dialect language. If students imitate him, they will fail because as Academic **A$_1$** postulates, the use of one's dialect in academic writing is penalisable and only condoned during examination writing. The same teacher advises students to use standard Shona always when writing at school. In his own words he says; "*I encourage my students to use Standard Shona when they write,*" so that they do not make errors when writing. It is in such meetings which they starve themselves of, that they could be encouraging and advising each other to encourage their students to always write in standard Shona.

4.9.7 Question 10: Interest in learning Shona.

The following Responses are of the two Teachers who cared to answer the question:

Teacher 1, Teacher Questionnaire (**T₁TQ**): *They are not very interested in learning Shona since it is difficult for them. Some of them always score very low marks when say their compositions are marked. Grammar work like noun classes is very difficult for them.*

Teacher 2, Teacher Questionnaire (**T₂TQ**): *Some are interested others are not at all, probably because they do not perform well in the subject, especially composition. I always encourage students not to give up but continue trying harder and harder.*

The teachers were asked to assess their learners' interest in learning Shona. The teachers said the learners' interest is lukewarm. The lukewarmness emanates from the low marks some students score in written exercises because of myriad of errors they commit when writing, the teacher argued. Only two teachers responded to this question. In the second response, the idea of encouraging students to thrive to do better came up. The researcher could only deduce that the interest of learners in learning Shona is low.

4.9.8 Question 11: Availability of reference books in the school

	The Number of teachers who say…				
Table 4.9	..Unavailable	Fewer than 30	…30-60	…61-100	…Over 100
A Guide to Shona Spelling is…		~~HH~~ / (6)			
Duramazwi Guru ReShona is…		~~HH~~ / (6)			
Manyorerwo eShona: *Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu* is…	~~HH~~ / (6)				
Shona novels are...					~~HH~~ / (6)
Comprehension textbooks are...					~~HH~~ / (6)

All the six teachers (100%) to whom the questionnaire was administered agreed on the levels of availability of reference books in the school. The subject of the research's investigation is orthography. It is therefore disturbing to note that a very helpful text book as regards orthography, Manyorerwo eShona: *Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu*, is unavailable in the school. Another helpful text, A guide to Shona spelling, though available, is in small quantities of fewer than thity for a student body of about three hundred. Various Shona novels and comprehension textbooks are available in numbers of over a hundred. Students could stand to benefit from such texts depending on their avidness to read as many of these novels as possible. Duramazwi Guru ReShona is a dictionary book that explains and gives dialect variants of Shona words. This is what is needed today to move towards accommodating all dialects in the envisaged way of writing Shona that there are very loud cries for in Zimbabwe. A plea to be made to national and school authorities is to avail useful and helpful texts such as the ones indicated above.

4.9.9 Question 12: Interest in teaching learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds

Question 12 sought to find out if the teachers are interested in teaching learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. There are learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds at the case school because it services a mining urban centre. In response to the question, the six teachers raised the following views:

View 1: *Enjoying or not enjoying I still have to teach the students. That is what is expected of a teacher.*

A closer scrutiny of this view reveals that the teacher teaches not because there is a calling but because it is expected of a teacher. The phrase 'enjoying or not enjoying…' connotes absence of interest in his work. He teaches because he is expected to do so. If there are challenges that are caused by diversity of languages that the learners need the teacher's help to overcome, the lack of interest displayed by the teacher may not cause any solution to the challenges. The teacher minds less helping learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds and minds more satisfying the demand that he teaches; interested or not interested.

View 2: *It is a big problem kudzidzisa marudzi akangosanganasangana* [(It is a big problem teaching learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds)*. They write in different ways. When marking written work, it is difficult. You come across certain words that you do not know what they mean. Using standard Shona solves such problems.*

The teacher in this instance confesses that it is a problem to teach students of diverse linguistic backgrounds. It is not surprising that this will breed disinterest in the teacher. Once the teacher's discharge of duties is circumscribed by disinterest, we can observe remissness in his marking of students' written work. Students in the circumstances being discussed are prone to making writing errors as their home languages interfere. To give maximum help in solving this kind of problem the teacher needs to mark the written work diligently by indicating all the errors learners make so that they do not repeat the errors next time around. This is not possible because the teacher has no drive since he has already given in to the problem of diversity of linguistic backgrounds. In some cases, as the teacher indicated, it is possible to come across words whose meaning he does not know. It is

unenjoyable to mark a piece of written work with portions one does not make sense of and therefore the teacher cannot enjoy or like teaching learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

View 3: *I learn many new words from teaching learners of different linguistic backgrounds. Zvinondisvinudza* (I am challenged).

The teacher who raised the above view appreciates diversity of languages. The teacher acknowledges the benefit of getting to know what new words from other languages mean. That too enriches his or her vocabulary stock. The view speaks to the teacher's apparent interest in teaching students of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

View 4: *I do not have any problem teaching students coming from different places with different languages in my lessons. What I want to say is that the problem is marking their books. It is very difficult at times.*

The teacher notes that diversity of languages makes marking very difficult. The teacher gets difficulty in marking probably because he or she comes across new words he/she does not know their meanings because of crosslinguistics. The use of unstandardized home languages in academic writing will manifest as errors that the teacher finds cumbersome to indicate all of them when marking. This is why the teacher in question laments that it is difficult to mark such learners' exercise books. As for the teaching part of it, the teacher has no problems with that. This may be because if an unstandardized dialect word whose meaning he /she does not know is used, the teacher will interject and the concerned learner is immediately asked to rephrase the sentence. Such interjections might awaken the learner to the importance of using standard Shona because it is at school and not at home.

View 5: *It is not a question of enjoying, but teaching students. When they make mistakes, they are corrected.*

In this instance, the teacher shows religious adherence to the call to the duty of teaching students. When they make mistakes, he/she commits himself/herself to correct the learners. Such a teacher takes interest in indicating all the errors committed by learners as they write so that the same mistakes are not repeated. He/she believes that is what teaching is all about. He/she actually underlines the idea that teaching is "…not a question of enjoying, but teaching…"

The teacher does not enjoy teaching Shona and the learners do not like the subject of Shona. It is not clear if the teacher does not enjoy teaching Shona because of the diversity of learners' languages or because the learners do not like the subject. It is also not clear if the learners hate the subject of Shona because they have a low esteem of Shona or they are not doing well in the subject because of failing to meet the demands of academic writing. Errors caused by mother tongue interference marr learners'written work Th.ey end up scoring low marks.learners resultantly lose interest in the subject.language. They will also hate the subject.

4.9.10 Question 13: <u>On ideas that can help learners become competent writers</u>

<u>Idea raised by Teacher 1 (**T₁TQ**), and Teacher 6 (**T₆TQ**)</u>:
The two teachers **T₁TQ** and **T₆TQ** suggested a similar idea, that of encouraging students to read a lot of story books in which they will observe good ways of writing. The two teachers seem to know the benefit of wide reading. The students stand to benefit immensely if they take heed of their teachers' encouragement to read as many storybooks as they possibly can. When they engage in wide reading they come across many good ways of writing that include spelling correctly, constructing sentences well and punctuating well. These language aspects describe competent writing.

<u>Idea raised by Teacher 2</u> (**T₂TQ**):
The teacher proffered that students must be involved in a lot of discussion where they will realise how spoken and written languages relate. They are then warned about being careful enough not to let their home languages interfere with how they write. Improved oral language influences development and improvement of written language. Although discussion is time consuming, it needs incorporation. Discussion is critical as a teaching method; the teacher seems to be aware of that. Error correction is done as the discussion progresses. Immediacy of error correction alerts students to how oral language and written language relate. They can also realise the genre that suits school language best.

Ideas raised by Teacher 3 (**T₃TQ**):

Teachers are encouraged to give students regular and frequent written work on story writing. The written work must be marked thoroughly by indicating all the errors leaners commit so that the errors will not be repeated. That way learners will somewhat become competent writers.

Ideas raised by Teacher 4 (**T₄TQ**): All home languages should be used at school. What are considered as errors today will cease to be considered as such. The teacher is indirectly implying reform of the Shona orthography by way of incorporating into it all dialect languages. Writing problems caused by differences between L_1 and **L_2** thus, will be done away with.

Teacher 5 (**T₅**): One teacher code-named **T₅TQ** did not offer any **i**dea on what should be done to enable learners become competent writers. The teacher did not answer the question.

4.10 Findings and analysis of data from learners' questionnaires

The questionnaire is contained in Appendix D. Questionnaires were administered to 45 learners. The return rate for the questionnaires was 100% probably because the researcher waited for the questionnaires and collected them soon after the students finished answering the questions.

4.10.1 Question 1: Demography of students by age

Table 4.10

Learners' Age Range			
Under 15*yrs*	15-16*yrs*	17-18*yrs*	18⁺*yrs*
0	⦀⦀ ⦀⦀ ⦀⦀ //	⦀⦀ ⦀⦀ ⦀⦀ ⦀⦀ ////	////

	Under 15*yrs*	15-16*yrs*	17-18*yrs*	18⁺*yrs*
TOTAL	0 (**0%**)	17 (**37.8%**)	24 (**53.3%**)	4 (**8.9%**)

45

The age range of 15-16 years had 37.8% of learners. The age range of 17-18 years had 53.3% of learners. The age range of 18 years and above had 8.9% of learners. The age range of 17-18 years and above indicates that generally the learners are mature and committed to preparing for the future out of school. Learners of this age now have some inveterate motivation and interest to achieve educationally to make good their preparation for life after school. Is the motivation and interest evident in all their

learning activities? This will become clear when written work and those activities that improve writing such as reading storybooks are considered.

4.10.2 Question 2: Demography of learners by language

Learners indicated their languages. Table 4.10 shows the number of students for each of the listed languages, vis-a-vis Shona, Cewa, Nyanja and Ndebele.

Table 4.11

	Number of learners whose language is…			
	Shona	**Cewa**	**Nyanja**	**Ndebele**
	꜓꜓꜓ ꜓꜓꜓ ꜓꜓꜓ ꜓꜓꜓ ꜓꜓꜓	*꜓꜓꜓ ꜓꜓꜓꜓*	*꜓꜓꜓ ꜓꜓*	*꜓꜓꜓ ꜓*
TOTAL	23 (**51%**)	9 (**20%**)	7 (**15.6%**)	6 (**13.3%**)

45

Learners of a Shona background outnumber learners of all other languages. There are twenty-three learners of Shona background out of forty-five learners. That translates to 51%. There are nine Cewa learners out of forty-five learners. That translates to 20%. Seven Nyanja learners have a percentage value of 15.6% and six Ndebele learners have a percentage value of 13.3%. If we go by Vildomec's (1963) and Ngara's (1982) view that it is difficult to learn a second language (L_2) when old, does it mean that writing problems if ever they exist at the case school are presented only by learners of language backgrounds other than Shona background? What invokes the question is the fact that the learners are old and mature as depicted by the Table 4.10 on Learners' Age Range. In addition, does it mean that learners of Shona background do not have problems, or their problems are minimal? Evaluation of learners' written work will validate this view.

4.10.3 Question 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c): The effect of mother tongue interference in the way learners write.

 51.11% of learners said that their language is Shona. 39.13% of learners said that their dialect, Karanga, does not interfere with their writing even in composition writing. 30.43% of learners said that they have challenges of writing using some Karanga words that are marked wrong. The phenomenon of crosslinguistics is thus evident in this case of Karanga learners. The magnitude of 30.43% appears small. Nonetheless, it serves to indicate quite boldly the existence and effect of crosslinguistics in academic writing. Some Karanga words are marked wrong. 13.04% of learners said

that their Zezuru does not interfere with their writing. 8.70% said that they have problems when certain Manyika words are marked wrong. 8.70% of learners said that their Ndau interferes with how they write and causes writing problems for them. In this sample, cross-linguistic transfer and its effect is statistically evident and causes different levels of improficiency among students.

4.10.4 Question 4: Learner's interest in learning Shona at school

Table 4.12

	Learners who indicated…		
	[That] it is interesting to learn Shona at school	[That] it is NOT interesting to learn Shona at school	Neither interest nor disinterest in learning Shona at school
	卌 ///	卌 //// ///	//
TOTAL	**8 (34.8%)**	**13 (56.5%)**	**2 (8.7%)**
	23		

Numbers add and give lucid details that otherwise would never come out with generic statements or descriptive adjectives. The picture about the degree of interest or disinterest is explained best by the figures 34.8% and 56.5% than by the respective adjectives of interested and disinterested.

Analysis of the data for question 4 revealed that the sample had twenty-three learners instead of twenty-two learners. The rightful respondents to this question comprised nine learners of Cewa background, seven learners of Nyanja background and six learners of Ndebele background (9+7+6=**22) [**see Table 4.11**]**. Twenty-one learners indicated their interest or disinterest to learn Shona at school. They comprised eight learners who are interested and thirteen learners who are not interested. The majority of learners of Cewa background, Nyanja background and Ndebele background are therefore not interested to learn Shona at school. One learner of Shona background failed to grasp the instruction to answer question 3 and not to answer question 4 and went on to indicate that it is interesting to learn Shona at school thereby increasing the sample size to twenty-three (22+1=23). It is also interesting to note that two learners sat on the fence. They did not indicate interest or disinterest in learning Shona at school. Concisely, such learners did not answer the question.

4.10.4.1 Reasons for finding it interesting to learn Shona at school

Learners who indicated that they are interested in learning Shona at school explained the reasons for their choice. Some of them said that their interest in learning Shona derives from the fact that Shona can open up employment opportunities for them. Some such learners (Learner 1, 2, 3 on Student Questionnaire – code named **L₁SQ, L₂SQ** and **L₃SQ**) were specific and particular. Here is what they said:

L₁SQ: _I will find work at ZBC._

Others said that learning Shona at school could make them versatile teachers who can teach in any region of Zimbabwe where people speak Shona. A statement given by

L₂SQ: _I will feel free among Shona speakers as a teacher,_ testifies this viewpoint.

Quite a number of learners said that they like learning Shona because they score well in the subject. One of the learners who cited such a reason for finding it interesting to learn Shona at school specifically said:

L₃SQ: _It is easy_.

If learners pass Shona because it is easy, their prospects of finding employment as broadcasters or teachers are brighter.

Graph for 8 students (N =8) who are interested in learning Shona at school because of the items under key (**Graph 1**)
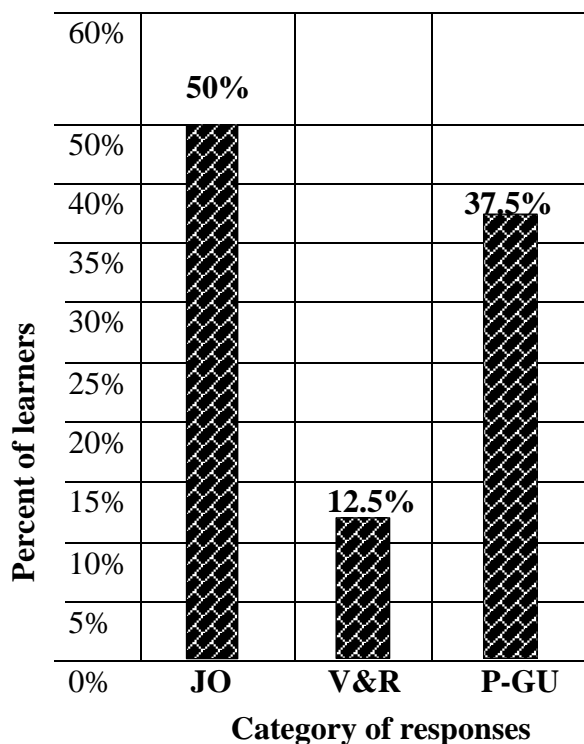
KEY for items of utility of Shona

JO: Job Opportunity

V & R: Versatility and Recognition

P-GU: Passing – Good Understanding

50% of learners indicated that they like learning Shona at school because it offers them job opportunities. 12.5% of learners, Learner **L₁SQ**, cited enhanced chances of being employed as a radio

announcer at ZBC as a reason for getting interested to learn Shona at school. Learner **L₂SQ** cited teaching as a prospective form of employment. As a teacher, **L₂SQ** argues that he/she will feel free working among the Shona people whose language she/he would have mastered at school. They will recognise him/her as one of them since he/she will be knowledgeable about their language and culture. Language embodies culture, and vice versa. All the cited opportunities come about because of passing the subject because it is easy as argued by learner **L₃SQ**. This is a representative view of 37.5% of learners. The researcher proposes to group the three items of JO, V&R and P-GU under the theme Utility of Shona that is the usefulness of the subject of Shona. This explains why some learners are interested in learning Shona at school.

4.10.4.2 Reasons for finding it not interesting to learn Shona at school

Learners who indicated that they are not interested in learning Shona at school explained the reasons for their choice. 30.8% of the learners that indicated that they find it not interesting to learn Shona at school said that the subject of Shona is not important. Two of such learners (Learner 4 and Learner 5 Student Questionnaire – **L₄SQ** and **L₅SQ**) were specific and particular and they said:

> **L₄SQ**: *When you apply for a vacancy at college, two important subjects are said*
>
> *English and Maths. Shona is not there.* (The grammatically correct sentence is:
>
> When *you apply for a vacancy at college, two important subjects are*
>
> *mentioned which are*
>
> *English and Maths. Shona is not listed.*)

> **L₅SQ**: *When you pass Shona your parents do not ululate as they do when you pass*
>
> *English* (The grammatically correct sentence is: When *you pass Shona, parents do*
>
> *not rejoice as they do when you pass English.*

The views expressed by **L₄SQ** and **L₅SQ** on why they are not interested to learn Shona at school are representative of the views of 30.8% of the learners who blamed the lack of interest on the disutility of Shona as depicted in the graph below.

Graph for 13 students (N =13) who are not interested in learning Shona at school because of the items under key (**Graph 2**)
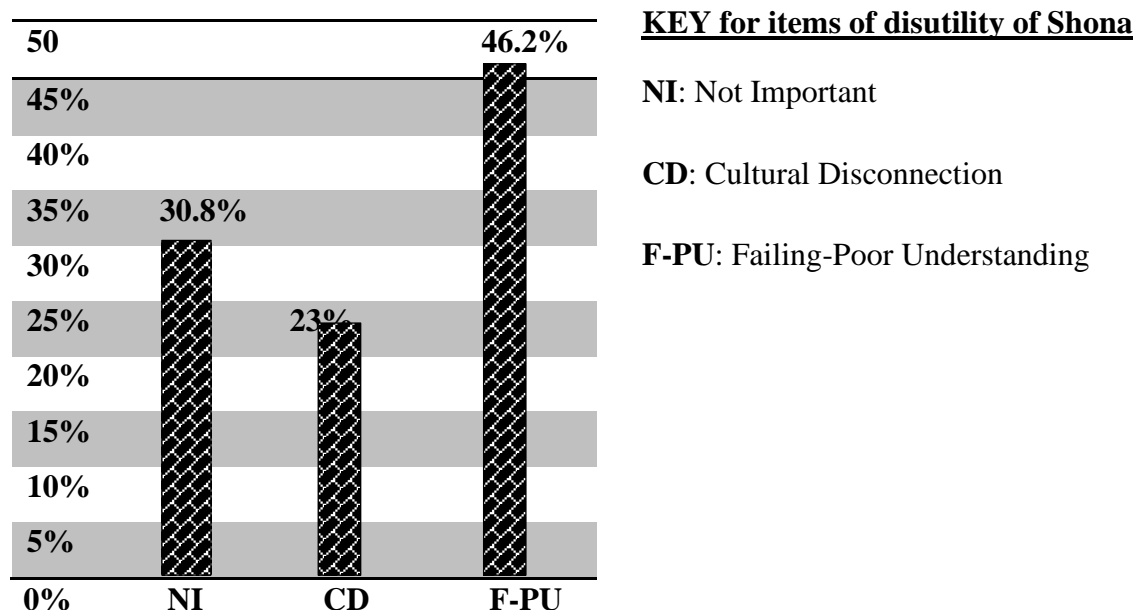
KEY for items of disutility of Shona

NI: Not Important

CD: Cultural Disconnection

F-PU: Failing-Poor Understanding

Learners who indicated that they are not interested in learning Shona at school explained the reasons for their choice. 30.8% of learners indicated that they find it not interesting to learn Shona at school because the subject of Shona is not important. Learner 4 and Learner 5 on Student Questionnaire – **L₄SQ** and **L₅SQ** - were specific and particular and said:

>   **L₄SQ**: *When you apply for a job two important subjects are said*
>   *English and Maths*. *Shona is not there.*
> (The grammatically correct sentence is: *When you apply for a*
>   *job two important subjects are mentioned which are English and Maths. Shona is*
>   *not listed.*)
>   **L₅SQ**: *When you pass Shona your parents do not ululate as they do when you pass*
>   *English and Maths* (The grammatically correct sentence is: *When you pass Shona parents*
> *do not rejoice as they do when you pass English.*

The views expressed by **L₄SQ** and **L₅SQ** on why they are not interested to learn Shona at school are representative of the views of 30.8% of the learners who cited disutility of Shona as their reason for disinterest. Shona is regarded as an unimportant subject considering **L₄SQ**'s argument that it is not listed as a requisite subject when one is applying for a job or entry into college. **L₅SQ** argues that parents as well are not elated as much when a child passes Shona in the examination as they are when a child passes English that is a requisite subject when applying for any job. Learners do not therefore

apply themselves fully and diligently as regards learning Shona at school. The views of **L₄SQ** and **L₅SQ** are representative views of 30.8% of learners who cited disutility of Shona as their reason for disinterest.

3 learners out of 13 learners (**23%**) said that they are not interested in learning Shona because it is not their mother language with learner 6 on student questionnaire -**L₆SQ-** pointing out that: _I am not interested in learning Shona because I am Nyanja._
The view expresses foreignness of Shona as a language and cultural disconnection that goes with language that is symbiotically connected to culture. The disinterest emanates from the language atributes of foreignness and cultural disconnection.
 46.2% of learners said that they fail Shona because it is difficult for them to understand. The conclusion this researcher made from this submission is that these learners do not have the spur to understand Shona better because it is not important. It is a foreign language and as such, it disconnects them from their culture. If it is true that any other language other than your own is, ipso facto, culture-free then the learners' disinterst is justified. The absence of these attributes makes 46.2% of learners submit to the difficulty of the subject.

4.10.5 Question 5: The language learners are comfortable in when not in class and at school.

All the 45 learners in the sample indicated that they feel free talking in the language used at home by their parents and siblings. This being the case, it becomes safe to deduce that two languages, school language and home language, coexist in each of the 45 learners in this sample. The co-existence of two languages in a learner is a phantom and never peaceful. There is a never-ending warfare between the two languages as the mother tongue (**L₁**) negatively influences the learning of **L₂**. Because **L₁** is formative of one's speech and identity, replacing, changing or obliterating the use of the home language is very difficult or next to impossible. It also causes learners to commit errors when writing in standard Shona, which is not a mother tongue to some who hail from dialects of Shona other than Zezuru. This state of affairs advantages learners of a Zezuru linguistic background. Learners or children in general, use language for seven purposes as stated by Thwaite (2019) who notes that Halliday established seven purposes or functions of language learning and use, back in 1973. The functions subsume the linguistic

matrix in the development of a child as a social being. Of the seven functions that Halliday identified, three piqued this researcher's attention (see Figure 2 below). These are:

- Instrumental (*I want*) Function
- Informative/representational (*I have got something to tell you*) Function
- Personal (*Here I am*) Function

Assimilated to Halliday's 1973 ideas on functions of language
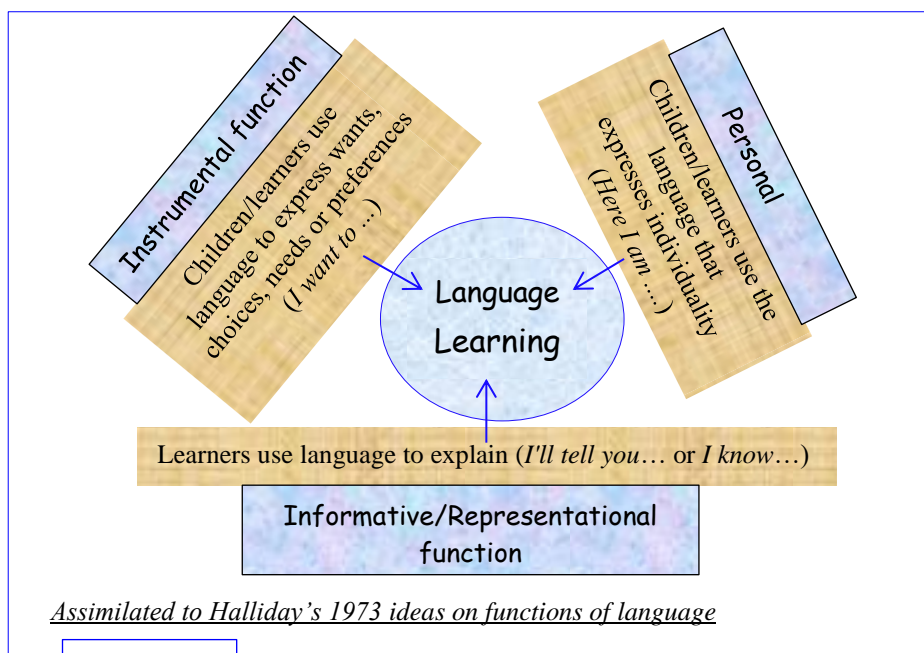
Figure 4.4

The use of standard Shona as reflected in the school classroom discourse tends to assume the instrumental (*I want to…*) purpose or function of language (Thwaite, 2019; May, 2003; Halliday, 1973). These authorities argue that learners of the standard language (a language considered as the second language-**L2** for the purposes of this research), use it in school/academic writing at the expense of their dialect languages. They grudgingly, it is presumed, use the standard language to:

- (*…want to…*) identify with the prestigious language/dialect
- (*…want to…*) write proficiently in all academic work and pass examinations to enhance job opportunities

In doing so, **L1** interferes causing learners to commit some errors

After the instrumental purpose with regards to language use, the assumption and attainment of the informative/representational (*I have got something to tell you/I will tell you…/I know…*) purpose is apparent. Learners will be eager to inform whoever that they can write, proficiently so in the prestigious language (standard language that is biased towards one dialect, Zezuru for the purposes of this research) and they are more than ready to tackle academic writing and pass examinations. In the process of

'telling something they have got', learners commit various errors. The causes of the errors are as varied as the errors. One of the causes pertains to <u>personal</u> function of language, when a learner uses his/her mother/home language to express individuality. In the process of doing that, the mother tongue interferes in academic writing where unstandardized dialect language (mother tongue/individual's language) is unacceptable and culminates in errors being committed. A near exhaustive investigation of other causes of the errors was attempted.

James's (1907) in Hergenhahn & Henley (2014) claim that what holds attention (the errors that learners make) demands action, holds true. The action so demanded as per this study has shown to be three-pronged:

- Action to find out the type of errors dogging learners' efforts to write proficiently
- Action to find or investigate the causes of the errors learners commit when writing in Shona
- Action to investigate and suggest ways of mitigating the commission of errors by learners

NB: The actions outlined in the above paragraph are mirror images of the study questions.

4.10.6 Language aspects that give learners some problems

Question 6 has two parts, (a) and (b). Part (a) asked learners to indicate that or those aspect/s of language that give/s them problems and part (b) solicited their suggestions on what can be done to help them do well in language work. The data were analyzed as follows:

4.10.6.1 Question 6(a): Language aspects that give learners problems when writing in Shona

The language aspects of spelling, word division, punctuation, concordial agreement have varying degrees of effect on learners' proficiency and performance in language work. An analysis of the 45 sampled learners' responses to this question revealed so as depicted by the following table.

Table 4.13	Number of learners who indicated that…				
	Spelling is problematic	**Word division** is problematic	**Punctuation** is problematic	**Concordial agreement** is problematic	**All** of the above aspects are problematic
	‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖	‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖ ‖‖	‖‖ ‖‖	0	0
TOTAL	38 (**58.4%**)	20 (**30.8%**)	7 (**10.8%**)	0 (**0%**)	0 (**0%**)
	65 Responses				

From forty-five respondents, sixty-five responses were received. This implies that some learners indicated more than one language aspect as problematic. None of the learners indicated concordial agreement as problematic. The big question that can arise from this is that do the learners really understand what it is. An in-depth documentary analysis of the learners' exercise books was carried out to find out if the learners have no problems with this language aspect. The analysis revealed that learners struggle with concordial agreement. It is, however, encouraging noting that the forty-five learners are not affected by all the four aspects but by one, two or three of them. That means that they are, at least, good at something. Spelling problems account for 58.4% of responses, word division problems account for 30.8% of responses and punctuation problems account for 10.8% of responses. Inferentially, spelling poses problems for many learners (58.4%), followed by word division with a 30.8% rating. Punctuation is sitting at 10.8%. The two language aspects of spelling and word division are the worst culprits as far as proficiency and performance in language work is concerned. A thorough documentary analysis of the learners' exercise books will validate this claim or opinion.

4.10.6.2 Question 6 (b): Suggestions about what should be done to help learners do well.

Some learners had ideas about how they can be helped to do well in language learning while others seem not to have any suggestions. This is so because they did not answer the question. The suggestions they gave, thematically orbited around efficacy of the teacher, the availability of enough reading books and the provision of study rooms in the school because it is very difficult to study at home.

Table 4.14	**Number of learners who suggested that…**		**Number of learners with <u>no</u> suggestions**
…efficacy of the teacher can help them do well	…availability of books can help them do well	…Provision of Study rooms can help them do well	
⧄⧄⧄ ⧄⧄⧄ ⧄⧄⧄ ⧄⧄⧄ ∥	⧄⧄⧄	∥∥	⧄⧄⧄ ⧄⧄⧄ ⧄⧄⧄
22 (**48.9%**)	5 (**11.1%**)	3 (**6.7%**)	15 (**33.3%**)
45			

48.9% of learners cited the teacher as the one who can help them do well in language learning, giving statements like:

1) *We want very good teachers to teach Form 4.*
2) *Our teachers must give us plenty time to ask questions <u>when we are taught</u> [...when they are teaching us].*

The above views insinuate teacher efficacy. As defined by Berman et.al. (1977) in Tschannen-Moran et.al (1998), teacher efficacy is the capacity a teacher possesses to influence and affect learners' performance and achievement. The following attributes characterise teacher efficacy:

1) Incorporation of oral non-instructional teaching methods like discussion which help to improve writing skills

2) Mastery of experience which is grounded in results and accomplishments, where a teacher adjusts competency levels and help learners perform and achieve better

Such views imply that the teachers are, according to the learners' judgement, either incompetent or that the teaching methods that the teachers use are not up to scratch. This results in the learners' poor understanding of what they are taught. The teachers are, therefore, called upon to embrace the concept of teacher efficacy in its true and total sense.

Failure by the school to avail enough reading books was blamed for the learners' poor performance in language work by 11.1% of learners in the sample. The school and the authorities are implored to provide substantial number of relevant textbooks on Shona orthography and or other reading books. The learners think that if they get as much reading material as possible they can do well. This is consistent with Kellaghan and Greaney's (1992) study carried out for the World Bank Technical Paper Number 165 that concluded that the provision of incomparable quality books could brush up educational achievement. Kellaghan and Greaney (ibid) argue that the provision of relevant quality books is key in educational performance and achievement. It is sad to say that the availability of relevant and quality books is crucially low at the case school. 75.56% of learners and 100% of teachers, as depicted by Table 4.27 and Table 4.28 respectively, concur that the availability of helpful texts as regards mastery of orthography is reprehensibly low.

6.7% of learners said that they could do well if they are provided with study rooms in the absence of a library at the school. This has adverse impact on readership. Many learners read very little. The environment at home is not conducive for studying because once they are home; their studies are disturbed by the various chores that have to be performed. This affects girls worse than it does boys. This is uncontested truth. The performance and achievement of both girls and boys is negatively affected by the various home chores that have to be performed and the absence of study rooms and library at the school. This is in stark contrast to World Bank Working Paper № 126's (2008 in Kellaghan and Greaney, 1992) view that a library at school offers reading opportunities to learners. The opportunities will in turn enhance performance and achievement of learners.

66.7% of learners were allotted to three groups of twenty-two members, five members and three members respectively (see Table 4.14). The allotment was based on the following themes: the teacher, the availability of books and the provision of reading rooms as factors that can help them do well in language learning. However, 33.3% of learners had no suggestions on how they can be helped to do well in language learning. Such learners seem to have no purpose at all.

4.10.7 Question 7: How books can help learners to improve their spelling

This question sought the learners' confirmation on the availability of the books listed in the following table:

Table 4.15	**Number of learners who indicated that …**					Responses indicated by a blue x = 5 learners out of 45 learners (11.1%)
	…Unavailable	**…Under 30**	**…30-60**	**…61-100**	**…Over 100**	
A Guide to Shona Spelling is…	X X	X				Responses indicated by a red x = 6 learners out of 45 learners (13.3%)
Duramazwi Guru reShona is…	X X	X				
Manyorerwo eChiShona is…	X X X					Responses indicated by a black x = 34 learners out of 45 learners (75.6%)
Shona Novels are…				X	X X	
Comprehension Text Books are…				X	X X	

The book <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling</u> and the dictionary <u>Duramazwi Guru reShona</u> were indicated as unavailable by 11.1% of learners and 13.3% of learners respectively. However, 75.6% indicated that the same texts were available, but in small quantities of less than 30 in number. As confirmed by 75.6% in the sample, the books are available in small quantities, too small to be encountered by about two hundred and fifty-one O-Level learners. 100% of the learners in the sample agreed that the book <u>Manyorerwo eChiShona:</u> *Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu* is unavailable in the school. This is disheartening because the textbook is a key one that explains all the important rules and facts about Shona orthography. It is written in Shona, a language comprehensible to many or most learners. If availed, the textbook could go a long way in improving the learners' interpretation of the rules and subsequently improve their competence and proficiency in writing in Shona.

