

**TEACHING OF ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING PROFICIENCY TO FORM TWO  
ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN  
ZIMBABWE**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

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### **TEACHING OF ACADEMIC ENGLISH WRITING PROFICIENCY TO FORM TWO ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN ZIMBABWE**

I declare that the above dissertation/ thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete

SIGNATURE

Ms. G Mupupuni

---

DATE

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mum and late dad, who always inspired me to take on greater challenges than I envisioned, as well as my siblings, my husband and my children. I also dedicate this work to my former school head, Mr Masunda, who saw greater potential in me when I thought I had given my all to education.

## ABSTRACT

Academic writing proficiency is essential for academic success; however, the development of writing skills is predicated on learners' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). The development of academic writing proficiency is the most challenging among English second language (ESL) learners. This study investigated the teaching of English academic writing proficiency to Form Two learners in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Data were collected through a literature review as well as a qualitative investigation. The study was underpinned by Cummins' second language learning theories and Vygotsky socio-cultural theory. Literature also provided a historical context for the development of language in education policy in Zimbabwe since colonial times to the present. Using an ethnographic design two private secondary schools were purposefully selected to participate in this study. The sample comprised two ESL Form Two teachers, two heads of departments and the two school principals. Data were collected in three phases using the following research instruments: document analysis, classroom observation and individual interviews with the ESL teachers, Heads of Department and school principals. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that Form Two teachers taught academic writing proficiency using the process model, which engaged learners actively in their own learning. Learners' writing could be improved through dividing essay writing into various components and encouraging group work and discussion prior to writing. Thorough planning, drafting and peer reviewing enhanced learners' academic writing proficiency. Despite the success of the approach used, ESL teachers experienced challenges in teaching academic writing, which included a shortage of text books prescribed by the Cambridge Examination Board and lack of support for the teaching of indigenous languages. The study demonstrated the value attributed to English for economic and social mobility by the two schools and the learners' parents. It was concluded that language proficiency is socially constructed by the teacher, supportive home environments and learners' motivation to learn the language. Based on these findings it is recommended that private schools implement home language instruction on an equal basis with the teaching of English and introduce learners to a variety of writing genres to improve their academic writing proficiency.

**Key words**

Academic writing, English Second Language, Writing proficiency skills. Form two learners, Cambridge Examination Board, home language.

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# CHAPTER I

## BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS

### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study was motivated by my eighteen years of teaching English at various secondary schools in Zimbabwe, where I noted an apparent gap between the current English Second Language (ESL) instruction in Zimbabwean secondary schools and the expected English language requirements at tertiary institutions. It appears that Zimbabwean teachers do not tackle the teaching of grammatical techniques and lexis that ESL learners require in higher education and the workplace adequately. Prescribed textbooks used in secondary schools also fall short of addressing the salient academic writing techniques needed for academic success in tertiary education. The fundamental assumption is that for learners to be successful in academic writing in English, they must have mastered the rudiments of grammar. The thrust of this study, therefore, is to examine whether English academic writing proficiency skills are adequately taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools and to suggest ways of improving the teaching of ESL academic writing.

The elements constituting appropriate teaching methods for enhancing language proficiency are difficult to determine. This is due, in part, to the fact that language teaching encompasses spoken and written grammar, listening and reading. English is highly regarded in Zimbabwe because it is an international language and proficiency in English opens job opportunities and positive life outcomes. Nhongo (2013) notes that because of the value attached to English, most black parents push for English to be taught to their children from an early age to give them a good start. As an international language English proficiency is viewed as important for academic success and future job opportunities by both blacks and whites. This is despite the fact that there are very few English first language speakers in Zimbabwe. Internationally, research shows that world over, Zimbabwe included, there are more English language learners than English first language speakers (Fareed and Bilal 2016; Reid 2018).

When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, the status of English as an official language remained unchanged. English emerged as the major language of communication in trade and commerce. A pass in Ordinary Level English became a must for Zimbabwean secondary school candidates because of the employment and training opportunities it opened for them, and

because of its global significance. Gotosa, Rwodzi and Mhlanga (2013) posit that there is lack of confidence in African Languages as linguistic capital that can increase upward social mobility for African Language speakers. That is why the Zimbabwean government has not experienced pressure to put the constitutional clauses on language issues into practice. Extensive reviews have been conducted regarding the need to promote English Language proficiency. Viriri and Viriri (2013) highlight that English is regarded as a tool of effective communication, study and work, and its importance across the entire school curriculum cannot be over-emphasised. Study findings (Spanou and Zafiri 2019) indicate that because English writing skills facilitate the acquisition, creation and documentation of knowledge, the instruction thereof warrants close examination. In an attempt to clarify the language debate, I examined the current language education policy in Zimbabwe with the aim of making recommendations to improve practice. In Zimbabwe, there is continual emphasis on how to improve English proficiency because of the attendant economic and employment benefits.

### **1.1.2 Language instruction in post-independence Zimbabwean secondary schools**

There has not been much difference between pre- and post-independence language instruction in Zimbabwe as manifested by the poor levels of writing proficiency among learners in general. In spite of the value attached to English language proficiency, Ndlovu (2011) found that teachers are not receiving sufficient professional development in effective teaching strategies to address the learners' academic language proficiency needs. This research also concludes that there is need to design pedagogical programmes that promote the development of academic language proficiency skills (Ndlovu, 2011). Brining (2015), Nemati, Alavi and Mohebbi (2017), Ndamba (2012) and Sithole and Van Wyk (2017) carried out further studies on English writing skills instructional practices in Zimbabwe and discovered gaps in the teaching strategies adopted by teachers. An emerging issue was an apparent difference in the way teachers prepared for lessons based on experience, academic and professional qualifications. Hence, the need to revisit how, among other ESL skills, academic writing skills are being taught at secondary school level cannot be overemphasised.

Poor linguistic proficiency is not just a Zimbabwean phenomenon but a worldwide problem. Nel and Muller (2010) carried out research in which they established that most South African English language teachers lacked academic literacy skills in English and a number lacked a

strong oral culture and adequate reading materials. Research studies carried out by Maseko and Ndlovu (2013), Nhongo (2013) and Gora (2017) demonstrated that a large number of learners in tertiary education in Zimbabwe manifest inadequate linguistic skills which impede their performance in other areas of their study. The extensive review asserted that the majority of tertiary education students have English language skills that are below standard for Grade 12 second language learners and exhibit a poor command of the English language. Such poor communicators struggled with tertiary education. Nel and Müller (2010) observed that free writing strategies employed in second language teaching classrooms did not always respond to academic writing needs such as synthesising and interpreting new information from external sources. Faced with this scenario, curriculum planners have begun critiquing the curriculum to see how it can best be aligned to the needs of tertiary education and industry.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Inadequately trained teachers are unable to assist their learners acquire linguistic proficiency. In particular, against the above background, there is a need to investigate the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills to ESL secondary school learners in Zimbabwe.

The main research questions that this study sought to investigate was formulated as follows:

1. How effective is the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in selected secondary schools in Zimbabwe?

This main research question was answered using the following sub questions:

- 1.1 Which important theoretical frameworks and models influence the way language proficiency is conceptualised in literature and how are these models critiqued?
- 1.2 Which key reforms have been implemented in the Zimbabwean education system since independence in a bid to create a new policy and legislative landscape, and how does the implementation of these reforms affect the teaching of English academic writing proficiency in schools?



1.3 What strategies do teachers use to teach English academic writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners in Zimbabwe?

1.4 What recommendations can be made to improve the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners in Zimbabwe?

### **1.3 RESEARCH AIM**

In light of the main research question, the study aimed to explore the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in selected secondary schools in Zimbabwe. In order to address the sub-questions mentioned above, the following objectives have been identified:

- To explore the theoretical frameworks and models which influence the way language proficiency is conceptualised in literature;
- To identify and examine the key educational reforms that have been implemented in the Zimbabwean education system since independence in order to create a new policy and legislative landscape, and discuss the implementation challenges and their effects on the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in schools;
- To conduct an empirical study using a qualitative approach to explore the strategies teachers use for teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in selected secondary schools in Zimbabwe;
- To make recommendations to improve the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in selected secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

### **1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

To my knowledge, there are very few empirical research studies investigating standard practice in the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Lundidi's (2015) unpublished thesis exposed that lack of English academic writing proficiency skills negatively impacted both academic learning and competence in the

workplace. Muchafanechiya and Muchafanechiya (2010) investigated the use of English as the medium of instruction in Zimbabwean Junior Primary Schools and concluded that using English for instruction has eroded teacher rapport with learners, resulting in the excessive use of code switching, both in spoken and written discourse.

The present study links to Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya's (2010) study in the primary school sector but my study focuses on ESL secondary school level. My research also subscribes to Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya's (2013) view that proficiency in English helps learners master knowledge and construct understanding because, in an effort to boost production, champions of industry are competing for proficient writers who will, in turn, enhance the quality of their operations. For this reason, attention was given to the quality of English language learning and how it could be enhanced. Zimbabwean learners seem to lack proficiency, what Lucantoni (2013:12) calls, "the ability to use English effectively for purposes of practical communication in a variety of situations." My intention was that by examining how ESL is being taught, I would be able to make recommendations on how to improve the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills.

The Zimbabwean school curriculum is nationalised and the Ministry of primary and secondary education will also benefit if researchers successfully investigate how English academic writing proficiency skills are taught in Zimbabwe. Current methods used in the teaching of English are criticised for failing to equip students with appropriate language proficiency skills required in tackling academic success both at primary and tertiary education institutions. Kahari (2012) criticises existing composition writing courses for focusing on personal and creative writing at the expense of academic writing style.

The other thrust of the proposed study is to focus on how Zimbabwe's language teaching policy reforms are affecting the teaching of English academic writing proficiency in secondary schools. It is hoped that the study will contribute to a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current teaching strategies meant to enhance writing skills development. It is my hope that the proposed study will stimulate school policy makers, administrators, researchers and teachers to reflect on the English language teaching and learning policies in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Chapter four provides a detailed explanation of the research methodologies used in this study. In this section I only provide a summary of the research methodology. This study was conducted through a literature review and an empirical investigation.

The aim of conducting the literature review was twofold. The literature study investigated both international and national trends in the teaching of English language proficiency skills among second language learners. The literature study further enabled me to conduct a thorough investigation of research conducted both internationally and nationally on literacy teaching and learning and the language policies in education in these countries. The literature study thus assisted with the identification of the knowledge gap as well as the demarcation of the study.

### **1.5.1 Empirical investigation**

This study conducted an in-depth investigation of the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills amongst Form two ESL learners in Zimbabwe using a qualitative approach. As such, an ethnographic research design was used. Mare (2012) avers that constitutive ethnography is rooted in American pragmatism which studies the structure of activities and related social facts of education and how they contribute to learning as opposed to merely establishing correlations to antecedents and resultant effects which quantitative researchers specialise in. According to Creswell (2013:87), ethnography entails lesson observations, interviews, digital photo journaling and collection of artefacts. Data for this study were collected over a period of two months. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) notes that qualitative methods provide a thick description of data. In addition, ethnography is credited for allowing a holistic investigation of teacher-learner interactions in a scholarly fashion.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study investigated the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills among Zimbabwean secondary school learners using a qualitative research design. According Maree (2012), the qualitative approach enables researchers to use multiple research instruments and in so doing this assists in cross checking results. Qualitative research is also said to be advantageous as it allows for the collection of data in a naturalistic environment. Creswell

(2013) further points out another advantage of conducting a qualitative study: it focuses on the "how" and "why" questions and emphasises the natural setting as the direct source of data. It is closely aligned to interpretative phenomenological inquiry because the aim was to develop fully insights from the perspectives of those who are involved in the experience (McMillan and Schumacher 2014). It is an approach about searching for meanings and experiences about a phenomenon, (McMillan and Schumacher 2014: 382).

### **1.6.1 The research site and selection of research participants**

Purposive sampling was applied in the selection of two secondary schools, Hilbright Science College and High Achievers (pseudonyms) as research sites. These two institutions are both private self-funded schools as indicated in Chapter 4 (par. 4.2.4) located in close proximity of each other. They are fed by the high income group within the Zimbabwean community and are both located in suburban areas. The rationale for the choice of the two schools was as follows:

- a) English which is a second language for learners is the medium of instruction at both schools;
- b) Accessibility to the researcher;
- c) The existence of information-rich informants;
- d) The two schools register their candidates with the Cambridge Examination Board, a prestigious worldwide board sanctioned by the British Council.
- e) They both produced excellent academic results for Cambridge Ordinary Level examinations for three years in succession (2015-2017);
- f) Both schools have state-of-the-art facilities and have consistently competed with each other to earn the Cambridge Outstanding Learner Awards for the best results in various subject areas in Zimbabwe. For most learners, English is both an interactional and instructional language.

In both schools, the ESL results in the three year period (2015-2017) has ranged from 80-90%, which is outstanding. In 2016 and 2017, both Hilbright and Higher Achievers were awarded the Best Student Prize by the Cambridge Examination Board for producing the best ESL results in Zimbabwe. Hilbright has an enrolment of 350 learners from Form 1 to form 6, with a teacher; pupil ratio of 1: 20. While High Achievers has an enrolment of 425 learners, and a teacher: pupil ratio of 1:25. I wanted to investigate whether the high performance was a result

of the ESL teaching methods or if other factors came into play. It would appear that maintaining a lower teacher-pupil ratio has an impact on the quality of ESL instruction and ultimate results (cf. par. 4.2.4).

The participant sample comprised two teachers, who taught ESL to Ordinary Level Form Two classes at the two schools respectively. I also chose two school principals and the two Heads of Department from each school respectively. The rationale for such choice was that the two participating teachers' had the highest qualifications, and were regarded by as the best ESL teachers. Heads of Departments and School administrator were selected based on the good performance of the two schools.

### **1.6.2 Data collection techniques**

The data for this study were collected through methods that subscribe to constitutive ethnography, which is lesson observations, face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews (Maree 2012). Creswell (2013) explains that ethnography entails lesson observations, interviews, digital photo journaling and collection of artefacts, all techniques of data gathering which I used over a period of two months. Qualitative research methods provided opportunity for thick description of data. In addition, ethnography is known for allowing a holistic investigation of teacher-learner interactions in a scholarly fashion. In some cases I took photographs to give a vivid visual narrative of all proceedings then carefully recorded the dates. Data collection techniques, namely, document analysis, lesson observation, face to face interviews are discussed in detail in the ensuing sections.

Data collection for this study was conducted in three phases. Phase one of data collection entailed document analysis and initial interviews with the two ESL teachers. Phase two and three of data collection consisted of follow-up interviews with the teachers, individual interview with the school principals and Heads of Departments as well as classroom observation.

1. Phase one: Document analysis and initial interviews with the ESL teachers and HOD's

a) Document analysis

I firstly examined official documents such as the ESL Cambridge syllabus to gain insight into the context in which the teaching strategies are employed. Thereafter, I examined the participant teachers' schemes of work to ascertain if these documents were in tandem with the participant teachers' philosophies and beliefs about ESL teaching. The teachers' evaluations in schemes of work, were indicative of the two teachers' views on interactional rights and best approaches to developing linguistic and communicative competence. The documents were critiqued as a way of fulfilling the expectations of ethnographic case study. Most teachers' remarks were reflective of perceived best practice. I observed that generally, areas of perceived difficulty were schemed for more frequently. The classroom activities were indicative of the preferred language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Perceived difficulties and learners' attitudes towards certain content were indicated in the daily evaluation section of the schemes. The scheme cum plan is a guiding, yet mandatory ESL curriculum document which fuses the scheme of work and the lesson plan. Comparing the Cambridge syllabus and teacher schemes allowed me to evaluate the level of teachers' reliance on these important documents in their teaching. The identified documents were equally deemed to be reflective of the perceptions and philosophies guiding teachers' actions in the teaching process. The syllabus and schemes of work, like all other curriculum documents, are invaluable especially where qualitative researchers seek convergence and corroboration of research findings. From the selected documents, it became easy to establish the context of the research as well as identify issues that required further investigation.

b) Initial interviews with the ESL teachers and HOD's

Initial interviews were conducted with the ESL teachers to solicit background information about them such as their level of qualifications, their teaching experience and teaching philosophies. An interview guide was used during the initial interview with them (Appendix E). Follow-up interviews were further conducted with these two ESL teachers ( Appendix G).

Interviews were also conducted with the two HOD's of the participating schools to find out more about the schools and how they supported the ESL teachers. (Appendix H)

2. Phases two and three of data collection: Lesson observations, Interviews with school principals

a) Lesson observations

I prepared in advance the lesson observation grid (Appendix H) in order to investigate the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills. The aim of lesson observation was to determine teachers' awareness of the need to teach all the four language skills in an integrated way although my main focus was on English academic writing proficiency skills (cf. 4.2.6.1) A total of 48 lessons were observed with the two teachers over a two-week period.

b) Interviews with the school principals

Individual interviews were conducted with the two school principals of the participating schools, in order to find out the supporting strategies used to support ESL teachers (cf 4.2.6.2). An interview guide was used during the interviews and same questions were asked to both groups (Appendix H). Data from these different sources were triangulated.