Shona Novels and Comprehension textbooks are available in large quantities of ±100 texts. This kind of text books become helpful in language learning if and only if learners themselves engage in voracious reading. In the audio-recorded interview of a focus group of students, there is a question

asking learners to reveal the number of novels they have read so far. An analysis of the data that was collected will reveal if they are avid readers.

4.10.8 Question 8: The effect of books on learners' performance

The availability or non-availability of books affects the performance of learners. All the forty-five respondents said something only about the availability of books and nothing about the non-availability of them. This could have been occasioned by the already existent situation of not having enough books in the school. The effect of not having enough books has become commonplace so much that they concentrated on enunciating the advantages than mention the obvious, the disadvantages of not having enough books. When this researcher gleaned the collected data, the following themes based on the availability of books were identified:

- Ability to read
- Ability to spell
- Knowledge about how to write well in Shona
- Passing examination

An example of the leaners' responses is given below. For example, ideas like:

1. *Writing Shona is difficult for me. When I read I can see how they do it*
2. *Interesting Shona of tsumo and nyaudzosingwi is found in novels*
3. *Reading many books can make me pass form 4*
4. *I will be like a book with no mistakes when I write*

were raised.

Actually the themes were modelled around the following response of a certain learner (see Figure 4.5). This response was adjudged to be more encompassing and representative of the many and varied ideas raised by the forty-five learners.

8. What effect on your learning and performance do you think their availability or non-availability has?

If there are many books at the School I will read and spell words good. I know how to read write good Shona and pass examination.
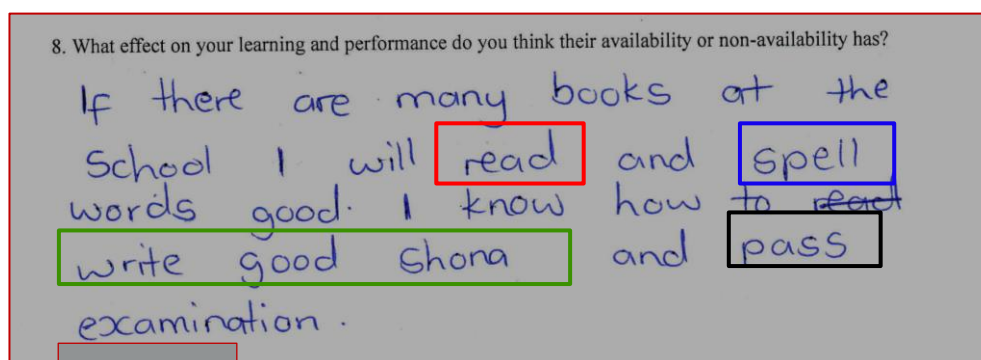
Fig 4.5

The following table on availability of books and how it benefits learners shows the distribution of the learners' responses according to the identified themes.

Table 4.16	Responses indicating that books will make learners…			
	…able to **read**	…able to **spell**	…know how to **write well**	…able to **pass**
	////	*//// //// ////*	*//// //// //// //// /*	*//// //// //// //// //// //*
TOTAL	5 (**7.3%**)	15 (**22.1%**)	21 (**30.9%**)	27 (**39.7%**)
	Total Responses = 68 (100%)			

39.7% of responses indicate that availability of books makes learners able to pass. This is a high rating. Reading ranks high among the important strategies in language learning. The safe language-learning journey must have pupils who are vehemently encouraged to read books in which they will encounter correct spelling of words and become more comfortable with rules of the language's grammar. If learners read as many books as possible, they will come across correct spelling of different words as indicated by 22.1% of learners. That will enable them to know how to write well in Shona as indicated by 30.9% of learners. 'Heavy' readers tend to be more proficient than 'light' readers are as reading stories plays a critical part in language learning. Ability to spell, knowledge of how to write well and ability to pass are splinter abilities of the parent ability; ability to read. Although represented by only 7.3% of learners, reading is the cog of language learning. Reading benefits the different key aspects that are important in language learning.

4.10.9 Question 9: Short paragraphs on what learners were doing at home during the National Lockdown.

Thirty-nine learners out of forty-five learners wrote out small paragraphs of what they were doing during the National Lockdown (**NL**). This researcher, indicating all the errors that were observed,

marked Thirty-nine paragraphs. Three categories to which the marked paragraphs were allotted are as follows: the outstanding, the good and the bad.

Table 4.17

	…**Outstanding** category which has **no orthographical errors**	…**Good** category which has **orthographical errors that do not exceed 20**	…**Bad** category which has **many different orthographical errors**
Number of students in the…	4 (**10.26**%)	13 (**33.33**%)	22 (**56.41**%)

39 Marked paragraphs

Purposive sampling of the marked outstanding, good and bad paragraphs was done. The sampled paragraphs that were marked are given below.
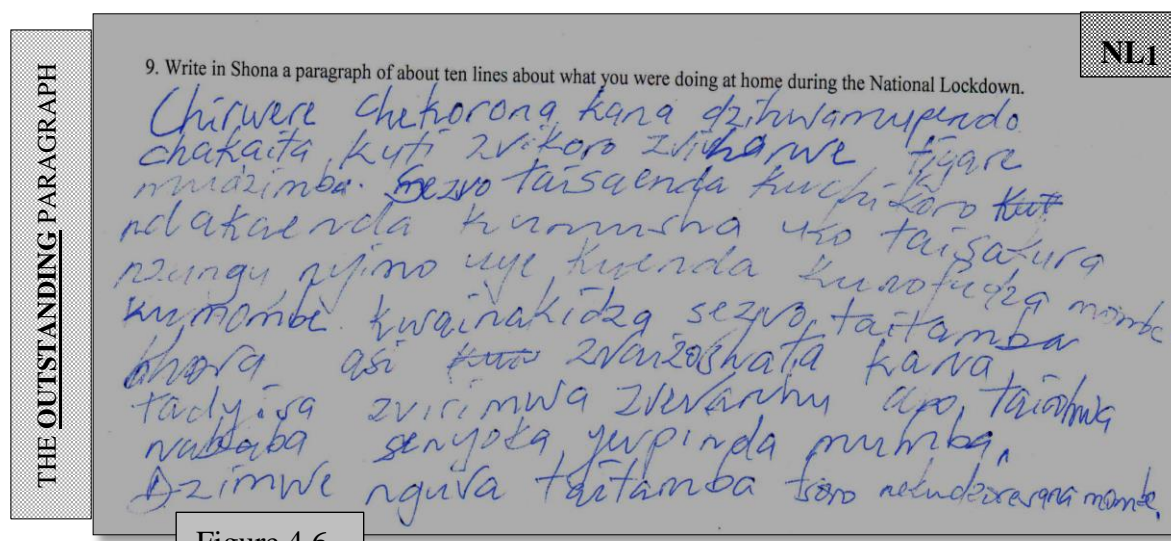
Figure 4.6

*The **Outstanding** Paragraph*

In the above picture, **NL₁**, the student showed good mastery of orthography. Spelling is good so is punctuation and word division. The level of tidiness is not bad. Considering that the paragraph was written impromptu, the kind of mastery of orthography displayed is commendable. It has become almost instinctive; it seems, for the learner to write thus.

Figure 4.7

*The **Good** Paragraph*

In some instances, word division, as indicated in **NL₂** above; /*yakadzikamutemo*/ [yakadzika mutemo – legislated rules]; /*ndaivakumba*/ [ndaiva kumba – I was at home]; /*kuno tamba*/ [kunotamba – out to play], poses some challenges for the student. The student also struggles with punctuation. /*ini*/ [me] should have been capitalised because it signals the beginning of a new sentence. The learner has however, displayed a fair mastery of the various rules of the Shona orthography.

Figure 4.8

*The **Bad** Paragraph*

Key: ▬ Incorrect capitalisation ▬ Spelling ▬ Omission of period ▬ Untidiness

▬ Mixing tenses

In many instances spelling, punctuation involving omission of period and incorrect application of a capital letter, untidiness and mixing of tenses as indicated in **NL₃** above, pose serious challenges for

the learner. The learner in question has displayed a very poor mastery of the various rules of the Shona orthography.

4.10.10 Question 10: Parental support for learning Shona at school

If parents support their children by encouraging them to work hard at school, the children can yield positive academic achievements. However, their support is somehow indirect. It is indirect in ways like paying school fees, buying books, buying uniforms and making sure the child never learns on an empty stomach. The child takes more direct responsibility to get the best out of his /her learning. This is why the response to the question orbited around acknowledging that their parents support their learning Shona at school. The following statements by certain learners are testimony of the support that parents give to their children:

- *They bought all my books to read and write* (this statement and related ones concerning consumables was given by 4 learners out of 45 learners in the sample, 8.8%)

- *They paid my school fees* (this statement and related ones was given by 7 learners out of 45 learners in the sample, 15.6%)

- *Yes, they support it[me]* (this statement, either with *...it* or *...me* turned out to be the most popular statement that was given verbatim by 34 learners out of 45 learners in the sample, 75.6%).

4.10.10.1 Giving meaning to 8.8% in Graph 3

Learners who comprise this category acknowledge their parents' support since they buy them everything they use at school in their learning of all the subjects offered at school, Shona included. The school has a standing policy that it does not supply Shona literature set books that are, mostly, parent purchased textbooks.

When these learners acknowledge their parents' support of buying them books, it became very clear to this researcher that reference to the purchase of such books apart from exercise books and other consumables, was being made.

4.10.10.2 Giving meaning to 15.6% in Graph 3

Parental support manifests in the form of payment of the learners' school fees. The Other Fees being referred to especially when dealing with O-Level examination classes are the infamous examination fees. Paying school fees (PSF) guarantees the child's acceptance by the school to study at the institution. Paying other fees (OF) like examination registration fees guarantees that the child will sit for O-Level examinations. In this case, it means every child at the school studies Shona and sits for O-Level Shona examination since it is a government policy directive that every child should at least study one indigenous language depending on what the school offers. Learners value parental support by way of fees payment.

4.10.10.3 Giving meaning to 75.6% in Graph 3

75.6% of learners assented to parental support. They did not specify the kind of support as did 8.8% and 15.6% of the learners respectively. What this could mean is that parents support the learners' being in school in all the various support forms expected of every parent with a child in school. This can cover buying of books, payment of school fees, payment of examination fees and even emotional support. Learners then become obliged to pay this back. How? One quizzes. This can be by way of working hard at school and pass examinations. Zeroing in on the study of Shona, difficult and challenging the application of orthography might be, learners will apply themselves diligently aiming to pass the examination so as not to disappoint the parents whose wide ranging support they acknowledged. They will struggle to master the orthography so that they please their parents whose support efforts must be paid back by passing the O-Level Shona examination. However, that at times is derailed by poor mastery and application of orthography.

4.10.11 Question 11: Suggestions by learners on how they can score better in the ZIMSEC Shona examinations

Thirty learners out of forty-five learners (66.7%) offered suggestions as to what should be done to help them score better at the end of course ZIMSEC Shona examinations while fifteen learners out of forty-five learners (33.3%) did not answer the question. Concisely, they did not have any suggestions. See table for question 6 (b) in section 4.5.6.2 which tabulates exactly the same data that is outlined in

question 11. The suggestions made by learners about what has to be done to help them score better in ZIMSEC Shona examinations had something to do with the teacher, the provision of enough and relevant reference books on orthography and study rooms by the school. The number of learners who gave suggestions and the themes of the suggestions are the same as those for question 6 (b). The two questions, 6 (b) and 11, solicited exactly the same information. This was an oversight on the part of the researcher. Respondents must have realised the repetition and used the same suggestions made in answering question 6 (b) to answer question 11. However, this helped the researcher to concretise what suggestions leaners have. Appraising the teachers and the school authorities about the learners' suggestions benefits future learners and help school authorities to plan better.

4.11 Research findings from Document analysis

Appendix E contains guidelines for document analysis.

The chief aim of document analysis is to evaluate documents. This is usually characterised by evaluation of any written document. The documents could take varying forms like advertisements, books, newspapers or magazines, notices, letters, pictures, drawings or photographs. These will be analyzed and relevant information elicited to gain more and better understanding of how orthography is affecting learners' writing at school.

4.11.1 Analysis of Schemes of work and lesson plans

The abovementioned documents were analyzed to find out how often oral work is schemed and or planned for. This is prudent since teachers need to fuse speaking with writing because oral language skills enhance writing. The intention was also to find out how often written work is schemed or planned for since practice makes perfect.

4.11.2 Analysis of learners' record of marks

These documents were analyzed to find out how many of the O-Level learners at the case school exist in the high, middle and low score categories. Such kind of information was vital in making conclusions on the gravity of the effect of orthography on academic writing. The information about the score categories would also shape the recommendations for teachers on what teaching strategies they can adopt to improve the students' competency and performance.

4.11.3 Analysis of the National and School syllabuses

The above-mentioned documents were analyzed to find out how much emphasis is given in academic writing to correct and inviolable use and application of the current Shona orthography. The inviolableness of the use and application of the current Shona orthography is epitomised by one of the National Syllabus aims that states that learners should <u>accurately</u> and <u>appropriately</u> use the language. The qualities of accurateness and appropriateness of language use connote use and application of orthography, in this case, Shona orthography. It must be mentioned here and now that the school syllabus draws from the national syllabus.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aim, the national syllabus set out an objective that states that learners should be enabled to construct, spell; punctuate words, phrases and sentences correctly. Learners can only do all that correctly via strict use, application and adherence to the dictates of the current Shona orthography.

4.11.4 Analysing writing exercise books

The analysis of learners' writing exercise books was intended to see whether teachers mark learners' written work assiduously or neglectfully. It was also intended to find out if they give any helpful feedback by indicating all errors made. The teachers should also show the learners how they score composition work. The analysis was also done to discover the aspects of orthography that give learners the worst difficulty.

4.11.4.1 Teachers' marking

Some photographs of marked exercises were taken. Some examples of such photographs are shown below, and an in-depth explication of the marking will be done in the discussion section of this chapter. In Figure 4.9, the teacher corrected some mistakes and neglected doing so on an equally serious error of code mixing on /*Chakazondibhowa*/. This was in violation of some of the current Shona orthography's conventions as outlined in the National Syllabus particularly that learners should *accurately* and *appropriately* use the language. The School Syllabus stresses the importance of writing in good Shona language. Thus, the use of the language appropriately and accurately is implied. The

use of the anti-language word /*Chakazondibhowa*/ [what bored me] is inappropriate, is not good Shona and should have been indicated as an error.
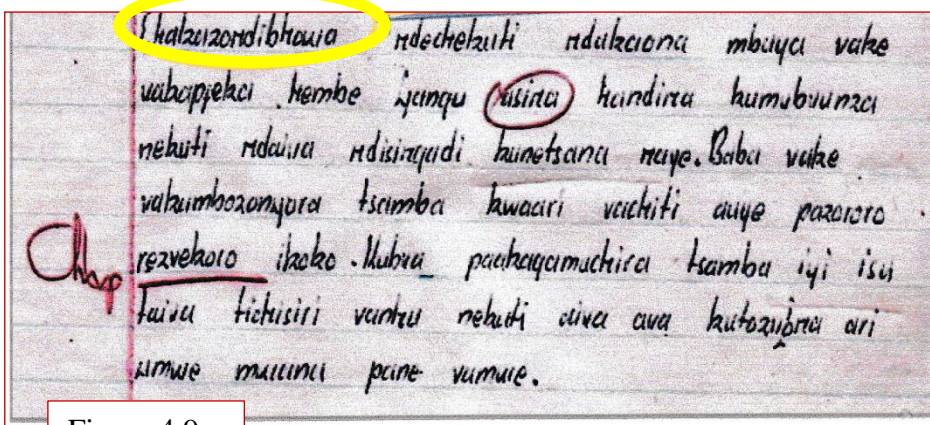
Figure 4.9

In the picture below, Figure 4.10, the teacher did not do justice to the kind of feedback the learner needs. The learner should be helped to realise all the errors that are committed by mixing two codes, English and Shona and their implied repercussions in composition writing whereupon one of the

In the case in this picture, the teacher only indicated the error only on /*pamastation after query*/ where there is an error of mixing codes (see the red arrow). The use of English words in a Shona composition should never be condoned, whether phonologised as in /*ende*/ or in its pure English form as in /*speed*/ or code mixing at word level as in /*malight*/ (see the yellow circles)
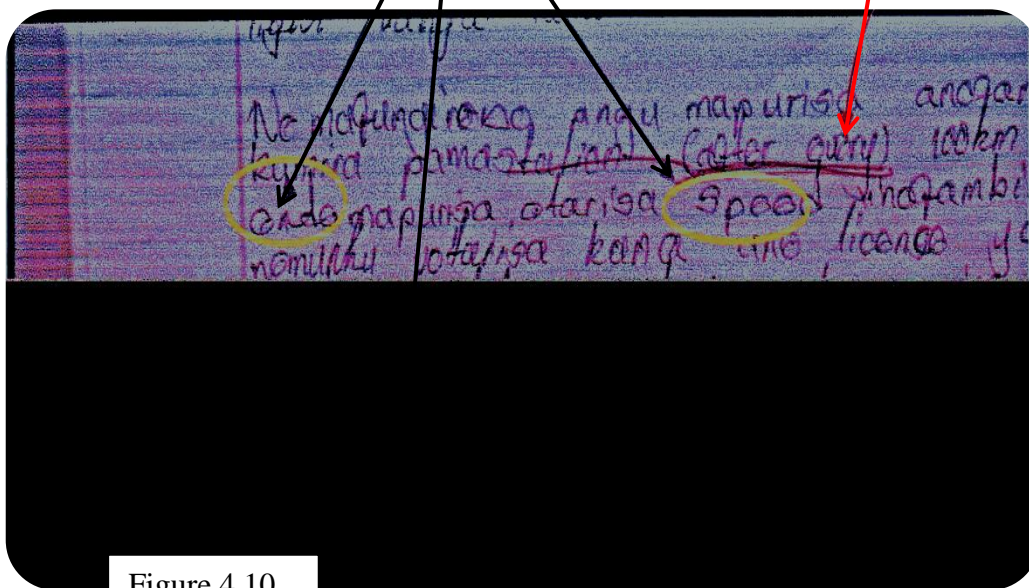
Figure 4.10

National Syllabus aims states that learners should, *accurately* and *appropriately,* use the language. Mixing codes is not an accurate and/or appropriate use of the Shona language. The repercussions are apparent, considering the ZIMSEC O-Level Shona Paper 3159/1 that instructs examiners to penalise every time half a mark off for every sentence that is completely ill formed. Mixing codes results in a sentence that is ill formed and worth being penalised. In the picture indicated below, there are four errors of code mixing. That means four half marks are going to be deducted giving us a total deduction of two marks. Loosing two marks in an examination is not good at all. It must be avoided at all cost where it is possible. This can be achieved if teachers mark assiduously by indicating all the errors and alerting students of such repercussions.

In the picture below, Figure 4.11, the teacher expended time, energy and effort to indicate all the errors the learner made. If the momentum is upheld, such marking can surely beget some corrective and well-meaning feedback. The teacher went on further to alert the learner to always adhere to the style of letter writing that is always writing the address before all else.
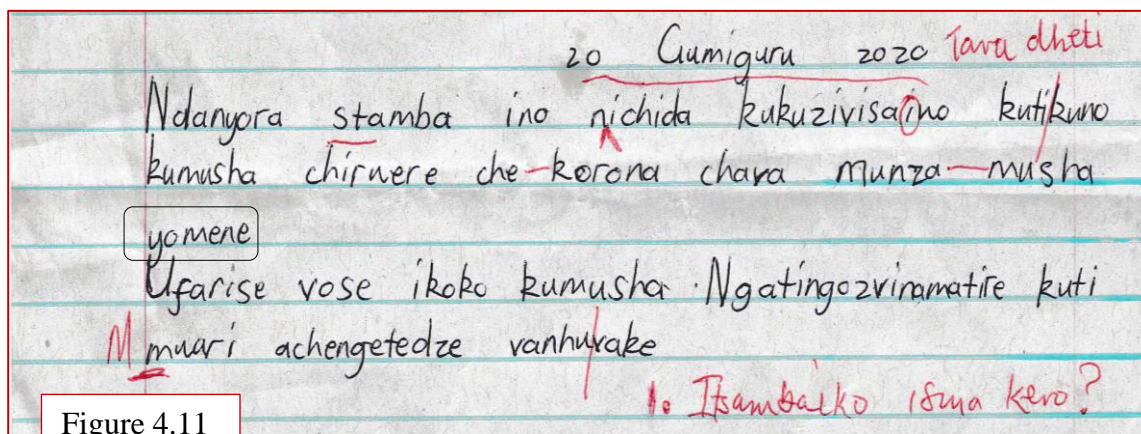
Figure 4.11

However, the teacher missed out the error of not indicating a paragraph appropriately by not skipping a line after the word '*yomene*'. (see the black oblong).

4.11.4.2 Aspects of orthography that pose difficulty to learners

From the teachers comments in Figure 4.12 it can be realised that learners have difficulty with spelling of certain words. They also find it difficult to divide words. Punctuation involving capitalisation is at times misused. Assiduous marking and honest written feedback is very important for school improvements. Comments like /***Ziva panoshanda vara guru***/ [Know when to use a capital letter] are applauded as they highlight the challenges the learners need to give attention to. Feedback like this one that matches the errors displayed is the kind of feedback that will benefit learners most. This is quite commendable, but how often will we see that?
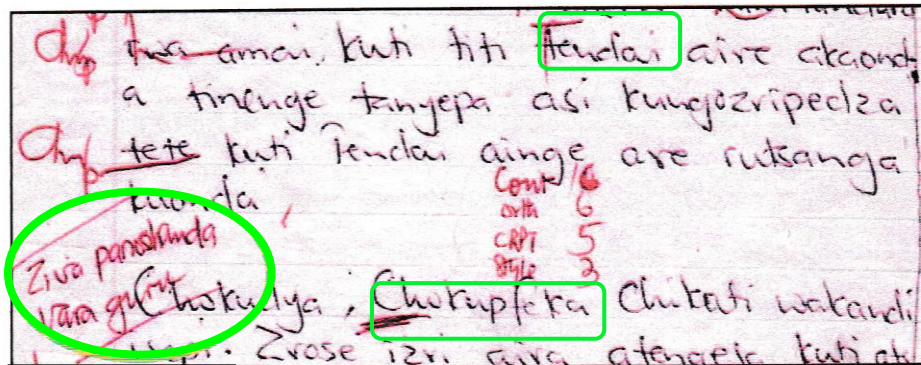
Figure 4.12

In the above picture the attention of the learner is drawn to the need for accurate and appropriate use of a capital letter, expressed in vernacular as '*Ziva panoshanda vara guru'* [Know where to use a capital letter]. The error is observable in /tendai/ which is a proper noun which should be capitalised to become /Tendai/. It is also observable in /Chokupfeka/. The relative verb exists in the middle of the sentence. As such it should not have been capitalised. It should have been correctly written with a small letter as /chokupfeka/.

It is also encouraging to note that the teacher did not score the composition haphazardly, but followed the guidelines given in the school syllabus for awarding marks to a composition, vis a vis:

- Content (**Cont**)   **16**/25
- Orthography (**Orth**)   **6**/10
- Coherence/Readability/Paragraphing/Tidiness (**CRPT**) **5**/10
- **Style**   **3**/5

                                                   Score: **30**/50
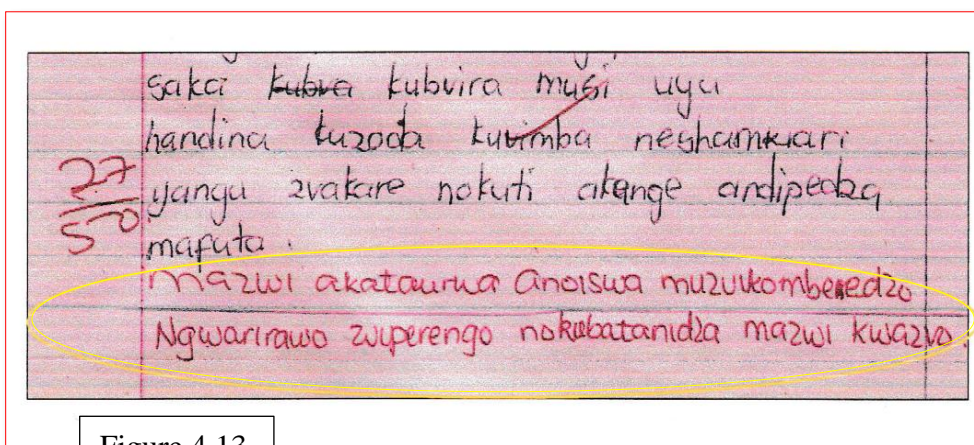
Figure 4.13

The encircled teacher's comment highlights the problematic aspects of Shona orthography the learner has to pay attention to. These are quotation marks (*zvikomberedzo*), spelling (*zviperengo*) and word

division (*kubatanidza mazwi*). The learner is entreated to put more effort in mastering the said aspects of Shona orthography if his/her composition writing and scoring should improve. Again, it is evident that the teacher gives written feedback that highlights areas that need attention thus, matching up the comments to the work displayed. This is very critical in that the teacher has written feedback meant to benefit the learner. That is what it should.

4.12 Research findings from adverts

The guidelines for the observation of adverts are contained in Appendix F

Observation of events and artefacts was done. Events in the school like sports were observed where female learners were cooking food for the staff and other learners. At the cooking shed packages of Maggi Relish Mix were seen and instructions on the package were analyzed.
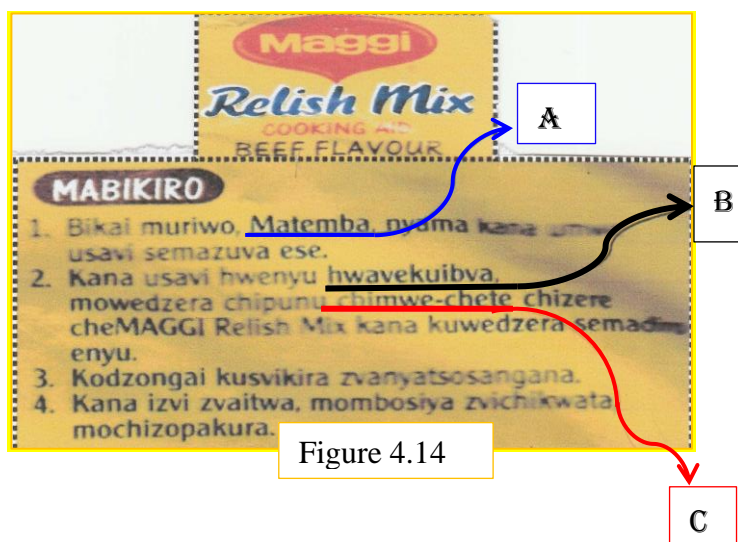
Figure 4.14

Letters **A, B** and **C** indicate words that are written erroneously. The errors or cause of them will be discussed in detail in the discussion section of the

One more food package like the one shown below was also observed and analyzed:

Figure 4.15

The underlined sentence and phrase denoted by **A** and **B** respectively have errors that will be discussed in detail in the discussion section of this chapter

Very near the school a billboard for Chibuku opaque beer stands erected with the wording 'Gara Uchispakwa'.

Figure 4.16

The underlined word denoted by **A** cannot be used in academic Shona composition writing because it is in contravention of the current Shona orthography. A detailed discussion is given in the analysis and discussion section.

An in-depth discussion of what the researcher found out about the artefacts is found in the discussion section of this chapter.

4.13 Respondents' views on types of errors that learners make when writing in Shona

The types of errors commonly committed by learners are spelling errors, punctuation errors, word division errors and sentence structure errors.

Some of the spelling errors that some learners commit are caused by mother tongue interference. All spelling that is mother tongue related is considered wrong spelling. This is caused by the standardisation of the Shona language, which sidelined other dialects in preference of all word forms of one dialect, Zezuru.

As academic **A₁** aptly states in the audio-recorded interview, "spellings become a problem because there are certain letters, sounds that are not there in our orthography." This is epitomised by academic **A₂**'s admission that one of his best students "… lost orthography marks for writing **w**ana instead of **v**ana. I said the spelling is wrong. I later on realised that this student, when speaking says **w**ana." A learner of Manyika dialect was being penalised for letting his/her home language interfere with the spelling. Academics, teachers and learners complain that something needs to be necessitously done. The following confessions by these academics, teachers and learners speak to orthography reform or its restandardisation so that it becomes more accommodative of the other Shona dialects' phonologies. This leads to the acceptance of dialect word forms in academic writing because how people/ learners speak essentially relates to features of the language they produce when writing.

Confessions by academics:

- **A₁**: …we come up with different spelling for the same, (because) …our language is not standardized completely.
- **A₂**: … now I see that there is something that needs to be done to our orthography because it punishes students who shouldn't be.
- **A₃**: …it is unfortunate that the use of one's dialect in school writing is penalisable…

Confessions by teachers:

- **T𝒸**: …if our pupils are allowed to use their language, they may make fewer mistakes, I presume.

Confessions by learners:

- **L𝐸**: Why are we not allowed to write the way we speak to our parents and relatives at home?

- **L$_H$**: I make many spelling errors when I write and fail composition.

All the confessions given above deductively imply orthography reform. In its formulation or design, the envisaged orthography must accommodate word forms of the different dialects of Shona. This gives credence to Nordquist's (2019) explanation that every language has conflicting forces as regards its grammar. As for the case of Shona language, the conflicting forces that come to mind are the speech form and the written form. The explanation goes further to mention that the satisfaction of one of the forces entails the infraction of another. In the case of Shona, the standardisation (the written form) aspect was satisfied while the use of dialects (speech form) in academic writing is violated. It is also penalisable as argued by Academic **A$_1$**, Academic **A$_2$** and Informant Academic **A$_3$**. Hamann & Colombo (2017) have a similar view about the conflicting forces of a language. The view can be explained diagrammatically as:
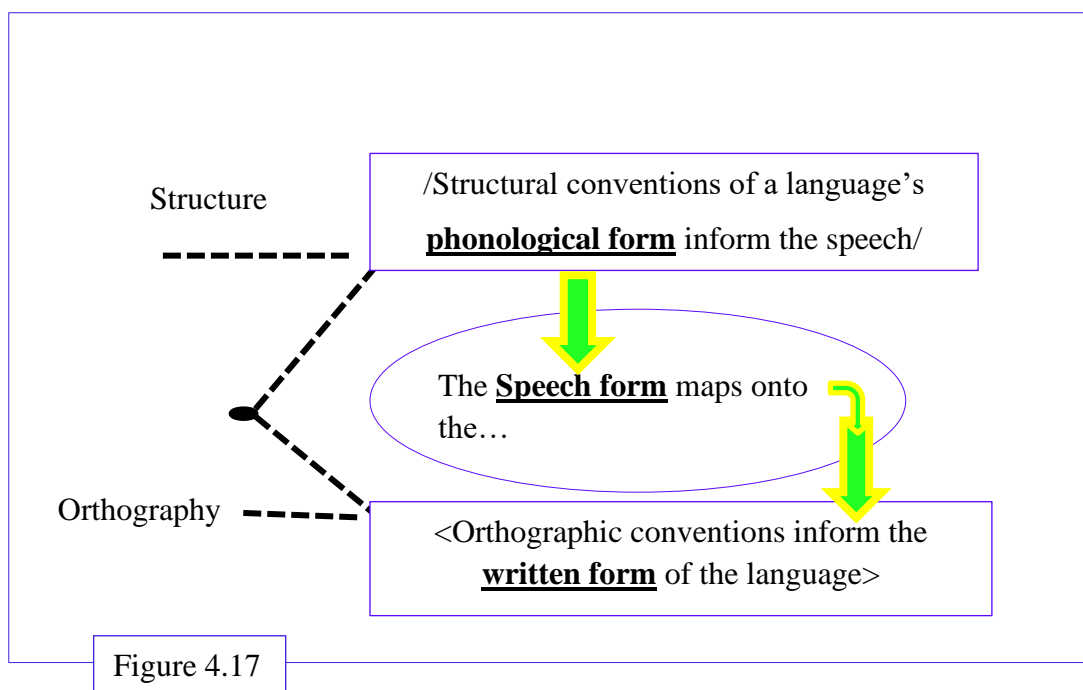
Figure 4.17

Figure 4.45 is a depiction of native writing where the phonological form of one's speech maps onto the written form and at times affecting it and causing errors in the process. Native speakers are susceptible to the effects of the conflicting forces of the speech form and the written form of the Shona language. The lack of dialectological expediency is caused by Zimbabwe's language policy that refuses to acknowledge functional space for the use of dialects in public domains like education. All the confessions given above illuminate the negation of the use of dialects in academic writing as stated particularly by academic **A$_1$**, **A$_2$** and **A$_3$** that the use of one's dialect is penalisable. Learners make writing errors when their indigenous language's phonological repertoires interfere with how they, for

example, spell. The spelling they produce is in contravention of the Shona orthographic conventions. This is confirmation of academic **A₁**'s claim that learners (from different dialects) come up with different spelling for the same because the Shona language is not standardized completely. This is a particular and specific constraint for shallow orthographies. Learners existing in such scenarios usually commit many errors when writing as revealed by **L_H**'s admission and confession that she makes many spelling errors when writing. Figure 4.18 on page 136 irradiates the same, with a learner of Karanga dialect background being penalised for using phoneme /gw/ instead of /rw/ thereby producing wrong spellings as per Shona orthographic conventions. Learner **L_E** laments why they are not allowed to write as they speak. In view of all this, **T_C** makes a compelling plea to allow learners to use their home/dialect languages so that they make fewer errors.

Apart from spelling errors, learners make errors of the Natural Inability Group (**NIG**) wherein they naturally fail to divide or join words correctly. They also sometimes have a dyslexic confusion of the order of letters in a word. They fail to use the various punctuation marks well, for example, failing to use capital letters correctly or not putting a full stop at the end of a sentence. Figure 4.18 is evident of the **NIG** errors (dyslexic and punctuation) a learner has committed:

1) Dyslexia leads to confusion of the order of letters in a word. Abu-Rabia and Taha (2004) call it letter-confusion error. The correct word is /tsamba/.

2) The learner is naturally failing to divide or join words correctly. This is a NIG error.

These are punctuation errors of 1) capitalisation 2) missing full stop at the end of the sentence.
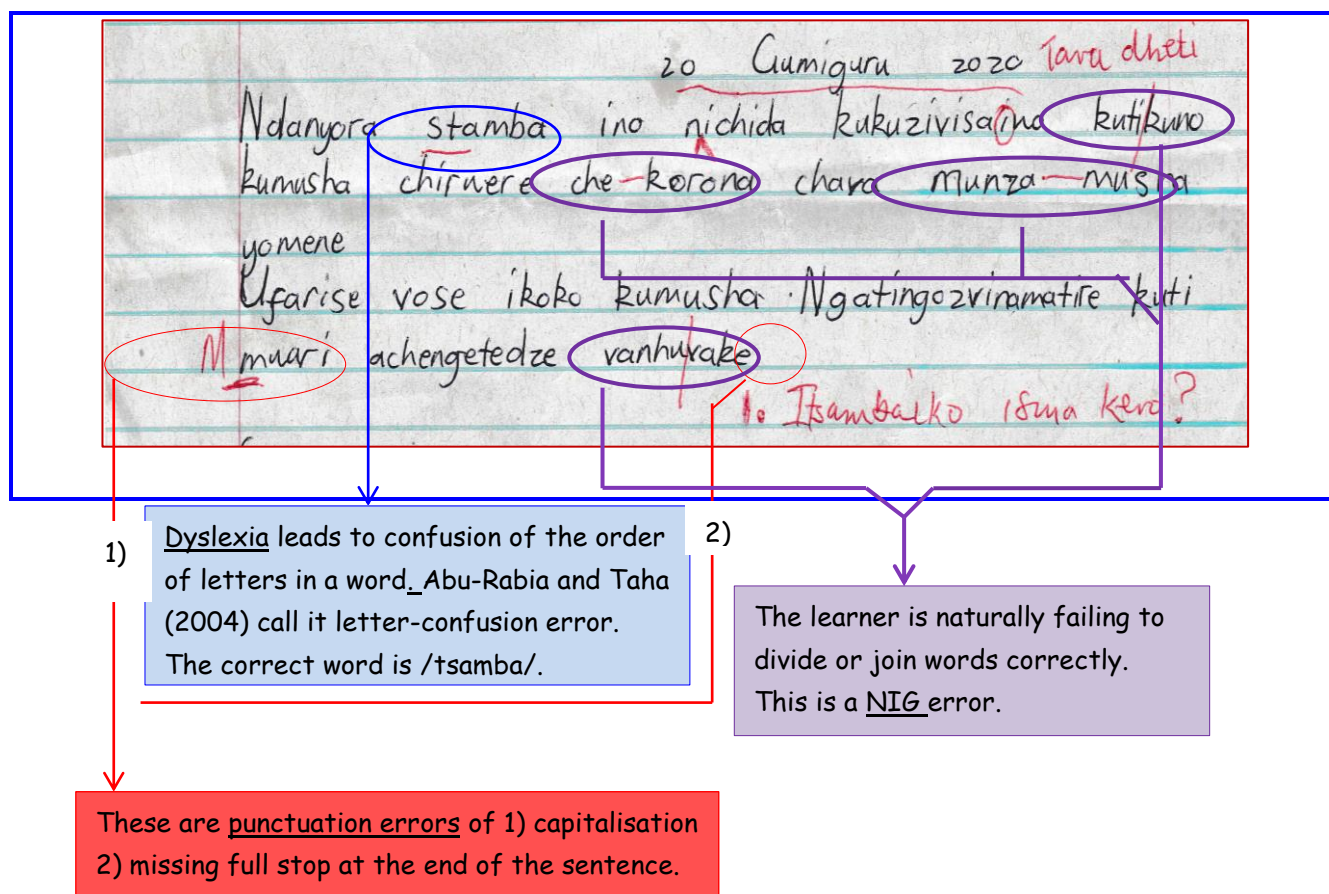
Figure 4.18

4.14 Respondents' views on causes of different types of writing errors committed by learners

If the picture painted by the following Tables 4.18 and 4.19 is anything to go by, it becomes safe then to conclude that there are writing challenges confronting learners in schools because of poor mastery of Shona orthography. An analysis of teachers' record of marks revealed that learners' performance in composition and comprehension is poor.

Record of Composition Marks [Composition is *marked out of 50*]:

Table 4.18

№ of learners scoring…	4a	4b	4c	4d	4e	4f	Total per category for all classes
30^+	7	6	3	6	0	2	24 [9.6%]
25-29	17	18	12	11	6	5	69[27.5%]
0-24	23	26	21	28	34	26	158[62.9%]
							251 [100%]

(Header: **Learners in class per category**)

Record of Comprehension Marks [Comprehension is *marked out of 10*]:

Table 4.19

№ of learners scoring…	4a	4b	4c	4d	4e	4f	Total per category for all classes
7-10	15	14	11	8	6	6	60 [23.9%]
5-6	11	18	8	15	12	7	71[28.3%]
0-4	17	18	23	18	22	22	120[47.8%]
							251[100%]

(Header: **Learners in class per category**)

The two types of written exercises cited above are written in prose. Spelling, word division, punctuation, correct sentence construction and general mechanical accuracy are given prominence when marking. These language constituents comprise orthography. Marks are

allocated after a thorough consideration of these constituents (see Table 1.1: Amplification of Essay Class Definitions).

 If so few learners, 9.6% score 30 and above in composition and few learners too, 23.9%, score 7-10 in comprehension, what really could be causing that, one would ask? The high number of very poor performers with 0-24, 62.9% for composition and 47.8% with score of 0-4 for comprehension, indicates that there are challenges posed by some or all of the mentioned language constituents. This was also revealed by the survey of the views of teachers about the problems their learners face with regard to the language constituents of spelling, word division, punctuation and sentence construction. Moats (2005) in Putman (2017) claims that making spelling, word division, punctuation and sentence construction errors is akin to incompetence and ignorance. Teachers at the case school regard correct use of these orthography constituents as quintessential communicative traits without which learners perform poorly in language work as shown in the tables of scores for composition and written summary work (see Table 4.18 and Table 4.19 above).

Analysis of writing challenges posed by spelling, punctuation, word division and sentence structure

Table 4.20	Number of teachers who say…			
	…is **not** difficult.	...is **a bit** difficult.	…is **difficult.**	…is **very** difficult.
Spelling…	0	0	4	2
Punctuation…	2	4	0	0
Word division…	0	0	0	6
Sentence structure…	1	5	0	0

Knowledge of how a language's orthography is devised helps teachers realise why spelling can at times become difficult for learners. Shona is heavily biased towards Zezuru; that they know. Could that have a bearing on the difficulties learners have with spelling? 66.67% of teachers rated spelling difficult, and very difficult by 33.33% of teachers. Aggregating the ratings consolidates the fact that spelling poses challenges to learners. The challenges are in the difficult and very difficult categories. Henry (1989) in Adoniou (2018) argues that poor performers at spelling are so because they fail to master and apply the orthographic conventions correctly and rely heavily only on phonological knowledge for the spelling of words which knowledge is informed by home language or dialect. Silver (2011) posits that dialect (home language) is non-standard and therefore considered wrong and inappropriate in academic writing. The non-acceptance of the use by learners of dialectally informed spelling confuses them. It, as well, excites their

sensibilities and sensitivities as they are forced, as it were, to learn standard Shona that has many letters from other dialects excluded from it in preference of all phonemes of the Zezuru dialect. They bring with them cultural or dialect based structures of a language and that contrasts the structures of the school language that is standardized. Instead, they should apply orthographic knowledge as well which dictates correct graphemes to be used. Learners are thus, heavily constrained in their efforts to spell correctly. Relying on both processes of phonological and orthographical knowledge, it is the researcher's belief, reduces error margins as the latter checks out the excesses of the former. This gives credence to the notion that spelling is a procedure decorated with social values. It is ideal, as academic A_2 suggests, to create an orthography that minimises the making of mistakes by incorporating the social values of spelling (*an orthography that respects dialectology*-my annotation) when he says "… now I see that there is something that needs to be done to our orthography because it punishes students who should not be (punished-*my annotation*)". The teachers at the case school have the view that, at present, correct spelling is unfortunately determined by an orthography that is biased in favour of one dialect, Zezuru. Learners of other dialects have problems of having their home language interfering in the way they spell and write since spelling has social values, the linguistic identity that is attached to it. Many studies done so far show that L_1 interference is a problem in writing in situations that have a standard language. Bhela's (1999) in Watcharapunyawong & Usaha (2013) and Camilleri's (2004) in Watcharapunyawong & Usaha (2013) studies indicate that L_1 interferes, influences, affects and causes errors in L_2 writing. Basing on such ideas, it could be why the teachers in the present study generally feel and suggest that the orthography needs to be changed to accommodate L_1 and minimise the commission of errors. This is their general view about the Shona orthography with teacher T_C giving a representative statement of the view by saying that "…if our pupils are allowed to use their language, they may make fewer mistakes, I presume." This statement deductively implies orthography reform, a reform that incorporates dialect languages of Shona in its formulation or design.

Punctuation proved not to pose serious challenges with 66.67% of teachers saying that it is a bit difficult. 33.33% of the teachers said that punctuation is not difficult at all. While teachers view punctuation as not causing serious writing challenges, academic A_2 views punctuation, in his own words, as "…a very big problem caused by failure to interpret rules about it…" Learners misuse comma, colon, semi-colon, apostrophe, exclamation mark and quotes. Some learners do not put a full stop at the end of a sentence. Academic A_2 made a clarion call to teachers to encourage their students to punctuate properly. The survey also revealed that word division is very difficult for learners, with 100% of teachers expressing the same view. Sentence construction was rated a bit difficult by 100% of teachers in the sample. The difficulty regarding writing in Shona arises from the problematic

constituents of spelling, word division and punctuation, which affect grammatical expediency in sentence construction.

In a bid to find out what the teachers give as reasons for poor performance in composition and comprehension work, the researcher conducted group interview with the teachers. The six (6) teachers code-named Teacher A, B, C, D, E, F on Teacher Questionnaire - T_ATQ, T_BTQ, T_CTQ, T_DTQ, T_ETQ and T_FTQ - assented to cross-linguistic influence affecting how learners spell some words. Teacher T_ATQ was direct and particular about the issue by saying, "Those of Ndebele background pose spelling problems." To this, teacher T_BTQ gave an example of a Ndebele word /*futhi*/ that she often comes across when marking. Teacher T_CTQ noted that even "…pupils with Karanga (a Shona dialect) background, some of them, show spelling problems." This speaks to cross-linguistic influence where the power of mother tongue interference is evident. It also confirms Teacher E on Teacher Questionnaire (T_ETQ)'s view expressed when answering question 8 that "Dialect language and mother language affect how students write at times." Learners are encouraged to use standard Shona for academic writing.

Well-founded immediacy of evidence of this state of affairs is effective. The following are pictures of pages from learners' exercise books found in the staff room at the case school. The researcher stumbled upon a dusty pile of exercise books while carrying out documentary analysis. Although it is need of the time to have education in the mother tongue, people should not be granted a wholesale leeway to write as they speak lest there is confusion on how we ought to write as per conventions of the Shona orthography. Let preference be given to the dialects of Shona lest we experience what picture **C** reveals.

Figure 4.19 demonstrates the effects of <u>Ndebele language spoken at home but not at all</u> related to Shona. This learner, in the main, makes orthographical errors. Ndebele interference is noticed on the words like /kuchiphathara/, /dokhotela/, /pakhathi/
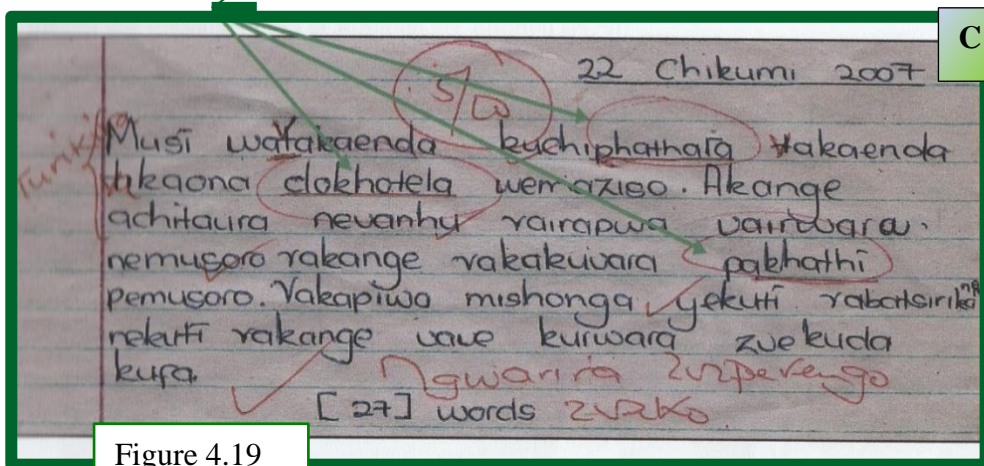
Figure 4.19

The interference of Ndebele that is not at all related to Shona cements the argument that one's home language interferes with one's spelling thereby causing writing errors.

Picture **D** shows how a learner with Karanga background would write. Cenoz & Genesee (1998) in Kahn-Horwitz et.al (2014), hint that transfer occurs more amongst linguistically and orthographically related languages. Picture **D** is a good example of the influence of crosslinguistics, more precisely its offshoot called *negative transfer* (Odlin, 2012; Alonso, 2019). For the purpose of this research, this refers to phonological repertoire of the source language (Karanga dialect) being transferred to the target language (standard Shona that has a heavy Zezuru bias). The influence is negative as can be observed in the picture that the learner has been marked wrong as having committed spelling errors by writing /rinogwadza/ [it is painful]; /anomugwadza/ [they pain him/her] and /chinomugwadza/ [it pains him/her] instead of respective /rinorwadza/, /anomurwadza/, and /chinomurwadza/. The Karanga phoneme /gw/ is not accepted by the current Shona orthography.

In Figure 4.20, 'chip' indicates spelling errors. 'Chip' is a short form for chiperengo. 'Chiperengo' means spelling in English. Spelling errors of the nature indicated in picture Figure 4.20 overleaf reveal persistent difficulty concerning rules and regulations about Shona orthographic conventions and their application.

anomugwadza

chinomugwadza

rinogwadza
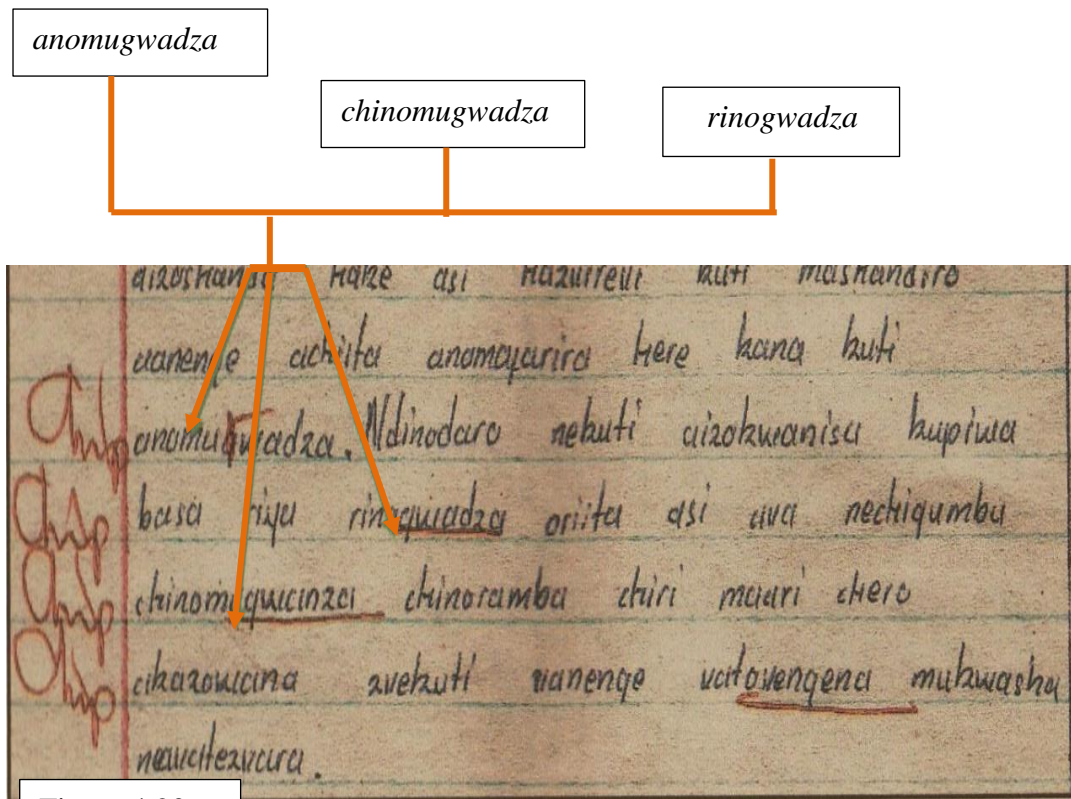
The use of encircled /-*va*-/, /-*nz*-/, /-*en*-/ is an orthographic error while all other errors indicated in the picture are phonological errors where the use of /-*gw*-/ is not acceptable in the standard Shona

Figure 4.20

Academic **A₁** asserts, "…we come up with different spelling for the same, (meaning that) …our language is not standardized completely." There is not a uniform way of writing spellings of words that mean the same. According to Protopapas et.al, (2012) such spelling errors are individuatable and categorisable as: (**1**) orthographic errors as in Figure 4.19 (**2**) phonological errors as in picture Figure 4.20. (**3**) & (**4**) other grammatical errors as in Figure 4.18 (indicated by red circles). A detailed explanation of the categories follows below:

1. Orthographical errors

The errors show the maintenance of sameness of pronunciation but change the written representation of a word by using surrogate graphemes for the same phonemes, for example:

Table 4.21

Correct Spelling	Wrong Spelling
kuchipatara	kuchiphathara
dhokotera	dokhotela
pakati	pakhathi

2. Morphological/Phonological errors

This type of error changes the phonological form of a word. In the case indicated in picture Figure 4.20, the written word is pronounced differently from the one intended because of different graphophonemic mappings (see Table 4.22). However, the meaning of the word is not changed or affected. This is caused by what this researcher proposes to call The Identity Orientation Group (**IOG**) of errors. This is common in **L₂** learning where there is rampant **L₁** interference. As has been mentioned earlier, learning Shona (which has a heavy Zezuru bias) at school is like learning a second language (**L₂**) where **L₁** interference is likely to cause spelling failure. Orthographic rules, morphemic and phonemic structures of a language (dialect) cause learners not to spell well in the language used at school. This subsequently affects proficiency in academic writing. This school language is an exclusively unique writing genre that places a lot of emphasis on rules and demands strict adherence to them. If morphemic and phonemic structures of the learner's home language differ from those of the school language, the learner is very likely to experience spelling problems of the nature shown in the following table.

Table 4.22: ***Wrong spellings caused by mother tongue interference***

Correct spelling (L₂-standard language)	Wrong spelling where L₁ is Karanga Dialect
anomu***rw***adza	anomu***gw***adza (they pain him/her)
rino***rw***adza	rino***gw***adza (it is painful)
chinomu***rw***adza	chinomu***gw***<u>nz</u>a (it pains him/her) (The erroneous use of -***nz***- instead of –***dz***- [see Figure 4.20] produced a spelling error confirming Protopapas et.al.,'s (2012) claim that there can be single or multiple errors on a written word.

This can be extended to other Shona dialects as testified by academic **A₂** when saying, "…I was disappointed by one of my best students who lost orthography marks for writing **w**ana instead of **v**ana. I said the spelling is wrong." This is evidence of only one of many Manyika dialect phonemes that are not incorporated into the standard orthography.

There are <u>other grammatical errors</u>: -

3. of the nature of **prefixal**, affixal and **suffixal** inflections. A good example of the prefixal inflection error can be noticed in picture **D**, in the phrase:

> …asi hazvirevi kuti mashandiro ***va***nenge ***a***chiita anomafarira…

The **prefixal** inflection /**va**-/ [subject concord] is not in agreement with the verb *achiita.*
The appropriate concord of agreement should be */a-/* thus, the correct phrase
would read:

…asi hazvirevi kuti mashandiro *a*anenge *a*chiita *a*nomafarira…

4. pertaining to the use of a wrong **suffixal** reciprocal verb extension as indicated in picture **D** above. In the phrase …vanenge vatoveng*en*a… the correct suffixal reciprocal verb extension to have been used is /-**an**-/. The resultant correct phrase would then have been

…vanenge vatoveng**an**a…
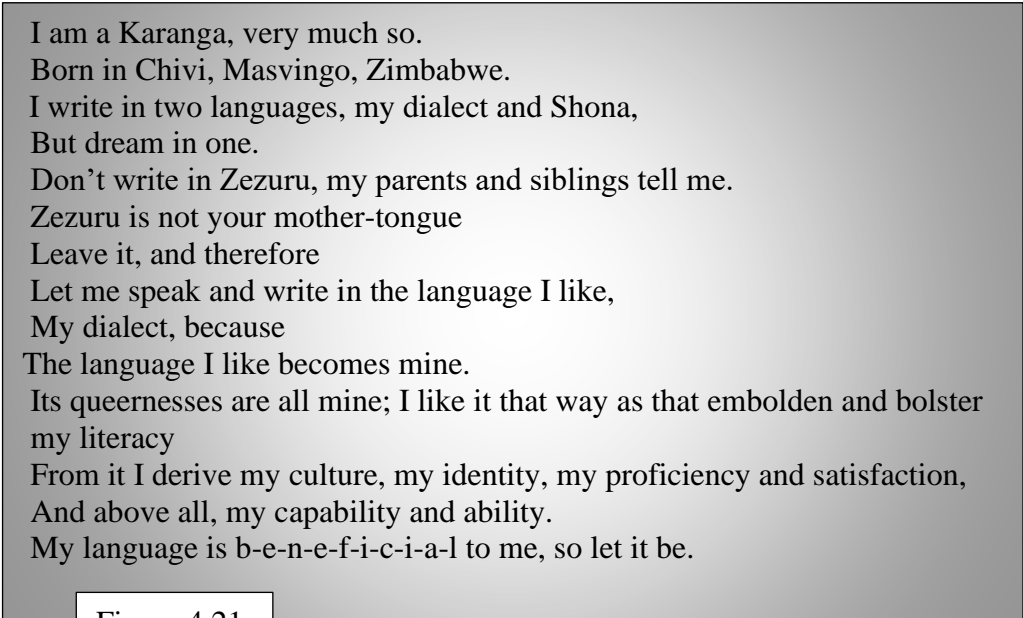
Mbongue (2000) in Friesen (2002) avouches that the idea that there is a 'dominant' dialect to which all other dialects look up to, should never be embraced. It is fertile ground for displeasure. People are not pleased to write not as they speak because they will, in cases, be adjudged to have erred when their mother tongue interferes in the way they spell. Efforts to develop orthographies usually flounder if socio-linguistic factors are not considered; factors like cultural and ethnic identities (Bird, 2002). All the words indicated as wrong spelling in picture **D** are correctly spelt, dialectally or ethnically. It is very displeasing to lose marks allotted to orthography on basis of having embraced mother-tongue linguistic features. The repercussions of such an arrangement are brought bare (see Table 5) when how the mother-tongue informs how learners' spell is taken into consideration. According to Krashen (1982) in Archvadze (2015), the interference can best be considered a habit of L_1 linguistic structures mapping onto target L_2. Krashen's viewpoint is premised on The Linguistic and Orthographic Proximity Hypothesis espoused by Kahn-Horwitz and Share (2011) in Kahn-Horwitz et.al., (2014). It states that the degree of proximity between L_1 and L_2 linguistic and orthographic characteristics triggers mother tongue interference in the negative direction thereby affecting proficiency and performance. The interference is negative. If picture **D** and Table 4.22 are read together, we observe that a learner is being penalised for letting the mother tongue, Karanga, interfere with his spelling. Further to that, Ellis (1999) says that the interference is considered as mistakes or errors made by learners as they write in a 'foreign' language, Zezuru, for the purposes of this research. It is different to one's home dialect. The use of standard language (considered as L_2 in this research) so prescribed by orthography, therefore, undermines or does not accept the use of mother tongues in school writing. This emanates from two orthography philosophies bounded by two extremes.

In the **first extreme,** every dialect decides on whatever writing system it wants. According to Wolck (1991) in Friesen (2002), European countries like England, Germany and Italy have such an arrangement where features from different dialects are selected and absorbed in the orthography. In

such an arrangement, it is possible to experience regional differences in spelling conventions, all accepted in writing. This route embraces and enhances cultural and ethnic identity. In Zimbabwe, it is the incorporation or absorption of dialects into the writing system that cries for reform are getting louder and louder.

In the **second extreme,** one dialect is developed with no regard for other dialects. Due to this extreme's inclinations towards linguicide, other dialects become susceptible to language death. Like in Uganda where KiSwahili was unilaterally declared the official language of the colony (Kabaka, 1929 in Brutt-Griffler, 2002), in Zimbabwe Shona was also unilaterally declared the official language of the colony despite the fact that in the respective colonies both languages were only known to small proportions of the population. This colonial policy promoted a dialect because of convenience to the colonisers' administrative exigencies. This colonial language policy has affected and influenced generations up to date. Reform has become increasingly imminent. Cries for reform are getting louder by the day. This research depicts one such cry.

Taking cue from Brutt-Griffler (2002), the easiest proposition for the Zimbabwean case was to select one dialect and one orthography and impose that by government decree on all the people in the area thereby affecting speaker-writers' competency and proficiency as regards language use. The following poem attests where lack of competency or proficiency stems from:

> I am a Karanga, very much so.
> Born in Chivi, Masvingo, Zimbabwe.
> I write in two languages, my dialect and Shona,
> But dream in one.
> Don't write in Zezuru, my parents and siblings tell me.
> Zezuru is not your mother-tongue
> Leave it, and therefore
> Let me speak and write in the language I like,
> My dialect, because
> The language I like becomes mine.
> Its queernesses are all mine; I like it that way as that embolden and bolster
> my literacy
> From it I derive my culture, my identity, my proficiency and satisfaction,
> And above all, my capability and ability.
> My language is b-e-n-e-f-i-c-i-a-l to me, so let it be.

Figure 4.21

Unpublished poem by Joseph Mupambi: Assimilated to Kamala Das's (1997) in Brutt-Griffler (2002) ideas on use of mother tongue

Ideas raised in the poem:
- Karanga dialect is found in Masvingo province of Zimbabwe

- To say '...dream in one' connotes use of mother tongue (dialect) not Zezuru that was imposed on people
- It is desirable to speak and write in a language one is proficient in;
- The use of the mother tongue makes learners literate, functionally.
- Home language (L_1) is not used for school writing. That transition from home language to school language is a barrier to mastery (Quijano and Eustaquio, 2009) of Shona by learners
- The use of the mother tongue should be encouraged because it helps learners become aware of their culture and identity.

A closer scrutiny of this arrangement leads one to come to the conclusion that, effectively, people in colonies were being compelled to study and use these 'invented and artificial' languages against their choice and will, moreso, at the expense of their mother tongues. Shona language is viewed as a second language that was taught in schools and used for inter-communication by different tribes. It is also a language that learners and general citizenry (who are of dialects other than Zezuru) are not proficient or competent in when writing. Learning through a second language hampers learning outcomes, Daby (2015) advises. However, this **extreme** is feasibly the easiest. It is considered a default route for orthography development endeavours. However, this route breeds disunity. It also breeds cultural disconnection, decline in self- esteem, decline in confidence and decline in interest that leads to poor performance in language work for learners. Academic A_2 admits that the way we write Shona has to be changed because it is largely characterised by discrimination on the basis of language causing one to become diffident. His testament that, "I was laughed at when I went to mark in Harare [because] they found fun in my Karanga. I felt bad. I lost confidence throughout the exercise," amply connotes the discrimination based on language. He further argues that the acceptance of dialect use in examinations as directed by the 1982 Circular should not end there but become law that allows dialect use wherever and whenever as it benefits learners in schools. Academic A_3 also adds a voice to this by arguing "…it is unfortunate that the use of one's dialect in school writing is penalisable," but reprievable when it comes to examinations as presented by Academic A_2 by saying… "The 1982 circular is only for examiners not for teaching or learning." This is true if Informant academic A_3's view that dialect language is accepted on condition of consistence is anything to go by. In the same vein, Informant Academic A_3 admits that "…unfortunately this is in principle." It has not been communicated to general users of the language like school learners. When teaching, educators are forced to enforce the current orthography, the 1967 orthography. It is folly to sideline other dialects as it rubbishes ethnic identity. It can also lead to language endangerment as Schiffman (2002) in Sallabank (2013) contends. Gal (2006)

in Sallabank (2013), states that the language boundaries (dialect zones) borne out of language delimitation, are a European invention which benefitted linguists of European descent such as van Warmelo, Doke, Lestrade and Englebrecht. Missionaries also distorted the linguistic terrain in Africa, as did the linguists. Aggregately, this served the colonial powers well. These efforts delineated the absence of functional space for indigenous languages in school writing. Kufakunesu (2017) notes that the resultant effect of the absence of functional space for indigenous languages in public domains like education, is a violation and trampling of linguistic rights of speakers of indigenous languages. Those linguistic rights are enshrined in the UN declaration on the rights of Persons belonging to Linguistic Minorities. It states that such persons should be afforded the right to use their language in the private and public domains without discrimination or interference. They should also be accorded the opportunity to learn their mother tongue or have instruction in it. Such rights can be affirmed if people use a language that they are proficient in, usually the mother tongue (Mazrui (1998) in Brutt-Griffler (2002); World Bank Education Notes (2005); Maseko & Dhlamini (2014). The need of the time is having education in mother tongue (Shiraz and Shah, 2016). Learning outcomes are improved if education is mother tongue based, Daby (2015) avouches. Academic (A_2) concludes as well that, "Their [the learners] achievement in language work will be bettered as a result of their educational intellect being developed, enhanced and sharpened," by use of their mother tongue.

While Mamo (2016) argues that learners must be encouraged to avoid mother tongue elements interfering in their writing, it has to be mentioned that this is very difficult or next to impossible because L_1 is natural and sticks on the mind. L_2 that is artificial, as Nida (1963) in Friesen (2002) contends, never sticks on the mind. As such, whenever and wherever a foreign language is encountered, the natural tendency there is, is wanting to hear it in terms of the sounds of one's own language, the mother tongue (Wells, 2000 in Mamo, 2016). The discrepancy between the pronunciation and written form of L_2 and the mother tongue L_1 contributes significantly to the errors learners make. As has been observed in Figure 4.20, some learners tend to replace the grapheme /rw/ (Standard Shona) with /gw/ (Karanga Dialect). Academic A_2 testifies that one of his students replaced /v/ (Standard Shona) with /w/ (Manyika Dialect). The examples are many. Such spelling errors result from incorrect substitution of standard Shona phonemes with their dialect counterparts (see Figure 4.1 and Table 4.22). Teacher F (T_F) explained the source of the discrepancy or dissonance by giving a metaphorical analogy of school language as a language that has been sieved and is refined language for school use unlike "…dialect language which is 'crude' and not permitted in education." Academic A_2 diagrammatically illustrated the source of the discrepancy or dissonance as well, thus:
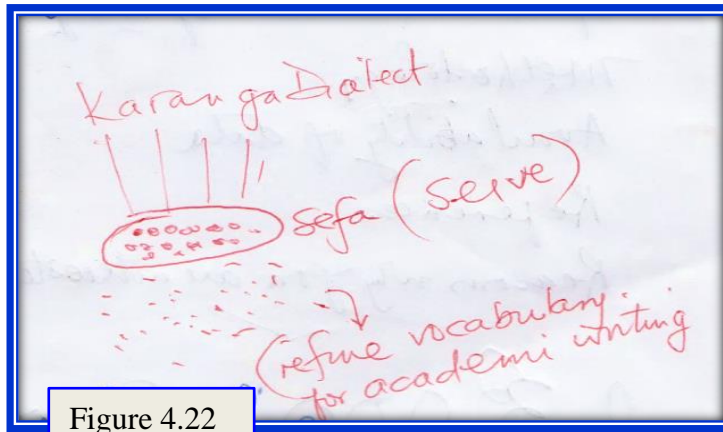
Figure 4.22

The only language that is acceptable for school use is that which has come through the sieve (*the refined vocabulary for academic writing*) and not any other. However, when answering Question 5 on Student Questionnaire - *When not in class or not at school, which language do you feel free to use and why?* – forty-five learners in the sample said that they feel free talking in the home language. The two antagonistic languages - home language and school language – therefore, co-exist in the forty-five sampled learners. The antagonistic co-existence, as Ochieng (2016) hints, causes negative mother tongue transfers that cause errors that learners commit when engaged in academic writing. Shahrebabaki's (2018) view that L_1 is formative of one's speech and identity and as such very difficult and next to impossible to replace or change confirms the notion that L_1 negatively affects the learning of L_2, herein regarded as standard Shona or the school language.