### **1.6.2.1 Data analysis**

Data emerging from the qualitative data were analysed thematically (cf 4.3). Data collection and analysis were informed by the first and second language acquisition theoretical frameworks of this study.

### **1.6.2.2 Research ethics**

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:129) reiterate that because most educational research deals with people, it is a necessity for a researcher to understand all the ethical responsibilities and considerations that come with it.

Before the study commenced formally, I obtained ethical clearance from the University of South Africa's College of Education, the Department of Education in Zimbabwe and the two school chosen as a sample. Written consent was obtained from the teachers, administrators, subject heads and parents of learners who participated in the study. The following information was included in the consent forms to all prospective participants: the purpose of the research, what was expected of the participants, assurance of voluntary participation, steps to maintain confidentiality and privacy and the contact information of the ethics committee chairperson, should participants have any questions regarding the ethics of the study. I conducted myself in a professional manner in accordance with the key values of the University of South Africa. According to Creswell (2003: 44), it is the role of a researcher to "plan for potential ethical situations that may evolve when the researcher must gain entry to the field site of the research; involve participants in a study; gather personal, emotional data that reveal the details of life; and ask participants to give considerable time to a project." Thus, I treated all the participants with respect and in order to observe safety of all participants, ensured that they were not harmed by any unethical or dangerous actions throughout the process.

Creswell (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014) point out the necessity to protect participant confidentiality when conducting research. In order to protect the confidentiality of the research participants I used pseudonyms for the schools and for teachers, school heads and school administrators. Furthermore, the collected data has been stored safely on a password locked computer in a secure office and I am the only person with access to it.

### **1.6.3 Trustworthiness of data**

To ensure trustworthiness of data, data analysis was done with the assistance of a research expert, Dr Gotosa, who is responsible for research in the Department of Curriculum and Arts in the University of Zimbabwe. She assisted in reviewing the coding and transcription of raw data. According to Maree (2012), coding helps the researcher to identify dominant themes, behaviour patterns, interactions and incidents. All conclusions were based on substantiated data, which was supported by authentic literature sources. The stronger the supporting evidence that emerged from the data, the stronger the conclusion and resultant interpretation.



#### **1.6.4 Limitations of the study**

The study had inherent limitations in that the sample was not representative of all Zimbabwean ESL teachers in private schools. The current study focused on English academic writing proficiency skills of learners from two purposefully selected suburban, affluent private schools, Hilbright and High Achievers, in Zimbabwe and excluded English academic writing skills development strategies in less resourced schools. Although English academic writing proficiency is a formidable challenge among all Zimbabwean learners, the current study focused only on Form Two learners in accordance with the Critical Age Hypothesis (Lenneberg 1967; Bialystok 1997; Cook 1995), which considers the teenage years as the most crucial period in which ESL learners are required to acquire the bulk of the second language, including English academic writing proficiency skills. Thus, the study did not investigate the development of English academic writing proficiency skills at tertiary level.

### **1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

Key concepts employed in writing this thesis are defined below to ensure a common understanding throughout the work.

#### **1.7.1 English Language Proficiency**

English Language Proficiency is the ability to speak, write, read and comprehend English in general. There is little consensus on what it means to be proficient although some scholars have taken it to mean a command of language needed to succeed in the classroom (Lee 2018).

#### **1.7.2 Communicative competence**

Competence is the ability to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally and within specific contexts. It includes the knowledge that gives a person communicative functionality and the ability to be interactional (Widdowson 2014).

### **1.7.3 Academic literacy**

Academic literacy is the student's ability to process and interpret information gathered from a variety of sources and by relevant means (Snow & Uccelli 2019). It is the key to academic success and will enable learners to properly manage all information that will be prescribed for their course of study and course instruction.

### **1.7.4 Bilingualism**

Bilingualism refers to the ability to converse proficiently in two or more languages (Bialystok 2019) Bilingualism is common and is on the rise especially in the countries such as United States (US), Switzerland, Belgium and Zimbabwe, in particular. Most learners in Zimbabwe speak a first language other than English.

### **1.7.5 Subtractive bilingualism**

Subtractive bilingualism can be loosely defined as the weakening of first language proficiency as a result of obtaining a second language before the first language is fully developed. In subtractive bilingualism contexts, the second language tends to replace the functions of the first language. In fact, the acquisition of second language increases the cognitive load such that it becomes detrimental to the development of learners' first language. This type of bilingualism is common among immigrant communities and former colonies and it usually results in language shift within one or two generations. This phenomenon is common among minority groups whose first language is poorly taught (Lambert, 1981). Repeated usage of the second language overshadows the first language competence and culture progressively replaces by the second language.

### **1.7.6 Additive bilingualism**

Additive bilingualism is the sociolinguistic situation in which there is strengthening of first language proficiency due to the mastery of a second language. Speech communities espouse a second language without necessarily threatening the status of the first language (Cummins 1979). Second language speakers usually learn English in order to gain access to prestigious

jobs that require bilingualism but continue to use indigenous languages as their main language. Embracing additive bilingualism strengthens reading skills in both English and learners' first language. The ultimate goal of additive bilingualism is to attain strong communication skills in English and the first language. In authentic additive bilingualism contexts, learners' first language and culture continues to be developed while they are learning their second language. Both languages are comfortably used inside and outside of school.

### **1.7.7 Official language**

An official language is a state language that is given a special status in government, business and court proceedings. At independence Zimbabwe declared English as the official language and Shona and Ndebele as national language according to the National Languages Education Act (1978b). Unfortunately the government has struggled to empower indigenous languages as official language. English has remained the country's lingua franca (Nhongo, 2013).

### **1.7.8 Language policy**

A language policy is an official or legislative declaration by governments on how languages are supposed to be used to support national priorities and establish the rights of individuals, groups or communities at large. The main aim of language policies is to preserve the minority languages Spolky (2007:9) defines a language policy as language practices, beliefs and management decisions of divergent communities. The term language policy may equally refer to the body of decisions made by governments with regards language choices of particular language communities. In this study, the term is used to refer to a statement of a plan of action or decision that comes out of language planning activities.

### **1.7.9 Multilingualism**

Blackledge, Adrian, Creese and Angela (2010) define multilingualism as the capability of speakers or a community to converse proficiently in three or more languages. The person who speaks several languages is known as a polyglot or a multilingual. In Zimbabwe, multilinguals normally speak English, Shona, Ndebele or one of the modern languages such as French and

German. In this study this term will be employed to refer usage of more than two languages by participants in the community, at school or in the workplace.

### **1.7.10 English Second Language**

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a customary term for students who come to school speaking languages other than English as home languages (Lin and Lin 2019). ESL is associated with the use or study of the English language by non-native speakers. In this study, English as a Second Language may refer to teaching strategies designed for those whose first language is not English.

## **1.8 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The study is divided into six chapters as follows:

**Chapter One:** This chapter presented the introduction and the rationale for undertaking this research. It provided the main research question and the subquestions as well as the aim and objectives of the research. A synopsis was given of the research approach and the research design including selection of research sites and participants, data gathering and analysis as well as ethical considerations.

**Chapter Two:** Chapter 2 discussed the theories that guided this research. For purposes of this study, I adopted theories of first and second language acquisition to guide the investigation. I investigated how the two theories impacted the teaching of ESL academic writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners.

**Chapter Three:** Chapter 3 reviewed the Zimbabwean Language Policy contexts in which the study was carried out, outlining the attitudes towards policy reform and implementation. Factors leading to poor implementation of the language in education policy were explored in detail in this chapter. Pre- and post-independence language policies were examined with a view to highlight the linguistic realities of Zimbabwe in the twenty-first century. In addition, I discussed the different types of schools in Zimbabwe and their response to the language in education policy. The chapter reviewed literature which discusses different Education Acts and other statutory instruments introduced to uphold language policy reforms and the impediments

encountered. The chapter concluded by emphasising the problems of secondary schools in developing learners' Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in Zimbabwean schools.

**Chapter Four:** Chapter Four was an overview of the research design and research methods. In line with principles of ethnography, data was collected through classroom based observation, face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews. The chapter also discussed some of the ethical measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of data

**Chapter Five:** This chapter thematically analysed data collected, discussed the results based on qualitative findings. Results were based on the field notes, lesson observations, interviews and focus group interviews.

**Chapter Six:** Chapter Six dealt with recommendations for further research and conclusion. The chapter focused on recommendations relating to the need to emphasise teaching academic writing skills right from secondary school level. The limitations of the study were also be discussed.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter provided a background to the study as well as the research questions and aims of the study. Further discussed in this chapter is the research methods used to collect empirical data, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures used. This was followed by a discussion on ethical issues, the limitation of the study and the demarcation of the study.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING THEORIES AND THEIR**  
**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING**  
**PROFICIENCY SKILLS**

**2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter second language learning theories which underpin this study are discussed. The first language learning theorist whose work is presented is Jim Cummins and this is followed by the work of Lev Vygotsky. The work of the two theorists complement each other hence their importance in relation to this study. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of bilingual language programmes offered in different school systems worldwide.

**2.2 CUMMINS AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORY**

Jim Cummins, a retired professor at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, has published extensively on second language instruction and left a legacy of 88 articles in refereed journals, 107 book chapters and fifteen books. Bilingualism runs through most of these studies. Cummins (2000) claims a correlation between bilingualism and language learning. According to Cummins (1978; 1979), first language instruction is not detrimental to learning a second language as there is a transfer of skills from one language to the learning of a new one. According to Cummins (2001:56), success in learning a second language is determined by factors such as learners' cognitive abilities, linguistic and socio-cultural experiences. This view is further supported by Skutnabb-Kangas (1998: 40) who opines that learners' exposure to the world affects their linguistic competence. Cummins' second language learning theory was influenced firstly by Skutnabb-Kangas (1976) research results which indicated that Swedish and Finnish learners showed low levels of reading proficiency, although they appeared to have mastered communicative competence in both Finnish and Swedish languages.

### **2.2.1 The Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) distinction**

Cummins made a distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in order to refute Oller's (1979) claim that individual differences in language proficiency could be explained by global language. Cummins (1984) refuted this claim by indicating that children can understand and hold competent conversations with adults. Cummins provided an example of a twelve-year-old and a sibling who is six years old. He indicated that the conversation between the two did not show any difference in their language proficiency. However, when the two were expected to read or write, such a difference became apparent. This analysis further explains that some aspects of children's language development reach a plateau early. An example of this is with regard to the development of phonology, whereas other aspects such as vocabulary knowledge continue to grow throughout one's life. Academic language proficiency is thus defined by Cummins (2000:79) as the extent to which individuals have access to and command of oral language and the written academic register required by schooling.

Cummins thus coined two terms to explain the difference between school language and everyday language. These are designated by two terms: Basic Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency skills (CALP). He explains that it takes a short period of time (two years) to acquire BICS, which is everyday communication skills. This is due to the fact that it takes place within an environment where there are contextual clues. An example of BICS can be gleaned from children playing with each other where gestures are used as well as facial expressions. CALP is the language proficiency skill, which is necessary for academic success and deals with, among others, the ability to synthesise information, evaluate information, as well as reading and writing abilities. The notion of CALP is specific to the schooling system, hence the term academic language proficiency skills (Cummins, 2000). Cummins (1979; 1981a) estimates that it could take a period of six to twelve years of being immersed in a language to acquire CALP. This was further supported by other studies, for example, Klesmer (1994), Hakuta, Bittler and Witt (2002) and Thomas and Collier (2002). I am of the opinion that since Cummins (1979; 1984; 1986) studies were conducted in first world countries with English role models, print rich environments and well qualified teachers, it might take even longer in a country like South Africa where 80 percent of schools are located

in rural areas, with limited resources and many teachers are under qualified (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, 2017).

This distinction was made to draw mainstream teachers' attention to the timelines second language learners require to master CALP in English where English is also the medium of instruction in schools. Cummins (2000) emphasises second language learners' constant need for support to enable them to develop the required CALP skills to ensure academic success. Through his BICS/CALP distinction Cummins is encouraging teachers to use learners' first languages as medium of instruction for an extended period of time as proficiency in first language will enhance second language development. Furthermore, he argues that learners' cultural identities are affirmed through first language instruction and chances of these learners' alienation from their communities will be limited. Cummins (2000) proposes that educationists follow the late exit Bilingual Model which encourages several years of first language instruction in all subjects up to Grade 5-6. At the same time learners should attend additional English second language classes.

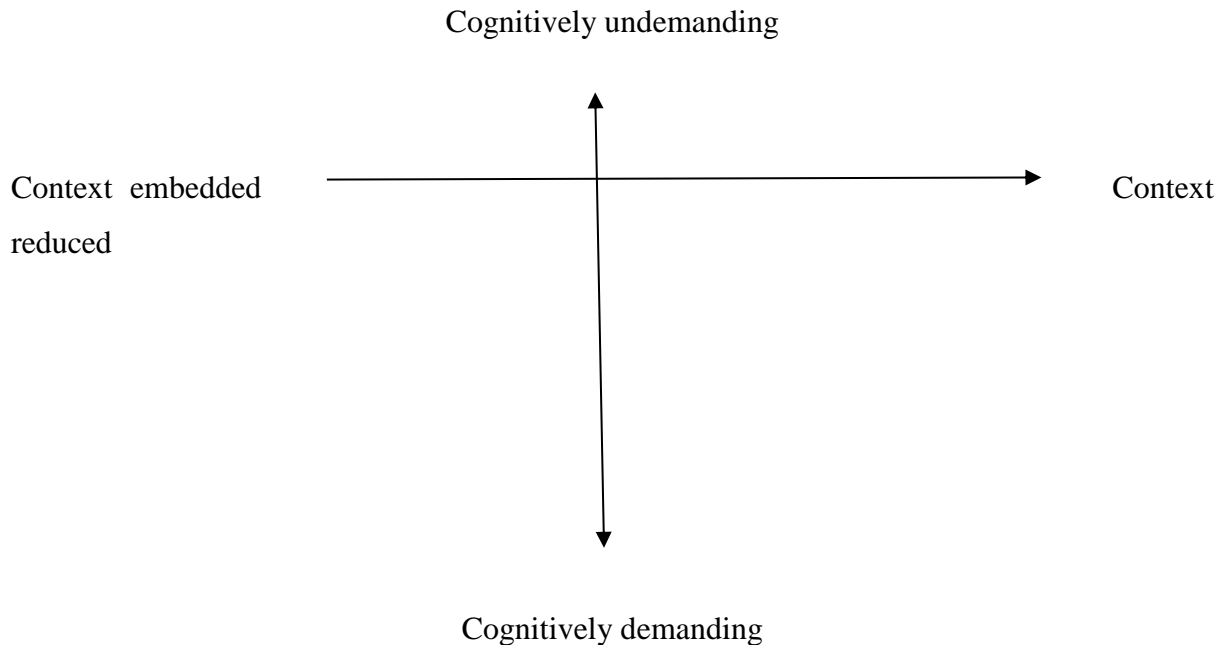
#### **2.2.1.1 An elaboration of Cummins' BIC/CALP using the four quadrants**

The distinction between BICS and CALP can be further understood by using Cummins' task difficulty framework. The framework is made up of two continua, that is, the cognitively undemanding continuum and the context embedded and context-reduced continuum. When the two continua are put together, they form four quadrants that account for the level of difficulty for an academic task. Quadrant A indicates tasks that are context embedded and as such not cognitively demanding. An example is reading a passage with pictures. Such pictures scaffold the understanding of the text or passage. Quadrant B is made up of tasks that are context embedded and cognitively demanding. Lessons that are driven by demonstrations, science experiments and lessons with audio visuals exemplify tasks that are context embedded and cognitively demanding. Quadrant C is made up of tasks that are context reduced and cognitively undemanding. The activities that exemplify tasks that are context reduced and cognitively undemanding are telephone conversations, a friend's shopping list and written instructions. Quadrant D is made up of tasks that are context reduced and cognitively demanding. Reading and writing are example of these and synthesising and summarising texts read are examples of cognitively demanding and context reduced tasks. Figure 2.1 illustrates Cummins framework of task difficulty as explained above.



Figure 2.1 Task difficulty framework

The diagram below illustrates Cummins framework of task difficulty as explain above



**Figure 2.1 Task difficulty framework**

The framework is hierarchy as illustrated below.

- A. Cognitively demanding and context reduced
- B. Context reduced and cognitively undemanding
- C. Context reduced and cognitively undemanding
- D. Context embedded and cognitively undemanding

Source: Cummins 1989

Use of the framework in Figure 2.1 elucidates the distinction between BICS and CALP. This quadrant framework results in a discussion of the instructional environment required by ESL learners to catch up academically with their peers. The differentiation of the two language proficiency skills is not an indication that they are acquired at different stages, but highlights the difference between surface fluency and deep fluency. Developmentally they are not separate, as they are both acquired through social interactions. The common underlying proficiency (cf. 2.2.3) is a theoretical framework which explains that what is seen on the surface

and that which lies below; on the other hand, two pieces of an iceberg representing two separate linguistic codes keeps us oblivious of a common underlying proficiency that results from transfer of language skills.

### **2.2.1.2 Critique of BICS/CALP distinction**

The BICS/CALP distinction has been criticised by some scholars, among others, Halbach (2012), Edelsky (1999) and Valdez (2000) who are of the opinion that the acquisition of both skills does not occur sequentially. Furthermore, these two concepts have been linked to the Bernstein's (1960) elaborated and restricted code. The average time it takes to acquire BICS and CALP skills, according to Halbach (2012), alludes to their sequential and hierarchical nature. Furthermore, Halbach (2012) criticises Cummins' (1984), claim that learners start schooling already competent in the one language although this is not always the case. This differentiation has implications for Cummins' CALP/ BICS distinction. Despite the critique levelled against the two concepts I still find them useful in second language teaching environments. These concepts assist ESL teachers in designing learning activities starting with easy to comprehend to the most challenging activities. It is also possible that Cummins could have been influenced by Bloom's (1950) taxonomy and the learning hierarchy although he does not confirm this.

### **2.2.1.3 Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP)**

Cummins (1991: 102) expanded on the BICS and CALP distinction and adopted the term Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). The CUP deals with similarities between languages. According to Cummins, experience with either language can promote the development of the proficiency underlying both languages. However, the development of this CUP is predicated upon motivation to learn a language as well as the exposure to language concerned within the learners' communities or environments. Research evidence shows, for example, that phonological awareness is transferred across languages. Through the CUP model Cummins shows that prolonged first language instruction results in academic language proficiency in the first language which facilitates the development of second language proficiency.

In support of Cummins' CUP model, Verhoven (1991) indicated stronger cross-linguistic skills for literacy and pragmatic linguistic skills than lexical knowledge. His research result further

revealed that phoneme discrimination tests were strongly related across languages. Cummins' CUP is further supported by MacLaughlin's (1986) research results which revealed that the learner's ability to deal with complex texts in German was determined by his/her ability to understand these texts in the first language. I therefore argue that the CUP model encourages ESL teachers to use materials translated from the English medium of instruction into ESL learners' first languages in order to enhance their understanding of the learning materials.

Cummins (2000: 59) argues that there is an interdependent relationship between first language and second language proficiency. According to Cummins (2001: 58), a strong first language foundation acts as a support of the acquisition and learning of a second language. Based on CUP principles, Cummins (2001: 59) argues that since most first language skills transfer readily to a second language, there is a possibility of transfer of academic language skills from the first to second language contexts. Conversely, if the learners' first language is poorly developed then second language learning becomes a challenge leading to semi-lingualism or subtractive bilingualism (Lindholm-Leary 2003:55). In comparison, context reduced, cognitively demanding communication develops interdependently and can be promoted by either language or both languages in an interactive way (Lindholm-Leary 2003: 56). Cummins' theory, therefore, suggests that bilingualism succeeds when learners have developed CALP skills in their first language or second language. Such proficiency skills enable learners to tackle cognitively demanding tasks. Those lacking CALP skills experience lack of academic success as such learners are unable to deal with, analyse, evaluate, interpret and apply the content (Cummins, 2001:182; Fitzgerald, 1995:181).

Similarly, learners who master reading skills in their first languages are able to transfer such skills to second language reading. Cummins' findings are supported by Collier (1998)'s study on English proficiency tasks conducted in the US with six and seven year old ESL learners. His findings revealed that these groups of learners needed more time to master second language academic tasks due to their lack of first language proficiency skills. According to Collier, these learners' challenges lay in the fact that they never received first language instruction as such their first languages were being replaced by the majority language. To avert this scenario, school authorities and policy makers should promote minority languages in school. An assessment of bilingual programmes has revealed that a developed first language will ensure considerable success in developing English academic skills. Cummins (2001: 193) claims that the additive bilingual programmes have added benefits for learners.

#### **2.2.1.4 Critique of Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency**

Cummins' (2001: 286) BICS/CALP continuum helps researchers to explain clearly the distinction between BICS and CALP. The two views give a detailed account of requisite language skills necessary for successful learning. Pereira (1984: 18) posits that academic literacy skills equip learners with sophisticated language which enables conceptual development. The process of academic language skills development should not be left entirely to the language teacher who teaches the second language. All other subject teachers should target the development of CALP. Issues of underachievement when examined should take into consideration cultural and linguistic factors. Learners' underperformance should be interrogated through curriculum reviews as well as learners' linguistic and academic development. Curriculum interventions should be aligned to uphold ESL learners' long term academic progress bearing in mind that language and conceptual development are interrelated.

#### **2.2.4 The Threshold Hypothesis**

According to Baker (2011), Cummins' Threshold Theory is aimed at achieving balanced bilingualism among learners and ensuring that they are bi-literate. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukamaa (1977: 25) outline two threshold levels of linguistic proficiency, namely the higher level threshold and the lower level threshold. The first and lower threshold is the relevant and age appropriate level of linguistic development in bilinguals. If the first language is the language of instruction, children have fewer problems attaining academic excellence. The second and higher threshold level of bilingual proficiency is essential as it is capable of leading learners to accelerated cognitive growth. Baker (2011: 23) asserts that cognitive growth is unlikely to be attained until learners have mastered a certain threshold of language proficiency in their second language. According to Cummins (2001: 99), learners who manifest poor linguistic competence in the first language and/or second language tend to perform poorly in academic tasks. Baker (2011: 169) has observed that the more developed the first language is, the easier it will be to learn a second. Conversely, the weaker the competence in a first language, the more difficult it is to become proficient in the second language. The other continuum exhibits children who are competent in one language but are unable to efficiently transfer the skills between the two languages.

Apparently, when language minority learners' first language is strongly promoted by the school programme, learners tend to manifest some subtle linguistic and cognitive benefits. Baker (2011: 169) has observed that the more developed the first language is, the easier it will be to learn a second. Conversely, the weaker the competence in a first language, the more difficult it is to learn the second. Several studies have been carried out to verify Cummins' (2001) Threshold claims. Lasgabaster (1998) and Ricciardelli (1992) discovered that students with high first language and second language thresholds tend to perform significantly better than monolinguals and other sub-groups of bilinguals. Cummins (1999: 268) argues that children benefit from learning through the home language, provided that the instructional programme is effective in developing academic skills, in particular, literacy skills which need to be taught in a meaningful, interactive context so as to promote broader academic skills. The importance of gaining academic skills is supported by Pereira (1984:79) and Vygotsky (1986: 99) who both held that literacy plays a major role in both linguistic and conceptual development.

Kessler and Quinn (1980) found that Hispanic bilingual children, who had participated in bilingual programmes, outperformed monolinguals in language and science problem tasks. Cummins and Malcohy (1978:57) found that Ukrainian-English bilingual children outperformed monolingual English children in detecting ambiguities in English sentence structures. Diaz (2012) indicated that the levels of children's proficiency positively influenced the rate of intellectual development. In an attempt to buttress the need for instruction in the first language, Fafunwa (1998: 70) studied two groups of language learners: one which used their first language as medium of instruction while the other changed to English instruction in the fourth year of schooling as per the language policy at the time. Research results showed that those who received home language (i.e., first language) instruction for the first six years of schooling performed better at both secondary and university level and that their grasp of both English and mathematics was better than their peers.

Results from these two studies indicate that first language proficiency lays a strong base for the mastery of additional languages. The above findings have been used as evidence to prove existence of positive language transfer which makes the additional languages comprehensible. The language researchers have concluded that bilingualism is not directly related to learners' academic challenges but the main challenge lies in the teacher's failure to develop learners' first language to a point where it can enhance cognitive and analytical abilities. Consequently, students may end up with conceptual confusion.

#### **2.2.4.1 Critique of the Threshold Hypothesis**

The Threshold Hypothesis is critiqued for failing to elaborate on the predominant characteristics of each type of threshold. Cummins (2001:108) concurred with Baker's (1994: 145) critique that the threshold hypothesis does not define the aspect of proficiency that is being referred to. Cummins (2001: 109) clarifies what he meant by age appropriate proficiency. He refers to research which supports the notion that continued development of academic skills in two or more languages has positive cognitive consequences if cognitive is seen as including verbal cognitive abilities such as vocabulary or knowledge of concepts, meta-linguistic knowledge and deductive verbal reasoning.

#### **2.2.5 Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis**

The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, coined by Cummins, asserts that most first language concepts are transferrable during second language acquisition. Cummins (1995: 73) maintains that linguistic proficiency is attained if the first language is thoroughly mastered prior to exposure to the second language. Cummins' assertion is strongly supported by principles of Universal Grammar (UG), which is based on the premise that human beings have pre-wired innate properties which facilitate the process of language acquisition. Cummins' (1995: 73) interdependence theory is premised on the notion that children's second language competence is partly built on their competence in the first language. Cummins suggested that there is a common underlying proficiency in learners' first language and second language. It is these common elements in the learner's first language that make transfer of linguistic skills to the second language possible (Baker 1996: 18). According to Cummins (2001: 71), exposure to both first language and second language promotes the development of proficiency in the common elements in both languages. The home and school environment play a significant role in the development of these underlying similar skills.

Cummins' (2001) standpoint is supported by Vygotsky (1986) that learning of a second language involves learning new words but not new concepts. The two scholars agree that language acquisition is biologically determined and the learner's rich linguistic environment helps to boost the language acquisition process. This view implies that learners' concepts are better developed in their home language. Regrettably, if the home language does not enshroud scientific concepts, children become stuck with concepts but no words in which to house them.

According to Cummins (2001: 74), children who have not mastered academic proficiency in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) have a tendency to lag behind in school work unless the language of instruction enables them to comprehend enough written and oral skills that boost participation in class. One way to achieve this is ensuring that the home language instruction be continued for as long as possible. Once the first language is fully developed, conceptual development is guaranteed. However, formal instruction in the target language is necessary to concretise the process of cross-linguistic transfer.

### **2.2.5.1 Critique of the interdependence hypothesis**

Cummins' idea of the interdependence of language skills has been criticised by a number of authors. One major critique of the interdependence theory is offered by Rivera (1984: 49) who states that the theory overlooks the role of social factors in language acquisition. Edelskys (1990: 61) argues that there is more to academic excellence than linguistic and cognitive development. Genesse (1984:14) believes that language alone cannot account for all the learners' cognitive abilities. There are other intervening factors like age and the impact of learners' socio-economic background which influence second language proficiency. Edelsky (1990) argues that the interdependence theory cannot be tested empirically. Cross sectional studies by Palmer (1989: 34) found out that children with more advanced academic skills are also likely to be older and more cognitively mature. Furthermore, learners who were enrolled in bilingual programmes, outperformed monolinguals in language and science problem tasks, while Cummins and Malcohy (1978:57) found that Ukrainian-English bilingual learners outperformed monolingual English learners in detecting ambiguities in English sentence structures. Diaz (2012) indicated that the levels of learners' proficiency positively influenced the rate of intellectual development. In an attempt to buttress the need for instruction in the first language, Fafunwa (1998: 70) studied two language learners who used their first languages while others changed to English instruction in their fourth year of schooling as per the language policy at the time. Research results shows that those who received home language instruction (first language instruction) for the first six years of schooling performed better at both secondary and university level and that their grasp of both English and mathematics was better than their peers.

### **2.2.6 Cummins and additive and subtractive bilingualism**

Bilingualism can loosely be defined as the ability to use two languages effectively both in its written and oral forms (cf. par. 1.7.5). Linguists have identified two types of bilingualism namely additive and subtractive bilingualism. A bilingual person may either communicate orally only or may be proficient in reading as well. Cummins (2000: 45) defines additive bilingualism as the form of bilingualism that occurs when students add a second language to their intellect while continuing to develop their first language conceptually and academically. Cummins (2000) draw a distinction between additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism. Additive bilingualism occurs when second language instruction is introduced to learners while the development of their first language continues to be enhanced through its offering within the school system. Subtractive bilingualism occurs when the introduction of a second language results in the discontinuation of first language learning and the disruption of the culture associated with the language.

An early introduction of second language at the expense of first language results in learners losing their first languages. Furthermore such learners also fail to attain the necessary proficiency skills in second language to cope with the school curriculum. Cummins (2000) refers to the failure of these learners to attain cognitive language proficiency in both first language and second language subtractive bilingualism. However, learners whose first language learning is continued with the introduction of the second language gain from the language instruction in both languages resulting in academic success. Cummins terms this additive bilingualism. There are about 150 studies that have reported a positive association between additive bilingualism and learners' linguistic, cognitive and academic growth. Most of these findings have proved that bilinguals manifest better meta-linguistic abilities which are advantageous especially when they are learning a new language. Additive bilingualism is more noticeable in learners who have a more developed first language. Learners from minority language backgrounds experience additive bilingualism if the schools they attend uses their first language as the language of instruction up to such a time when learners are ready to add on a new language. Matthews (1997: 314) report that it is possible to attain a high level of proficiency in both first language and second language.



### **2.2.7 Evaluation of Cummins' contribution**

Cummins' second language learning theory has helped researchers and educationists to realise that language learning is a product of both cognitive development and social interactions. Cummins' idea of different strands of bilingualism has profoundly influenced language education. As a bilingualism proponent, Cummins attacks the notion that learners' deficiencies in English could be remediated by intensive English instruction. Cummins (2000) supports the view that English language learners could benefit more from first language medium of instruction. Quality education can thus only be realised through the language that the learners understands the most which in this case is their first language. This view has the support of other researchers to mention a few (Manyike and Lemmer, 2012; Manyike, 2013; Manyike and Lemmer, 2015; Hugh, 2018; UNESCO, 1953).

Cummins' second contribution to the education system is the distinction that he made between BICS and CALP. Such a distinction assists teachers in understanding some of the challenges faced by ESL learners as they struggle to read yet appearing to be proficient in the language. It also assists teachers in designing their task to move from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding tasks and in so doing follow Bloom' revised taxonomy in designing assessments. Research evidence suggests that ESL learners may require 2–5 years to develop keen mastery of English oral skills (e.g., sound discrimination, vocabulary, listening comprehension and oral expression) (Hakuta et al., 2000). Sometimes oral communication may be complemented by gestures which are absent in academic communication. Academic English often requires language associated with the higher order thinking skills, such as hypothesising, evaluating, inferring, generalising, predicting or classifying. Learners may end up being labelled as having special educational needs when all they need is more practice sessions. Educationists should remember that it takes a while for non-native learners to catch up with their first language counterparts.

Another area of contention regarding Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis is its emphasis on the two continuums of bilingualism, the lower and upper thresholds of bilingualism. MacSwain (2000) criticises the theory for lacking generalisability to all academic learning environments arguing that in some cases, there is no direct relationship between language proficiency and academic success among ESL learners. Some researchers feel that Cummins' thresholds

depend on associations that are difficult to measure. MacSwain (2000) further attacks the threshold hypothesis for not clearly delineating partial and dominant bilingual tendencies.

In Cummins' (2000) view, disadvantages associated with bilingualism are a result of a discriminatory school system whose syllabi prejudices minority language learners from accessing education in their first languages. According to Cummins, language minority learners need good bilingual programmes which expose them to intensive first language instruction and intensive second language instruction, well-resourced classrooms and well qualified bilingual teachers. Such a curriculum will enable learners to experience additive bilingualism and affirm learners' various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In such programmes learners will excel academically and the current over-representation of minority language learners in remedial classes within the US education environments will be eliminated. Cummins explains ESL learners' lack of academic success as the result of the mismatch between the home language and school language. He argues that such a mismatch results in learning becoming increasingly difficult for these learners. Cummins cites French immersion programmes where learners receive instruction in their first language and English is factored in later. His other contribution is highlighting the disadvantages of the immersion programmes which result in learners failing to master English which is the medium of instruction due to the lack of first language proficiency skills.

### **2.3 LEV VYGOTSKY'S THEORY OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

Lev Vygotsky a Russian psychologist, was born in 1896 and died in 1934 (Bronfenbrenner, 1992:187) at the age of 37 years. He is regarded as the founder of socio-cultural theory or the socio-historical approach in psychology. Following his love of humankind and his zeal to know more about cognitive language development, he worked extensively on the development of learners' speech and its implication for learning. His work was further developed by other researchers such as Alexander Lucia, a neuropsychologist, Zaporozhetch, a psychologist and early childhood specialist, and Morozova, a special education expert. His theories are still prominent in the field of first learning and second language acquisition (Bronfenbrenner, 1992:187-190).

Since the 1990's Vygotsky's socio-cultural theories of language learning have gained increasing importance in theorising how learners learn language. Vygotsky (1995) suggests

that cultures are formed using tools and symbols, and that this key distinction is what differentiates the human race from that of animals. Intelligence is achieved when learners can internalise the tools that are being provided in their cultures (Snow and Uccelli, 2009). When the tools of a culture emerge and evolve, learners grow and their knowledge base is broadened. McKinney (2010) claims that the sociocultural learning theory is important for teachers to understand the human mind from a historical as well as a cultural point of view. According to the sociocultural learning theory, language is a direct result of the symbols and tools that emerge within a culture (McKinney, 2010).