The foregone analogy can be assimilated to Mark Sebba's (2009)] ideas about the relational link between school language, individual language and home language. This view and standpoint is lustrated thus:

Individual

The Individual's language can be either *Non-standard* or *standard*

Non-standard

Standard

School language (red intersection) is **strictly & always** *Standard*

Home

School

Home language can be either *Non-standard* or *Standard*

*The Transition from Home or Individual Language to School Language [Based on **Mark Sebba's (2009)]** ideas*

Fig 4.23
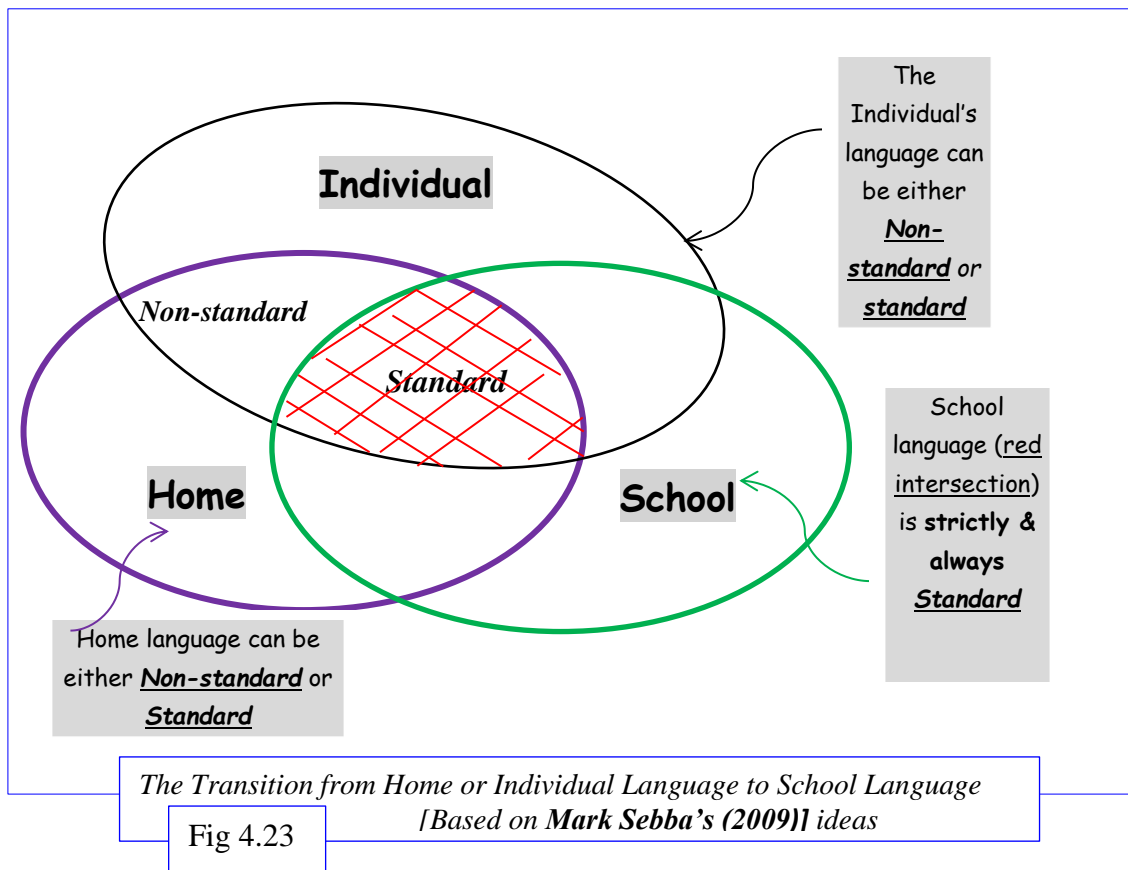
The mismatch between the language used at **school** (standard language) and that spoken at **home** by an **individual** has important consequences on educational attainment (Ramachandran, 2012 in Mamo, 2016). This mismatch between orthography and speech is a product of a language's historical development in the journey of orthography design. It is our (*human beings*) natural tendency that whenever we encounter a language that is foreign to us, we want to impress on it the sounds of our own language, even if they are not accommodated in the orthography. The home, the individual and school (*the subgroups of community of language users*) all use language differently. The mismatch that often exists between pronunciation (by an individual at home) and the written form contributes to the errors learners' make because of mother tongue interference and influence (Viola, 2013 in Mamo, 2016).

The sub-groups of community of users of language (the individual, the home and the school) have varying language forms and conventions (Fig 4.23). As learners transition from home or individual language to school language, they face difficulty in spelling emanating from cross-linguistic transfer as dialect overtones manifest and get transferred onto school language. There will appear discrete differences within word forms, sound and spelling. The divergence characterising spoken and written language causes the errors that learners make. This divergence also inspires the envisioned spelling reform. The way we write should be changed as academic A_2 suggests by saying that reforming or

changing the current orthography is a very good idea because it gives the other varieties a chance to have their input in the writing system. The orthography should be phonemic and Academic **A₂** supports that when saying that, "Shona is a phonemic language and people should be left to write the way they speak." That makes the Shona language orthographically consistent with speech. Porpodas (1989) in Frith, et.al, (1998) argues that how a word is pronounced in speech, usually gives its written equivalent. Learners existing in such linguistic environments make few spelling errors. Wimmer and Hummer (1990) in Frith et.al, corroborate the former's argument by mentioning that learners who exist in environments where the language is orthographically consistent with speech make even fewer spelling errors. That way the orthography will fit the language it serves, as the glove fits the hand. It will allow people to write like how they speak. The commission of errors especially by learners, it is hoped, is ameliorated and or mitigated. A phonemic orthography made mention of effectively pleases all and sundry.

According to the interviewed teachers, the problem of word division could be a result of not understanding the rules that govern it (see Fig 2.9). If the rules are not understood or interpreted well, learners run the risk of confusedly, incorrectly and inappropriately apply the rules. In so doing, they make word division errors that cost them a lot in prose writing. During the analysis of exercise books stumbled upon in the empty staffroom, a page in one of the composition exercise books found was taken picture of (Figure 4.24). It was realised that learners have challenges in dealing with word division confirming 100% of the interviewed teachers' assertion that word division is very difficult for learners (see Table 4.20). Teacher **T_B** blamed this on the literature around them that they read. Although the teacher was not specific about the literature that they read, this reseacher assumed that the teacher could be refering to adverts (on billboards) and marketing fliers. Academic **A₃** and Academic **A₁** concur that this literature is 'notorious' for making those errors mostly word division and punctuation. The academics submit that adverts can affect learners, particularly if Academic **A₂**'s argument that "Adverts are very influential so much that people end up copying wrong things," is anything to go by. From the following picture (Figure 4.24), it can be realised that the learner writes disjunctively. Shona is an agglutinative language and as such it requires a conjunctive way of writing. Word division problem becomes apparent, where (see the encircled words in the following picture):
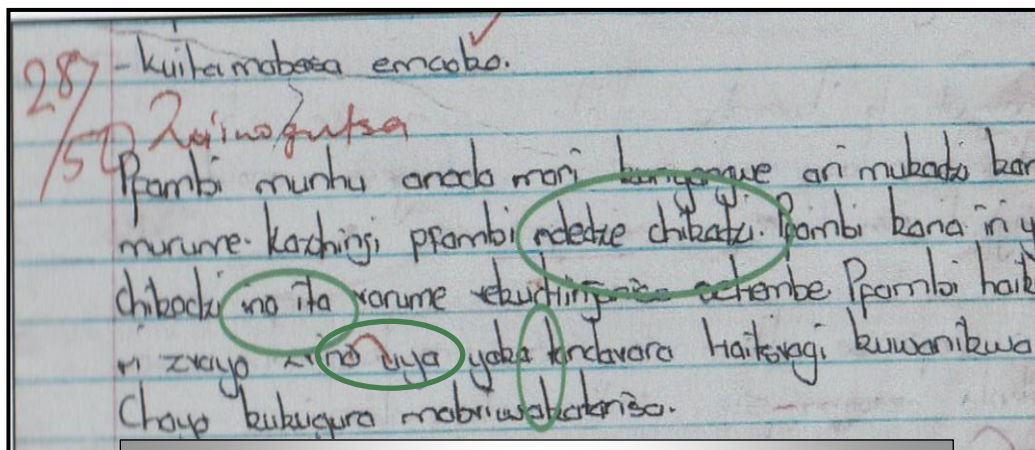
Figure 4.24: *Natural Inability Group of errors (**NIG**)*

(a) … *ndedze chikadzi*…should have been written correctly as …ndedzechikadzi…

(b) …*ino ita*… should be …inoita…

(c)…*yaka tandavara*…should be written as …yakatandavara…

(d) …*zvino uya*… should be …zvinouya… [indicated in red by the teacher]

(e) … *mabviwakatarisa*. should be …mabvi wakatarisa

The Natural Inability Group (**NIG**) of errors [a term fashioned by this researcher] seems to have caused the errors in the above picture (Fig 4.24). The learner naturally fails to write the language properly by breaking words inappropriately or joining words inappropriately as well. These kind of errors could be mitigated had we advertently upheld Doke's recommendation that we should write as we speak as suggested by academic **A₁**.

Wittgenstein (2018) contends that language is rule-governed. The rules, he argues, are so strict that it is like showing the fly the strict way to get out of the fly-bottle. Linguistically, these rules extricate us from confusions and misconceptions that blur our understanding of how a language is written correctly . If these rules are wrongly interpreted, the result is the incorrect way of writing the language as shown in Figures 4.33; 4.34; 4.35; 4.36; 4.37; 4.38; 4.39; etc. However, there are flaws in letting rules themselves act as the normative standard by which we discern whether our way of writing the language is correct or not. We usually will find ourselves entangled in these rules when we fail to interpret their fixed pattern of application. As regards certain constituents of the Shona language like word division, alternative normativity resource has to be engineered to counter the complicated rules brought about by the Language Committee that existed after Doke. Doke had introduced a smart way of avoiding word division problems. According to academic **A₁**, the smart way stipulates that *'write as you speak'*.

This researcher proposes an alternative that gives functional space to all Shona dialects, particularly in the domain of education. Effectively this will mean allowing people to write as they speak. Many errors like spelling errors that people, learners included, make because of mother tongue interference could be done away with. The unfortunate and regrettable failure to interpret word division rules would also be done away with. Above all, the dialects would have been afforded functional space in the domain of education.

4.14.1 Adverts as sources of some of the writing errors learners make

The word 'advertise' comes from a Latin word 'advertere' that means 'turn around'. This suggests drawing someone's attention; implying that the language that is used in advertisements impacts on people's life both socially and individually. Invariably people even end up using the language of advertisements in their everyday life (Alperstein, 1990 in Hamid, 2015) because they would have been turned around or their attention would have been drawn to the adverts. They end up taking everything and anything in the advert as some given truth (Goddard, 2002 in Hamid, 2015) because apart from influencing people to buy products, advertising also influences people linguistically (Arens, 2002 in Hamid, 2015). Goddard (2001) in Hamid (2015) brings up a different view about language of advertisements. He argues that it has long lasting effect on society by way of presenting and representing people's ethnicity, culture and even psychology.

Lanir (2011) and Sebba (2007) concur in asserting that the grammatical inaccuracies and misspellings awash in advertisements and texting confuse students' competence and proficiency. Sebba (ibid) illustrates that adverts and texts affect how people spell a language as people get exposed to these forms of unregulated ways of spelling in a language. Although there are many other **unregulated** and **regulated orthographic regimes** that affect writing as indicated in Figure 4.25, adverts and texts are focussed by this research.

Sebba (2007)'s Orthographic Regimes
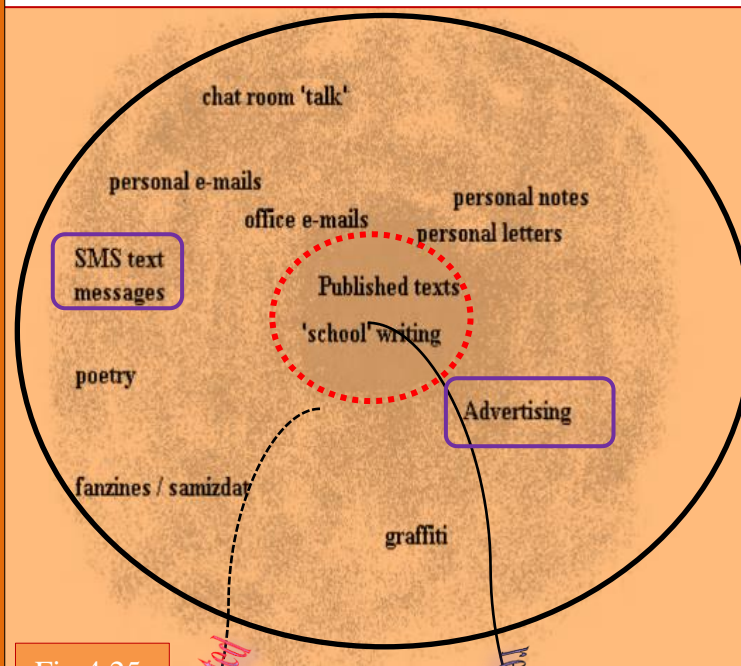
NB: The red and black circles, purple oblongs and the arrows are my own insertions for clarity of my explanations***

chat room 'talk'

personal e-mails

office e-mails

personal notes
personal letters

SMS text messages

Published texts

'school' writing

poetry

Advertising

fanzines / samizdat

graffiti

Fig 4.25

unregulated

regulated

Caption A

The space lying between the red circle and the black circle, is the space occupied by all other orthography regimes that are **unregulated**. The shading within the space is sparse or partial; a 'metaphor' that the way the language is spelt in these regimes is **unconventional**, taking care only of communication. The unregulated regimes (the outliers) of **advertising**, **SMS messages**, are of special interest to this researcher. These usually affect the way a language is spelt. They do not conform to the standard and conventional form of orthography for school writing and formal publications (which regimes are in the centre red circle) **Unregulated regimes hold a licence to violating the conventions** of a language's orthography.

Caption B

The red circle boarders the area of Orthographic Regimes that are **regulated** in terms of spelling. The 'cloudiness' or the colour shading within the red circle is thick in order to aptly indicate the high degree of the regulation of the way a language should be spelt. This conforms to standard or conventional orthography of a language (conventional way of writing).

VIOLATE CONVENTIONS

According to Ehri & Wilce (1980) and Hutzler & Wimmer (2001), word specific orthographic knowledge depends on exposure to specific words that are in print. For advertisement agencies, spelling, word division, punctuation and grammar rules can be broken, played around with to entice buyers to buy their products (Ogilvy, 2017; Nyota & Mutasa, 2010). They are deliberately and intentionally broken. Learners get into contact with the wrong things because women and men in this word business, advertising, cannot write (Ogilvy, 2017). Learners usually internalise and carry the wrong things over to school where they subsequently commit errors when they write in Shona.

A deliberate choice of the following adverts and telephone texts in which errors are identified and discussed was made to indicate the possible negative effects adverts and texts could have on learners. This goes a long way to confirm Lanir's (2011), Sebba's (2007), Ehri & Wilce's (1980), Hutzler & Wimmer's (2001) and Ogilvy's (2017) assertion that word-specific orthographic knowledge depends on exposure to words that are in print.

Figure 4.26

The cover of this brand of powdered **Baby Cereal with Milk** has instructions on how to prepare the porridge. Learners at secondary school level are mature enough to be responsible baby-minders. They get into contact with such instructions once left to care for babies. The instructions have grammatical errors in them. Children are affected by adverts that they get into contact with in their environment (Mwansa (2017). Learners risk carrying this over to school where they will be marked wrong for either wrong spelling, word division or wrong sentence construction. Academic **A₃** admits that adverts can affect learners on, "…mostly word division." Learners tend to think that what is in print is correct. **A** denotes a sentence with grammatical errors and **B** denotes a phrase with a word division error involving an auxiliary verb. The errors are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

A discussion of the errors denoted by **A**

*Ku*gadzira bota remwana *zvi*sina mwero *zvi*nogona kurwarisa mwana wenyu.

- /**ku**gadzira/ is an infinitive verb. Its infinitive prefix /**ku-**/ acts as an alliterative concord that mirrors on all the associated words in the sentence, triggering and consolidating appropriate gender agreement which conforms to gender agreement modalities. Alliterative agreement is appropriate only for prefixal agreement markers. These systems determine such concordial agreement of all the associated words in the sentence (Dobrin, 1995). Cognizant of this argument, in this cited case

- /**zvi**sina/ becomes /**ku**sina/

148

- /**zvi**nogona/ becomes /**ku**nogona/

and the correct sentence would read thus:

Kugadzira bota remwana **ku**sina mwero **ku**nogona **ku**rwarisa mwana wenyu.

A discussion of the error denoted by:

B

In the phrase   …<u>Iripedyo</u>… there is erroneous application of the conjunctive way of writing where

- /iri/, an auxiliary verb and a stand-alone word should be separated from /pedyo/ and also
- /pedyo/, an adjective and a class 16 noun, also needs to be separated from /iri/. It is a stand-alone word.

That done, the correct phrase will read: **…iri pedyo…**

During one of the researcher's data collecting visits to the case school, he found the whole school at the sports grounds. Upon realising that class observations were not possible, documentary analysis was opted. A group of girls was busy preparing food for the staff and athletes. Around the cooking stall were empty packs of Maggi Relish Mix, so many of them. Reading through the cooking instructions on the packaging, various grammatical errors indicated by A, B and C were noticed. Such errors, most likely, can affect learners' writing competency. A discussion of the indicated errors follows underneath Figure 4.27.

Figure 4.27

Discussion of the errors indicated by A, B, C:

Misuse of capital letter indicated by   **A**

There are three types of relish mentioned in the sentence: **m**uriwo, **M**atemba, **n**yama. Two of those are written with small letters at the beginning. There is no justification why *Matemba* is capitalised. After all, it is in the middle of that sentence.Neither is it a proper noun.

Wrong word division indicated by   **B**

Auxiliary verbs and verbs are stand-alone words. As such, *hwavekuibva,* is erroneously written as the stand-alone-word tag is rubbished. The correct phrase is …**hwave kuibva**…

Misuse of hyphen indicated by   **C**

Where hyphens are used, the resultant compound word has a new meaning. In the case indicated, *chete* serves as an emphasis word. Joining it to *chimwe* by a hyphen does not create any meaningful compound word that has a new meaning. Therefore, there is apparent misuse of the hyphen. It should be …**chimwe chete**…

In the following advertisement, there is an error of mixing two languages, English and Shona at word level. A slang word (uchispakwa) which nonetheless gives an effective impact on the product being marketed – CHIBUKU opaque deer – is formed. Pictures of the people in the advert show that they are really having time of their life. Their faces are beaming with a **spark** in their life. The presented argument here is that when learners write likewise at school and they are marked wrong, they will be surprised because they would have seen **uchispakwa** in print on a billboard like the one shown. It is a phonologised equivalence of **spark** meaning to be happy or to enjoy. Shona as a language lacks lexical expansion and that hampers any effort to 'shonarise' many loan words that are used in day-to-day oral or written communication. The strapline Gara uchispakwa is odd and grammatically wrong as far as the current Shona orthography is concerned. However, these odd-sounding phrases (slang) in advertisements have become common parlance among young girls and

Figure 4.28

boys (Gibson, 2017). Learners will carry this over to school where they are adjudged to have committed an orthographic error by mixing codes, English and Shona. They end up not scoring well in Shona written work. Words like /uchispakwa/ where codes have been mixed;

- /uchi-/ a Shona word
- /-spakwa/ a phonologised English word, **spark**

would have been encountered somewhere on previous occasions. They tend to be remembered and thus used in school writing. Teacher **T_B** accedes that many learners mix codes by saying that "…many learners mix Shona and English, in many instances," (also see Figure 4.29 and Figure 4.30) while Teacher **T_A** says that, mostly learners of Ndebele background give her the worst problems.   Mixing codes is neither allowed nor accepted in school writing.

If the reseacher was not aware of how such adverts like the one above with mixed codes (Figure 4.28) influence and affect how learners may end up writing, his perception had a huge turn around, especially so after carrying out a documentary analysis on some learners' written exercises. This is what the documentary analysis revealed:
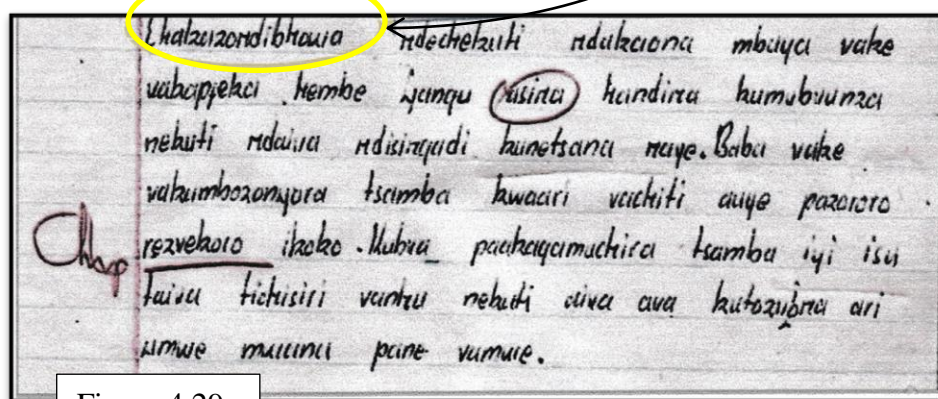
Figure 4.29

/Chakazondi<u>bhowa</u>/ [what bore me] is not a proper Shona word. It is a word borne out of code mixing at word level:

- /Chakazondi-/ is Shona
- /-bhowa /is a 'shonarised' English word meaning /*to get* bored/.

The use of such words is unacceptable in academic writing

All the encircled words are not accepted in academic writing. They have errors of a code mixing nature, the codes being English and Shona. …**ende**… is /and/ in English. Proper Shona word for it is /zvekare/ or /uye/ in the sense implied. /speed / has been used in its English language state. …namalight…is a word borne out of code mixing at the word level; /nama-/ is Shona and /-light/ is English. Mixing of codes is rampant in this paragraph. The teacher indicated such an error ONLY where it is indicated by the red ink (…pamastationafter query…). The teacher did not indicate the other code mixing errors.
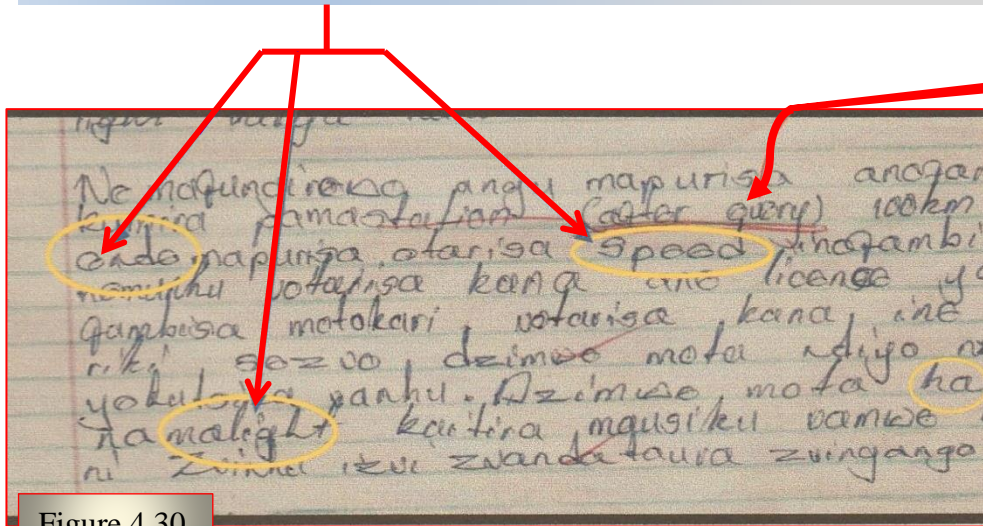
Figure 4.30

Concerning marking school learners' written work, Al Noursi (2011) outlines three important and basic approaches to marking any written work. These are:

1) indicating by underlining each and every error/mistake a learner makes
2) correcting each and every error a learner makes and
3) indicating errors by using what Al Noursi (ibid) calls marking codes as shown below (Table 4.23) (**NB**: the Shona terms are the researcher's improvisation)

The above outlined approaches to marking learners written work ensure preferment of meaningful corrective feedback that in turn can cause enhanced performance, progress and achievements of learners (Independent Teacher Workload Review Group, 2016).

Table 4.23

ERROR INDICATED BY… / MHOSHO DZINOTARIDZWA NE…		
Code	English term	Shona term
^	missing word	pane shoko/izwi rasara pakati
/	new sentence	chirevo chitsva
//	new paragraph	ndima itsva
sp	spelling	**chip** *chiperengo*
wd	word division	**bat** *batanidzo*
		pats *patsanuro*
punc	punctuation	**nyora** *(dzakasiyana-siyana- , . ; “” vara guru)*
ww	wrong word	Izwi rashandiswa zvisina kunaka

Why the teacher chose not to indicate all the encircled code- mixing errors in Figure 4.30 is anybody's guess. This does not do justice to the outline of marking written work that is given above by Al Noursi (ibid).

The mixing of codes as academic **A₁** sees it, is caused by "…get[ting] stuck when we want to say certain things and may end up mixing codes." Informant Academic **A₃** states that the Shona orthography that is based on one dialect and also lacking lexical expansion limits learners' expression and fluency, which leads to what academic **A₁** is alluding to; getting stuck and ending up mixing codes.

A

QUESTION No. 4

edza

Mukuzama

vedzisvondo

avakateedzera

Clete we Chi...

Ngne Zvimwe

B

GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY
Knowledge | Culture | Development

...kwanisa kubuda nevadzidzi vakawanda
.Mukurandudzwe kweChiShona
...nova nonizivo rwakachama pamusoro
weChiShona. Ruziro urwu anobva
kuradzidzi rake nomazvo
nongodza mutauro wakapfuma
Pamusana pepfungwa iyi vadzidzi
ozowanikwa vachipawa *hunda* zvidzidzo
obva zvajekesa kukosha kwsstaita
...wrandudzwa kwomutauro
usekondari.

Figure 4.31

Writing errors of varying nature persist even at university level. Code- switching, as the discussion of pictures **A** and **B** reveals, has persisted up to this high level of education. Some of the confusion lies in the misunderstanding of the rules that govern the writing of the language. Pictures **A** and **B** depict the current Shona orthography as having no room for phonologisation of certain words borrowed from other languages like English as in **B** in the case of /vachi*pasa*/. It is spelt correctly but was marked wrong. The correct Shona word to have been used is /vachi**kunda**/. The Ndebele verb root /-zama/ in **A** means 'trying' or 'to try'. /Muku*zama/* is marked wrong. The correct Shona word to have been used is /Muku*edza/.* Despite the fact that both words have been assigned the morphological and phonological features of Shona, they are marked wrong. This is all an indication of the Shona language's rigidity and poor word inventory caused by its lack of lexical expansion. The Shona language could however, expand its word inventory by legitimising borrowing from languages that it is in contact with. The current orthography has no room for the use of phonologised foreign/borrowed words or adoptives. If a language like Shona could be flexible and embrace lexical expansion, it could realise its fullest growth from contact with other languages. The unacceptability of the words /vachi*pasa*/ and /muku*zama*/ in academic writing stems from

154
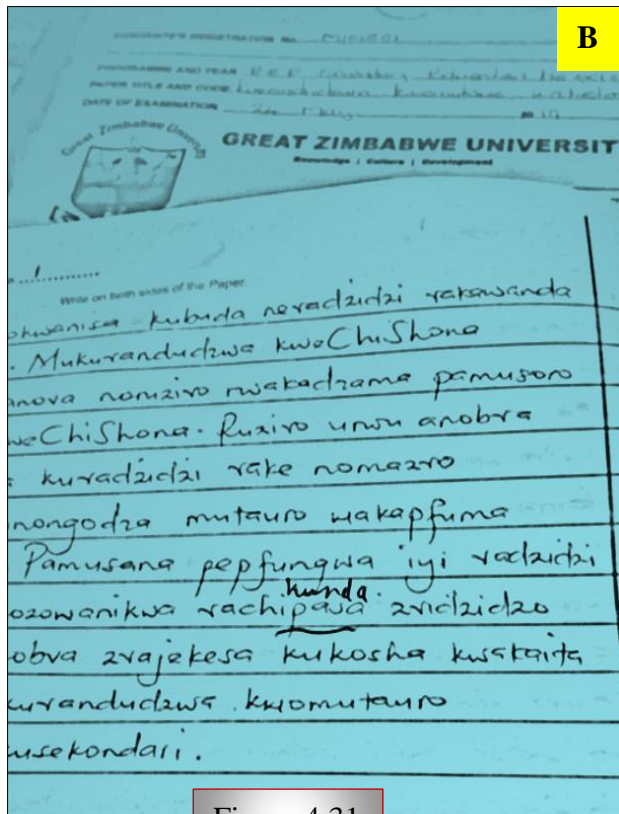
the Shona language's lack of lexical expansion as claimed by Informant Academic **A₃** when saying that if Shona "…does not borrow from other languages it does not grow as liked."

Code mixing as indicated above, is undesirable when writing in Shona. From curriculum to school syllabus pronouncements, the emphasis is so much on using pure Shona when writing. The Pure-Shona-only rule warns learners to be wary of code switching since it can lead to loss of marks, particularly those allotted to orthography in composition writing.

The above learners' errors, as academic **A₁** argues, are a result of the fact that "…Shona language lacks lexical expansion," which feat it could accomplish by way of adoptives/loan words. She further argues that Shona language's rigidity makes it difficult to 'shonarise' foreign words all because "…sounds like /l, q, x, / and many others are not there in the Shona orthography." This causes many learners to perform badly at school writing. Current demands in education tend to compel the Shona language to borrow as much from the languages it is in contact with.

The statement by SUNNY Milling Company **Upfu wesadza wakatsetseka** has three glaring errors on it as indicated:

Figure 4.32

Period is missing

Upfu wesadza wakatsetseka

(i) (ii) (iii)

155

(i) & (ii) are characterised by incorrect use of concordial agreement marker for a Class 14 noun, **upfu.** Instead of **we**sadza, where /**we-/** is a concordial agreement marker for class 3 nouns or class 2 nouns not class 14, **hwe**sadza should have been used. Instead of **wa**katsetseka, **hwa**katsetseka should have been written. The correct grammatically constructed sentence with appropriate concordial agreement markers would read thus, *Upfu hwesadza hwakatsetseka.*

(ii) The third error is a punctuation error symbolised by absence of a period after /*wakatsetseka*/ as indicated. It is a sentence and should have a stop at the end.

Whereas the teachers say punctuation is not a big problem (see Table 4.20), academics see otherwise. Academic **A₂** observes that there are some people who do not put a full stop (period) at the end of a sentence. Others fail to interpret punctuation rules and end up misusing comma, colon, question mark and many other punctuation marks. This shows that teachers are understating the gravity of punctuation as a language constituent that is difficult for learners to use properly when writing. The learners' failure to use various punctuation marks in their pieces of written work leads to loss of marks allotted to orthography when marking.

Learners are exposed to erroneously constructed sentences at one time or another in their school days. Children being children as they are, consider everything and anything in print as correct. When they carry that over to school, they get confused when they are adjudged to have erred. The advert below serves this point well:

As states noun juxtaposition, the second noun functions as a qualifier e.g.: murume *murimi*; mukadzi *shoroma*; musikana *nherera*. This concept is contestable in the following example of a nominal noun /**Mudzinga Zhara**/ in the advert. In their semantics and discourse, the two words combine verbal and nominal features and occupy space between typical nouns and typical verbs (Croft, 1991 in Zucchi, 1993). Action nominals make reference to events – event of driving hunger (zhara) away by way of the verb (-dzinga) which asserts the occurrence of an event. The two linguistic aspects joined together form an Action Nominal /**Mudzingazhara**/ written correctly as such, not erroneously as is the case in the advertisement thus, /**Mudzinga Zhara**/. Nominals should always be written as one word. If pupils encounter such errors in adverts, there is danger of carrying the wrong thing over to school. They are adjudged to have committed an orthographic error when they write nominal constructions in the manner shown in such an advertisement that they would have come across in the environment.
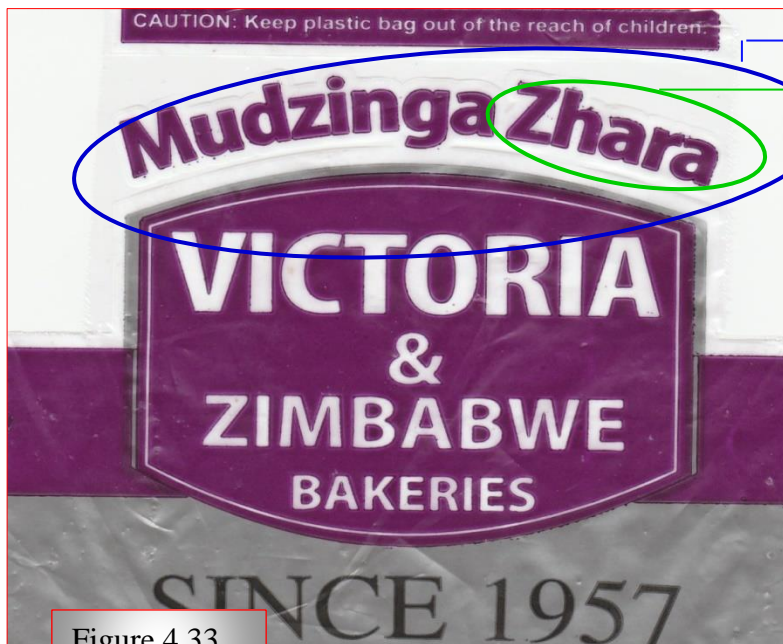
Figure 4.33

The word /*zhara*/ is a Karanga dialect word form. When pupils come across words that are in print but are not prescribed by the current Shona orthography, they take that as correct and acceptable spelling of the word. They will be confused as to why the teacher marks them wrong, while preferring /*nzara*/. They spell the word as they would have seen in an advert like this one.

The analysis given above depicts advertisements as a source of some of the errors learners make when writing at school. When they see certain words with errors but in print, they tend to consider them and internalise them as correct spellings. To them, anything and everything in print is correct. When they spell like they would have seen on an advert, they will be marked wrong and that really confuses them. As it is, words misspelled, wrongly divided and sentences wrongly punctuated in advertising copies only add to the confusion of pupils who are already insecure when it comes to standard usage. In America, one teacher hinted that it is not advisable to trust advertising spelling because it can be harmful to one's spelling (Maddox, 2007). Academic **A₂** concurs by arguing that adverts are very influential, so much that people end up copying wrong things. Adverts have the latitude to use anti-languages, to use slang or even colloquial language and people copy those colloquial and anti-languages ending up making errors.

The following picture (Figure 4.34) is part of a page from a composition exercise book of a certain learner at the case school. Of the many writing errors indicated by the teacher, the researcher's interest was piqued by the highlighted words, /stamba/ and /munza musha/.
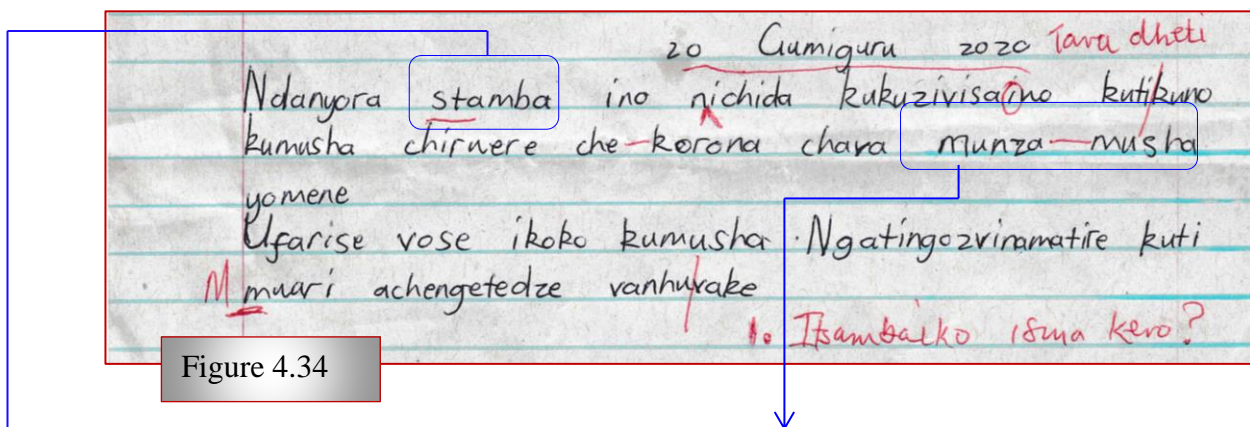
Figure 4.34

Juxtaposing <u>Mudzinga Zhara</u> (see Fig 4.33) against <u>munza musha</u> (Fig 4.34), one can see the possible effects of adverts on learners' writing. Both words are nominal nouns, specifically Action Nominal Nouns that should always be written as one word (Croft, 1991 in Zucchi, 1993), giving us Mudzingazhara and munzamusha respectively.

A dyslexic disorder can manifest either by omitting a letter in a word or by confusing the order of letters in a word (Kelly, 2016). As it is with *'Contraditcion'* in Figure 2.6, it also is with *'stamba'* in Figure 4.34. The dyslexic confusing of the order of letters in a word produced /*stamba*/. /t/ should come before /s/ for the correctly spelt /*tsamba*/ as /c/ should have come before /t/ for the correctly spelt /*contradiction*/.

Teachers are entreated to indicate all the errors learners make when writing The teacher who marked the piece of written work shown above, Figure 4.34, indicated most of the errors the learner committed. However, the teacher is encouraged to discuss the errors with the individual learner so that the errors are not repeated. Unfortunately, individual attention to learners is not possible at the case school as Teacher **T**c comments that, "There is no room for individual attention given to learners" because the teachers are generally overwhelmed by the amount of work.

Helma (2008) says that all scripts are robust identity indicators. Goddard (2001) in Hamid (2015) likewise argues that language can represent its speakers' culture, characteristics, ethnicity and even psychology. My interest in this advert was specifically piqued by such ideas and subsequently captured by the TellZim identity-seeker statement, *Wezhira wati wahwei!!!!*

Figure 4.35

This statement makes TellZim feel comfortable among the Karanga people who live in this dialect zone of Masvingo in Zimbabwe. For advertisement agencies, as Ogilvy (2017) opines, grammar conventions are there to be broken, played around with to produce messages that will appeal to buyers and persuade them to buy their product. The Shona orthography currently in use, forbids */wezhira/*, and accepts */wenzira/*. It also forbids */wahwei/* and accepts */wanzwei/*. The spelling conventions as per Shona orthography have been brutalised to achieve desired identity; that of becoming one with the Karanga people where the business is situated. They find it better to speak the language of their buyer persona by not following every grammar rule in the book.

As academic **A₁** puts it, if learners "…see things in print they say this is the right thing," They will carry the errors over to school. The identity–seeker statement shows the symbolic 'otherness' of the Karanga while it also has spelling errors caused by using the Karanga phonemes /**zh**/ and /**hw**/ instead of /**nz**/ and /**nzw**/ respectively. The weekly tabloid boosts its sales by becoming one with the language of the market base (the psychological effect), Karanga. Also noticeable in the statement is the misuse of a punctuation mark, the exclamation mark at the end of the identity-seeker statement. A **question mark** is appropriate. The correct statement will thus, be *Wezhira wati wahwei?*
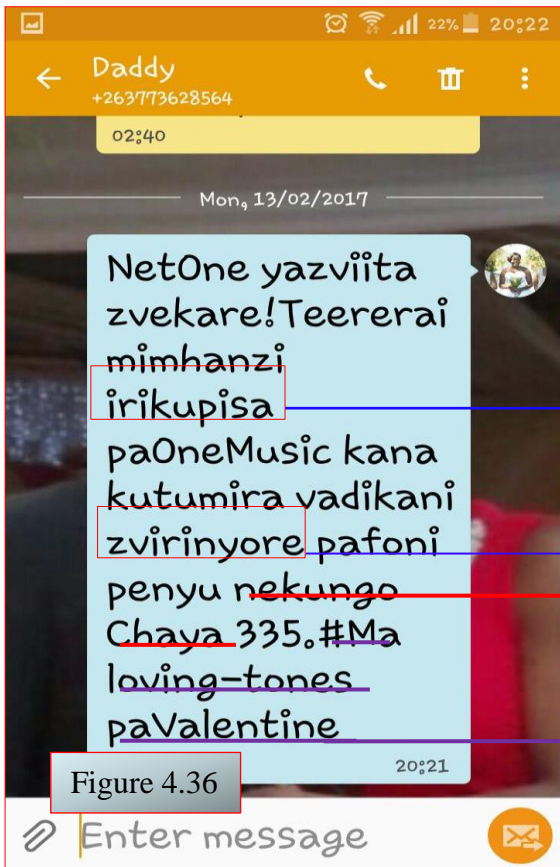
Figure 4.36

In Fig 4.34 knowledge that auxiliary verbs should be stand-alone words is lacking. It is exacerbated by seeing adverts which often, as claimed by academic **A₃**, carry word-division errors. Academic **A₁** concurs by saying that print media is notorious for carrying such errors. On (i) correct word division would give us /**iri kupisa**/ and /**zviri nyore**/. When learners encounter such orthographic errors that are in print they tend to internalise these errors. Eventually they pay the prize at school when they write likewise. It can therefore be argued that advertisements are a rich source of orthographic errors of a word division nature. On (ii), a hyphen that signals word break at the end of a line should have been used, giving us **nekungo – chaya** instead of **nekungo chaya.** On (iii) the sentence has an error emanating from code mixing at word level; **ma**loving-tones and **pa**Valentine. In academic writing, this is marked wrong. It is grammatically unacceptable. Its unacceptability is because of the Shona language's lack of lexical expansion. "…the orthography does not borrow from other languages…" as claimed by Informant Academic **A₃**. The claim by this academic is however, contestable in a way.

The language borrows, selectively though. That curtails its expansion and growth. Examples of accepted borrowed words that come to mind are /*motokari*/ from motor, /*bhasikoro*/ from bicycle, /*bhazi*/ from bus, /*-sevenz-a*/ from Ndebele /–sebenz-a/. These adoptives are phonologically modified to suit the target language's features. In view of this, it is suggested that the language should borrow much more than this so as to "…further development (and ability) to capture new trends in language development," as alluded to by Informant Academic **A₃**,

All red markings in the following phone message in Fig 4.37 below indicate writing errors leading one to conclude that the electronic media has many errors. This can influence and negatively affect how young learners end up writing at school. Academic **A₁** argues that, "Our learners see these adverts and it cannot be doubted that they get influenced and affected," negatively so, it should be added.
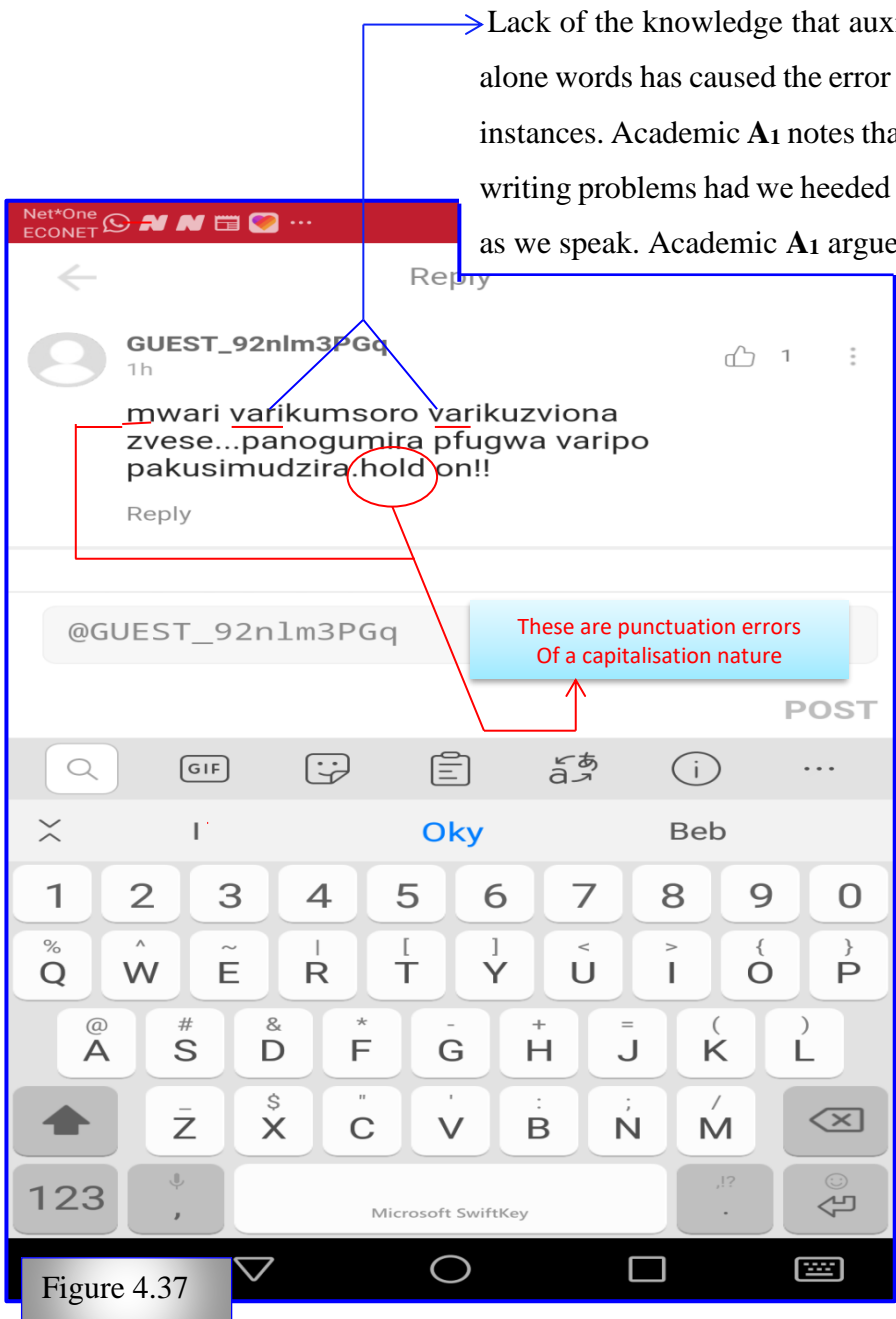
Lack of the knowledge that auxiliary verbs like /vari/ are stand-alone words has caused the error of word division in the indicated instances. Academic **A₁** notes that word division should not cause writing problems had we heeded Doke's hint that we should write as we speak. Academic **A₁** argues That, "Shona is a tonal language so much that even as we speak, in between words there is this penultimate stress on the last syllable of a word. That indicates a word has ended." The following examples given by the same academic serve as good examples of how the word division problem could be circumvented:

a) tine-e mari-i

b) vari-i kudya- a

c) vari-i kufara-a

d) dzevakadzi-i ava-a

Going by Doke's principle, word division involving auxiliary verbs must not cause any writing problems. It is easier and clearer to notice where to break words because of the penultimate syllable-lengthening principle. If people (and learners) are allowed to write as they speak, they would find it much easier to locate where the penultimate syllable lies and break the words accordingly and appropriately. A punctuation error is on /**.h**old/ which should be /**H**old/ with a

Figure 4.37

capital letter /**H**/ since it comes after a period. The period marks the end of a sentence and the beginning of a new sentence. Another punctuation error is on /**m**wari/. It should be capitalised and be written as /**M**wari/.This validates the claim by this researcher that print media is a possible cause of writing errors.

Figure 4.38

The red marking on this Facebook Home Page picture, Fig 4.38, indicates a word division error involving an auxiliary verb /**iri**/. It is a stand-alone word. The word was erroneously joined to /**-pa**/. /**pa-**/ as a locative prefix should be joined to Facebook to give us the locative noun **pa**Facebook. If the claim by Academic **A₁** that print and electronic media is notorious for making errors is anything to go by, then the young learners are never safe. They are most enthused by such media like Facebook that has such glaring errors. This can influence and negatively affect how young learners end up writing at school. Academic **A₁** argues that, "Our learners see these adverts and it cannot be doubted that they get influenced and affected," negatively so, it should be added.

If gadgets like phones as indicated in Fig 4.36, Fig 4.37 and Fig 4.38 are that much infested with grammar errors, it cannot be doubted that young learners who are still learning and most enthused by such gadgets, are exposed to very 'dangerous' literature. Academic **A₁** submits that, "Those areas [print and electronic media] are notorious for making those errors we are talking about especially word division and punctuation."

In several countries, so states Helma (2008), public transport vehicles have advertising posters affixed on them or proverbs and prayers written on them. This gives the adverts a local context that enhances people's engagement with the brand. Roux et. al., (2013) in Roux (2014) refer to this kind of advertising as transit advertising. Advertising, transit or stationery, conveys messages about a brand or persona. In the case of transit advertising, the target audience are commuters, pedestrians and the general people passed by. The reality of the idea being communicated by Helma (2008) and Roux (2014) is observed on buses and kombis moving around with such advertising banners or inscriptions. The following picture of a kombi observed on the road, bears clear testimony to this claim. Some of these posters and inscriptions have orthographical errors. These errors can be harmful to learners, warns Maddox (2007), more so in urban centres where they board them daily going to school. Learners get into contact with wrongly written sentences and are rated as poor and inexpert writers who pay heavily in their written exercises at school for internalising such errors.

Figure 4.39

The statement /*WAKUDARO HAMAYAKO*/ has a punctuation error. It is a question and must therefore have a question mark at the end. There is also a word division error. /HAMA/ and /YAKO/ are stand-alone words. /*WA[va]KUDARO*/ is formed out of quick speech where there is leeway of leaving out the infix morpheme -**va-**. This is acceptable only in speech and not in writing. The correct form of the phrase is /WAVA KUDARO.../. After the errors are corrected, the correct strapline in the advert would read thus,

Wava Kudaro Hama Yako? Learners encounter such errors on adverts that are awash in their environment. Such kind of errors negatively influence and affect their writing, Maddox (2007) advises. These vehicles speak to a variety of audiences, students included (Hobbs, 2018).

4.14.2 Co-existence of orthographies as source of errors that learners can commit when writing in Shona

Figure 4.40

This is a signpost giving direction and distances to three schools in my rural home area. Cognisant of Gentry's (1982) cogent argument that orthography development stages overlap and co-exist, I got interested in the name RUNGAI. In 1955, in a bid to rid special symbols in the orthography, /**ng**/replaced /ŋ/ of 1931 (a special symbol that could not be typed). /ŋ/ represents the nasal sound better than /ng/. After realising the inaptness of /ng/ to represent the nasal sound, a new typable symbol was proposed and used. It is /n'/. The name of the school as pronounced by locals is

/RUN'AI/ and not /RUNGAI/ that is a phonologically and orthographically wrong spelling. The 1955 convention is used to write the name Rungai instead of using 1967 orthography that governs spelling today. This leads one to believe that orthographic conventions can surely overlap and co-exist. However, learners are not allowed to vacillate between the stages. Doing so can lead learners to inappropriately apply the current orthography's conventions thereby making errors when they write in Shona.

Advertising about Covid19 is viciously going on. The aim is to disseminate as much information about the disease as possible. Various intended audiences seek the information with hyped-up interest. This means that many people get into contact with the erroneously written words. You cannot exclude learners from this frenzy because schools, at one time, closed because of the dread disease. They will want to know more about the pandemic that is affecting their education. They get into contact with such errors (see red marks in the picture) on such adverts. These errors can influence and affect their spelling or word division.

Figure 4.41

Two ideas that arise from this advert:

1) Orthographies from two eras can overlap and coexist as argued by Gentry (1982). In the 1955 Shona orthography they would write /*kwemaviki*/ which today, by the current 1967 orthography is /*kwemavhiki*/. Today, a breathed sound is represented by the grapheme /**vh**/ not /**v**/. Vacillating between the stages of orthography development causes learners to make errors like the generator of this adv

2) Word division errors involving auxiliary verbs are frequent and rampant in adverts and they pose many problems to most learners as noted by Academic **A₁** and Informant Academic **A₃**. One such word division error in the above advert that confirms the academics' assertion is on the word /*inechirwere*/. It should be /…*ine chirwere*…/, spoken as **…ine-e** (Penultimate syllable lengthened indicating end of a word) **chirwere-e…** (Penultimate syllable lengthened indicating end of a word). In that case, auxiliary verbs should not be causing any writing problems had we heedfully upheld Doke's recommendation that '*write as you speak',* because, " Even as we speak you see that in between words there is this penultimate stress on the last syllable of a word. That indicates a word has ended and should be separated from the next word," Academic **A₁** insists. Academic **A₂** also presents that rules
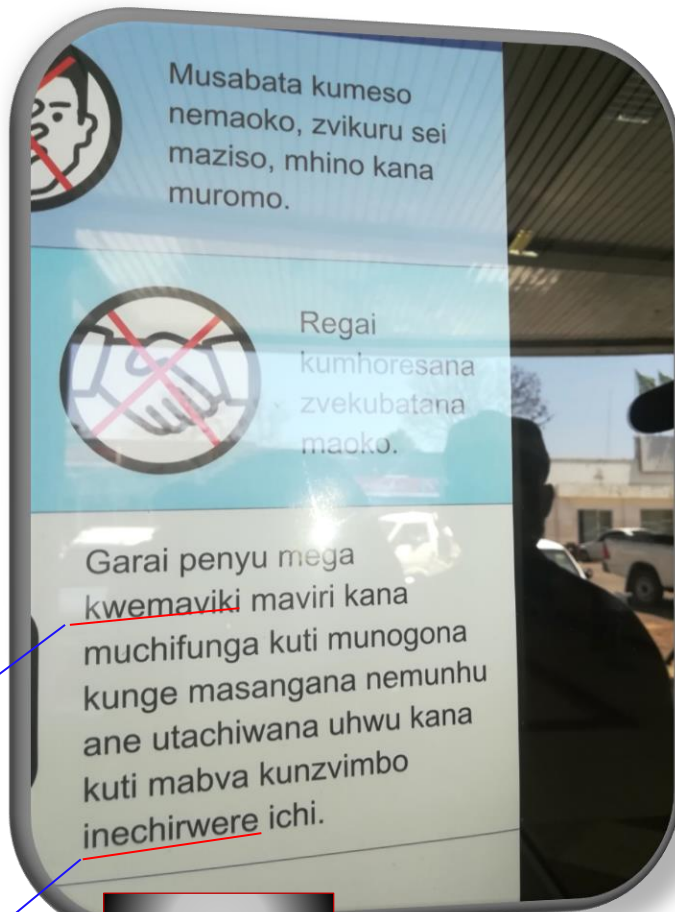
about word division are not easy to interpret. They are confusing and not easy to conceptualise. Learners get to a stage where they do not know what and how to apply what and where. They end up making these word division errors, most commonly those that involve auxiliary verbs. Some of the confusion lies in the misunderstanding of the rules that govern the writing of Shona. At the moment, rules are the normative standards for discerning whether one is writing the language properly and correctly or not. The rules have to be discerned meaningfully by finding simplified and appropriate interpretations. That can be facilitated and achieved by writing them in Shona. It is unfortunate that a book that explains spelling rules in Shona, Manyorerwo eShona: *Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu* is not available at the case school (see Tables 4.27 & 4.28). However, there are under 30 texts anyway of A Guide to Shona Spelling, a book written in English that is an incomprehensible language to most leaners.

4.14.3 Zezuru hegemony

The time is now, Banda & Mwansa (2017) declare, for adopting new pedagogical approaches that have benefits in multi-lingual and multi-cultural classroom discourses. The one-language (Shona) discourse that still characterises language education in Zimbabwe needs displacement and replacement. The Shona language's heavy bias towards Zezuru and its use in education negates new pedagogical approaches suitable in multi-lingual or multi-cultural discourses. The hegemony needs dismantling by reforming the Shona orthography so that it accommodates all the dialects to suit multi-lingual and multi-cultural classroom discourses. Learners' linguistic repertoires and cultural identities should be at the centre of consciousness rather than being peripheral in language teaching. This will facilitate what African countries, Zimbabwe included, envisage. They envisage extricating themselves from Western education approach with regard to African languages. The approach is premised on the onerous notion of One Nation, One Language. In 2003, UNESCO directed the development of a framework that encourages the use of mother tongues in education. The use of mother tongues in education implies reforming and redesigning orthographies for the languages. Clifton (2013) argues that orthography, as a social construct, fosters identity and 'groupness'. Above all, it interacts with dialectal differences. A good one does not only interact with the differences, but strives to, by some good measure, resolve the differences. To realise this resolution of the differences in earnest,

- The government and institutional attitudes, as argued by Academic A_1, that emphasize use of standard Shona and policies that support furtherance of Zezuru hegemony need exorcism by way of instituting positive language attitudes and language policies that do not exclude

Shona dialects in the education system. The unfortunate penalising of students for using their dialect language in academic writing must be done away with. This is achievable through acceptance and accommodation of Shona dialect languages in academic writing. The acceptance and accommodation is justified by the high degree of overlap between grapheme-to-phoneme for standard Shona and its dialects. This will satisfy Academic **A₂**'s proposal that since "…Shona is a phonemic language…people should approximate sound and letter, that is they should write as they speak." The straightjacket insistence on the use of standard Shona in academic writing is tantamount to denying functional space to dialects for use in education. That should not be.

- The attitude of people towards their different dialect languages needs exorcism. They need to have a positive attitude about their languages (dialects) and never accept that their way of talking is inferior as they respond to critical trends and shifts in domains of life like education. People should stop discriminating others on the grounds of language thereby subjecting them to 'linguistic self-hatred', a term coined by Fishman (1991) in Sallabank (2013). Academic **A₂** testified against this discrimination when he remonstrates that, "I was once laughed at when I went to mark in Harare. They found fun in my Karanga, those speaking Zezuru. I felt bad. I lost confidence throughout the exercise." The Zezuru who are favoured by current Shona orthography think that any other dialect is not a language. They discriminate against people who do not have a 'language' and expect them to <u>speak in **the** language</u> – Standard Shona- that has a very heavy Zezuru bias.

- The envisaged orthography should be one that facilitates dialect transmission by encompassing all Shona dialects in its design and formulation. It will ensure dialect transmission through respecting language diversity in education.

After adopting the strategies identified and discussed above, the stage is set for the dismantling of Zezuru hegemony. The hegemony is dismantled by instituting these strategies regarding mother tongue use in education.

Fig 4.42: *Abridged version of Clifton's (2013) model of mother tongue use in education*
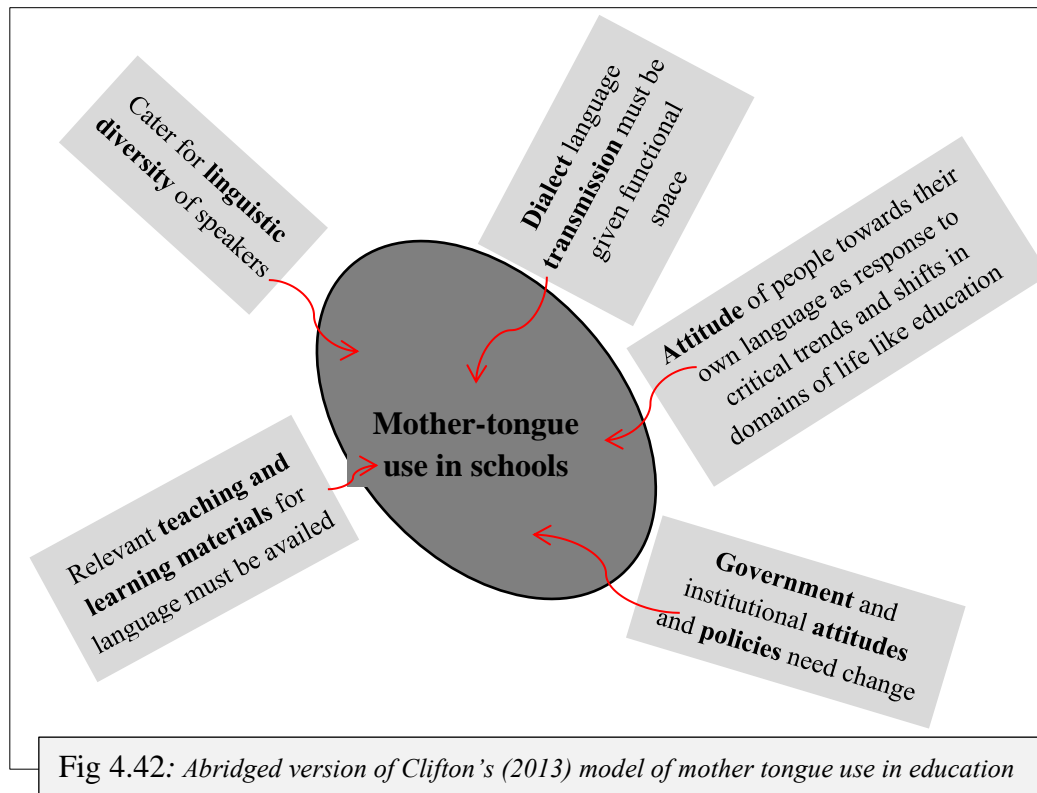
The appropriation of mother tongues in education is driven by the criteria illustrated in the above diagram (Fig 4.42). That way, a big blow is dealt to the Western education model for African languages, which is based on the notion of One Nation, One Language. It is so because the new pedagogical discourses that embrace mother tongues in language learning would have taken grip. That is a welcome education model for African languages. It also signals the dismantling of Zezuru hegemony.

This Zezuru hegemony, a result of standardisation, has to be dismantled. From a non-Zezuru perspective, the use of Zezuru as a norm of reference must not be taken lightly. It must be viewed as a problematic hegemony of the language. Tsuda (2015), talking about the English language, notes that its international dominance as a communicative asset causes absolute communicative inequality as well as generating linguistic insecurity and anxiety for non-English speaking people. Tsuda (ibid) proposes The Ecology of Language Paradigm as a strategy to counter and dismantle the hegemony of English in the world linguistic terrain. This researcher believes Tsuda's ideas about English hegemony can be likened to Zezuru hegemony on the Zimbabwean linguistic terrain, whereupon Zezuru has dominated the outlook of the Shona language. It was, during the standardisation process of the Shona dialects, that the Zezuru dialect was designated the accepted norm-of-reference status. That almost relegated some of the Shona dialects to the periphery of consciousness. Kufakunesu (2017) argues that the basis for a plausible ecology of language is the existence of diversity of languages that share the same

environment. The diversity will save languages from language loss, endangerment and 'erasure' (a term coined by Bourdieu, 1991 in Sallabank, 2013). Diversity also affords speakers the right to language choice and usage, doing away with imposition of what language to use, where and when. The dominance of Zezuru over other Shona dialects needs dismantling if diversity is to benefit Zimbabwe, linguistically. This researcher diagrammatically explains the genesis of Zezuru hegemonic imposition as a dominant variety. This narrows and restricts other varieties' functions. Figure 4.43 is the proposed frame for dismantling Zezuru hegemony:
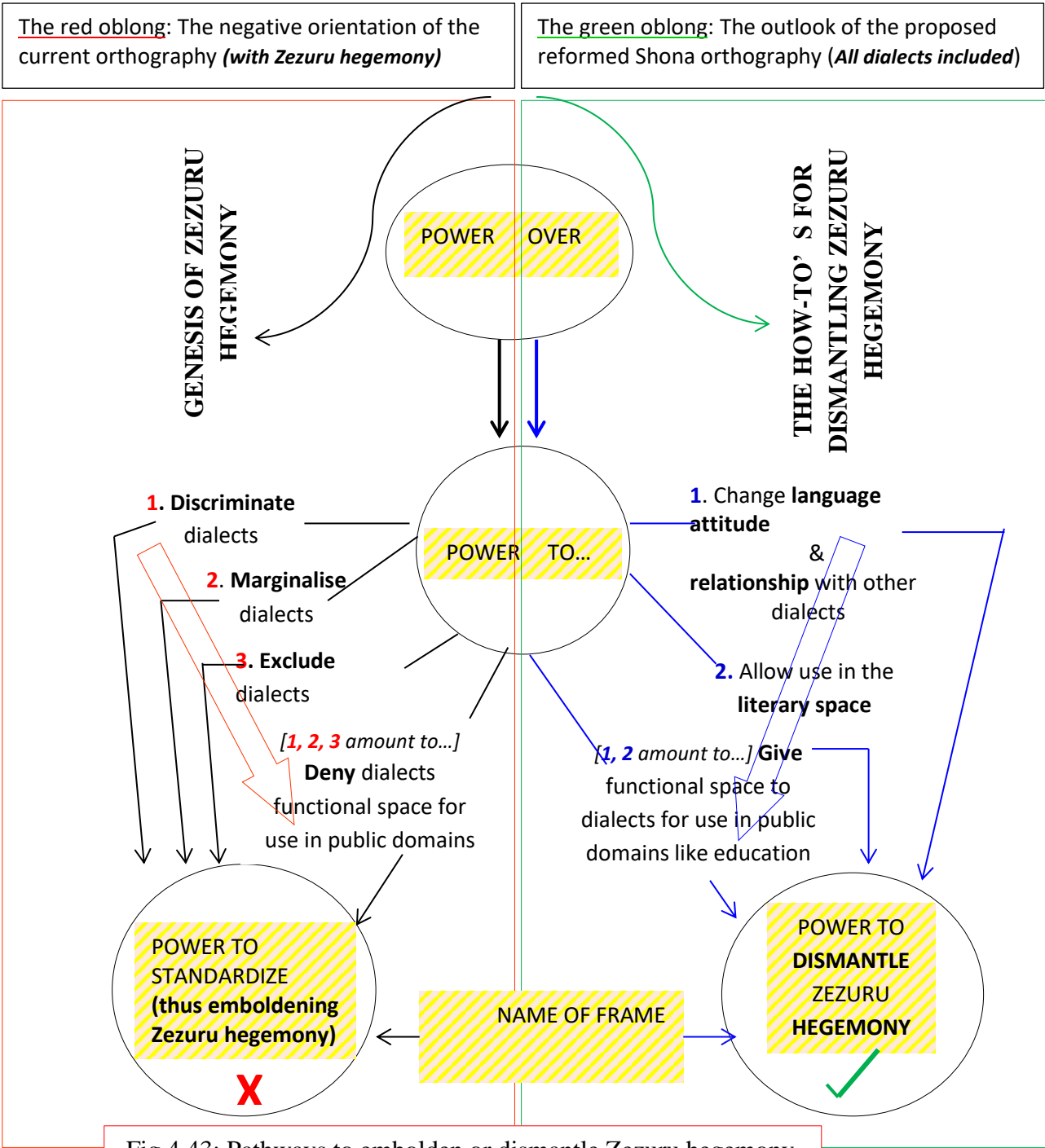
Fig 4.43: Pathways to embolden or dismantle Zezuru hegemony

Zezuru hegemony needs to be dismantled so as to save other dialects (language varieties) from four linguistic perils, namely:

Fragmentation, which according to Henrich (2005) in Sallabank (2013) is the narrowing or restricting of a language's or its variety's use or functioning. In the case of Shona, other dialects but Zezuru have a restricted functioning. They are not given functional space in public domains like education.