An individual is able to learn language through a variety of social events, scenarios and processes, which all result in the acquisition of language (Snow and Uccelli, 2009). This aspect of the sociocultural learning theory relies upon the idea that learners go through three stages of speech development. First, they must engage in the social environment, which is known as social speech, which begins at the age of two. Next, they learn about private speech, which occurs when learners voice their thoughts aloud, and begins at the age of three. The last is inner speech, which takes the form of ideas that remain within individual's minds and directly impact his/her behaviour or thoughts; this stage begins at the age of seven years (McKinney 2010). After 1984, Vygotsky aimed his research towards studying the development of consciousness and conscious speech. Vygotsky's speech earned him a position in the Russian Institute of Psychology and from there he continued his research on language and thought. According to McLeod (2014) and Vygotsky (1978; 1995), language passes through the three developmental stages (external, egocentric and internal) moulded by external cultural situations. These cultural environmental influences and experiences guide language development in terms of concepts and structure (Vygotsky, 1995). The way in which learners are guided from one stage of development to the next is what Vygotsky called the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Vygotsky (1995:14) defines the ZPD as the difference between the learner's capacity to solve problems on his/her own and the capacity to solve problems with the help of knowledgeable others, be it parents, teachers or peers. Vygotsky further explains the ZPD as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Wilkson, Hye and Sun 2011:359). Vygotsky (1995) emphasises the importance of practice and good guidance in learning.

Vygotsky's ZPD theory has profound implications for education. He felt that society should seek the elimination of illiteracy and that it should be done by establishing programmes, which maximise the potential of individual learners. Vygotsky (1995) emphasises the importance of scaffolding and active participation in the learning environment; learners can only learn effectively if they are given enough chances to actively participate in their learning. He views the classroom environment as a place of experimenting with ideas wherein learners work cooperatively in groups. The importance of questioning is also emphasised. He regards the teacher as a facilitator of learning and that, as facilitators, they need to mentor their learners. Teachers in their facilitation role are expected to give clues and suggestions that lead. In so doing they are scaffolding learning and this will result in learners who comprehend the subject matter. Vygotsky's (1995) theory on language and thought is that language learning is a social activity, which depends on a learner's interaction with peers, community and the environment. The authenticity of the environment is very important in guiding learners towards learning.

According to McLeod (2014), Vygotsky is of the opinion that learners should study topics which are interrelated and which are of interest to them for learning to take place effectively. He advises teachers to start from what the learners know in order to scaffold learning. Teachers should then guide learners in a circular path of learning, relating, reviewing and increasing the complexity of the information discussed in the classroom environments. The importance of testing learners' prior knowledge in the classroom is also emphasised in Vygotsky's learning theory. This allows teachers to correct any misunderstandings about the topic under discussion and to assist in using prior knowledge as the foundation of further learning.

Vygotsky's theory of how language and thought should be studied is summed up in the metaphor of a drop of water. If language is studied without speech, then the inner process becomes biological rather than social. If speech is studied without thought, then it is analysed in terms of linguistic terminology and loses its communicative properties. Vygotsky's theory is used in most classrooms around the world. The language structure, which people are habitually using, influences the way they perceive their environments (Menon, Viswanatha, and Shai, 2014). He believed that learning had to be developmental and that it had to take place through socially meaningful activities (Menon et al., 2014). He also distinguished between two kinds of learning: scientific and spontaneous learning. Vygotsky (1995) maintains that language structures learners' speech because speech reflects socio-culture exposure and experiences.

Elder-Correa (2012) asserts that those teachers utilising Vygotskian methods of teaching will ensure active learner participation in the classrooms. They will be scaffolding learning by providing assistance and offering detailed feedback when correcting learners' work. Vygotsky (1995) is of the opinion that teachers should ensure that learners are provided with adequate tools to assist learners to understand the subject matter. I argue that it will be important for teachers to teach learners, for example, how to use computers to assist them in their language development. With regard to the use of the environment to assist in language development, it is important for teachers to use songs, proverbs and folktales to improve learners' language development. I further argue that in the African context teachers should also be aware of the oral tradition of most African languages when teaching a language; in that way they will be in a position to develop their learners' languages effectively especially home languages.

### **2.3.1 Vygotsky's stages of speech development**

The primitive speech stage is demonstrated through the first two years of life. During this stage the learners learn to listen and speak, mainly imitating words and naming objects or responding emotionally (crying) or socially (laughing). Vygotsky calls the next stage of children's development the naïve psychological stage, which usually lasts until children are four years old (Cummins, 2005; McLeod, 2014). During this stage, children begin to realise that words are symbols for objects. Between two to four years of age children have great curiosity as to what objects are called. This is followed by an egocentric or private speech stage, which emerges between the ages of four to seven. During this stage, learners talk aloud to themselves as they perform tasks or solve problems and they tend to role-play. The use of 'private speech' assists children in verbalising their thinking. When children are seven years of age, they begin to develop inner speech, which marks a decline in private speech as it becomes internalised. At the age of seven children are able to solve complex problems using inner speech although at times they might still use it when faced with challenging tasks (Ndimande-Hlongwa, Mazibuko and Gordon, 2010).

Vygotsky (1995) believes children's abilities to listen, speak, read and write are developed within cultures to communicate with others and that initially, children use these predominantly for communication but the use and internalization of these tools lead to higher level thinking skills. He believes that thought and language do not exist or function without each other. Vygotsky (1984) investigated the different stages of the learners' language development and

concluded that they were interrelated with the development of both speech and thought based on the learners' cultural backgrounds (Haupt and Koch, 2012; McLeod, 2014). As children learn a particular language, they move from the first stage of social speech, which is trial and error sounds used to control the behaviour of others, to the next stage of egocentric speech, which is socially mediated. After these two stages they are ready for the final developmental stage of speech, which is inner speech or thought (McLeod, 2014). To illustrate these steps, in the first stage, a learner cries and gets attention or says a sound and gets a response.

In egocentric or social speech, learners talk whether or not someone is listening to them. An example would be parallel play often seen in pre-school and kindergarten classes. Inner speech reflects a higher mental function according to Vygotsky (1995). This communicative speech reflects a synthesis of mental functions and denotes the ability for deep, reflective thought. Communicative speech uses the 'sense' of words and sentences. This 'sense' is found in the social, cultural context in which the words are being used (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010). Prior thought, imagery, experience and inner conversation go into framing what is actually spoken (Vygotsky, 1984). This third stage is much more a mental than a physical process. The goal of this final stage in speech development is to bring forth a coherent, mutually understandable thought (Vygotsky, 1984).

### **2.3.2 Critique of Vygotsky's theory**

Vygotsky made an enormous contribution to language learning through his emphasis on the strong relationship between language and cognition and the role of interactions in learning. However, there are several critiques levelled against his theory. One such critique comes from his Zone of Proximal Development. This concept fails to provide a clear picture of the learners' learning needs, their current capabilities and their motivational influences to learn. According to Chaikline (2003), the ZPD further fails to explain how development actually occurs among learners.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory according to Lui and Mathew (2005) also disregards the role of the individual but emphasises only that of a group. The theory also disregards the fact that it is possible for individuals to rise above the social norms based on their ability to bring about personal understanding. According to Vygotsky (1978), knowing is relative to people's encounter with their environment. Other critique against Vygotsky's theory is that it fails to

address how the external world is bridged across to the internal mind (Fox, 2001). This assertion is based on the belief that there is a difference between the individual and the social group.

Vygotsky is further criticised for his emphasis on obeying rules through play as key to academic success. However, engaging in play with explicit rules in most cases calls for players to negotiate the rules and reach an agreement. This requires more cognitive abilities, communication skills as well good social skills than required in explicit school instruction. His theory on the role of play puts more emphasis on the rules with little emphasis on imagination which is of paramount importance (Safer, 2010).

Despite these criticisms which in my view stem from his concepts being viewed literally, I am of the opinion that his theory on the relationship between language and cognition is essential within ESL classrooms as research shows that ESL learners know more than they can produce to express their thoughts due to lack of language proficiency. Furthermore, his theory of the ZPD has been influential in ensuring that teachers rethink their assessments strategies to cater for learners' future developments. The role of social interaction and engagement in learning for true learning to take place has also revolutionised the way teaching is done as teachers are no longer considered the sources of information but facilitators of learning. Social constructivism is thus praised by amongst others Philipps (1985), Fox (2001) and Cobb (1996).

## **2.4 LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMMES FOR ESL LEARNERS**

Various programmes are used to teach ESL learners throughout the various schooling systems across the globe. These programmes will be discussed in the sections below in order to identify the most suitable and effective ones.

### **2.4.1 Types of bilingual programmes**

There are different types of bilingual programmes offered to learners based on the societal goal and the educational outcomes that institutions want to achieve. If the goal is to quickly immerse the learners into English-only instruction and to ensure that learners quickly assimilate to the dominant culture, the programme will follow assimilationist principles. The various programmes will be discussed in the section below.

### **2.4.1.1 Submersion**

In submersion programmes, also known as immersion programmes, ESL learners are placed in the same class as the majority English first language learners. The goal of this programme is to assist learners to assimilate into mainstream culture and to acquire the dominant language. First language instruction is not supported in such programmes and in most cases teachers in these programmes are English first language speakers with no proficiency in the learners' first languages. Although the submersion programme is not legally supported in most cases, where such programmes exist there are few language minority learners. Law enforcement tends to be lax as such teachers continue to implement such programmes given the fact that there are no repercussions for not enforcing the laws. Furthermore, learners' parents fail to demand that their children's bilingual needs be addressed by the schools due to lack of information on what their rights entail.

Submersion is the most common type of bilingual education in the US. The key drive of the submersion bilingualism is to assimilate less competent language users into compensatory programmes and so minimise cultural differences as well as ensure social conformity to a dominant culture (Lemmer, 1997). Resultantly, there will be majority language use and total elimination of first language use from the classroom like many other African countries, Zimbabwe typifies the submersion model as much of the educational instruction is given in the former colonial masters' first language. Both the academic and linguistic performance of most Zimbabweans is considered dismal (Africa, 1990). It appears the only major gain of the submersion version of bilingualism is dominance of English over the indigenous languages. Regrettably, Africa (1990) points out that the result has been devastating in that the indigenous languages have remained underdeveloped and learners have attained limited English proficiency.

### **2.4.1.2 ESL pull out classes**

These programmes are mainly offered within the US schooling system. In these programmes ESL learners are placed with English first language learners in the same classroom and receive instruction in English. ESLs are however, pulled out of mainstream classroom at times. Pull-out classes are conducted for learners from varying linguistic backgrounds. In such



environments it is a challenge to appoint bilingual teachers to cater for all languages due to financial constraints.

It is the responsibility of schools to decide which classes should be conducted with the language majority learners and when the ESLs need to be pulled out. A similar programme to the pull out is the sheltered model. In sheltered programmes ESLs are also placed in the same class with English first language speakers. These classes tend to be taught by a trained bilingual teacher or a trained team. In these classes content is delivered in a more accessible language to the ESLs. Teachers in these classes are able to use bilingual materials in assisting learners to understand the content offered. The goal of the sheltered programme is similar to the pull out class, which is to assimilate ESL learners into mainstream language and culture.

#### **2.4.1.3 Transitional/Early exit bilingual programmes**

According to Gora (2011), transitional bilingualism is based on the premise that skills learnt in the first language classroom are easily transferable to the second language classroom. These skills encompass reading, spoken and writing fluency. This method of bilingual education is the most common in Zimbabwean high schools. Transitional bilingualism has been known to smooth the transition into an English-only classroom at high school level. The bilingual teacher teaches all other subjects in the curriculum in the native language from Grade 0-3, then once the transition is made learners easily fit into an English-only classroom from Grade 4 to high school. Research evidence had proved that most language skills learned in the native language (first language) are transferrable to the second language.

Hakuta (1990: 100) critiques the transitional model of bilingualism for not guaranteeing mastery of the second language. She argues that it prevents mastery of either first language or second language. However, the existence of transitional bilingualism in Zimbabwe is evidence that a well-developed first language can be useful in conceptual development.

Transitional bilingual programmes offer instruction through the learners' first language while teaching at the same time introducing these learners to English. The medium of instruction is the learner's first language while English is taught as a school subject. Learners at times also learn music in English in such classrooms. This is mainly because such classes require less language and as such learners are able to learn a language in a playful way. Such programmes

also enable learners to interact with English first language speakers. It further acts as a bridge between the home and the school environment for the learners making it easier for the learners to adapt to the new school culture. Learners tend to spend three years in such programmes before they are excited to mainstream classes.

These transitional or early exit programmes are aimed at transitioning learners to mainstream culture and to the dominant language as soon as possible. As such the goal of such programmes is to assimilate learners as quickly as possible. This is contrary to Cummins' theory that second language learners should receive first language instruction for as long as possible in order to gain competence both in their first language and also in English which is the medium of instruction. Transitional or early exit bilingual programmes result in the loss of learners' first language, which is considered subtractive bilingualism. This approach and that of the other programmes discussed puts ESLs at risk of semilingualism.

The Zimbabwe language policy in education has opted for an early exit where the first language is used as a medium of instruction during the first four years of schooling and thereafter learners are transitioned to English medium of instruction. For transitional bilingual programmes to be successful, teachers in these programmes should be competent bilinguals who can switch from the learners' home language to English depending on the complexity of subject matter. Most Zimbabwean teachers are bilingual speakers of either English and Shona or English and Ndebele. This combination makes transitional bilingualism possible as teachers can easily switch from second language to first language whenever the complexity of concepts demands code switching or code mixing.

#### **2.4.1.4 Maintenance model**

The maintenance model is an American bilingual education programme which targets maintaining a strong cultural identity and citizens' rights (Lindholm-Leary, 2003: 1). The key focus of the programme is to help second language speakers of a language to acquire a second language and still maintain the first language. The programme has traces of bilingual programmes which promote additive bilingualism in which an additional language is added to learners' first language.

The heritage language programme in Canada is also typical of this approach. In the heritage language programme, the learners' home language is used as a language of instruction for half the school curriculum time (Baker 1996: 98). According to DeMeija (2002: 40), founders of the maintenance bilingual education programme encourage employment of both the learners' first and second language in the classroom instruction with the aim of putting both languages on the same pedestal. In maintenance bilingual education the class comprises an equal number of first and second language users so as to create solid and balanced bilinguals. Both languages are used for all the interactions in the classroom with the hope of producing balanced bilinguals. Lindholm-Leary (2003:153) notes that two languages are compartmentalised in this programme. Only one language is used during any given lesson. Content is taught without switching of languages within single lessons. Code switching is regarded as counterproductive. This method of instruction fulfils the other aim of the programme which is promoting bi-literacy, a situation whereby learners simultaneously attain full literacy in both languages.

Lindholm-Leary (2003: 150) points out that a successful, two-way bilingual programme aims at helping learners achieve classic proficiency in both the first language and second language. Learners' academic performance should also be way above grade level in the desired languages. This can only be attained if the learners demonstrate positive cross-cultural attitudes and competences. That way, the school produces citizens who can co-exist despite cultural diversity. The maintenance model, if well administered, will produce citizens who have linguistic competence.

#### **2.4.1.5 An enrichment model**

An enrichment model of bilingual education shares certain characteristics in common with the maintenance model but goes beyond it. The main aim of this model is to maintain the speakers' first language as well as developing and extending it. This model encourages cultural pluralism and the development of the social autonomy of cultural groups and refers to both the language minority and the language majority speakers. Immersion programmes in Canada and dual language programmes in the US are examples of this type of model where both first and second language and foreign languages are seen as important resources to be used and developed by the individual speakers. According to Horn-Berger (1999), the enrichment model provides the greatest potential benefit not only to language minority speakers but to the national society as a whole. In conclusion, the enrichment model of bilingual education is not synonymous with

immersion programmes, although the two are closely linked. The enrichment model is defined as a whole range of programmes. It provides bilingual education to majority language speaking groups who are highly educated and usually of a high socio-economic status.

#### **2.4.1.6 Immersion programmes**

The immersion bilingual programme originated as a linguistic experiment in the 1960's in Quebec, Canada. According to this method, the foreign language instruction is given in the second language. There are two categories of the immersion programme, partial and total immersion. The total immersion programme prefers that 90-100% of content be taught in the second language/target language in K-1, followed by 80% in Grades 2-3 and 50 % by Grade 4-6. Skutnabb-Kangas (1991:234) attributes the success of the programme to a number of factors. Firstly, the immersion programmes gives parents and learners a choice whether to be educated in French or English (with reference to Canada). The second reason for success is that the teachers engaged in these programmes are qualified bilinguals who understand both French and English. Lastly, the learners are allowed to use their first language until they are mature enough to add a second language. Resultantly, these learners are able to attain a high level of proficiency in both the first language and the target language.

#### **2.4.1.7 Early partial immersion**

In the partial immersion programme the learner is exposed to 50 percent first language and 50 percent second language instruction from Grades 1-6 (De Meija, 2003: 78). This immersion programme aims at communicative proficiency in the target language. The second goal is to communicate in the target language on content that is relevant to the learner's level of maturity. Thirdly, partial immersion aims at equipping learners with competitive linguistic proficiency which matches that of first language speakers. The final aim is to gain understanding of curriculum content and to inculcate an appreciation of diverse cultures.