Marginalisation is a direct result of fragmentation, where a language is restricted in its use and in the case of Shona this has been caused by the biased choice of Zezuru over other dialects. Batibo (2005) says that leads to near death of languages (dialects in this case). Present day Zimbabwean linguists have come to realise the negativity of this. They are all in unison as regards the creation of an orthography that, as Magwa (2007: viii-ix) hints, please all speakers of different varieties of the Shona language living in different dialect zones in Zimbabwe. Academic **A₂** concurs with Magwa (2007) that the current Shona orthography does not please all speakers because it excludes some of the letters they use when he admits that, "Our standardisation has excluded some phonemes from other dialects, phonemes like /*l, mp, dhl, x, gw, zh* /,only to mention a few"

Sublimation is a stage of language decontextualisation from certain functions like its non-use in the domain of education. Its use is regarded as abnormal. Deviating from using the 'normal' language (the standard) is penalisable or invites rebuke or any other pejorative connotations. The use of dialect language like Manyika in education for academic writing is penalisable. Academic **A₂** penalised a learner who wrote **w**ana instead of standard **v**ana

Subordination is the final stage in the process of language erasure. At this point of no return, the dominated cannot query the imposition of a variety's hegemony. This researcher encourages that now is the time to query Zezuru hegemony and institute strategies for its dismantling In the case of Shona, efforts to reform its orthography so as to give other varieties functional space have been going on for long but there seems to be no movement in foot towards any meaningful reform.

After the Zezuru hegemony is dismantled, the hope is that dialect phonologies, erstwhile excluded and marginalised, are accommodated in the orthography. When learners use such an orthography, the expectation is that the commission of errors by learners is ameliorated. Learners find it easy to approximate sound and letter in the new shallow orthography. That can cause learners to produce flawlessly written texts in the language of the new order. Ability to produce a flawless text in a language is a yardstick for measuring literacy. That is achieved by spelling competency; a competency one can attain by writing as he/she speaks. This is attainable if words from Shona dialects that were erstwhile denied inclusion, are given such space in the envisaged orthography. This researcher bemoans the

present emphasis on standard Shona, which has contributed immensely to low pass rates when learners do not score well in composition after they lose marks allotted to orthography. Some of the errors that cause that loss of marks are a result of the mismatch between the home language-L_1 (dialect) and the school language-L_2 (standard Shona). As long as the mismatch between L_1 and L_2 remains unresolved, learners will continue to bear the brand of the effect of mother tongue interference in the way they write.

4.14.4 Failure of the Shona orthography to embrace learners' linguistic backgrounds

One wonders why the learnt and spoken language does not correlate with writing. If standard language marks correct usage of language, so use of dialect language embodies incorrectitude. I beg to ask; is it not a misnomer that gropes for realignment?
[A cover- statement for linguistic background as a cause of writing errors]

Whenever and wherever standardisation of a language is done, dialect languages suffer being not wholly embraced by writing systems. In that case, you find that the use of dialect languages is considered as an incorrect use of language. Standard language is 'the language' and sad to say that anyone who possesees dialect language has no language at all. This is how distorted the relationship between dialect and standard language is.

The standardisation of Shona dialects orbits around perceptions of bilingualism where a learner possesses dialect language (considered as L_1 for the purposes of this study) and standard Shona language (considered as L_2 for the purposes of this study). Bilingualism has two forms, the subtractive and additive models. In the additive model, an education system upholds positive values for both the learners' first (L_1) and second (L_2) language (Lambert, 1977 in Ndamba, 2008). This does not obtain in the Zimbabwean education system concerning Shona. The averment that learning Shona at school is like learning a second language (L_2), is possibly informed by the flip model of bilingualism, the subtractive model because in this model, values of the first language (L_1) are not upheld in the education system giving currency to the general observation that bilingual education has negative effect on educational achievement. In this model, the linguistic characteristics of home language are not accommodated at all in the educational use of a language. Standard Shona (which is taken as an L_2 for the purposes of this research) is preferred at school while at home we see a preponderance of dialect language. This fits in well into the defining attribute of bilingualism that states that subtractive bilingualism accounts for the errors learners commit at school. To affirm that bilingualism has negative

effect on learners' academic achievement, Academic **A₂** observes that "When you use another language, you struggle here and there. You can also make errors when writing in the language that is different to your usual language." This putting a strain on academic achievements.

The phenomenon of bilingualism exists at the case school. There are learners of Cewa, Nyanja and Ndebele background (see Table 4.24). The form of bilingualism that exists in this scenario is one between Shona and other different languages. Another different form of bilingualism is one that involves the Shona language and its dialects (for the purposes of this research the dialects are the L_1 and the standard Shona language is the L_2).

After exploring and examining academics' and teachers' views about the Shona orthography, it becomes prudent to explore and examine learners' views and challenges about the same. The questionnaire administered to six teachers at the case school revealed that learners of Shona ethnic background outnumber leaners of the other backgrounds given in Table 4.24. Vildomec (1963) and Ngara (1982) share the view that learning a second language (L_2) when old is quite a challenge. As such, writing challenges would be expected to be very minimal at the case school because learners of backgrounds other than Shona are generally few at the case school.

Table 4.24

	Number of teachers who say..		
	...very few	…few	…many
…Shona learners are	0	0	6
…Nyanja learners are	6	0	0
…Cewa learners are	6	0	0
…Ndebele learners are	2	4	0

However, indications are that learners of all backgrounds, all the six teachers concurred, make errors.

with Teacher **Tₐ** admitting that they are the learners of Ndebele background who present most writing problems than any other which.

In a focus group interview conducted with learners, Learner B (**L_B**) submitted that he started learning Shona in 2020 when in Form 3. From Grade 4 up to Form 2 he was learning Ndebele. He admitted that he has problems writing well in Shona. Word division poses challenges to him. He states with the statement, "word division is a big problem to me." He also admitted having spelling problems and gave examples, where in Shona /k/ is used, in Ndebele /kh/ is used. He explained that his Ndebele background affects his spelling badly by giving the statement, "My Ndebele interferes in the way I

write." Where it should be /*kukara*/ the learner writes /*khukhara*/. However, learner **L_B** promised to persevere and improve on the spelling skill as per Shona orthography.

One's linguistic background can be a source of errors committed when writing in Shona. Ndebele background being discussed about now in 2021 has revealed what one other learner at the same school back in 2007 displayed as a writing challenge (see Fig 4.19). Figure 4.20 also shows errors made by a learner of Shona background confirming the teachers' view that <u>learners of all backgrounds</u> make writing errors. Learner H (**L_H**) is of Shona background, specifically of Karanga dialect. **L_H** is prone to making errors such as those depicted by Fig 4.20. During the focus group interview, **L_H** said that she makes many errors when writing composition, mostly spelling errors. This is because of 'bilingualism' that involves standard Shona and Karanga dialect. This confession by **L_H** is validated by the statistics for question (6a) on questionnaire for learners (Table 4.25). It revealed that 62.22% of learners to whom the questionnaire was administered confessed that they commit many spelling errors when writing composition.

Table 4.25

6. a) Indicate with an **X** the language aspect that give you problems when writing in Shona [*You are free to indicate as many aspects that you feel give you problems*].

Aspect	Count	Tally
Spelling	28	
Word division	15	
Punctuation	2	
Concordial agreement	0	
All of the above	0	

L_H among many others, is a likely candidate to satisfy the claim by academic **A₁** that the current Shona orthography has certain letters that are not included in it, like /l, q, x/ and many more others. As such, some words present spelling challenges. Academic **A₂**, as well, claims that students unknowingly write what is considered as wrong spelling because the mother tongue interfers with their spelling. This is because the standardisation of Shona excluded some phonemes from other dialects, phonemes like /***l, mp, dhl, x, gw, zh*** /, only to mention but a few. The above claims by academics **A₁**, **A₂** and the learner **L_H** are premised on:

- <u>The power of the mother tongue as it interferes with the way one spells</u> words whereupon some authorities like Wells (2000) in Mamo (2016) claim that it is human tendency of wanting to hear the sounds of another language (**L₂**) in terms of the sounds of one's own language (**L₁**), the mother tongue. Standard Shona, in this study, is the **L₂** language.

174

Where the standard language prescribes, for example, the use of /rw/, the mother tongue, for example the Karanga dialect uses /gw/ whose use culminates in what is considered as wrong spelling, for example (see Fig 4.20 & Table 4.26):

Table 4.26

Standard Shona [Correct spelling]	Karanga Dialect [Wrong spelling]
rwendo	gwendo
rwizi	gwizi

- <u>The view that language is not and should not be static. However, the Shona language is rigid because of lack of lexical expansion.</u> The lack of lexical expansion subsumes some of the errors that learners commit when writing in Shona. If it embraces lexical expansion, as states academic **A₂**, the language can borrow from within itself. The language is an expansive one that has as many as sixteen varieties. It can also borrow from other different languages with which it has contact. That way the language will grow and develop unlike the present state of affairs where "…the orthography does not borrow much from other languages…" as claimed by Informant Academic **A₃**. If the present Shona orthography is re-standardized to accommodate the missing letters from other dialects, it will allow people to write as they speak. Re-standardization, according to Nordquist (2016), is a term that refers to language re-designing and reshaping so that it conforms to how natives speak and or write. Concisely, such an undertaking will mitigate error commission by learners in schools.

The following excerpts are lamentations of Learner E (**Lᴇ**), Learner G (**Lɢ**) and Learner H (**Lʜ**):

Lᴇ: May ask please, why are we not allowed to write the way we speak to our parents and relatives at home? We never err in our speech. If we had the books that explain how Shona is written properly that could help us a lot.

Lɢ: I do not know what certain words mean and when I write I misuse them and mean what I do not intend to mean

 Lʜ: I make many spelling errors and fail composition. My book will be literally bleeding.]

It is interesting to note that learner **L_E** said that she is never told that she has made an error when talking at home. Learner **L_H** who is of Karanga background also confessed that she makes many spelling errors when writing (probably because of mother tongue interference). These sentiments show that the learners,

- have a glaring misconception about orthography. **L_E** does not understand that orthography is about the way people write <u>NOT</u> about the way people speak. Writing errors are mitigated if the scholars' reformist argument that Shona is a phonemic language is embraced in the reformation of the Shona orthography. Their argument is that, in a phonemic language, people approximate sound and letter. This effectively means that people write as they speak.

- speak a dialect different to Zezuru, the dialect that feeds most into the Standard Shona Orthography. When Doke designed the Shona Orthography, he used the Single Standard Dialect Approach - a unitary approach - where all other Shona dialects or varieties were forced to follow the Zezuru way of spelling. When it comes to writing, you get instances of cross-linguistic interference and the spelling of certain words will be considered as wrong as per current orthography spelling rules that preclude dialect spelling. Academic **A₂** warns that learners "…struggle here and there…" to spell correctly.The struggle culminates in the errors learners make when writing in the language that is different to their usual language, the mother tongue. This resonates very well with Wells's (2000) in Mamo (2016) argument that the discrepancy between the written form of **L₂** and the pronunciation of **L₁** (the mother tongue) contributes significantly to the errors learners make.

Learner G (**L_G**) said that of the many writing challenges he has, the worst of them all is that he does not know what certain words used and accepted by the teacher mean. Learner E (**L_E**) queried why they are not allowed to write as they speak at home. Learner **L_H** also confessed that she makes many spelling errors (probably because of mother tongue interference). The sentiments put together, mean that the school language is different to the home language. Learner **L_G** uses different words to mean the same with a word accepted at school. His/her choice of words in sentences is considered wrong and marked wrong. That confuses the learner. Learner **L_E** uses a language that is not compatible with school language. The transition from home language or individual language to school language becomes a problem here, causing the learners to commit errors when writing. Viola (2013) in Mamo (2016) argues that, the mismatch between pronunciation and written form contributes to the errors students' make.

The mother tongue interferes and influences how people spell. Ramachandran (2012) in Mamo (2016) also argues that the transitional relational link between the school and home in terms of language use can have negative consequences on educational attainment by learners. They are penalised for wrong spelling when they should not. That leads to loss of marks allotted to orthography, confirming academic A₁'s claim that the use of one's dialect is penalisable. The errors can also be a result of the Shona language's lack of lexical expansion caused by not accepting the use of words from its dialects or other languages it is in contact with. Academic A₂ argues that the errors are avertible if mother tongues are used at school. The learners' achievement in language work is bettered because their educational intellect is developed, enhanced and sharpened by the use of the mother tongue at school.

Irregularity or inconsistency tags English as a writing system that poorly represents the spoken language with symbols (Dobie, 1986). Having learnt and known about the negative effects of inconsistency on spelling, the researcher proposes to extricate the Shona orthography from the vagaries of irregularity or inconsistency by suggesting a phonological theory espoused by Chomsky (1970) in Dobie (1986). The theory recommends stricter and more regular sound and letter approximation. As regards writing, this is akin to 'writing as one speaks'. Academic A₂ holds a similar view when saying that, Shona as a phonemic language should essentially allow people to write as they speak. This fulfils the essence of the regular sound and letter correspondence described by the aforementioned phonological theory. By doing so, the commission of errors by learners is minimised since they will be allowed to write as they speak.

Some errors that learners commit, as noted by Academic A₂, are a result of an unfortunate and regrettable situation of lack of lexical expansion. New words from other languages or Shona dialects remain illegitimate yet the words have become part of Shona vocabulary inventory by daily use by speakers. This is probably why some academics say the standardisation of Shona is neither complete nor exhaustive. Others submit that unless and until dialect words and the new words that have come into our language are legitimised by orthography and policy decree, learners will continue to make errors, be they spelling or grammatical errors. In that case, it is quite noble for Zimbabwe to take cue from Germany, Russia and Korea.

 Like 1) Germany 'germanised' German,

  2) Russia 'russified' Russian and

  3) in Korea, King Sejong had Japanese words 'nativised'

in Zimbabwe, words from other Shona dialects should be accommodated in the orthography. Words from other languages Shona is in contact with should be phonologized (which is akin to 'nativization',

'germanization', 'russification'). Learners' commission of errors when writing in Shona are ameliorated. This is achievable if the Shona language borrows from within itself through incorporating into the orthography all word forms from its dialects. It also has to phonologize all words from all the other languages it is in contact with, whose words have already trended into our language.

The responses to Question 7 on student questionnaire [*Do you have enough books to help you with your spelling?*]

Table 4.27

7. Do you have enough books to help you with your spelling?   *student*

	Unavailable	Under 30	30-60	61-100	Over 100
A guide to Shona spelling		✓			
Duramazwi Guru reShona	X	✓			
Manyorerwo eShona	✓				
Shona Novels				✓	
Comprehension Text Books					✓

Respondents who gave similar responses such as the ones shown:

Total number of respondents = 45

Responses similar to those shown = 34

%Rating = **75.56%**

and Question 11 on teacher questionnaire [*Indicate the amount and availability of the following reference books*],

Table 4.28

11. Indicate with an **X** the amount and availability of the following reference books   *Teacher*

	Unavailable	Under 30	30-60	61-100	Over 100
A guide to Shona spelling		✓			
Duramazwi Guru reShona		✓			
Manyorerwo eShona	✓				
Shona Novels					✓
Comprehension Text Books					✓

Respondents with similar responses to those shown:

Total number of respondents = 6

Responses similar to those shown = 6

%Rating = **100%**

if read together, show that there are very few copies of the useful books, <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling</u> and <u>Duramazwi Guru ReShona.</u> 75.56% of students and 100% of teachers who answered the question

indicated that copies of either reference book are under thirty in number. Sadly, about two hundred and fifty-one learners share the few available reference books. The reference book <u>Manyorerwo eShona: Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu</u> is not available at all at the school as indicated by 75.56% of students and 100% of teachers. The mentioned three reference books are critical in understanding better the major concepts about Shona orthography. However, these reference books have each its own shortcomings:

- <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling</u> is a book written in English, a language difficult to understand for many learners. It is difficult for many learners to interpret spelling rules, word division rules and punctuation rules written in English. For word division Academic A_2 thinks that, "…rules about word division are not easy to interpret." In general, the rules are very confusing. Learners end up making orthographic errors of the kinds enumerated above when writing.

- <u>Duramazwi Guru ReShona</u>: Academic A_1 attests that unlimited expressibility of a language is attained by the use of dictionaries. Unfortunately, Duramazwi Guru ReShona is not sufficiently available. The existing dictionaries, in the main, support the existing word inventory. The existent word inventory causes errors that learners make, especially if learners hail from dialects other than Zezuru. Their dialects feed selectively into the standard orthography.

- <u>Manyorerwo eChiShona</u>: <i>Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu</i> is a book published in 1999. It is a sequel to <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling,</u> published in 1972. <u>Manyorerwo eChiShona…,</u> is in Shona. It would benefit learners immensely were it available at the school. Learners understand the language used to write it. It is unfortunate that the available <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling</u> is in English, a language that is incomprehensible to most learners. The failure to understand the language and subsequent failure to interpret the rules concerning orthography constituents of spelling, word division and punctuation exacerbates commission of orthographic errors by learners as they write in Shona.

Learner L_E deplores the fewness and or unavailability of the books that could vitally guide them on how to write properly in Shona. L_E laments that, if they had the useful books that explain how Shona is written properly, it could help them a lot. L_E says, "If we had the books that explain how Shona is written properly, that could help us a lot."

The reference books that are over a hundred in number (novels and comprehension textbooks), do not help learners much in terms of orthography because the learners are not avid readers. Their interest to read many novels withers because of some of the novels are too big, a sentiment learner L_H reiterates by saying, "The interest to read the novels withers because some of the novels are too big." To benefit

more from novels, learners should read as many of them as possible so that they come across the spellings of different words, word division and good sentence construction. Apart from reading Comprehension textbooks for answering comprehension questions and pass the written comprehension exercise, they can also benefit from observing spelling of words, word division, punctuation and proper sentence construction.

If the textbook that could benefit learners most on orthography, <u>A Guide to Shona Spelling</u>, is written in a language learners are not proficient in as indicated in the above analysis. A safe conclusion is that there is limited academic achievement or excellence in language learning where orthography is involved. Language learning demands that it be conducted in a manner responsive to the leaners' native language.

4.15 General discussion

Academic **A₂** argues that in a phonemic language like Shona people should approximate sound and letter. Concisely, that means they should write as they speak.The presented and analyzed data revealed that learners' achievement in language work improves if they write as they speak. The interviewed academics, Academic **A₁** and Academic **A₂**, concur on this viewpoint. The views of Informant Academic **A₃** are also in agreement with the same viewpoint. When learners approximate sound and letter, they usually and normally do not get their spelling wrong. As such, the use of one's dialect ceases to be penalisable as alluded to by the academics and teachers. Therefore, if the learners get their spelling correct, they score well on orthography. Orthography is one language aspect that is considered before marks are allocated to any composition.

However, some words present spelling challenges because certain letters, like **gw, w, zh, l, x** and many others are not included in the orthography. When such letters are used in spelling certain words, learners produce what is considered wrong spelling. In most cases, the mother tongue would have thus, interfered with how learners write.

Apart from getting the spelling correct because of writing as one speaks, learners could also get word division correct. Academic **A₁** categorically states that Doke had introduced a straightforward and smart way of avoiding word division problems that stipulates that '***write as you speak***'. Based on this smart way of avoiding word division problems, word division should not be a problem at all. This natural way of dividing words is tenable by writing as one speaks. Even as we speak, there is lengthening of the

penultimate syllable. The lengthening of the penultimate syllable indicates where a word ends and a new one begins. In addition, Academic **A₂** also states that auxiliary verbs should not be a problem if people write as they speak because where you pause, is where the word ends and a new one starts. The two academics are 'apostles' of the Dokian method of dividing words.

Academic **A₁**, Academic **A₂**, Informant Academic **A₃** and the participating O-Level teachers at the case school, all concur that the Shona orthography should not be based on one dialect. Concisely, they concur that it must be reformed. Informant Academic **A₃** says that if the orthography is based on one dialect, Zezuru, it affects learners' fluency and expression when writing. Academic **A₁** and Academic **A₂** agree on the point that the use of one's dialect when writing is penalisable. The current orthography favours learners of Zezuru background. The Shona orthography must therefore, be reformed to put an end to the unfortunate scenario of penalising learners for using their dialects and also decapitating learners' fluency and expression when writing. Additionally, 33.33% of participating O-Level teachers have the view that the Shona orthography needs revamping.

Tegegne (2015) hints that no language variety is better than the other is. The call to reform the Shona orthography as indicated by academics or to revamp the Shona orthography as indicated by the teachers is fixated on such hinting. Gone should be the days when orthographies, particularly for erstwhile colonial African countries, were designed along etic (views that orthography should be standardized and prescriptive) lines. Now is the time for reforming these orthographies to give them a 'cultural voice' and a native outlook. This entails designing the orthographies along emic (views that orthography should not be standardized nor prescriptive) lines. Such an arrangement will allow people to write as they speak. Currently, Zimbabwean linguists campaign vigorously for the adoption of efforts to reform the orthography, considering what Chimhundu (1992) in Magwa (2002:7) notes about the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe. The ministry generated the infamous 1982 Circular that directs removal of restrictions on the use of letters permitted by the current Shona orthography. The removal of the restrictions allows controlled flexibility for dialect overtones. This accords students sitting for Shona examinations some reprieve. The dialect overtones are observable in pupils' work because they instinctively write as they speak. Their disposition to home language dominates their linguistic mental faculties. Such dialect inclinations destabilize memories of standard Shona spelling causing learners to commit errors when writing at school. Proficient spelling ability requires phonological knowledge usually described by one's dialect and or orthographic rules. This confirms an argument that people should write as they speak. The removal of the restrictions also bears testimony to the fact that the ministry is aware that, not writing as one speaks affects one's competency and proficiency in Shona written work. Subsequently, that affects

learners' performance in 3159 O-Level Shona examinations, especially so when standardized orthographic speliing conventions and dialect spelling are not in accord.

Table 4.18 and Table 4.19 depict poor performance by learners in composition and comprehension written work. Learners have writing challenges caused by poor mastery of the Shona orthography. Teachers at the case school listed language constituents that pose writing challenges to many learners. These are spelling, word division, punctuation and mechanical accuracy. Learners' and teachers' perceptions about the listed language constituents were evaluated and the following conclusions were arrived at.

Table 4.29

	Learners' perceptions about…	Teachers' perceptions about…
Spelling	58.4%	66.7%
Word division	30.8%	100%
Punctuation	10.8%	66.7%
Mechanical accuracy	0	83.3%

66.67% of the six O-Level teachers rated spelling difficult for learners and 33.33% of them rated spelling very difficult, while 58.4% of sixty-five responses from forty-five learners indicate that spelling is problematic for them.

100% of the teachers rated word division very difficult for learners compared against 30.8% of the sixty-five responses from forty-five learners that indicate word division as problematic for these learners. As such, learners believe that they do not have serious problems with word division while teachers see otherwise.

83.33% of the teachers rated mechanical accuracy as a bit difficult for learners. Their rating is based on an indepth document analysis of the learners' exercise books that revealed that learners struggle with concordial agreement which constitutes mechanical accuracy. However, the learners themselves believe that mechanical accuracy is not a problem at all. None of them indicated having any problems with this language constituent.

66.67% of the teachers rated punctuation a bit difficult for leaners. Only 10.8% of sixty-five responses from forty-five learners indicate that punctuation is problematic.

It is note-worthy that the adjective difficult circumscribes the degree of the difficulty of each language constituent. This aptly demonstrates that the listed language constituents irrefutably pose writing challenges to learners.

Silver (2011) postulates that dialect language is non-standard and ill suited for academic writing. The inacceptance of most Shona dialect spelling in all academic writing bears testimony to this view by Silver (ibid). Lamentations by Learner H (**L_H**), who is Karanga (a Shona dialect); also give validity to Silver's postulation. The learner laments that, "I make many spelling errors when I write and fail composition. My book will be literally bleeding." The spellings are considered wrong because they exude dialect overtones. This is not peculiar for **L_H** alone but for all learners who hail fom all the other Shona dialects. Upon realising the disadvantages the current Shona orthography has on learners, the Ministry of Education sanctioned some reprieve to learners by way of the 1982 Circular. The circular directs the removal of restrictions on the use of letters permitted by the orthography. In essence, the dialect overtones are tolerated allowing controlled flexibility for mother tongue interference in the way learners spell. Unfortunately, this is applicable only in Shona examination marking. Outside that, learners are instructed to use standard Shona, albeit its disadvantages to learners. Academic **A_2** suggests that the current Shona orthography must be harmonised. The literature for all other varieties is available so they must be included in harmonising the writing of Shona. The academic further suggests that the infamous 1982 Circular being refered to should become law. Instead of only accepting dialect phonemes in examination only, they should accept them for all everyday writing. It is this researcher's hope that if this is done learners make fewer errors when writing as Teacher C (**T_C**) reiterates, "If our pupils are allowed to use their language, they make fewer mistakes, I presume." (See Table 4.30).

Apart from learners making fewer because of the embracement of learners' home languages in academic writing, teachers also help learners make fewer errors by embracing assiduous marking of learners' written work. Teachers must indicate and correct all errors the errors learners commit so that the errors are not repeated because of that corrective feedback. They must then analyse the errors and adopt best ways of guiding learners in overcoming the errors.

The classroom is the dance floor. Data obtained from the classroom directs correct forms of procedures in error analysis and correction. In the classroom, learners commit errors. In the classroom, teachers encounter the errors so committed by learners. Error analysis, as argued by Kazemian et, al., (2015), is critical in second language teaching and learning. Indicating and correcting all the errors by competent teachers when marking thus becomes critical since errors result from linguistic incompetency of learners and are never self-corrected.

Learners themselves also play an important part in improving their competency and proficiency in writing in Shona at school. They can do that by becoming avid readers of novels awash in their school as depicted in Table 4.27 and Table 4.28. They will do themselves a disservice by not being avid readers as observed by Teacher B ($\textbf{T}_\textbf{B}$) that the learners at the school are not avid readers. If they read many novels, they will observe how different words are spelt and divided correctly.

The school plays a role too in assuring that learners become competent and proficient Shona writers. The school should avail enough quality learning materials. The school where the research was carried out is found wanting regarding provision of enough quality learning materials.

4.15.1 Teachers' views about the Shona orthography

Axelrod and Cooper (1985) hint that a reading culture ranks high among the possible ways of improving one's writing proficiency in a language. Interlocutory engagements also help a lot in improving one's oral and writing proficiency. The three O-level teachers at the case school are aware of the importance of reading and dialoguing but the strategies are not implementable in their teaching due to the following constrains, namely:

- Class size
- Marking
- Syllabus coverage
- Reading culture

This researcher hastens to mention that, the cited constrains are largely influenced and constrained by the time factor. The following table, Table 4.28, encapsulates the essence of time on each one of the tabulated ideas.

Table 4.30

	Teacher A (T_A)	Teacher C (T_C)	Teacher B (T_B)
Time	Vhiki nevhiki haumbowani nguva yaunoti ha-a iye zvino handina basa, hazviiti. [*There is not enough time, you are always occupied*]	Muchidimbu, unogara wakadzvokorana namabhuku [*In short, I am saying…you will always be marking.*]	Nguva ishomasa. Zvinoitwa zvinowandisira mudzidzisi. [*Time is not enough. The teacher gets overwhelmed*]
Syllabus Coverage		Tine zvidzidzwa zvishoma pakirazi pavhiki…zvinokanganisa kusakura munda. Nguva ishoma. Zvidzidzwa zvikatutsirwa makirazi anoita mashoma [*The number of lessons per class per week is too low which affects syllabus coverage. If the number of lessons per class per week is increased, the number of class load per teacher will be less which will improve syllabus coverage.*]	Nguva ishoma. Hatingapedzi syllabus, kuti tingawana nguva yokumbotaura …handioni. [*Teaching time is not enough so much that if we adopt dialogue as a teaching method, we won't finish the syllabus.*]
Marking	**1**.[Basa rokumaka] rakawandisa…nokuti makirazi edu akakurisa…vana 55 per class akazonzi times 5 ari marondedzero iwayo, a-a akawandisa…mutauro, nzwisiso zvinenge zvichida kumakwa…zvokomburomaiza marking. **2**. Kuda kana load yedu ikadzikira zvingaita nani.	**1**.…saka zvinoreva kuti [zvonetsa] kumaka mazana maviri emabhuku, ose pavhiki imwe. **2**.…dzimwe nguva kukwenya kwacho unenge wongoita kwekumhanyidzana nako...mukana wokuti utaure navana umwe neumwe haupo zvachose. Pamwe hauzonyatsoita basa nemazvo	Nokuti vana vakawandisa, ndinopa rondedzero kamwe muvhiki nhatu asi mutemo unoti kamwe pavhiki mbiri [*Because the classes are too big, I give written composition work once in three weeks instead of the prescribed once per fortnight.*]

185

1.[*Marking is rushed and the quality of marking is compromised because marking 55x5(275) exercise books per week is daunting*]. **2.**[*If our work load is reduced the quality of marking can improve*].	nechikonzero chokuti unenge uchifanira kudzorera vana mabhuku kuti vanyore rimwe basa. [**1**. *It is overwhelming to mark over two hundred exercise books in a week.* **2***...at times thorough marking is not possible as you rush to give learners another exercise to write. There is no room for individual attention given to learners*]	
	Mabhuku enganonyorwa, kana vakamaverega akawanda zvingavabatsira chaizvo pakuziva zviperengo nezvimwe zvose zvingaita kuti vagone kunyora neChiShona chakanaka paine mhosho shoma zvakaita sokunyora nomutauro wavo wavajaira. Kufunga kwangu. [*If learners read a lot of Shona novels they will master everything that will enable them to write well in Shona making fewer errors. If our pupils are allowed to use their language, they make fewer mistakes, I presume.*]	Vana vanoda kukurudzirwa kuverenga mabhuku akawanda vachiona kuti mazwi akapereterwa sei, akapatsanurwa sei uye akabatanidzwa sei. Zvino vana vacho vane usimbe hwokuverenga nokuti mabhuku okuverenga aripo pano pachikoro [*Learners need to be encouraged to read a lot of novels awash in the school. That way they will learn and know the spelling of different words, how words are properly divided. Unfortunately, the learners are not avid readers*]

Encouraging Reading Culture

In short, I am saying…you will <u>always</u> be marking. [It is getting to sunset while still marking…*my annotation*]

Teacher C

To mark all that and…to indicate all the errors, is overwhelming, it is <u>unmanageable</u>.

Teacher B

Translated

Translated
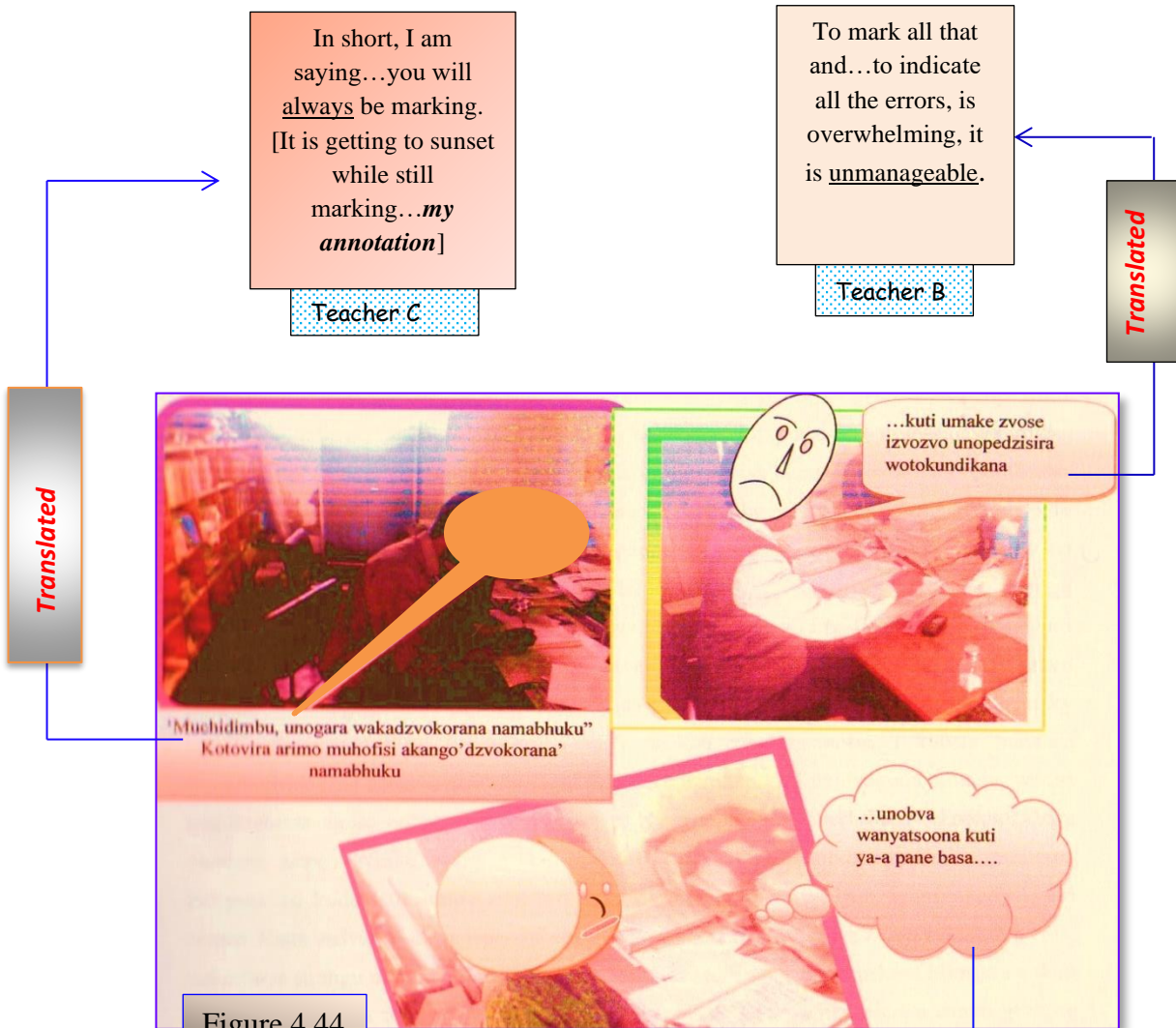
Figure 4.44

What teachers say and do about orthography

…you will realise how <u>overwhelming</u> it is…

Teacher A

Translated

Of the three O-level Shona teachers interviewed, each had regrets about the size of the classes they mind. Teacher C (T_C) lamented that he is <u>always occupied</u> by the marking. If T_C is that much overwhelmed, his sentiment about the marking is a direct match to Teacher A (T_A)'s who admits that marking is <u>overwhelming</u>. If marking overwhelms these teachers this much, the sentiment given by Teacher B (T_B), that it is <u>unmanageable</u> to indicate all errors when marking, can hold true for all the three teachers. Failure to indicate all the errors learners commit means that teachers fall far short of giving corrective feedback to learners.

187

Solihah (2017) mentions that errors in learners' written composition work arise from what is termed Context of Learning. In a classroom context, textbooks and the teachers guide learners in making correct language hypotheses. However, it is when learners take the **Direct pathway** to knowledge that they commit errors along the way. Traversing this way to knowledge is very difficult and challenging, hence errors are committed. The errors so committed are mitigable by taking the **Secondary pathways** (textbooks and dialoguing/ interlocutory engagements) to knowledge. As mentioned and discussed earlier on, it is unfortunate that essential textbooks that could benefit learners in terms of mastering and applying the Shona orthography correctly are not available at the school. Learners are therefore at the mercy of guesswork because the type and quality of the documentation is not up to the required standard.

The **Teacher pathway** is also very critical in the mitigation of learners' errors. The teacher, as a critical element in determining the quality of education, should indicate to the learners all the errors they make so that they can learn from their errors/mistakes and stop repeating them. This assures that learners benefit immensely from the pathway. Figure 4.45 depicts these pathwys to knowledge.
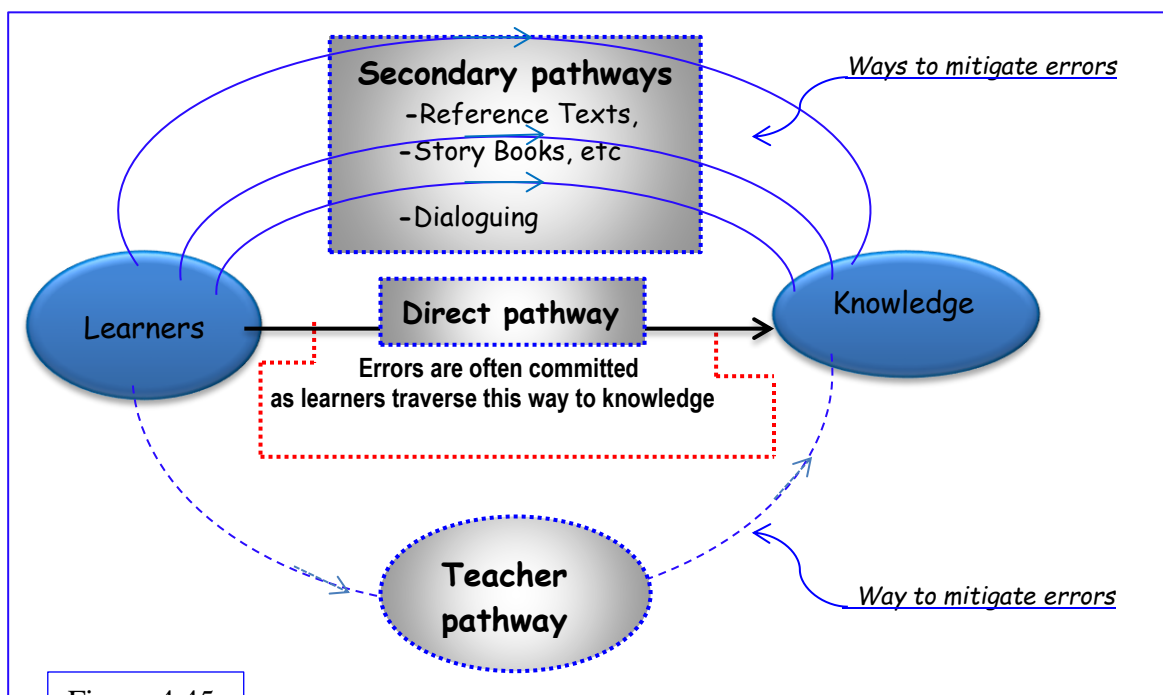
Figure 4.45

Pathways to knowledge

Unfortunately, the kind of teacher we are talking about at the case school is an overwhelmed one who does not display ardent and assiduous marking by indicating all the errors a learner commits. Teacher **T**ₐ mentions "…the large classes compromise… the quality of marking." Teacher **T**𝒸 as well says "…thorough marking is not possible as you rush to give learners another exercise to write" all with the

spirit to cover the syllabus. The kind of teacher at the school is an epitome of a faulty context of learning. The context does not guide learners well. The teachers mind more about finishing marking and covering the whole syllabus than guiding learners to master and apply the Shona orthography properly when writing in Shona. When the teachers mark, they do not indicate all the errors learners commit, when they should (see Figure 4.24, Figure 4.29 and Figure 4.30). If they do not pinpoint learners' errors, their feedback to learners is not of the corrective nature as liked. This kind of marking denigrates the attainment of Academic Language Proficiency (**ALP**), a term fashioned by this researcher. ALP should be every teacher's goal in the interim, before the use of dialect languages in school writing is adopted by the Shona orthography. **ALP** is, now, only assumedly achievable by way of the 1982 circular. The circular directs and accepts the use of dialect language in examination writing only. Academics **A₁** and **A₂** concur that the use of one's dialect is penalisable, and only condoned in examination writing. Once the **ALP** is achieved, the scene is set for the attainment of Content and Language Integrated Learning (**CLIL**), a term this researcher has fashioned and wishes to popularize. If the content is outlined proficiently in good language, good expression, well-punctuated sentences and well-spelled wording, it is easy to understand it. Once the content is there, followable and the language used is good, then content and language are integrated. The chances of doing well in Shona language learning or written language work are high and enhanced. Heightened and enhanced too is the proficiency level in the use of the language in question. All this is achievable once the use of dialect language is incorporated in academic writing.

James (1907) in Hergenhahn and Henley (2014) is of the view that what holds attention, in this case, the errors that learners make, demands appropriate action and correction. If all the errors that learners make are indicated and corrected, that enhances sound grasping of the right conventions of orthography that are applicable to school writing. Indicating all the errors when marking and later analysing them, is one way that provides the teacher the chance to realise the grey areas in the way learners interface with the Shona orthography. This kind of error analysis and treatment, charts a crucial process in the training of competent writers. Learners invaluably learn more from the errors/mistakes that they commit, only if teachers indicate and correct the errors.

Interlocutory engagements (dialoguing) as a route to knowledge (knowledge about the Shona orthography) does not benefit learners at the case school in their quest for this knowledge because, as Teacher **Tᴮ** asserts, teaching time is not enough so much that if they adopt dialogue (or discussion) as a teaching method, they won't finish the syllabus. Discussions in classroom activities promotes learners' motivation, appreciation and open correction of each's errors. Language, in this oral form can play the role of bridging understanding of the written form of a language. Isaacs (1999) in Sheets

(2012) concedes that dialogue harnesses intelligence collectively, thereby giving currency to the age-old adage that two is better and smarter than one. Underlying this method's features of dialoguing, interaction and constructive criticism is the enhancement of learners' disposition toward mastery and correct application of the Shona orthography. That leads to written language proficiency. It provides a suitable learning context of dialoguing which is a **secondary pathway** to knowledge for the learners. This non-instructional context of conversation or dialogue affords learners the opportunity to grasp how words are used thereby improving their oral proficiency, which resultantly translates to the learners' written proficiency. The researcher strongly suggests that the concerned teachers should forego syllabus coverage and adopt interlocutory engagements to let their learners enjoy the said benefits of it. Education as an intellectual process focuses on, among others, the training of writers who are proficient in a language (Fisher, 2006 in Karami, Pakmehr and Aghili, 2012). The mastery of orthography is apparently critical in this process. In order to adopt dialogue as a teaching method, Teacher **T$_C$** suggests that the number of lessons per class per week which is too low (4 lessons per class per week) should be increased. This will mean that the load per teacher is lessened. The current teacher-load regime hampers superlative syllabus coverage. If the class load per teacher is lessened, syllabus coverage subsequently improves, **T$_C$** argues.

Reading, as an activity, is joyous to some learners while it is an insurmountable struggle to others. If a reading culture is cultivated among learners, it can take them far regarding mastery of Shona orthography. Teacher **T$_B$** upholds the idea that learners need to be encouraged to read many novels awash in the school as depicted by Tables 4.27 and 4.28. It is the general belief of all the six O-Level teachers at the case school that extensive and intensive reading leads to better spelling. Learners know how different words are spelt, how words are properly divided and how different punctuation marks are used through observation. Unfortunately, the learners are not avid readers, teacher **T$_B$** declares. Confirmation that the learners are not avid readers is given by learner **L$_H$** who testified at the time of the interview on 9 October 2020 that she had read only two (my underlining for emphasis) novels. The excuse given is that some of the novels are too big. Learner **L$_K$** had read only one novel while learners **L$_J$** and **L$_L$** had read none. If these learners do not read as many novels as possible, the **secondary pathway** to knowledge which uses reference texts is not helpful to them in any way. Even if the teachers encourage them to read as many novels as possible to become competent and proficient writers, it is a case of driving a donkey to the river but never able to force it to drink the water.

4.15.2 Vitality of a language and the use of a language in education

Language vitality is usually described by, but not limited to:

- Availability of language education and learning materials

- Quality of the documentation availed for the education and learning of a language

- Learners' response to new domains in language use

- Learners' response to the media and

- Language attitude in government (policy pronouncements on status and use of a language), institutions (enforcing adherence to policy) and the general populace

The above-mentioned ideas circumscribe the Shona language's struggle for vitality.
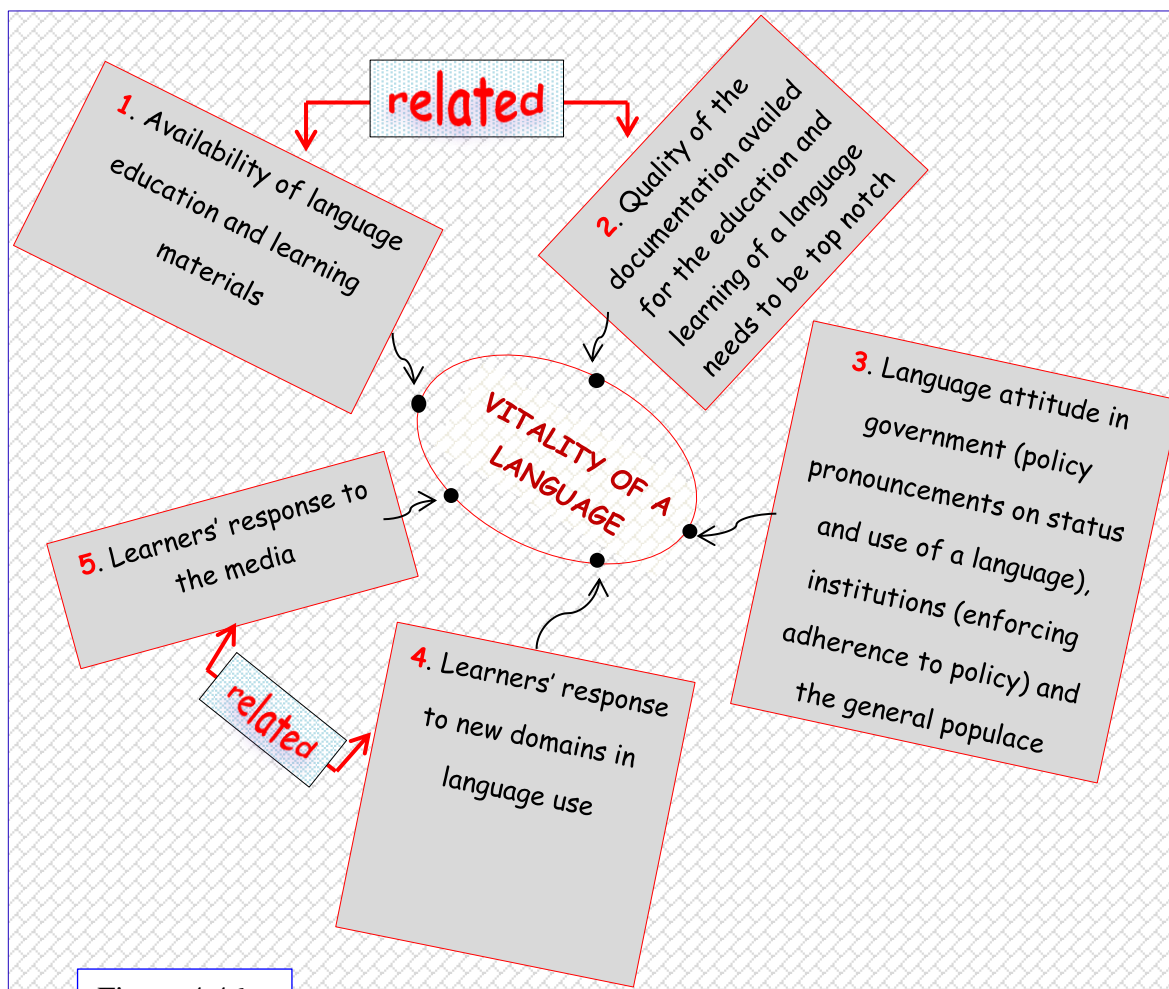
Figure 4.46

Kellaghan & Greaney (1992) argue that the concern about African education today relates to the provision of books. The World Bank (1988) in Kellaghan and Greaney (1992) in its policy study, hints that academic achievements rest on availability of enough quality books. Unfortunately, the supply and availability of good quality learning materials is critically low at the school. Non-availability of key resources like books has a backwash effect on language learning. Learner E (**L$_E$**) when saying, "If we had the books that explain how Shona is written properly that could help us a lot," testifies the non-availability of key resources like books. Learner H (**L$_H$**) who is of Karanga dialect also testifies that

she makes many spelling errors. She has problems writing in Shona. Lack of books that explain how to write Shona properly causes spelling problems for L_E and L_H. The views of L_E and L_H are in agreement with Informant Academic A_3's thinking that because Shona orthography is based on one dialect, it does not borrow much from other languages/dialects. As such, it does not grow or develop as liked. It also limits learners' expression and fluency. While Cookson (1997) suggests reform of the British orthography to cleanse it of its spelling inconsistencies, Academic A_2 reiterates that, "…there is something that needs to be done to our (Shona) orthography…there is need to reform the orthography" to produce the kind of documentation that uses an orthography that embraces other languages/dialects in its design. This is achievable via the suggested orthography reform which is clamoured for by many a linguist in Zimbabwe. As long as the Shona orthography does not embrace phonemes from all its dialects, many students will find it difficult to produce fluent pieces of written work because of the interference of home/individual languages. The mismatch between standard school language and the home/individual language has a bearing on the errors learners commit when writing. It also has consequences on educational attainment as regards education and learning of a language.

Negative attitude towards a language can have negative consequences on its education and learning. The main culprits regarding the negative attitude are the government and the institutions that are the dance floors. Government language policy pronouncements accord Shona (a language borne out of a coalescence of many dialects) a higher status, higher than the statuses accorded to dialects. For all academic writing, standard Shona has to be used, the policy states. Schools enforce that. Learners like Learner E (L_E) end up asking, "Why are we not allowed to write the way we speak to our parents and relatives at home?" Thus, the negativeness of the attitude of government policy and attitude of school towards a language has negative consequences on language learning. Learner H (L_H) regrets as well when saying, "I make many spelling errors when I write and fail composition. My book will be literally bleeding." L_H admits, "I have problems writing in Shona." The language L_E and L_H use as individuals at home, is unacceptable in academic writing. Government policy does not allow that. The school enforces government policy. Government policy and school enforcement on the use of standard Shona at the expense of dialect language breed disinterest in learners as representatively stated by L_H that, "I am Karanga but I don't enjoy learning Shona." The disinterest, in this case, is caused by the commission of numerous errors by learners, which thing they never do in speech, particularly at home. L_E reiteratively says, "We never err in our speech." When their home languages interfere with their writing at school, they make writing errors. Academic A_2 consolidates this when he presents that he has discovered "…that students unknowingly write what will be considered as wrong spellings as a result of their mother tongue" interfering in the way they spell words. They make some errors because

they will be writing in a language that is different to their mother language. In short, they will be displaying poor mastery of Shona orthography that is applicable in academic writing.

Learners 'brutalize' language vitality as they use Shona language that is influenced by new domains like the print and electronic media. They come across advertisements every day. On these adverts (print media) and phones (electronic media), they encounter wrong spellings, wrong word division and wrong punctuation. The learners' response to the different media is at times faulty. Academic A_1 accounts that print and electronic media are notorious for making the above listed errors. The same academic argues that adverts negatively influence and affect how the young learners write. In support of this, Academic A_2 categorically states that, "Adverts are very influential so much that people end up copying wrong things and make errors." Adverts use anti-language that is not suitable for academic writing. What is considered as faulty response to different media output by learners is caused by the Shona orthography's irresponsiveness and inability to, as seen by Academic A_3, "…capture new trends in language development." The new trends in language use come by way of inevitable language contact. Because of the Shona language's lack of lexical expansion new words from other languages or dialects remain llegitimate. New trends in language development also remain unembraced. The words have become so much a part of Shona vocabulary inventory by daily use by speakers, Academic A_2 argues. The same academic expostulates that, unless and until certain words and the new words that have come into our language are legitimized by orthography and policy decree, learners continue making errors, be they spelling or grammatical errors.

The hullaballoo about learners committing errors when writing academically could be quietened if, as Academic A_2 suggests, the Shona orthography's standardization becomes complete, exhaustive and inclusive which it is currently not. This feat is achievable if all people from different dialect zones in Zimbabwe are consulted. This gives credence to the Democracy Approach in orthography design. The vices of incompleteness, lack of exhaustiveness and lack of inclusiveness of the current Shona orthography emanate from the adoption of the Ivory Tower Approach in orthography design. As a result, the Ndau have claimed that it does not represent them because many significant sounds are not there in it as argued by Academic A_2. Since the orthography is unrepresentative of the Ndau, Academic A_1 concludes that it is probably why the Ndau pulled out, shrugged off the dialect status, and claimed the stand-alone language status as per present Zimbabwean constitution. In this approach, someone works in isolation in his or her office and then imposes orthography on people. Democracy Approach in orthography design is preferable. It cancels out the Ivory Tower Approach and all its vices in orthography design.

4 .15.3 Interest as a precursor to learners' performance in Shona

The researcher observes that the focus of any education system is making sure every learner succeeds in the race to the top via elevation and enhancement of learner performance. One way that turns the wheel of success in this respect is interest in learning or teaching a subject.

4.15.3.1. Effects of learner interest

As for the case of Shona, it is this research's contention that importance and utility of Shona bound learners' interest in learning the subject. Pajares & Schunk (2002) in Goulart & Bedi (2011) argue that a learner's motivation and interest have a bearing on educational achievement. If interest is there, the outcomes are positive; if interest is not there, the outcomes are negative.

An interview with some learners at the case school revealed that some learners are motivated and interested to learn Shona while others are demotivated and uninterested.

Certain learners who answered <u>Question 4 on the Student Questionnaire</u> - *Do you find it interesting to learn Shona at school? Explain your answer* – indicated that they are interested in learning Shona. They gave opening up and enhancement of job opportunities as their reasons for their interest in learning Shona. Learner 1 on Student Questionnaire (**L₁SQ**)**,** is interested in learning Shona. That brightens the future opportunity to become a ZBC announcer. **L₂SQ** sees the prospects of becoming a versatile teacher brightening up through performing well in Shona. The following excerpts bear testimony to the claims by the said learners:

> **L₁SQ**: *I will find work at ZBC.*
> **L₂SQ**: *I mix well with Shona speakers as a teacher*

When learners see the Shona subject as a means to job opportunities, they become motivated and interested in learning it. Interventions that are utility-value related often spew out interest and motivation for learners to perform well in Shona. They tend to apply themselves diligently to their learning of it. That is when learners like **L₃SQ** note that Shona becomes easy:

> **L₃SQ:** <u>*It is easy*</u>

When learners begin to view the subject as an easy one, it is because they would have got a good understanding of all that goes with its learning. At the end of it all, they pass. As a result, they get interested in learning Shona. However, there were other learners who explained that it is uninteresting

to learn Shona. 4 of the 13 learners (30.8%) who found it uninteresting to learn Shona said it is not important. Learners **L₄SQ** and **L₅SQ** were specific and particular and said;

> **L₄SQ**: When you apply for a job two important subjects are said
>
> English and Maths**.** Shona is not there.

(<u>The idea should be put across in a grammatically correct sentence as</u>: *When you apply for a*
job, two important subjects are listed which are English and Maths. Shona is
not listed.)

> **L₅SQ**: When you pass Shona your parents do not ululate as they do when you pass
>
> English and Maths.

(<u>The idea should be put across in a grammatically correct sentence as</u>: *When you pass Shona,*
parents are not elated as much as they are when you pass English and Maths.)

L₄SQ's view that Shona is not listed as a requisite subject when one is applying for a job and **L₅SQ**'s view that passing Shona does not elate or gratify parents as much as passing English and Maths does, are testament to the disutility of Shona and the eventual disinterest in learning Shona.

3 learners out of 13 learners (23%) were disinterested to learn Shona because they are aliens from Malawi and Zambia. As such, Shona disconnects them from their culture because language and culture are interwoven. **L₆SQ**'s view that "I am not interested in learning Shona because I am Nyanja," is representative of all aliens who feel hard done by the said cultural disconnection, loss of identity and foreignness of Shona to them. A foreign language is culture-free as well as identity-free. It epitomises the disconnection alluded to hence the lack of interest to learn Shona.

6 learners out of 13 learners (46.2%) said they are not interested to learn Shona because they do not understand it well. They do not pass it and subsequently lose interest in the subject. When interest is lacking, usually performance and achievement plummet.

Teachers also added their voice on learners' interest or none of it in learning Shona. Below are some of their testaments about the interest or the disinterest.

- **T₁TQ**: They are not very interested in learning Shona since it is difficult for them. Some of them always score very low marks…

- **T₂TQ**: Some are interested others are not at all, probably because they do not perform well in the subject…

Upon noticing that some learners are not interested because they do not perform well in the subject, one of the teachers, teacher **T₂TQ** took it upon himself to "…always encourage students not to give up but continue trying harder and harder." The encouragement to continue trying harder and harder can

generate interest in the learners when they probably begin to perform well in the subject and score better marks. If all teachers adopt such an approach to assess their learners' interest in learning Shona, we will one day definitely tell a different story about the performance of learners in Shona.

When learners' interest in an academic subject is energised, Hidi & Harackiewicz (2000) in Harackiewicz, Smith and Priniski (2016) assert that learners "…ultimately perform well" and that will guide and determine academic achievement and career choices.

The following model shows how importance and utility of Shona as a subject promotes interest and positive academic outcomes. Disutility breeds disinterest and the outcomes are nothing but the very opposite of every academic outcome indicated in the model below.

Interest Intercessions

Importance
&
Utility of Shona

Individual Interest

Outcomes

1. Spurred up learning
2. Improved Grades
3. Career opportunities
4. Parental Gratification

A model showing how importance and utility of Shona promotes interest and resultant academic outcomes *(Assimilated to Harackiewicz, Smith and Priniski's (2016) ideas and views about the Importance and impact of interest on educational achievement.)*

Figure 4.47

4.15.3.2 .Effects of teacher interest

The role of interest in enhancing educational outcomes has been researched on extensively but predominately focussing on student/learner interest. Watt & Richardson (2008) in Schiefele, et al., (2013) aver that little work has been done on the interest of teachers in enhancing educational outcomes. This research, in its small way, contributes to the yet little work on interest of teachers in enhancing educational outcomes alluded to by the above-cited authorities. This kind of view is predicated on the assumption that any education system in the world is as good as the teachers that impart it. The effectiveness of teachers in imparting education thus, becomes an important pointer to the kind of educational outcomes that are reaped.

The six who comprised the sample of teachers in this research showed varied conception and conceptualization of teacher interest. Their conceptualization of interest was evaluated and found to be circumscribed by individual interest which Schiefele (2009) defined as a permanent attraction of sorts to a knowledge field or a subject. Schiefele (ibid) presents that individual interest is value-related and feeling-related. Individual interest that is feeling-related, when discussing teacher interest, evokes emotions like enjoyment or apathy. Teacher interest also touches on didactics, which refers to a teacher's interest in the use of effective methods of teaching like discussion. However, teacher **T$_B$** says is not sustainable because it is time consuming so much that they cannot finish the syllabus, neither can they ever be up to date with their marking. Teaching also involves handling difficult emotional and behavioural situations in class or dealing with students' learning problems. They cannot find time for all such demands of the work.

As answer to Question 12 on Teachers' Questionnaire, Section 4.4.9 – *Do you enjoy or like to teach Shona to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds?* – the teachers gave views that either connote enjoyment or apathy concerning their teaching.

4.15.3.3 Views that connote enjoyment

> **View 3**: *I learn a lot of new words from teaching learners of different linguistic backgrounds. Zvinondisvinudza* (I get challenged).
> **View 4**: *I don't have any problem teaching students coming from different places with different languages in my lessons...*
> **View 5**: *It's not a question of enjoying, but teaching students. When they make mistakes they are corrected.*

The views of the teachers cited above all connote interest in what they do. The views are of teachers who can perform at the maximum because as they teach, some of them get to know many new words which challenge their intellect. Some of the teachers have no problems teaching learners even if they are of different linguistic backgrounds. There are the teachers who are committed to teaching the learners because they take note of all the mistakes learners make and correct them along the way.

4.15.3.4 Views that connote apathy

View 1: *Enjoying or not enjoying I still have to teach the students. That is what is expected of a teacher.*

View 2: *It is a big problem kudzidzisa marudzi akangosanganasangana* [(It is a big problem teaching learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds). *They write in different ways. When marking written work, it is difficult.*

View 4: *…What I want to say is that the problem is marking their books. It is very difficult at times.*

View 6: *I do not enjoy teaching Shona because the learners themselves hate it…*

The views of the teachers cited above all connote apathy in what the teachers do. The views are of teachers whose teaching is under par. They do not correct all the errors learners make because it is very difficult to mark books of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. This is made worse because some of the teachers do not enjoy teaching, consistent with Evaluation Research of the General Education System in Ethiopia's (1986) report in Kellaghan and Greaney (1992) that teacher morale is generally low in many African countries. It is also reported that this breeds apathy in the discharge of duty so much that 76% of secondary school teachers, given the chance, would throw over the teaching profession. The situation at the case school can be a true depiction of this African story where apathy of the teachers stems from teaching Shona to learners who themselves hate it.

The views about both teacher interest or teacher apathy as discussed above can be summarised diagrammatically as shown below.
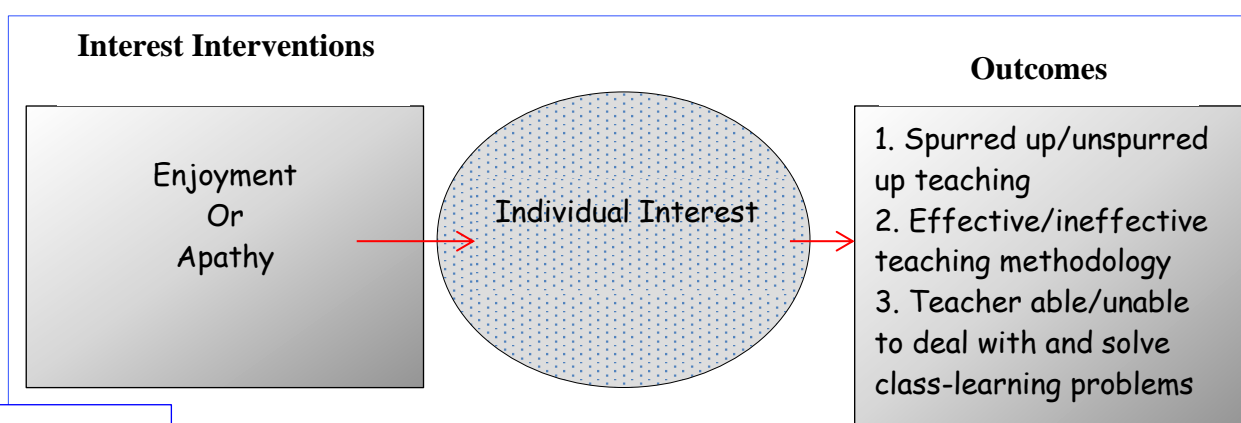
Figure 4.48

A model showing how enjoyment or apathy influence and affect interest and resultant teaching outcomes *(Assimilated to Schiefele's (2009) ideas and views about the effects of teacher interest on academic achievement)*

4.15.4 The value of departmental meetings

Teachers' Qualifications and work experience

Table 4.31

Qualification	Number of teachers
Certificate in Education/Diploma in Education	0
Bachelor of Education or higher	6
Work Experience in years	**Number of teachers**
Under a year	0
1-2	0
3-4	4
5-9	1
10$^+$	1

All the six O-Level (Form 3 & Form 4) teachers are degreed. They have at least a three-year work experience. Such experience, presumably, privileges them to have handled multitudinous hordes of learners up till now. They must by now each have encountered several and different writing challenges that learners experience. It could be beneficial for them to regularly hold departmental meetings in which they share ideas about how best they can help the learners overcome their writing challenges. Question 9 on teacher questionnaire required the O-Level teachers at the case school to state how often they hold meetings at departmental level. The question also required them to state whether they ever have anything about the writing challenges their learners experience on the agendas of these meetings. Analysis of Question 9 below revealed the following:

9. Do you, at school departmental level, hold meetings where you discuss possible ways of mitigating learners' writing challenges? If you hold such meetings, state how often you do so?

Table 4.32

Departmental meetings where issues about learners' writing challenges are discussed are…	
…Regularly held	…Never held
0	‾HⅠⅠⅠ Ⅰ
Total=0	**Total**=6

The data that were collected for question 9 revealed that, unfortunately, meetings where issues about orthography concerning learners' writing challenges are discussed are never held. All the 6 teachers (100%) concurred. This is regrettable as it negates Aurik's (2018) advice that, with meetings better is possible as people collaborate and educate each other on how to resolve issues and achieve a shared vision and mission. The shared vision and mission here is for the teachers to help learners become better writers who can score better in Shona written work at school and in examinations, as opposed to the poor scorers the learners are as depicted by Table **4.**18 and Table 4.19.

4.16 Conclusion

The chapter has outlined causes of different types of errors learners commit when writing in Shona. As the chapter unfolded, learners' concerns about the Shona orthography were highlighted and discussed. Teachers' and academics' concerns were also raised. The study participants suggested ways to ameliorate the writing challenges that exist as far as the Shona orthography is concerned. The suggested ways include:

- letting the home languages be used in school writing,
- equipping schools with relevant reference books, and
- adopting discussion as a teaching method.