Lambert and Taylor (1982: 57) carried out research studies in which they concluded that the Canadian immersion programmes result in expert bilingualism and academic success. In addition to other benefits, graduates from this immersion programme are known to manifest competitive linguistic proficiency, are able to easily integrate into different cultures and have high prospects of employability. Another observation was that programmes targeted at

overshadowing minority languages often fail to achieve bilingualism. Skutnabb-Kangas (1998: 40) further observed that most minority first languages are badly taught with the aim of maintaining the speakers' subordinate position on the social ladder.

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the second language acquisition theory of Cummins was discussed as well as the critique of each of Cummins' hypotheses. Further discussed in this chapter are the second language teaching models and their implications in promoting learners' first language or in ensuring that learners' first languages are replaced by the majority language which is English. The next chapter will situate the study within the Zimbabwean context.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE PRIOR AND POST INDEPENDENCE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Many countries have a language policy crafted to privilege or discourage the use of a particular language or set of languages. All societies have policies about how language or languages are used, which languages are used and which languages are promoted on a national level (Stemper & King, 2017). To design an intentional language policy means to regulate which language, languages or language varieties are used, where and when (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). Regulation of language issues involves ideologically loaded decisions, whether language usage is seemingly trivial, such as road signs, or serious social matters, such as the language of advertisements and the language of the job market (Stemper & King, 2017; Johnson, 2013). Language education policy may be articulated in different types of documents; the main ones are government and curricula documents. In this chapter, following a historical timeline, I will discuss the language policy that has shaped language learning in Zimbabwe.

#### **3.2 ZIMBABWEAN LANGUAGE POLICIES AND DECLARATIONS DURING THE COLONIAL ERA**

**In this section a brief political history of the country Zimbabwe previously known as Rhodesia is provided.**

##### **3.2.1 A brief political history of Zimbabwe**

The state of Zimbabwe, like other former colonies, bears the brand of colonialism (Nyamanda, 2016). According to Banda (2019:4), the country experienced four different colonial rules between 1890 and 1979. These colonial governments were as follows: a) the British South African Company which occupied Zimbabwe during the period 1890 to 1922; b) white settler self-government which was operative during the period 1923 to 1952; c) The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland 1953 to 1963; and d) The Rhodesian Front Government which ruled between 1965 to 1979. The country Zimbabwe previously known as Rhodesia suffered forty years of British colonial rule and fifteen years of intense fighting between the black majority

and the colonial powers (Warson, 2015; Nyamanda, 2016; Mardoch, 2014). Despite the sour relations between blacks and whites resulting from these conflicts, the Zimbabwean education system continues to reflect traits of its colonial history (Chivhanga and Chimhenga, 2013). During the colonial rule, black people were sidelined in the formulation of government policies, furthermore, most black learners were barred from enrolling in whites-only schools. However, a few learners from affluent backgrounds with similar religious backgrounds as the colonial masters were admitted in these schools (Makoni, 2012).

During colonial rule, the British government denigrated and underestimated the inherent power of black culture resulting in linguistic imperialism. The use of English as a primary medium of instruction within the schooling system resulted in the devaluing of indigenous languages in the country. Inspired by the need to liberate themselves and the need to govern themselves, the black people resisted the colonial rule (White, 2015; Scarnecchia, 2017). Although there was agitation throughout the colonial period for political freedom, in 1960 the Nationalist Democratic Party's (NDP) views became more radical as they demanded the overthrow of the minority government for their rights to be fully recognised (Nyamunda, 2019; Gansemer 2020). According to Nyamunda (2019), the NDP rioted, committed acts of arson and protested to force the British government to intervene in Rhodesia. As a result the NDP Movement was banned in 1961 but reconstituted itself as Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1962 under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo (White, 2015). Nyamunda (2019: 18) claims that the aims and objectives of the ZAPU were, amongst others: a) the establishment of a one man, one vote system in the country; b) the unification of all black people to free themselves from colonial rule; c) the elimination of all forms of discrimination and the development of best values in the African tradition to facilitate the establishment of a desirable order. Due to its militant nature the Rhodesian government banned ZAPU in 1963.

The ZAPU Movement resolved to go underground after it was banned. However internal conflicts in the party resulted in its split into two factions: The Zimbabwe National Union (ZANU) under the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole (Gansemer, 2020) and ZAPU. According to Scarnecchia (2017), the split appeared to have been along the tribal lines since ZAPU was predominantly supported by the Shona-speaking population and ZANU was supported by the Ndebele-speaking people. Although the two parties had similar goals, they differed slightly in the manner in which the intended goals were to be achieved. Both groups followed guerrilla

warfare tactics especially during 1964 when they attacked mostly white farms and destroyed properties which belonged to the Rhodesian population (Nyamunda. 2019).

The early 70's were, however, characterised by less guerrilla warfare. According to Nyamunda (2019), the formation of the Patriotic Front in 1976 heralded progress towards resolution of the conflict in Zimbabwe. The Patriotic Front was formed through the unity between ZANU and ZAPU. The party was jointly led by Robert Mugabe and Ndabaningi Sithole. This unity facilitated the negotiations of a peace settlement between the British Government and the Rhodesian population. Talks were thus held in Geneva in 1976 to find solution to the challenges in Rhodesia. However, the Geneva talks deadlocked as the Patriotic Party did not accept the terms and conditions of the settlement. The Patriotic Front had no alternative but to resume its guerrilla warfare between 1977 and 1978. According to Gansemer (2020), the Lancaster House Conference held in England finally resolved the conflict. Free elections were conducted in Zimbabwe in 1980 and Robert Mugabe became the first legitimately elected president of Zimbabwe.

### **3.2.2 The origins of formal education in Zimbabwe**

The origins of formal colonial education in Zimbabwe is attributed to HS Keigwin, the Director of Native Development, whose policy on African education upheld colonial hegemony (Sinfree, 2012). The colonial Rhodesian education policy for blacks emphasised instruction for agriculture and industry which prepared blacks to become productive in the Tribal Trust lands (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011b; Makoni and Sinfree, 2012; Gora, 2017). Blacks were educated to serve their colonial 'masters' on farms and in factories, hence the emphasis on agricultural and industrial skills. Thus, the Zimbabwean indigenous people were further alienated from their society as their fertile land was taken away from them and they were dehumanised as the payment they received from such manual labour failed to cater for family needs.

According to Maseko and Ndlovu (2013) and Maseko and Dhlamini (2014), formal education in Zimbabwe eulogised the dominant British middle class culture at the expense of indigenous education which satisfied the cultural needs of the communities. As a result, the lifestyle and world views of the black majority were destabilized. Whites assimilated and frequently misrepresented black people resulting in the development of feelings of alienation from black



culture (Gora, 2017; Kanyongo, 2005; Lemon, 1997). The influx of white settlers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, resulted in the establishment of more schools in major towns to cater for growing number of this population group in the country. As most black people became aware of the social capital related to attending schooling, which enabled them to take jobs as administrators and clerks, more black parents sent their children to schools to receive Western education. According to Prinsloo (2010), Stroud, (2014), Trudell, (2016) and Wiley et al. (2014), missionary schools perpetuated Western values that fostered racism and Eurocentrism. Missionaries acted as precursors of colonialist adventurers.

According to Nhongo (2013), the education of black Zimbabweans was left in the hands of the missionaries, who were accused of supporting imperialism and colonialism. Mission schools acted as evangelical centres, and their main aim was to teach the black population to read the Bible (Maseko and Ndlovu, 2013; Matsinhe, 2013). Throughout the colonial period the Zimbabwean education system was racially segregated and disproportionately funded. White schools received more funding while African education survived on grants-in-aid that were allocated to missionaries. Conversely, education for the white children was free and compulsory dating back to 1935. However, education for the black population remained a privilege. During 1951-1955, the expenditure for the black education was £2,209,389 (42% of the total education budget) which catered for 800 000 black children as opposed to £3,096 175 (58% of the total education budget) allocated to 50 000 white children (Kanyongo, 2005; Lemon, 1997; Dorsey. 1989; Zvombo, 1981). The annual unit cost per European pupil was £126 compared to £6 per black pupil (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). In the 1970s, although Europeans represented less than 1% of the country's total population, the annual budget for European education was at least ten times more than that of blacks who represented 99% of the school population (Shizha, 2013). Due to inadequate funding very few black children attended formal school by 1971. On the contrary, all children of school going age of European descent were in school. School dropouts were rampant among the black learners and these dropouts provided a pool of cheap labour for whites leading to the exploitation of indigenous people.

### **3.2.3 Language in education policy in Zimbabwe during the colonial era**

Initially whites were discouraged from addressing black people in English due to lack of the latter's English proficiency. As the colonial masters lacked proficiency in any of the

Zimbabwean indigenous languages, a mixture of native languages and English was used (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011a). Although initial education was in indigenous languages for the first six months of schooling, black learners were transitioned to English medium of instruction at the end of six months. According to Magwa (2010), Nkomo (2008), Makoni, Dube and Mashiri (2006) and Nhongo (2013), the initial language in education policy was not planned but implemented on an ad hoc basis. Language in education policy planning started around the 1960s and it was spear-headed by the missionaries who translated the Bible into African languages in order to gain more converts to Christianity (Mashiri, 2006; Nhongo, 2013). Missionaries developed orthographies for African languages, and were assisted by a handful of educated Zimbabwean indigenous people in the translation of the Bible. These elite blacks who were also proficient in English later served in the colonial administration as clerical staff (Magwa, 2017; Nkomo, 2018; Makoni et al. 2016; Nhongo 2013). The colonial language in education policy recognized Shona and Ndebele as the two official languages to be used in education during the first few months of schooling.

The colonial social policies were designated to perpetuate the two-tier system of development. At the same time, whites were determined to prevent the existence of a class of poor Whites. Whites were confronted with a mammoth task of how to keep Whites and Blacks in the same environment without political or social fusion. The first step was to design separate residential areas and social facilities for the two races (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011b; Makone and Sinfrey, 2012).

The little education blacks received was meant to enable them to render services to their White employers which were menial in nature: working as foremen on farms and supervising workers on the farms or working as gardeners or domestic workers. However, very few Zimbabweans blacks enjoyed training as agricultural or factory workers as they aspired for blue collar jobs (Goals, 2017). Blacks resented the education system which denied them access to the industrial economy which was reserved exclusively for the White population. The colonial government took over the governing of schools from missionaries in order to control the curriculum content and ensure that education for blacks remained inferior. According to Kadenge and Nkomo, (2011) and Goals, (2017), the few blacks who received colonial education were actively involved in the administration of the colonial government. The colonial government further established skills training centres at Domboshawa in 1921 and Tjolotjo (now Tsholotsho) in 1922.

Later, as the majority of white men joined the Second World War, there was an acute shortage of skilled manpower which forced the government to shift emphasis to educate Africans for economic and political reasons (Muchenje et al., 2013; Mhongo, 2013; Morcom, 2014). Whites were, however, careful to preserve white economic and political interests. Nhongo, (2013) notes that educating black Zimbabweans was primarily geared towards protecting European investment than for the upliftment of the black population. To this effect, the colonial government opened its first state controlled secondary school at Goromonzi in 1946, and its second, Fletcher, in Gweru in 1957. Another significant policy shift involved setting up urban primary schools for indigenous Africans. By 1945, 42 other primary schools had been established. According to Maseko and Ndlovu (2013) in secondary education, officials were careful to maintain their control over curriculum. The curriculum remained warped, preventing competition with whites in the job market and did not improve the quality of life among blacks. Consequently, graduates from such schools never qualified to work as skilled industrial manpower. For blacks the teaching profession was considered a privilege for a select few.

### **3.3 THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM DURING THE COLONIAL ERA**

During the colonial regime, missionaries provided most of the blacks' educational programmes (Nhongo, 2013). Policy de-centralised educational responsibility to local authorities, but under strict government control. In fact, while the government attempted to annihilate indigenous languages, missionaries endeavoured to standardise and develop orthographies of indigenous languages, motivated principally by the desire to evangelise Zimbabwe. Mokibelo (2016) highlights how the Livingstonia Mission in Malawi fought very hard to resist government efforts to marginalise the Chitumbuka language. In the same vein, the London Missionary Society facilitated the development of the first Ndebele orthography. Another example of the involvement of missionaries was the standardisation of Shona by Doke in 1931 (Mahlangu, 2015).

In 1966 the colonial government introduced an educational policy that restricted access, transition and progression into various education levels (Brown, 2019). The 1966 Education Act reinforced the discriminatory policies that had existed between whites and blacks since the occupation of Zimbabwe. By 1957, the colonial government had introduced one African teacher training college, which was opened in Mutare in 1955 (Shiza, 2018).

The education system was set up as follows during the colonial era. Children started schooling at the age of seven and spent the first seven years of schooling in primary education. At the end of the seven years of primary education learners moved to the secondary schooling system. The secondary schooling system was divided into two categories, namely a) the academics (the F1 system) and b) the industrial and agricultural category (the F2 system). The colonial government further developed what they termed the 'New Education Plan' of 1966 which reduced the number of students to transition from primary education to secondary schooling. As a result of this reduction the dropout rate amongst black students increased (Magwa, 2010; Pacho, 2017; Brock-Utne, 2014). Secondary school education registered an average of only 12.5% of the student-aged population (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). Under the new policy, not more than 37.5% of primary school black graduates were allowed to proceed to the poorly planned, vocationally oriented, Junior F2 secondary education (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011b). More than 50% of the black youth had no alternative but to join the informal labour sector (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011b; Maseko and Dhlamini, 2014). The type of F2 vocational education discouraged learners from aspiring to better education and precluded them from entering the higher education sector. Furthermore, learners registered in F2 vocational education were stigmatised as they were regarded as not intelligent enough to follow an academic pathway (Burekweni, 2020; Zimbabwe Rule of Law Journal, 2017). The graduates from F2 schools were relegated to semi-skilled jobs in the industries while whites maintained their dominant role as champions of industry.

Unlike the academics, the learners who pursued the F2 vocational system learnt carpentry, art, and building which did not lead to employability. Of the 2.5% of academically oriented learners who proceeded to Advanced Level, only 0.2% were channelled towards university education. The 1966 Education Act introduced drastic cuts in government expenditure on African education resulting in a wide rift being created between the education of blacks and whites. In 1979 a few reforms were instituted through the Education Act as well as the creation of a Three-Tier System of education. In 1979, the 'new' Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government (so named after the internal settlement between Ian Smith and Abel Muzorewa) instituted new education reforms. The Education Act of 1979 was devised to reduce the gap between the education for the blacks and whites. The Act encouraged integration of European and African education. According to Ndamba (2017), this Act stipulated that first language instruction be offered to all African learners during the first three years of schooling (Grades 1-3). English as a second language (ESL) was to be learnt as a subject from Grade 1 until learners transitioned

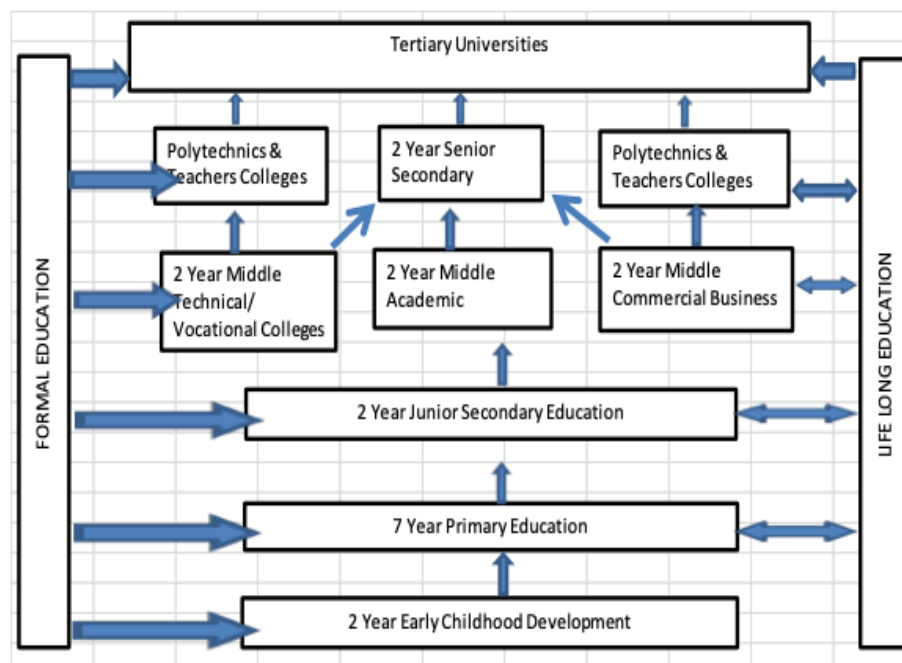
to English medium of instruction. All black learners were to be transitioned to English medium of instruction Grade 4. Prior to the 1979 Education Act, the colonial education system did not officially recognise the indigenous languages hence they were not included for use in the language in education policies of this era.

### 3.4 ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM AFTER INDEPENDENCE

After independence the country Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe. The independent Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe introduced education reforms in the country. The Education Act of 1987. The diagram below provides an overview of the education system today.

#### 3.4.1 Zimbabwean schooling system after independence

After independence the country Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe. The independent Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe introduced education reforms in the country. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the education system today.



**Figure 3.1: Structure of the Education System in Zimbabwe (Zimstat, 2013)**

In Zimbabwe children start their schooling system at the age of three and are expected to be attending early childhood development programmes for a period of two years. The Zimbabwean education system consists of seven years of primary school and six years of secondary school education. Learners spend four years in secondary school then sit the Ordinary level Examination. Learners who pass at least five subjects including English Language may either proceed to Advanced level or take up training at teachers' or technical colleges. According to Jairo Gonye, (2012), teaching is a complex process which is difficult to capture as it does not occur coherently and comprehensively. While teachers training colleges try to equip trainees with relevant skills, individual teachers will prefer using some instructional methods to others. Gonye's (2012) research reveals that some teachers opt for all-English medium instruction while others prefer code-switching.

### **3.4.2 Different types of schools in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe has a five tier schooling system as follows: Former Group A schools, private schools, government schools, council schools and rural schools. These different school types will be discussed in the section below.

#### **3.4.2.1 Former Group A schools**

Government schools in pre-independence Zimbabwe were stratified into Group A and Group B schools. Group A schools were for white students and most of these schools were well equipped with state of the art teaching and learning facilities (Maseko and Dlamini, 2014). At independence, the government disbanded the schools' classification system in an effort to achieve racial equity in secondary schools (Nhongo, 2013). Group A schools were opened to learners of all races giving learners from different racial and linguistic backgrounds opportunities to attend the same schools. (Sibanda, 2019). Efforts were also made to improve educational provision in black communities. In order to provide access to quality education some learners were bussed from townships to formerly white schools at subsidised fares. However, few learners could afford this as it was a costly venture since they had less disposable income than white families (Maseko and Dlamini, 2014a; Sibanda, 2019; Dube, 2020; Nkwe and Marungudzi, 2015). Group A schools were funded in whole or in part by taxation.

Government schools paid nominal levies to maintain buildings, school facilities and sports as the fees were heavily subsidised by government.

All government schools adhere to the same curriculum framework and are funded and administered by the Ministry of Education sector within the government (Nhongo 2016). In an effort to improve the quality of education in the country, the Minister of Education recruited expatriate teachers from Australia, Britain and Canada to fill the teaching posts created by the expansion in the education sector. Government was responsible for the payment of salaries and allowances, transport, services, pupil grants, furniture and equipment, student loans and examination expenses (Nhongo, 2015; Kanyongo, 2018). Another notable achievement was the country's attainment of a male literacy rate of 94.2%; a female literacy rate of 87.2 % and a total literacy rate of 90.7 %. Zimbabwe ranks first in male literacy, second in female literacy and first in total literacy rates among Southern African countries (United Nations Development Program, 2003). This milestone development is important because literacy and educational access are crucial as a means of improving public awareness of environmental and health issues.

Within the first decade of independence, the heavy government expenditure on education was no longer sustainable (Sibanda, 2019; Reynolds, 1990). Researchers noted a significant drop in the pass rates as evidence of decline in the quality of education. To curb the decline, Zimbabwe resorted to decentralising school governance by introducing School Development Committees (SDCs) to oversee the day to day running of the affairs in the government schools. An SDC is comprised of five parents of pupils enrolled at the school, the head of the school, the deputy head of the school, a teacher at the school and where the responsible authority of the school is a local authority, a councillor appointed by the local authority; and for any other relevant authority or body, a person is appointed by that authority or body (Government of Zimbabwe, 1992:613). In addition to SDCs, the Better Schools Programme in Zimbabwe (BSPZ) was introduced in 1993 (Ministry of Education, 1995). The objectives of the programme was to develop prerequisite competences among teachers and school heads through in-service training of teachers (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 2000). The BSPZ programme clustered secondary schools so they could share human, material and financial resources in order to improve the quality and relevance of education in former Group A schools. The major thrust of decentralisation of schools is to enhance democracy and good governance (Barberger, 1986; Weiler, 1990; Smyth, 1996, McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Paqueo

and Lammert, 2000; Bush and Heystek, 2003; Fiske and Ladd, 2004; Watson, 2005). SDCs were further empowered to fundraise for school development projects. (Government of Zimbabwe, Statutory Instrument 87, item 5c).

A new curriculum was introduced in former Group A schools in 2018 which aims to prepare learners for life and work in an indigenised economy but rarely to compete in the increasingly globalised and competitive environment. The updated curriculum emphasises the attainment of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes). The teachers strive to foster literacy and numeracy skills and practical competences necessary for life after secondary school. Much of the curriculum has a bias towards technical and vocational training. Because Zimbabwe inherited the British system of education, a full 'O' Level certificate remains a pass in at least five subjects. Students still sit for the Zimbabwe Certificate of Education at Ordinary Level at the end of four years of secondary education.

The aggressive education policies by the government have resulted in the country becoming a major source of an educated workforce in Southern Africa, churning out thousands of teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals for neighbouring countries and overseas. UNICEF (2015) claims that the country's education system was once the most developed on the African continent. However, the system continues to suffer from a current decline in public funding due to hyperinflation and economic mismanagement. Regrettably, the success of educational provision has been bedevilled by poor economic policies which has created a hostile environment resulting in 'brain drain' of the country's professionals (Ndamba, 2013; Maseko and Dhlamini, 2014a; Sibanda, 2019; Dube, 2020).

Former Group A schools have not been without challenges. Systematic underfunding dating back to the late 1980s has remained the main challenge. The government school system is too dependent on parental and community support and the large dropout from lower secondary schools (over 20%) for poorer communities (Nhongo, 2015). These challenges have defrauded learners of equity with regard to access to education. Former Group A schools have been hardest hit by textbook shortages and lack of science equipment and other essential learning facilities due to poor funding in these schools. Poor student performance is caused by a lack of books and other teaching/learning resources and a general low morale among teachers due to poor remuneration and conditions of service (Financial Gazette, 2003). Most teachers have left the teaching profession to escape the worsening economic situation.



A number of teachers in former Group A schools are second language users of English who lack competence in the language. Teachers are thus not sufficiently proficient in English as second language speakers and cannot adequately support the language development of learners who are first language speakers of indigenous languages. This situation negatively impacts on their academic and social relationships and on communication between educators and learners (Matsinhe, 2013). Lack of contact with first language users of English has significantly disadvantaged most black Zimbabwean learners in former Group A schools.

### **3.4.2.2 Private schools**

A number of private schools, namely, Lomagundi, Cornwall College, Prince Edward high school, Harare International School and St George's coexist with government schools although they offer the Cambridge curriculum. Hilbright and High Achievers offer learners the option to sit for the same school leaving certificates as government schools but the majority of learners write the Cambridge Examinations. While a few private schools were established in pre-independent Zimbabwe, quite a number mushroomed due to the poor quality of public education post-independence. Nhongo (2015) indicates that private schools tend to provide superior educational results over government schools. St George's College was founded in 1896 in Bulawayo. It has the highest academic standards and been awarded Rhodes Scholarships for excellence for the past 38 years. Other famous private schools like Harare International School (HIS), are independent, non-profit institutions enrolling approximately 500 students representing over 50 nationalities, including 21% from Europe, 23% from North America, 41% from Africa, 8% from Asia and 7% from other areas of the world. HIS is supported by the US Department of State, and the educational programme is sculpted along North American and International Baccalaureate (IB) recommendations. Additionally, HIS is fully accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Secondary school learners may choose to graduate with a Diploma Programme. HIS is present in eight countries: South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. The schools meet exclusively for cultural and academic undertakings and compete against each other in sporting activities on a rotational basis.

Most private schools have active membership of the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) and

the Association for School Curriculum and Development (ASCD). Learners who attend such schools are usually from affluent backgrounds. The steep fee structure automatically excludes most black learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. Other potential learners are excluded by a rigorous selection criteria and admission tests administered by these schools, which end up serving the interests of the literate middle class that already has a rich linguistic background. Learners may be selected for their academic prowess, or prowess in other fields, or sometimes their religious background. Private schools reserve the right to select their learners based on specific criteria. Private schools are funded in whole or in part by charging steep school fees (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011a; Chivhanga and Chimhenga, 2013; Nhongo, 2013). They do not depend on government funding. Some private school students offer sports or academic scholarships, thus, lowering tuition fees. High fees are said to be used to cater for higher staff remuneration and to provide conducive learning resources. Private schools generally have good infrastructure with well-equipped libraries, well educated, experienced experts and dedicated teachers (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011a; Kadodo Webster, 2012; Shizha Edward and Makuwaza, 2017). All private schools are characterised by well-resourced libraries, science equipment and computers. Some boarding schools are privately owned. The teacher to student ratio is usually much lower in private schools than in government schools, producing more academically sound learners (Shizha, 2010). The teacher pupil ratio in these schools can be as low as 15:1 and as high as 20:1. By and large, Zimbabwean private schools offer good and quality education which is invaluable globally. They produce competitive candidates in terms of science, mathematics, physics and other fields.

Private schools use English as a medium of instruction and are reported to provide a better standard of ESL teaching. Most teachers in these private schools are often proficient at least two languages, English and French; very few are proficient in Zimbabwean languages. In private schools, the indigenous Zimbabwean languages are commonly viewed as unsuitable mediums of instruction because they do not have the necessary scientific and technological vocabulary relevant for economic development. The drive for English proficiency is so serious that an entrance examination on proficiency has to be taken to enter Form One and the Lower Sixth Form. Resultantly, private schools tend to improve the life chances of their learners, whose ability in English determines their academic success and entry into tertiary institutions (Magwa, 2010)

To date, very few Zimbabwean teachers have been appointed to teach at private schools. This is detrimental in that the few black learners who have a chance to attend these schools do not have any role models who can help them negotiate cross-cultural linguistic structures (Maseko and Dhlamini, 2014a; Sibanda, 2019; Dube, 2020).

### **3.4.2.3 Government schools**

Government schools are schools located in semi-urban areas in Zimbabwe. Like rural day secondary schools, they serve predominantly black learners. Prior to 1980, government schools were run by the former Department of Education and Training (DET). Currently, contrary to policy makers' instruction that English should be the official medium of instruction from Grade 3 upwards, Gora (2013) shows that much classroom instruction in both primary and secondary school is carried out in the second language.

Government schools are mainly non-fee paying in rural areas where the majority of black people live (but parents contribute building material and pay for school uniforms, books, and stationery). The 1979 Act restricted entry into each category of schools which was determined by the zoning system (Shizha, 2010). Unfortunately, most black students remained in former Group B schools since access to former Group A school was strictly based on residence. In the zoning system learners could only attend a school within their residential zones. The zoning system meant that no child could attend a school outside their residential zones. Ironically, former Group A schools remained European in terms of student and teacher population. Therefore, the zoning laws reinforced discrimination and linguistic disadvantages. The other condition for entry into former Group A schools was academic ability and proficiency in the language of instruction, in this case, English (Magwa, 2010; Shizha, 2010). To date, as in the colonial period, language policy states that all schools in Zimbabwe should use English as a medium of instruction. Resultantly, the zoning system disqualified the majority of black students from former Group A schools due to lack of English language proficiency.

The other type of urban schools had been established by the pre-independence government in white suburbs. The government put these schools on sale and local communities could purchase the schools and all the assets in the schools. These schools are controlled by the Board of Governors who craft enrolment policies, fixed fees and ensure that the schools operated efficiently and maintain 'excellent' academic standards. Ironically, the policy on urban

community schools (now called Trustee Schools) allowed Whites to adopt the schools for white children and completely marginalised black children. The 1979 Education Act made racial integration an impossible venture even at independence in 1980. Hence, English language proficiency among black learners continued to lag behind due to lack of immersion into first language speakers of the language and the inadequately trained teachers.

#### **3.4.2.4 Rural schools**

Zimbabwe's rural schools are located in the country's economically disadvantaged communities formerly known as Tribal Trust Lands. These rural schools were established when villagers were resettled to more fertile lands (Gora, 2017). Rural communities living below the poverty datum line formed a united front and worked with scant resources derived mainly from social grants or migrant labour to build local secondary schools (Gora, 2017). This initiative went a long way towards meeting the fundamental need for adequate schooling facilities, which has a bearing on the access to schooling and quality education.

Opportunities to use English in the rural schools and communities are extremely limited, and most learners will typically only use English in the formal school context. In most rural schools learners have few opportunities to use textbooks (Gora, 2017). Reading materials in these schools are limited to textbooks. Because English is not spoken in their communities, English is therefore not a second language but a foreign language for the rural learners. Most secondary school teachers who are prepared to live and work in rural areas are not necessarily proficient in this language of power and high status. Maseko and Ndlovu (2013) and Ndamba, Sithole and Van Wyk (2017) insist that it is educationally unsound to suggest the use of an additional language as a medium of instruction in rural areas as proficiency in the additional language is difficult to attain.

The use of the mother tongue or first language medium of instruction among African learners is a source of controversy and complexities. The major challenges to this type of instruction are dialectical differences in the national languages. The gazetted Zimbabwean languages have a variety of dialects and for educational purposes, learners in rural areas are expected to master the standardised spoken and written grammar of English. Exams are set on the basis of learners' mastery of standardised languages. Learners who speak the alternative dialects find it difficult to cope in situations where the dominant language is required for essay writing. These learners

get penalised for using the first language they know and this inadvertently leads to subtractive bilingualism.

#### **3.4.2.5 Council schools**

Council schools are mostly affected by the unavailability of textbooks and teaching resources. There is also inadequate teacher training to support the demands of teaching English as a second language (Magwa, 2010; Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011b; Stroud, 2014). Zimbabwean council and rural schools often have a teacher-pupil ratio of around 50:1. The lessons are teacher-dominated due to the acute shortage of textbooks. The other challenge is that the per capita grand allocation per student is very low. Council schools also experience an acute shortage of textbooks as most learners fail to return textbooks at the end of each academic year (Shizha, 2010; Goals, 2017). Learners studying in a classroom environment deficient of books are bound to experience linguistic difficulties.

### **3.5 ZIMBABWEAN LANGUAGE POLICIES AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND DECLARATIONS IN THE POST COLONIAL ERA**

#### **3.5.1 The 1987 Education Act**

Zimbabwe's language policy in education is captured in the 1987 Education Act. The Act was a response to the Intergovernmental Conference on Language Policies in Africa (ICLPA) held in 1987 in Harare, Zimbabwe. This conference was organised by UNESCO and it was Zimbabwe which won the bid to host the conference. The ICLPA was attended by 52 African countries out of the 54 as well as other countries such as Britain, India and Switzerland. The major goal of the conference was to discuss the role of African languages in relation to that of the former colonial masters. The call of such conference came as the result of the realisation that despite the research that was being produced on the role of African languages in education, there was lack of implementation. It was thus decided that experts should meet with high level politicians to ensure that multilingualism which characterises Africa be acknowledged and implemented. Delegates were thus tasked with drawing up strategies and defining prospects for the political and technical management of the African linguistic context. The major drive of the conference was on upgrading the status of African indigenous languages in all African

states. The 1987 conference mandated all African heads of states to craft language policies that were amenable to mother tongue instruction.

The 1987 Education Act shortly followed the ICPLA conference and aimed at clarifying the role of indigenous languages in education. According to the 1987 Education Act learners were to receive initial instruction in their indigenous languages that is from Grade 1 to Grade 3. Zimbabwean learners were thus expected to switch to English medium of instruction in Grade 4. This policy was the initial step in the implementation of multilingualism within the Zimbabwean education system (Mawere, 2013).

The 1987 Education Act stated the following with regard to the language policy:

1. The three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows:
  - a. Shona and English in all areas where the mother-tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona or
  - b. Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele.
2. Prior to the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of sub-section (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.
3. From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal-time allocation as the English language.
4. In areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to those specified in sub-section (1), (2) and (3). (Part XI, Section 55, p.255)

I make the following observations based on the provisions of the bill:

- Decisions on language in Zimbabwe are very cautious as they are encapsulated in a language act and also as language in education policy;
- English, Shona and Ndebele are declared main languages of instruction in schools. English has more social standing and opens more economic doors than the other 13

minority indigenous languages that are not mentioned in the Act. The Act seems to imply that these minority languages have a minor role to play in education and hence English continues to play a prominent role in the Zimbabwean education system;

- From the fourth grade, children transit from using first language as medium of instruction to English medium of instruction;
- Deciding on whether a minority language can be used as a medium of instruction prior to the fourth grade becomes a prerogative of the present Minister of Education and is not based on what is pedagogically sound, which is using first language medium of instruction.

The parliamentary debate on the enactment of the Education Act forms the basis of legislation on language and education in Zimbabwe. In analysing the parliamentary debate on the second reading of the bill, basically, the question on language was dominated by other issues such as compulsory free education, classification of schools into government and non-government, registration of schools, determining school fees and the introducing of a single service for the teachers. The only contribution on language was stated by the minister (Government Printers, 1987:20) as follows:

There is a lot said about the language media in classes up to Grade 1V. Has the Minister considered that to force children- not to force children that it will allow children to be educated in their own language in the very low grades would not put them in a backward position, would not put them in a position where they could not compete with other people from Grade 1V. Is the intention of Government to do this universally or just in certain cases?