The sampled teachers in this study were found to be highly qualified and experienced personnel. However, their calibre does not benefit learners much as expected because, as a department, they never hold meetings where they share ideas about the best ways to help their learners. Worse still, they do not display the kind of marking that allows learners to learn from their mistakes. In general, they do not indicate all the errors learners commit when writing. A clarion call is made to the teachers to mind more to help learners master the Shona orthography than minding more to finish the syllabus. All said and done, the stage and tone for recommendations as to what needs to be done to benefit learners more is set.

Chapter 5

Study summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The key findings of the study are summarised in this chapter. The study managed to provide answers to the study questions listed in section 1.6. In doing so, teachers and learners set foot on critical consciousness through textbook examen and commenting on. The researcher also enjoyed interfacing with study participants leading to the researcher learning a lot from carrying out this study. One of the changes experienced has to do with the enhancement of pedagogical content knowledge of the Shona language. Apart from that, the researcher's research skills greatly improved. The study provided a good learning curve. The researcher got awakened to the fact that this current research cannot be exhaustive enough to capture all there is about fostering mastery of orthography in schools. Its failure to foster this mastery is akin to imposing 'a life sentence' on pupils as they are marked down at school and at times failing in examinations. Some tentative recommendations to reform the Shona orthography are proffered, with the hope of improving learners' proficiency in writing. Teachers are entreated to mark learners' written work assiduously to give corrective feedback to learners. Data was analyzed in three phases, thus analysis of:

Phase 1: Data from learners' questionnaires and interviews

Phase 2: Data from teachers' and academics' questionnaires and interviews

Phase 3: Data from documents like adverts and learners' written work exercise books

More researches need to be carried out to fill in the gaps this research could not fill itself. A summary of all the research findings is given in diagram form since diagrams visually explain ideas or concepts better than the written word only. A diagram is an information-carrying entity. It is a clear, simple, and elegant portrayal of matters under discussion.

5.2 Study Summary

This study is divided into five chapters. The following is a summary of each of the five chapters.

Chapter 1 addresses and articulates the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, the justification of the study, the definition of terms, the scope of the study, the layout of the thesis, ethical considerations and the conclusion. The listed items foreground the study.

Chapter 2 deals with the extended review of related literature. The adoption of A Funnel Approach of the review makes it quite extensive. First, a global view of orthography is given. Second, an African perspective of orthography guides the review and last is a zeroing in on the Zimbabwean view of orthography. In doing all that, the implications and effects of orthography reform on learners is examined. Some global examples of how orthography reform makes orthography easy to use are cited, particularly the Germany case. It is argued that learning German has become a lot easier now because of spelling reform. In Korea, King Sejong had a vision of creating a writing system that is easy to learn, master and use. Today, King Sejong is credited for developing 28 letters that are easy to learn. All the cited global orthography views and reform initiatives speak to the need of the time today to 'nativise' the Shona language to make it simple to learn, master and use. In the case of Shona, nativisation entails not basing the orthography on one dialect as the case is with the current orthography. The Shona orthography should accommodate all its dialects. It is this researcher's argument that, such an orthography will predispose learners to making less errors when writing, making achievements in learning more successful.

Chapter 3 highlights The Conceptual framework and The Study Methodology. The conceptual underpinnings of two approaches of Critical Theory and Theory of Alphabetic Writing that guide the analysis of the data collected is detailed in this section of the chapter. One of the underpinnings that bind the two theories is that of The art of writing that allows people to write as they speak. The two combined theories are used to interrogate the claim whether it is true or otherwise that learners commit fewer errors if they write as they speak. The data collected is analyzed to approve or disapprove the claim. Methodological issues which explain how this researcher went about finding whatever there is that the researcher believes has to be and can be known are discussed in this section of the chapter. In an effort to clarify this research's orientation, ontological and epistemological viewpoints are discussed. The qualitative research design was adopted. The qualitative research design demands that the participants be depicted doing '*things*' in an accurate and natural way. Qualitative design emphasizes observation of lived experiences. For this qualitative research design, the following research tools were used to collect the data: Interview, Documentary analysis, Observation, Questionnaire.

Chapter 4 delves into Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion. The data that were collected using the research tools listed earlier are presented, analyzed and discussed under the following subheadings:

Data from learners' questionnaires and interviews

The data presented and analyzed in this category reveal that there is a mix of mother tongues at the case school. These include Shona, Cewa, Nyanja and Ndebele. The diversity of the languages present quite a number of discussion topics and subtopics of the investigated phenomenon.

Data from teachers' and academics' questionnaires and interviews

The teachers and academics raised the idea that learners commit errors when writing in Shona because their home languages are not fully accommodated in the current Shona orthography. Both sets of professionals suggest a solution to this by way of reforming the orthography.

Documentary analysis of adverts and learners' written work exercise books

Advertisements and learners' exercise books were analyzed. The adverts analyzed have errors on them. Some of the errors have some striking resemblance with the errors learners make when engaged in academic writing. This became explicitly clear after certain excerpts from learners' exercise books were scrutinised and analyzed.

Chapter 5 summarises the whole thesis, paying attention to the findings of the study and the conclusions reached at. Recommendations for future practice and directions for future research are given in this part of the study.

5.3 Research findings

It is argued that a standard language (a language considered as the second language-L_2 for the purposes of this research), is used by learners for academic writing at the expense of their dialect languages or mother tongues. They grudgingly use the standard language for writing all academic work. However, they are unfortunately expected to write proficiently and pass examinations to enhance job opportunities. This axiomatically presents challenges for learners as they commit numerous writing errors, for example, spelling. Learners eventually lose interest in the subject considering it unimportant and void of enhancing career opportunities. Putting it all together, the results of the present study revealed the following key findings.

5.3.1 Key findings pertaining to the type of errors learners commit

Of the investigated type of errors commonly committed by learners, spelling, punctuation, word division and sentence structure stand out. The findings of this study have revealed that some of the spelling errors that some learners commit are caused by mother tongue interference. All spelling that is mother tongue related is considered wrong spelling. This is caused by the standardisation of the Shona language that sidelined other dialects in preference of all word forms of one dialect, Zezuru.

5.3.2 Key findings pertaining to the causes of the errors that learners commit when writing in Shona

The causes of errors that learners commit when writing in Shona were investigated. It has been revealed that advertisements are a possible cause of the errors dogging academic writing of learners. They get into contact with the adverts that are awash in their environments on a daily basis. The notoriety of these adverts for making spelling, word division and punctuation errors has been sufficiently argued. Learners are not spared of the negative effect and impact of such literature on their writing. Gadgets like phones affect learners' academic writing as well. Individuals who have access to these gadgets use shorthand to save space and time. The notoriously unconventional spelling they use to write the text messages harms the users' linguistic skills, especially so when the intrusions into formal writing show up. Teacher **T_B** and teacher **T_C** say that learners can learn new words through reading whereupon they observe correct spelling and word division. More reading exposure is, thus, critical and crucial. The said teachers' views indicate that they are aware of the benefits of wider reading as a method of teaching how to write proficiently. Their big let-down is being not able to cultivate the culture of avid reading within learners. However, teachers should not give up as easily. Instead, teachers should introduce the concept of D.E.A.R (Drop Everything And Read) to their learners with adeptness. They must rise above the challenges and cultivate the culture of reading within their learners.

5.3.3 Key findings pertaining to the suggested ways of mitigating commission of errors by learners

Several ways of error mitigation have been proffered and discussed. One way that the study suggests is reforming the current Shona orthography so that it is accommodative of phonemes of the other Shona dialects. Concisely this means that people and learners alike should be allowed to write as they speak. There are, among academics and teachers, 'apostles' of orthography reform who wish that the orthography must be reformed to accommodate and accept dialect nuances. When learners write at school, they make fewer errors. The teaching and learning approaches that take into account cultural backgrounds and beliefs of learners, reverberate with the current teaching and learning principles in the competence based curriculum that the Zimbabwean government espouses. The principles emphasize the connection of learning to the culture of learners. Orbiting around cultural values and beliefs is important as it puts into practice such policies by the government. Books that explain how Shona is written, should be availed in schools especially those that are written in Shona like Manyorerwo eShona: *Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutauro wedu.* When marking, teachers are importuned to indicate all the errors learners commit when writing. Indicating all the writing errors learners make provides that learners will learn from their errors/mistakes.

5.4 A diagrammatic summary of the study findings about the causes and mitigation of writing errors

Errors committed by learners when they write in Shona are caused by things like:

The learners themselves if…

1. They do not know the rules that govern Shona orthography

2. They are not avid readers of Shona novels or interested in learning Shona

3. They do not engage in oral talk and correct each other's errors

The variance between home and school language & literary environment like adverts cause errors

1. The transition from home to school language is not smooth; errors are usually made in the process especially when **dialect** (home language) is **different to Zezuru**

2. Adverts are awash in the environment. They are notorious for various language errors

3. Non- encouragement of learners to adhere to demands of standard orthography in the interim

The teachers themselves if…

1. They do not discuss learners' writing challenges in departmental meetings or if they are not interested in teaching Shona

2. They do not adopt discussions and encourage D.E.A.R (Drop Everything And Read) in the set of their teaching methods

3. They do not indicate and correct all the errors learners make when marking written work

This causes commission of…

This causes commission of…

This causes commission of …

Errors of spelling, word division, punctuation, grammatical errors and mechanical accuracy, causing learners to be inept writers of Shona
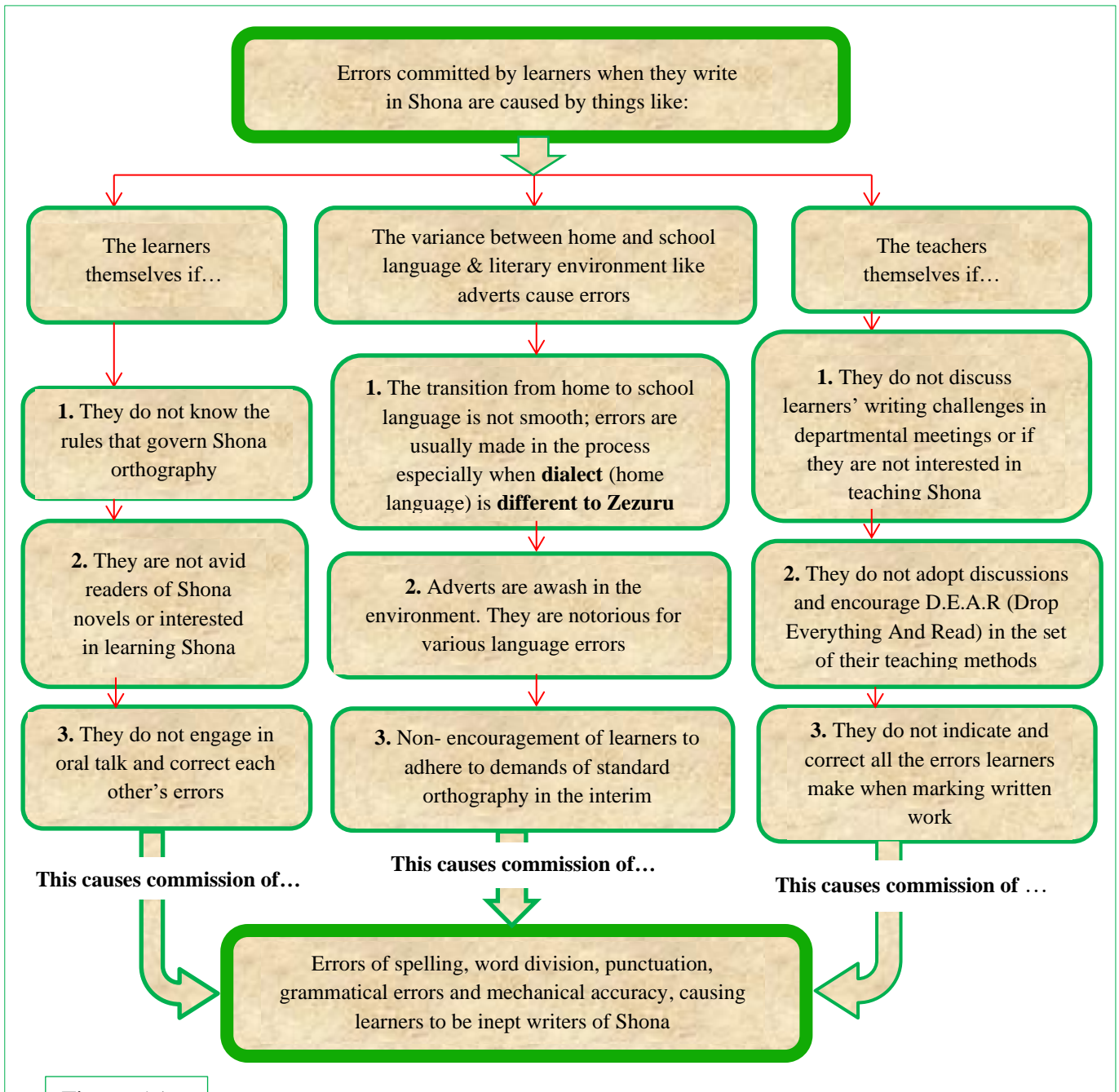
Figure 5.1

5.5 Recommendations

All the recommendations outlined in this section are informed by the research findings. They, in the main, are tentative recommendations awaiting validation and adoption by the powers that be especially those whose preoccupation is the accommodativeness of the Shona orthography to dialect morphophonology.

5.5.1 Recommendations for future practice

It is recommended that:

1. Mother tongue based language learning needs to be well-resourced. Quality and relevant curriculum materials that cover adequate funds of Shona orthographical knowledge in respect of the Zimbabwean social and linguistic milieux should be availed to learners.

2. The Shona orthography must be reformed to make it dialectologically accommodative by way of respecting diversity. Respecting diversity leads to an understanding of the different structures of different dialects by teachers. That way they can be able to see beyond the learners' errors.

3. Teachers should use non-instructional interactive teaching methods like discussion, dialogue and debate in their classes to enhance student performance and achievement since these oral activities help a lot in developing writing skills.

4. Teachers should indicate or and correct errors when marking learners' written work so that learners will realise their errors and learn from them. This will improve the learners' competency and proficiency in writing.

5. The findings show that learners are negative about the importance and utility of the Shona subject. Teachers should encourage learners to be positive towards the Shona subject by informing them about career opportunities related to Shona as it is like any other subjects that open up careers after a successful completion of school.

6. A reading culture should be encouraged and cultivated among learners. It is through reading

many texts that they can come across and learn correct spellings, correct word division and correct punctuation.

5.5.2 Directions for future research

In the literature review section of this study, it was revealed that many countries the world over are seized with orthography reform. The push factor in all that is striving to align the existing graphemes of orthographies to the real world of sounds of the various languages. However, although there is a close connection between the spoken and written forms of a language, it has remained an ideal. To such proponents of orthography reform, it has to be hinted here and now that regardless of how good they may be in the endeavours of orthography reform, they will never come to a stage where they cause a perfect orthography. However, something has to be attempted by way of future research.

A large body of research indicates that teacher efficacy has a significant impact on the teachers' classroom practices. Teachers form impressions about the nature and scope of knowledge and how best it is taught and learnt. That invokes learner interest. Learner interest has a bearing on academic performance and achievement. While we have at our disposal many further research options and possibilities, researches on teacher efficacy can be extended throughout other schools in future in order to create robust experiences and knowledge about classroom practice and learner performance and achievement.

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APPENDICES

RM^D

[COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES]

APPENDIX **A**

Dear Doc/Prof

*I am a doctoral student at UNISA's College Of Human Sciences under the supervision of **Professor D. E. Mutasa**. I am carrying out a research on the factors that cause poor mastery of orthography in schools. Your participation will be greatly appreciated. Your responses are going to be treated with utmost confidentiality. The responses are going to be used for the purposes of this particular research UNDER.*

research ONLY.

Structured Interview Questions for Academics

[**Orthography** involves spelling, word division and correct sentence construction.]

1. Which dialect do you speak?

2. Do you use it in academic writing?

3. Are there any problems that may be encountered by using it or not using it in academic writing?

4. Taking into account the problems you have highlighted, if it is suggested that the way we write Shona should be changed, what is your take?

5. Of what benefit can such a move be to
   a) school writing
   b) language development

6. You have worked in schools, colleges and now universities. How problematic are/have been the following to your learners?
   a) spelling   [probe on dialect influence
      ,auxiliaries, hyphen]
   b) word division
   c) punctuation

7. What is your take if it is suggested that problems of the three items above hinge on rules since every language is rule-governed?

8. Do you think the print media (adverts included) and electronic media can influence how a learner may end up spelling, dividing words or constructing sentences well?

9. In your opinion who should be the stakeholders in the revision of the Shona orthography?

10. What other suggestions and comments have you that can help spruce the image of the current Shona orthography?

[COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES]

APPENDIX **B**

Dear Doc/Prof

*I am a doctoral student at UNISA's College Of Human Sciences under the supervision of **Professor D. E. Mutasa**. I am carrying out a research on factors that cause poor mastery of orthography in schools. Your participation will be greatly appreciated. Your responses are going to be treated with utmost confidentiality. The responses are going to be used for the purposes of this particular research <u>ONLY</u>. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.*

Guiding questions for interview with Informant Academic A₃

[**Orthography** involves spelling, word division and correct sentence construction.]

1. Which dialect do you speak?

2. Would you say your dialect is well represented in the current Shona orthography?

3. If you do not use your own dialect in writing your works, do you encounter problems with the adopted dialect? Cite some of the problems.

4. How do you then go about the problem/problems?

5. In your opinion, should the Shona orthography be based on one dialect?

6. If your response to *question 5* above is NO, what do you propose to improve the Shona orthography's outlook?

7. What are the effects to the following, of basing Shona orthography on one dialect?:
   a) to learners?

   b) to writers?

   c) to the development of Shona language?

8. What is your view about the rules that govern the writing of Shona language?

9. Indicate where you have observed errors of word-division or grammar mistakes among the following.
   - Newspapers (e.g. *Kwayedza*)
   - Adverts
   - Instructions on items we buy for home use
   - Television

 NB: You <u>can be specific</u> about the errors and mistakes you observed.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

[COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES]

Dear Teacher

I am a doctoral student at UNISA's College Of Human Sciences under the supervision of **Professor D. E. Mutasa**. *I am carrying out a research on factors that cause poor mastery of orthography in schools. Your participation will be greatly appreciated. Your responses are going to be treated with utmost confidentiality. The responses are going to be used for the purposes of this particular research <u>ONLY</u>. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.*

Teachers Questionnaire

[**Orthography** involves spelling, word division and correct sentence construction].

1. Fill in the box:

Gender	Qualifications	Work Experience

2. What do you think of Standard Shona?

3. Which of the following affect your learners more when you teach Shona? Indicate with an **X**.

	Not Important	Important	Very Important
Spelling			
Punctuation			
Word Division			
Mechanical Accuracy			

4. Do you think we should change our way of writing?

5. Indicate with an **X** how your learners' writing competence is affected by the following language aspects:

	Not confusing and does not affect competence	A bit confusing and affects competence a bit	Confusing and affects	Very confusing and affects competence very much
Spelling				
Punctuation				
Word Division				
Mechanical Accuracy				

6. Can you estimate the numbers of learners in the classes you teach whose dialect language is any other than Zezuru?

	Few	Very few	Many
Karanga			
Ndau			
Manyika			
Korekore			

NB: *Indicate the dialect if not among those listed*
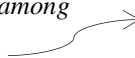
7. Can you estimate the numbers of learners in the classes you teach whose mother tongue is…

	Few	Very few	Many
Shona?			
Nyanja?			
Cewa?			
IsiNdebele?			

NB: *Indicate the mother tongue language if not listed*

8. Do you think the issues raised in question 6 and 7 have a bearing on the errors learners commit when writing in Shona?

9. Do you, at school departmental level, hold meetings where you discuss possible ways of mitigating learners' writing challenges? If you hold such meetings, indicate with an **x** how often you do so?

	Do you say departmental meetings are…		
	Never held?	Held **At times?**	**Always** held?
Frequency of departmental meetings			

10. In your view, are your learners interested in learning Shona?

11. Indicate with an **X** the amount and availability of the following reference books

	Unavailable	Under 30	30-60	61-100	Over 100
A guide to Shona spelling					
Duramazwi Guru reShona					
Manyorerwo eShona					
Shona Novels					
Comprehension Text Books					

12. Do you enjoy or like to teach Shona to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

13. What ideas do you have that can help learners become competent Shona writers?

    i)

    ii)

    iii)

RM

[COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES]

APPENDIX **D**

Dear Learner/Student

*I am a doctoral student at UNISA's College Of Human Sciences under the supervision of **Professor D. E. Mutasa**. I am carrying out a research on factors that cause poor mastery of orthography in schools. Your participation will be greatly appreciated. Your responses are going to be treated with utmost confidentiality. The responses are going to be used for the purposes of this particular research <u>ONLY</u>. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.*

Learners/Student Questionnaire

[**Orthography** involves spelling, word division and correct sentence construction.]

1.Mark with a cross or tick your age in one of the boxes below:

Under 15

15-16

17-18

18⁺

2. Which of the following is your language? Use a cross or tick to mark your language.

 Shona

Cewa

Nyanja

IsiNdebele

[*If Shona is your choice in question* 2, *answer question* 3]
3. a) What is your home language/dialect? Does the dialect language at times show up in the way you write in Shona written work?

b) Do you write your dialect at school?

c) Do you have problems when you write compositions?

[*If your choice in question* 2 *is any other than Shona, answer question* 4]

4. Do you find it interesting to learn Shona at school? Explain your answer.

5. When not in class or not at school, which language do you feel free to use and why?

6. a) Indicate with an **X** the language aspect/s that give/s you problem/s when writing in Shona [*You are free to indicate as many aspects that you feel give you problems*].

- Spelling
- Word division
- Punctuation
- Concordial agreement
- All of the above

b) What do you suggest has to be done to help you do well?

7. Do you have enough books to help you with your spelling?

	Unavailable	Under 30	30-60	61-100	Over 100
A guide to Shona spelling					
Duramazwi Guru reShona					
Manyorerwo eShona					
Shona Novels					
Comprehension Text Books					

8. What effect on your learning and performance do you think their availability or non-availability has?

9. Write in Shona a paragraph of about ten lines about what you were doing at home during the National Lockdown.

10. Do your parents support your learning of Shona at school?

11. What do you suggest should be done to help you score better in the end of course ZIMSEC Shona examinations?

Guidelines for: <u>Document analysis</u>

Schemes of work and lesson plans

- The schemes of work are analyzed with the purpose of finding out how much of oral work is schemed for since speaking helps in the development of writing particularly so for speaker writers.
- It is intended to find out as well how often is written work schemed or planned for since practice makes perfect.

Record of marks

These documents are analyzed in order to find out how many of the O-Level learners at the case school exist in the following score categories

- High scores
- Middle scores
- Low scores

Written exercise books

In analysing learners' written exercise books, it is intended to see

- How teachers score learners' work with regard to the language aspects that they give prominence to
- Which aspects of orthography give leaners worst difficulty

National and School syllabuses

In analysing the documents, it is intended to find out if the said documents do emphasize correct and inviolable use and application of orthography or the documents just in passing, talk about it.

<u>Observation</u>

Observation can be administered on events artifacts or behaviours. What is targeted by my observation will be:

- events in the case school that could yield anything pertaining to the study
- artifacts like a) billboards supposedly replete in the urban environs of the case school
  b) learners' exercise books
  c) teachers' record of learners' marks
  d) teachers' schemes of work
- linguistical mixing and mingling (behaviours) of learners
- lesson observations to realise how the learners and teachers interact linguistically
- lesson observations to realise how learners and teachers engage with the current Shona orthography

Teacher interview questions

1. What is your home language?
2. When did you start teaching at secondary school level and how long have you been teaching O-Level Shona?
3. Are you an O-Level Shona examination marker?
4. Can you highlight the aspects of language the exam gives prominence in awarding marks to composition work?
5. How often do you give composition written work?
6. Which language aspects do you give prominence when awarding marks to a composition?
7. In your view, which language aspect or aspects pose writing difficulty to learners? What could be the possible causes?

Student interview questions

1. What is your home language?
2. When did you start learning Shona?
3. Do you enjoy learning Shona? Explain why.
4. Are you able to write in Shona prose making very few errors, at least less than ten (10) orthography errors?
5. What language do your classmates use out of class?
6. Of the many advertising billboards you have seen in your vicinity, which one fascinates you?
7. I know phones are not allowed here at school. However, do you have a smart phone that you use at home? If you have, may I ask you to bring it over tomorrow? I will seek permission from the Head for you to bring it.

ETHICS

13 January 2021

The Headmaster
Mandava High School
Zvishavane

Dear Sir

Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MANDAVA HIGH
SCHOOL

The above subject refers.

I am a **PhD** student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am working on my research project entitled: *Challenges and solutions to the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools.*

Prof. D. E. Mutasa of the College of Human Sciences at UNISA is my supervisor.

My research study aims to find out the challenges bedevilling the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools and the possible ways of addressing the challenges. This is done in the context of academic (school) writing versus the casual and non-academic way of writing.

I would like to seek your permission to interview and observe your students and teachers doing what they do in their learning of the Shona subject in respect of the application of the Shona orthography in school writing.

I have deliberately chosen Mandava High School as my research context because it lies in a dialect zone where Karanga is widely spoken. Pockets of speakers of Ndebele language exist also around in Zvishavane in Mberengwa district. Zvishavane as a mining town draws its labour force from across the breadth and length of Zimbabwe. As such the chance of drawing together speakers of Shona dialects who mingle and talk is high. Nyanja and Cewa speakers also exist in the mining town of Zvishavane. Mandava High School therefore becomes a centre where learners of different native languages meet making it a suitable context for this study which seeks to find out how the home languages affect or complement academic writing.

Furthermore, be aware that the research has to be approved by the departmental Ethics Research Committee (ERC) and the Unisa Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC). The two committees have experts tasked to ensure that the welfare and rights of research participants are protected and that researches are conducted in a menschy ethical manner. If you have any questions you that you may like to ask before you grant your permission, you are welcome to contact me on the details given in this letter.

Yours sincerely

Madusise Raphael

Email: madusiser@gmail.com

Cell: 0773 628 564

Headmaster's letter of authority/permission

A LETTER OF AUTHORIT/PERMISSION-HEADMASTER MANDAVA HIGH SCHOOL,
ZVISHAVANE, ZIMBABWE

9 FEBRUARY 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Authorisation of **Mr Madusise Raphael** to carry out a research on the Challenges and solutions to the

mastery of the Shona orthography in schools at Mandava High School.

This note serves to inform you that Mr R Madusise, a PhD student at the University of South Africa has been granted
permission to carry out his research among students and teachers at Mandava Hugh School of Zvishavane District.
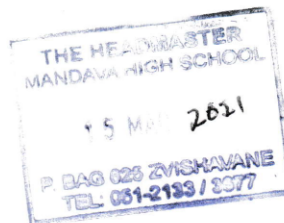
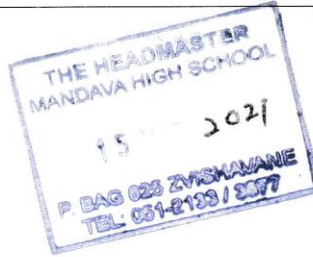Your cooperation in his research will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you

………………………..

C. Mutumhe

[*Headmaster- Mandava High School*]

13 January 2021

The Headmaster
Mandava High School
Zvishavane

Dear Sir

Re: <u>REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MANDAVA HIGH SCHOOL</u>

The above subject refers.

I am a **PhD** student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am working on my research project entitled: *Challenges and solutions to the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools.*

Prof. D. E. Mutasa of the College of Human Sciences at UNISA is my supervisor.

My research study aims to find out the challenges bedevilling the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools and the possible ways of addressing the challenges. This is done in the context of academic (school) writing versus the casual and non-academic way of writing.

I would like to seek your permission to interview and observe your children doing what they do in their learning of the Shona subject in respect of the application of the Shona orthography in school writing.

I have deliberately chosen Mandava High School as my research context because it lies in a dialect zone where Karanga is widely spoken. Pockets of speakers of Ndebele language exist also around in Zvishavane in Mberengwa district. Zvishavane as a mining town draws its labour force from across the breadth and length of Zimbabwe. As such the chance of drawing together speakers of different Shona dialects who mingle and talk is high. Nyanja and Cewa speakers also exist in the mining town of Zvishavane. Mandava High School therefore becomes a centre where learners of different native languages meet making it a suitable context for this study which seeks to find out how the home languages affect or complement academic writing.

Furthermore, be aware that the research has to be approved by the departmental Ethics Research Committee (ERC) and the Unisa Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC). The two committees have experts tasked to ensure that the welfare and rights of research participants are protected and that researches are conducted in a menschy ethical manner. If you have any questions you that you may like to ask before you grant your permission, you are welcome to contact me on the details given in this letter.

Yours sincerely

Madusise Raphael

Email: madusiser@gmail.com

Cell: 0773 628 564

241

9 FEBRUARY 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: <u>Authorisation of **Mr Madusise Raphael** to carry out a research on the Challenges and solutions to the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools at Mandava High School</u>.

Reference is made to the above matter.

Authority has been granted for you to carry out your research at Mandava High on condition that

- Your activities do not disrupt, disturb or interfere with our children's learning
- Data collected will benefit our school and our children

Yours faithfully

....

[*<u>Chairman</u> – Mandava High School –<u>School Development Committee</u>*]

INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number: .... (**See attached ethics clearance certificate**).

Research permission reference number ....

4 February 2020

Title: Challenges and solutions to the mastery of the Shona orthography in schools.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Raphael Madusise and I am doing research with Prof D.E. Mutasa, a professor in the Department of Human Sciences towards a PhD at the University of South Africa (UNISA). You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Challenges and solutions to the mastery the Shona orthography in schools.*

We are conducting this research to establish the causes of poor mastery of the Shona orthography culminating in the writing errors that learners commit. The study intends to give possible solutions to the challenges. It is our hope that research will help learners become better writers and teachers, better Shona teachers.

There was no special and specific reason for selecting you to participate in this study. The only criterion considered is that you are

- an O-Level Shona student who might have mastery challenges of the Shona orthography causing you to commit various writing errors
- an O-Level Shona teacher who when marking learners written pieces of work, notices that learners fail to competently apply the Shona orthography resulting in them committing writing errors

Your participation is valuable. Your views can help in the investigation and establishment of the causes of the orthography errors. Possible solutions can be proffered basing on the established causes of poor mastery of the Shona orthography. You the learners and your teachers are the direct consumers of orthography. It is only on that strength that you have been selected to participate in this study.

Your participation is voluntary. You are not at all obligated to consent to participation. Should you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form.

You are free to withdraw from participating in this study without any questions asked. You just inform the researcher via the given contact details:

- ❖ cell — 0773 628 564
- ❖ e-mail — madusiser@gmail.com

The study requires you to participate in three ways, which are

- answering wide ranging questions on the research questionnaire about Shona orthography [*this will take about 20 minutes of your time*]
- being interviewed to solicit your views about the learning and writing in Shona [*this will take 45 minutes of your time*]
- being observed while in a Shona lesson [*this observation is done during lesson time*]

There are no risks or foreseeable risks that are associated with your participation. There too are no monetary benefits to you for taking part in this research study. However, there are indirect benefits to you, such as becoming aware of Shona orthography and the existence of dialects that make up the Shona language. This will make you a better writer in Shona or a better teacher of Shona if you were not one.

All the information you are going to volunteer will be treated as highly confidential. Your name will never be revealed or used in any part of the report of this study. Pseudo names or codes will be used to refer to the answers or information you are going to give. The information so obtained from you will be used only for the purpose of this research and thereafter all the records of the supplied information, whether hard copies or recordings, will be destroyed according to the UNISA policy on the collected data.

243

Even if your information is used in journal publications or conference proceedings, confidentiality regarding your identity is going to be upheld.

We are happy to inform you that the study received approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Human Sciences. You can obtain the copy of the approval letter from the researcher if you so wish.

If you would like to be informed about the final research findings, please contact Mr Raphael Madusise on 0773 628 564 or madusiser@gmail.com.

Should you have any concerns about the way the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof D. E. Mutasa at

- 072 076 0843 or
- mutasde@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this research.

Thank you

Madusise Raphael

Student Number: **64023141**

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

The Study topic: Challenges and solutions to the mastery of Shona orthography in schools

Student: ....

Date: ..../......./2021

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Raphael Madusise** and **Professor D. E. Mutasa**, a senior professor in the Department of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

You are invited to take part in this study because as a learner or teacher of Shona, you are critical in that you may be experiencing some challenges in writing in or teaching Shona. If you are experiencing any challenges, you could be very helpful in letting the researcher become aware of them. The main purpose of this research study is investigating any such problems or challenges and, as a way forward, gives possible suggestions to ameliorate the problems.

Your participation is voluntary. It involves

    a)   answering questions (on the research questionnaire) about Shona orthography [*this will take about 20 minutes of your time*]

    b)   being interviewed to solicit your views about the learning and writing in Shona [*this will take 45 minutes of your time*]

    c)   being observed while in a Shona lesson [*this observation is done during lesson time*]

There are no risks that can be associated with your participation. There too are no monetary benefits to you for taking part in this research study. However, there are indirect benefits to you, such as becoming aware of Shona orthography and existence of dialects that make up the Shona language. This will make you a better writer in Shona or a better teacher of Shona if you were not one.

You will be given a copy of this letter so that you can discuss with your parents before you sign to assent your participation in the research.

If you have any queries feel free to contact the researcher on <u>Cell number</u>: **0773 628 564;** <u>email</u>: **madusiser@gmail.com**

245