An analysis of the debate in parliament reveals that the legislators had very little knowledge of the role of language in education. They did not understand the role of the first language in learning at primary school level. As a result, the use of the indigenous languages as medium of instruction was trivialised. In concluding the discussion on the 1987 Education Act I argue that it was a failed piece of legislation as it failed to raise the status of indigenous languages as media of instruction and craft a language policy for the nation. I will now discuss the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training.

### **3.5.2 The Presidential Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training (The Nziramasanga Commission)**

Following the non-implementation of the 1987 Language in Education Act, the then Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe, spearheaded a second attempt at language policy reforms. In January 1998, he tasked a 12-member committee under Chairperson Dr Caiphaz Nziramasanga, to appraise the incumbent education system, including the Language in Education Policy. The Nziramasanga Presidential Commission was set up to restore the dignity of African languages and culture. The Nziramasanga Commission was charged with five broad Terms of Reference which were further broken down into about 23 specific Terms of Reference. The enquiry set to address specific areas in the education and training systems requiring reform (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999). After consultation with the Zimbabwean people and cognisance taken of other countries' education systems, the Commission presented its recommendations to the late President Robert Mugabe in 1999 as follows. The Commission highlighted:

- a) The need to promote minority languages in Zimbabwe;
- b) Concern over the poor Ordinary level English results and attributed it to poor English language proficiency among the learners. Chief among concerns was that the current LoLT policy in Zimbabwe was slowly attracting public cynicism and disillusionment because of its colonial outlook.

The Nziramasanga Commission's Language in Education policy read as follows;

- (1) Subject to this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely, Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught in all primary schools as follows:
  - (a) Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of majority residents is Shona: or
  - (b) Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority is Ndebele.



- (2) Prior to the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) and (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.
- (3) From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction: Provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal-time allocation basis as English language.
- (4) In areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such language in primary schools in addition to those specified in (1), (2) and (3).

I am of the opinion that the Nziramasanga Commission endorsed the 1987 Education Act, thus perpetuating the colonial language-in-education policies. Unfortunately, thirty-eight years after independence, none of the recommendations of the report have been implemented. This lack of implementation can only be interpreted as the Zimbabwean government's lack of commitment to the implementation of the multilingual language policy in the schooling system. According to Nyika (2008), the Commission's proposed language-in-education policy is overtly and covertly colonial in outlook. Mavhunga (2006) further observes that the current curriculum continues to uphold values and knowledge systems of former colonisers. Products of such a system will always look to Europe for solutions to local problems rather than adapt African solutions to African problems. The Nziramasanga Commission has been accused of perpetuating the existing English hegemony in the country's education system. English remains not only a school subject throughout the education system, but the medium of instruction from Grade 4 and a pre-requisite for educational attainment.

Various reasons have been given for lack of implementation of the language-in-education policy in Zimbabwe. Firstly, teachers are inadequately equipped for mother tongue instruction. Secondly, schools are inadequately resourced. Stakeholders are rarely consulted concerning their preferences. Lastly, negative attitudes towards mother tongue instruction mitigate against effective implementation. Reagan (2002:420) proffers the view that issues of LoLT policy are not mere educational issues but political in that they tend to strengthen national ties, perpetuate oppression and create educational inequity. Schools often have inappropriate or a lack of teaching materials, lack of consultation and policy without implementation. For a successful first language/mother tongue implementation programme, teachers need to undergo thorough training by way of in-service courses, seminars, conferences, and workshops (Benaars, Otiende and Biersvert, 2008).

Failure to implement Nziramasanga's proposal proves that policies do not always yield the desired results because they are devoid of detail and are often misinterpreted. At times the stakeholders lack commitment to implement the working strategies. In a few cases, acts have succeeded where there were policy documents. Hence, the need to complement the acts with policy documents. Learners also reveal that they encounter difficulties while learning in indigenous languages because most of these languages are deficient in scientific vocabulary.

### **3.5.3 The 2004 Amendment of the 1987 Education Act**

Following the Nziramasanga Commission, the Education Act of 1987, was reconstituted without amendment in 2004 verbatim with a few alterations as follows:

Languages to be taught in schools (1) Subject to this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely, Shona, Ndebele and English, shall be taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows— (a) Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona; or (b) Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele. (2) Prior to the fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils. (3) From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction: Provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal-time allocation basis as the English language. (4) In areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in primary schools.

Clearly, there is not much difference between the two education acts. The fact that language matters are left to the discretion of the minister is an indication that indigenous languages have not been afforded enough space in the curriculum. The non-implementation problem lies in the fact that the Zimbabwean Government has a non-committal attitude towards language matters. From January 2002 the languages were expected to advance to a grade per year until they could be taught at Grade 7. Introduction of these languages was expected to offer an opportunity for decolonisation of education as well as affirming most indigenous learners' cultural identities. The plan was that the implementation of indigenous language as medium of instruction up to Grade 7 by the year 2005 would lead to further development of these languages for the upper grades (Nyika, 2008). The governments, however, failed to execute the language in education

policies and Ferguson (2000:01) claims that this could be due to the country's vacillation in fear of being marginalised by the international community.

#### **3.5.4 The 2006 Education Act**

The 1987 Education Act was revised in 2006 due to implementation challenges of the Act. The half-hearted implementation of the 1987 Act was caused by the fact that key stakeholders were not consulted and most parents appeared to prefer the early introduction of English medium of instruction. There was therefore a huge disparity in the implementation of the 1987 Education Act. The 2006 Education Act allows for the inclusion of other minority languages for use as medium of instruction during the early years of primary education. These minority languages are, amongst others, Tonga, Venda and Kalanga. The use of Shona and Ndebele was extended from primary education to Form Two (Nhongo, 2013; Shiza, 2013; Sibanda, 2019). These languages were also allocated equal teaching time with English and this policy was to be implemented in the whole country.

However, this policy remains a pipe dream as implementation on the ground appears to be non-existent. In reality the English hegemony is maintained as English continues to be viewed as the language of the economy and commerce and a global language. The failure to implement these language policies provides a clear indication that the independent Zimbabwe like all other colonised countries in Africa is unable to shed its colonial language policies. In this regard the country cannot be blamed as the world education system is moving towards English medium of instruction. I, however, argue that language and culture are intertwined and can never be separated from each other. It is therefore essential that African languages be promoted in school together with English. The role of English in the African continent need to be investigated to allow learners proficiency in the language but also a firm grounding in their own cultures.

#### **3.5.5 The 2013 Education Act**

The 2013 Education Act does not appear to be much of a departure from the 1987 Education Act. There were few nominal changes compared to the 1987 and 2006 policies (Banda, 2019). The 1987 policy considered English as the official language while Shona and Ndebele were considered national languages. Already, the policy reflected traits of the inherited language-in-education policy which gave prominence to English. The 2006 language policy elevated the

status of Shona and English to official languages and incorporated Chewa, Chibarwe, Kalanga, Khoisan, Nambya, Ndaou, Shangani, Sign Language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa, as officially recognised additional official languages of Zimbabwe. However, negative attitudes from parents and other stakeholders saw English retaining its position as the language of instruction throughout the education system. Hence, the policy remained on paper only. The aforementioned language policies had been crafted to perpetuate Eurocentric value systems and ensure the subjugation of black people. The 2013 policy inherited features, which deliberately and systematically neglected indigenous languages (Shizha, 2013). For instance, indigenous languages have hardly been used as languages of instruction in education. Inclusion of Sign Language was an interesting feature because there were no formal teacher training colleges to prepare personnel for this important task. The 2013 policy continued to read more like the 2006 language in education policy which read as follows:

#### PART XI: GENERAL

1. The following languages, namely Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Khoisan, Nambya, Ndaou, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Sign Language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa, are the officially recognised languages of Zimbabwe.
2. An Act of Parliament may prescribe other languages as officially recognised languages and may prescribe languages of record.
3. The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must:
  - a. ensure that all officially recognised languages are treated equitably; and
  - b. take into account the language preferences of people affected by governmental measures or communications.

The State must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe, including Sign Language, and must create conditions for the development of those languages. (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013: 184).

The 2013 constitution deliberately endorses the place of English as a language of instruction and English has essentially retained its position as the language of instruction in Zimbabwe. The provisions remained essentially the same. All other languages were bunched as official languages but were hardly used as languages of instruction except in a few cases of

codeswitching (Ndaba, 2008). Except for the provision relating to additional minority languages, this constitution duplicates the 2006 constitution, which had the following provisions on languages:

## PART XII GENERAL

62. Languages to be taught in schools.

1. Subject to this section, all the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely Shona, Ndebele and English shall be taught on an equal time basis in all schools up to Form 2 level.
2. In areas where the indigenous languages other than those mentioned in sub-section (1) are spoken, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in schools in addition to those specified in sub-section (1).
3. The Minister may authorise the teaching of foreign languages in schools.
4. Prior to Form 1, any one of the languages referred to in sub-section (1) and (2) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.
5. Sign Language shall be priority medium of instruction for the deaf and hard of hearing (Zimbabwe Education Act 2006: 16).

As is characteristic of colonial policies, English remains the language of instruction, commerce, and civic administration. The revision of the Education Acts starting from 1987 and 2006 is merely on paper and not in practice. According to Sibanda (2019:6), it is unsettling to note that Zimbabwe does not have a comprehensive, written, single language policy document on how Sign Language will be taught. Language policy is implied or inferred in diverse documents such as the Education Act, the Cultural Policy of Zimbabwe, the Report of the Survey of the Teaching and Learning of Minority Languages in Zimbabwe, the Position Paper on Zimbabwe's Language Policy, the National Language Policy Advisory Panel Report, and the Nziramasanga Commission Report on Education and Training in Zimbabwe (Nhongo, 2013; Kadenge & Nkomo, 2011). The only training institution in Sign Language, Sunrise Sign Language Academy, was only registered by a private entrepreneur in 2018. Failing to put systems in place on how language in education will be taught is a glaring neglect of views by Vygotsky (1962) that Sign Language offers the psychological foundations of human cognition. I argue that the current Zimbabwean language-in-education policy is reinforcing the intent,

purpose, and agenda of colonial predecessors because English is still the language of the powerful and influential people in society (Ndaba 2008). According to Bourdieu (1991), citizens who are not proficient in English may be left out of the corridors of power and influence. Since their languages are marginalised, indigenous people end up being deprived of cultural and social capital. Nhongo (2013), Kadenge and Nkomo (2011), Nkomo (2008) and Shizha (2014) lament the fact that the current language policy does not acknowledge that language and knowledge are intricately connected, since one cannot dispense knowledge without language.

The lack of genuine amendments in the language policy thwarts efforts at sustainable language development programmes. According to Shizha and Abdi (2014) and Hungwe (2019), local languages were considered unscientific and thus as obstacles to modernisation. In Zimbabwe, a full Ordinary Level certificate should have at least five subjects including a language. Shizha (2014) observes that under this regulation, it is possible for learners to go through secondary school without studying an indigenous language at all. Roy-Campbell and Gwete (undated: 198) assert that Shona is the mother tongue of the majority of the Zimbabwean population who make up about 75% of the population and Ndebele is the mother tongue of a further 16.5%, while English is the mother tongue of a mere 1%. The remaining 7.5% of the population are speakers of the other Zimbabwean languages (Hungwe 2019). Although the Education Act of 2013 states that either Shona or Ndebele languages may be used as media of instruction up to Form 2, in practice, this is seldom implemented. Kadodo's (2012) research confirmed code switching in most Zimbabwean classrooms. English continues to dominate the academic space as the medium of instruction and prerequisite qualification for education and training at all levels and therefore becomes the key to employment and upward mobility (Hungwe, 2019). English is also predominant in government-controlled Zimbabwean newspapers like Zimpapers. Clearly, English has maintained its preeminence over African languages in education, administration and civic life. English enjoys this linguistic dominance in these spheres of life, because it is regarded as a language of status and influence. English is regarded as a unifying force that fosters national consciousness, identity and warrants effective communication among diverse linguistic groups (Nhongo, 2013; Muchenje, Goronga and Bondai, 2013). It appears as if the application of this policy by teachers, parents and administrators has been spasmodic. Shizha (2013) and Nhongo (2013) further note that teacher training curricula do not deliberately promote the use of local languages as much of the content is taught in English. Additionally, commercial publishers are reluctant to publish books written

in indigenous languages on the pretext that the market is too small and government policy on them is ambiguous (Ndaba, 2008; Hungwe, 2019; Nhongo, 2013).

Adopting a colonial language in education policy was not the best option as it overlooked the benefits of mother tongue instruction. One advantage of mother tongue instruction is that learners become more proficient at articulating issues. In any speech community, mother tongue instruction has been known to better mould future leaders and refine mastery of the beliefs and knowledge systems of the society (Nhongo, 2013; Hungwe, 2019). Using the mother tongue encourages members to attain maximum intelligent participation in local activities and react to new ideas in the most intelligent way possible. In spite of these advantages, most Zimbabweans shun mother tongue education due to the stigma associated with it during the colonial era. At that time, mother tongue education was synonymous with inferior education and this stigma hampers current policy implementation efforts. Muchenje et al. (2013) and Sibanda (2019) also assert that since English is the official language, most African people tend to see it as a means of upward social and economic mobility. Knowledge of English is therefore associated with high socio-economic status, and the English language is regarded as the key to success and a prerequisite for upward mobility.

Policy makers have used this loophole to justify the prominence accorded to the English language. The Zimbabwean Constitution states in Articles 82 and 87, for example, that eligibility for appointment as a judge of the High Court or the Supreme Court or for appointment to a tribunal, requires a legal practitioner to have been qualified for at least seven years and practising “in a country in which the common law is Roman Dutch or English with English as the official language” (National Language Policy Advisory Panel 1998: 25). In Zimbabwe, law is practised in English and English language proficiency skills are therefore imperative. The use of the other two languages is articulated in Articles 13 and 18, which state that an offender, detained for trial shall be allowed to plead “... in a language that he understands” [Articles 13 and 18 (3) (b)] and “shall be permitted to have, without payment, the assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand the language used at the trial, that is, English” [Article 18 (13) (f)]. This is one of the few cases where use of indigenous languages is sanctioned. The denigration and neglect of African languages have made it possible for English to dominate the academic arena.

Efforts to support the development of indigenous languages has declined in recent years probably because local people fear that the curriculum might lock them in a country with a declining economic base. Zimbabwean citizens view English as a language of globalisation that will enable them to escape poverty. Compared to English, indigenous languages are considered to be incapable of rendering a person employable (Nhongo, 2013; Muchenje et al., 2013; Ndamba, 2008). Another observation by Shizha (2013) is that some teachers use English as a medium of instruction from Early Childhood Education while others code switch, thereby applying the policy differently.

In conclusion, proficiency in indigenous languages ought to be encouraged in learners, as it defines their identity. For most Zimbabweans, mother-tongue education does not appeal to them because of the stigma attached to it during the colonial era. Such attitudes however hinder efforts at upholding Zimbabwean languages as languages of learning and teaching, let alone developing proficiency in them. English has become the language of choice because most Zimbabweans see it as a means of ascending the social and economic ladder.

### **3.6 THE STATE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Gora (2013) holds the view that students' low proficiency in English does not warrant its use as LoLT. This observation is corroborated by Bondai et al. (2020) who confirm that English proficiency in Zimbabwean secondary schools is inadequate for use as medium of instruction. According to Nhongo (2019), secondary school students have challenges in accessing information from their textbooks and examination questions due to limited English language proficiency. Studies shows that it is not only learners who have challenges of using English as a medium of instruction, but also their teachers. Most secondary school teachers' English language proficiency is limited resulting in poor presentation of concepts (Nyoni, 2018; Nyoni, 2020; Lemmer, Nyoni and Manyike, 2019). The lack of adequate language proficiency skills also results in teachers failing to implement the English medium of instruction resulting in code switching and code mixing and also limiting classroom interactions. Another study by Ndamba (2016) reveals that most teachers show preference for Shona as medium of instruction. Further, Shona teachers in secondary schools prefer teaching the subject in English although they feel that Shona serves their purposes better (Basturkmen 2016; Ejieh 2017). This action proves the superior status which is accorded to English.



Viriri and Viriri's (2013) analysis of language policy implementation in the Zimbabwean secondary schooling system reveals code switching as a major teaching strategy used in most classes. This is despite the policy directive that classroom interactions be conducted in English. In earnest, the proposed policy, as amended in 1987, 1999, 2006 and 2013, to use mother tongue instruction up to Grade 7 has never been fully implemented. (Veit-Wild, 2009; Mareva and Mapako, 2012). Viriri and Viriri (2013) associate code switching with poor proficiency in English among teachers and learners. Viriri and Viriri (2013) recommend the adoption of an indigenous language (not necessarily Shona) as medium of instruction especially in rural secondary schools where code switching is rampant. Phiri, Kaguda and Mabhena (2016) concur with Viriri's proposal although they fail to provide an explanation on the procedures to be followed. According to Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya (2011:195), code switching is not only limited to certain subjects but is also used during mathematics instruction, thus, limiting opportunities for developing learners' ESL proficiency. According to Makanda (2011), governments should provide teachers with opportunities to choose their preferred medium of instruction as classroom practitioners.

### **3.6.1 Teaching and training of English Second Language teachers**

The teacher training colleges like the other education levels experience challenges in teaching student teachers to teach ESL. In Zimbabwe, teachers' training colleges appear to be failing to produce student teachers who are proficient in the English language which is also the medium of instruction. Gonye, Mareva, Dudu and Sibanda (2012) show that not only are colleges appearing to be failing to teach ESL effectively, most academics appear to lack the necessary English language proficiency. Their study findings record errors made by lecturers and student teachers who teach ESL. Among the errors made, the followings were noted:

- a) teachers and student teachers made syntactic and other grammatical errors.
- b) incorrect tenses, spelling, sound, stress and
- c) intonation errors were predominant.

Other errors noted were overuse of the present continuous tense and wrong use of prepositions. I argue that this is mainly because Zimbabwean teachers' training colleges tend to overlook indigenous languages as a result there are few students graduating for the teaching of indigenous languages. Resultantly, since indigenous languages are not adequately taught and

most learners are not proficient in their first language. Lack of proficiency in both first and second language results in subtractive bilingualism (Manyike & Lemmer, 2015). In addition, the government policy on minority languages is vague as it fails to provide implementation strategies. Another proposal in the amended 2006 Act was that all the three main languages of Zimbabwe, namely Shona, Ndebele and English, be taught on an equal-time basis in all schools up to Form Two level. However, this is apparently not being enforced.

Other communicative weaknesses could be attributed to a weakness in the way teachers' training colleges train the teachers. According to Gonye et al. (2012), there is need to train the upcoming corps of teachers adequately so they can make a concerted effort towards refining learners' writing skills throughout primary, secondary and tertiary education. An additional observation is that if academic writing proficiency is to be fully attained, teacher training ought to focus more on preparing teachers to teach English as a subject and as a LoLT.

An additional issue causing concern to trainers is the acute shortage of resources in the schools. Teachers who may be keen to demonstrate their acquired teaching skill and creativity find limited ESL teaching materials a hindrance to their practice. Even though Training Colleges expose trainees to suitable teaching techniques, they may lack support from headmasters, senior teachers and colleagues when entering the world of work.

In tertiary education, English-trained teachers outnumber the Shona-trained teachers and this has promoted the development of English at the expense of Shona. This shows how trivially local languages are treated (Goals, 2017). To counter the neglect of the indigenous languages, in 2008 Great Zimbabwe University introduced Venda and Shangani into the curriculum with assistance from the University of Venda in South Africa. Instead of positive linguistic transfer occurring, code switching emerged. Nhongo (2013) carried out research in which he noted that code switching is rampant in Shona instruction and in instruction of other subjects in the curriculum. In some instances, teachers are forced to use English in the teaching of Shona and Ndebele at university level. This venture creates room for code switching and impedes the development of proficient language abilities.

### **3.6.2 Development of CALP in Zimbabwean secondary schools**

The development of CALP is critical for English second language learners (cf. Chapter 2). However, most ESL secondary school learners in Zimbabwe lack CALP skills which in turn impact on their academic success (Nyoni et al., 2019). Properly developed CALP manifests itself in the ability to synthesise information, make inferences and summarise information. Although secondary school learners in Zimbabwe were exposed to English medium of instruction from early grades, most reach secondary education without having achieved the required proficiency levels in English second language to be able to read to learn.

Teachers are often challenged when learners do not understand complex vocabulary or concepts. They often fail to understand how most learners who communicate proficiently are unable to read or write. This accounts for learners' failure to do assignments and occasional lack of interest in school activities. The need to be proficient in English which is the medium of instruction and the need to be proficient in the first language have resulted in much debate amongst linguists and other educational researchers (Philipson, 2014; Hugh, 2017 Wa Tiongo, 2014) To that effect Mustapha and Asgari (2011) carried out a study in Nigeria comparing mother tongue instruction and Additional Language (AL) instruction. Mustapha' and Asgari's study revealed that the mother tongue plays a significant role in content subject instruction. Similar studies on the relationship between first and second language instruction were conducted by Manyike and Lemmer (2008; 2012; 2014; 2015) and the results of these studies revealed a strong correlation between first language proficiency and the acquisition of a second language.

In Zimbabwe most teachers are ESLspeakers and so are the majority of the learners. Furthermore, there are also few English first language speakers to serve as role models in learning the language. This results in a geographic distance between English language speakers and the majority of African language learners. Generally, learners' classroom behaviour affects the development of CALP. When learners do not interact with each other enough, their ESL learning experience is retarded. Limited exposure to English in the home disrupts the development of BICS and CALP (Manyike, 2009). At times learners are automatically promoted to the next class for fear of destroying their self-esteem. However, such learners always lag behind academically. ESL learners' first language tends to interfere with the development of English. Differences in phonics tends to confuse their written language. The

way in which teachers manage classrooms also affects the development of CALP. Sometimes teachers are poorly equipped to deal with ESL teaching contexts. Generally, it is not easy to teach learners who are not proficient in English,

Another problem experienced in Zimbabwe is the bilingual set up of the language policy. The Education Act of 2004 stipulates that learners use the first language from Grade 1-3 then revert to ESL as the language of instruction. There is concern about poor performance by learners in both first and second language which is attributed to additive rather than subtractive bilingualism which Zimbabwe's colonialist language policy attracts (Muchenje et al., 2013). Subtractive bilingualism arises where the second language, English, is acquired without accommodating the linguistic skills that have already been developed in the first language, Shona/Ndebele (Muchenje et al., 2013). This is so because English is considered more prestigious than the local languages. Gradually, the learners' first language skills are replaced by the second language, since the two languages' linguistic and cultural systems are at variance with one another (Gotosa, Rwodzi and Mhlanga, 2013). Subtractive bilingualism is disadvantageous to bilingual children (McLaughlin, 1990). Abundant research has, however, proved that well-implemented and high-quality bilingual education programmes worldwide succeed in developing CALP skills (Nel, Norma and Muller, 2010; Jairos Gonye, 2012; Manyike, 2014).

Zimbabwean learners' problems are usually exacerbated by poverty, hunger, and fatigue through travelling long distances to school (Muchenje et al., 2013). The other challenge is that there is very little parental involvement to support the development of learners' academic cognitive skills. (Nel, Norma and Muller, 2010; Jairos Gonye, 2012; Manyike, 2014). The way ESL educators are trained is poorly aligned to the bilingual thrust of the Zimbabwean curriculum. Textbook shortages in some schools also militate against the development of learners' CALP skills (Nhongo, 2013).

The majority of Zimbabwean learners are either bi- or multi-lingual, and are unfortunate to learn in English which is in fact to many a foreign language. According to Anylendah (2017), second language learners are often considered as having 'language disorder' and yet sometimes their deficiency is due to poor teaching techniques. Second language teachers often struggle to counter the accompanying academic difficulties related to language differences (Anylenda, 2017).

In some instances, parents fail to assist their children with school work as they do not understand the concepts in English. Other social circumstances such as long hours of work, transport, or finances may limit parental involvement in second language learning. In addition, educators get frustrated working with learners of limited proficiency due to the heavy workloads and large classes. Teachers are forced to concentrate on mastery of the English language and vocabulary, so they struggle to complete the syllabus for the year. Teaching learners of mixed English abilities can be quite challenging to the teachers (Anylanda, 2017). English language teachers are further overwhelmed by large mixed ability classes who need individual attention. This compromises time management skills as they are expected to mark and prepare for subsequent lessons.

### **3.6.3 The LoLT policy in Zimbabwe**

It is imperative to give a brief history of the LoLT policy in Zimbabwe in order to contextualise its impact on the teaching of indigenous languages. The policy of using English as a LoLT dates back to the 90-year colonial rule by the British from 1890-1980. During this period, English was consolidated as the LoLT in all schools alongside two indigenous languages, Shona and Ndebele which were taught from Grade 1 to university level, as subjects only. In fact, English operated as the language of business and was a mandatory subject and a requirement on all school certificates (Nhongo, 2013). Shona and Ndebele enjoyed only four periods of learning time while English was allocated seven periods. For this reason, indigenous subjects were viewed with contempt by teachers, parents and students. The rest of the minority languages such as Venda, Sotho, Shangani, Kalanga, Nambya and Tswana were only taught up to Grade 3 (Nhongo, 2013). At independence in 1980, policy makers tried to rectify this colonial anomaly, in vain. The policy of 1996 stipulates that Shona and Ndebele should enjoy treatment equal to that of English on school timetables. However, this was not implemented partly due to congestion on the timetable.

In 1981, policy makers proposed that a full Ordinary Level certificate should acknowledge Shona or Ndebele as qualifying students for entry into tertiary institutions and higher learning but this was greatly contested. The African Languages Panel also tried to introduce Shona and Ndebele in 1987 in the form of two separate subjects, language and literature, but this was rejected once again on the grounds that the timetable would be overloaded and that the teaching/learning materials and teaching personnel would not be available (Nhongo, 2013).

Clearly, very little effort is being made to implement promulgated educational policies. The current language policy seems to have been crafted to safeguard the status of English language. Various protest groups have challenged this marginalisation of local languages to no avail. Nyika (2018) details the efforts being made by ZILPA to promote minority languages beyond teaching them up to Grade 3 but the government has remained resolute that teaching minority languages beyond Grade 3 is unnecessary as this would create division in the country (Nhongo, 2013). The government revisited the 1996 policy and effected modifications to it that are captured in a circular produced by the Ministry of Education. However, the policy reveals loopholes that promote subordination of local languages to the colonial language.

Nhongo (2013) observes that the post-colonial curriculum is hardly relevant to the local Zimbabwean learner. To Mavhunga (2019), the Education Act of 1987 was merely reconstituted without amendment in 1996. Collier (1989) and NEPI (1992) testify to the critical role that the learner's mother tongue plays in the learning/teaching process. Collier (1989) cites immersion programmes used in Canada, which confirm the existence of the interdependency or CUP (Cummins 1981b; cf. Chapter 2). Collier (1989) opines, furthermore, that if adolescents do not have exposure to a first language, they find it difficult to acquire a second language and need great assistance to reach national norms in high school. Gora (2017) acknowledges that the hegemony of English language disadvantages the local masses in African classrooms. Similarly, Gora (2017) further argues that local languages, if used as LoLTs, will result in pedagogical, psycho-linguistic and social advantages for the learner. Students using a second/foreign language as a medium of instruction experience additional difficulties in a classroom setting.

### **3.7 AN EVALUATION OF SPECIAL INITIATIVES/PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE**

The above discussion indicates that Zimbabwe has made insignificant changes by way of language policy modification. There is need to ensure proper implementation of instruction in indigenous languages. Zimbabwean society comprises people of different ethnic identities and nationalities hence, diglossic, so it is imperative that officials consider using the majority of local languages. Use of European languages may be adopted as subjects to facilitate dialogue at national and international levels. To successfully implement these indigenous language policies the teacher training curriculum has to be adjusted to suit this new language policy

innovation. Local languages have to be developed to accommodate scientific terms that are associated with economic development.

Deployment of language teachers in both primary and secondary schools should take cognisance of their sociolinguistic backgrounds. The success of the language policy largely depends on buy-in from the government, education officials, parents, teachers and headmasters. Nyawaranda (2000) carried out a study in which he suggested that classroom practice guided teachers' personal beliefs rather than the national language policy. He acknowledges that negative attitudes ruin policy implementation procedures and admits that selecting the language of instruction is a complex process. Negative attitudes usually remain imprinted in the mind for very long periods of time. According to Kadenge and Nkomo (2011a), if the majority of stakeholders favour English, the government should take this positive attitude into consideration when upgrading indigenous languages for later use as the sole media of instruction (Makanda, 2011). The indigenous languages and English have managed to co-exist through code-switching. As Makanda (2011) rightly observes, the incumbent teacher-training curriculum that was developed during the colonial period prepared student-teachers to teach in languages that were unfamiliar to children. The post-independence curriculum has not changed much. The student teachers are left baffled at how they can merge the two distinct languages to reap the desired level of language proficiency. Gondo and Gondo (2012) posit several gaps in the way indigenous language teachers are trained. The curriculum places emphasis on Shona and Ndebele and neglects other indigenous languages like Sotho, Nambya, Kalanga, Tonga, Nyanja, Chewa, Barwe, Hwesa, Venda and Shangani. If the indigenous language policy is to be implemented, these minority language speakers will be completely left out. This reality overlooks the Education Act of 2004 which suggests that use of local languages become compulsory in areas where they dominate. This remarkable omission by teachers' training colleges tends to isolate learners from reaping full benefits of indigenous language instruction. The situation is worsened by the fact that there are few government initiatives targeted at development of local languages. Teachers are left with little option but to revert to the traditional methods of language teaching such as the Grammar Translation Methods and the Natural Approach.

A language-specific analysis by the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ 2016) carried out in 15 countries in 2011 and 2015 indicates a strong relationship between pupil achievement and mother tongue instruction. SACMEQ is an

organisation meant to provide advice on the quality of education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The participants of this forum discovered that it is common practice among Zimbabwean language teachers to frequently fall back on code-switching for clarity of expression. Research evidence has recommended the use of local languages of instruction for better results at both Ordinary Level and Advanced Level. The local languages have been known to yield significant cognitive and academic benefits.

The World Bank Report (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011a) opines that pre-independence ESL teaching policies still have a stronghold on post-independence ESL language classroom interaction. At independence, the government advocated for a socialist type of education system but effective implementation was thwarted by lack of economic resources. Kadenge and Nkomo (2011b) cite lack of coordination between the policy makers, the socio-cultural processes and educational plans as impacting poor implementation strategies. The other reason was that the policy makers are a product of pre-independence policies, who prefer the same policies to influence their children's education in order to escape poverty. Hence, the post independent Zimbabwean teachers have simply perpetuated the pre-independence teaching methods into the existing classroom interaction patterns.

### **3.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the political history of Zimbabwe and the education system and its declarations during the colonial period. This was followed by a discussion of the Zimbabwean schooling system, its education acts and declarations after independence. Further discussed in this chapter was the teaching of CALP in secondary schools in Zimbabwe as well as the training of English language teachers at Teachers' Training Colleges. Finally, various initiatives to improve language teaching in the country were discussed.

The next chapter presents the research methodology and research design for the empirical investigation.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapters formed an important background to the empirical investigation contained in this thesis. Chapter 2 provided an overview of relevant literature which elaborated on the theoretical framework concerning second language learning which informed the study. Chapter 3 situated this study within the context of language in education policy and practice in schooling in Zimbabwe. Chapter 4 now presents a detailed description of the research methodology and the research design which were employed to examine the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills in Zimbabwean secondary schools by Form Two teachers. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research paradigm and research approach. This is followed by a description of the design of the study including a detailed overview of sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, measures to enhance trustworthiness of the findings and measures taken to ensure ethical compliance. The methodology used, which is grounded in ethnography, generated information rich data aimed at addressing my research questions.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The interpretive paradigm was adopted for the purposes of this study. The word 'paradigm' can be defined as the researcher's "world view" (Ho-Ming, 2016: 55). Creswell (2013: 78) further defines the interpretive paradigm as a social psychological theory based on American pragmatism, which enables one to analyse structured activities and the social facts of educational instruction. Gerhard Friedrich Muller, a history professor, developed the concept of interpretive research between 1733-1743. Lewis (2015), Aydin (2016) and Wiley (2016) expound that interpretive research has the advantage of examining people in their contexts, focusing on their experiences, feelings and attitudes. The goal of constitutive interpretive research is to take into account the role of participants in creating their reality. Allowing participants to create their own reality is advantageous in that the emerging data enables the researcher to construct and reconstruct theories based on obtained data. This is contrary to quantitative research where researchers enter the field with a hypothesis to be tested. Approaching research with an open mind enhances critical thinking (Alshenqeeti, 2014;

Brining, 2015; Aydin, 2016; Bokan-smith, 2016; Harwell, 2016). The current research is based on interpretive research which involves interaction among the research participants with the researcher observing such interactions. These interactions are further interpreted by the researchers using the theoretical frameworks which underpin their studies. Cremin and Baker (2014) aver that ethnography is uncontaminated by personal judgment and personal bias as the analyst simply gives a detailed report of phenomena under study. Another notable advantage of ethnography, sometimes referred to as interpretive research, is that findings are presented in research participants 'own words, thus making data authentic. The interpretive paradigm was adopted for the purposes of this study because of the advantages it offers. One major advantage is that first-hand information derived from similar environments can be applied to other similar environments.

#### **4.2.1 The qualitative research**

Rudolph (2019) credits qualitative research with the ability to capture participants' points of view in a natural, yet complex setting. Generally, the experiences of the participants are easily captured, even when there is little or no prior information about them. Christensen and Johnson (2014) opine that qualitative research enables participants to contribute meaningfully to the study through the close relationships created and nurtured between the researcher and the research participants during the prolonged engagement. Both the researchers and participants shape the direction of the research study as they interact with each other.

The qualitative research method is applauded by Cohen and Keith (2011) for providing opportunities to explore informants' beliefs, attitudes, motives and obstacles freely. Much of the language adopted for qualitative research is both value free and descriptive in nature. I adopted the qualitative approach because examining participant experiences exposed me to information rich data. Qualitative research was therefore enriched by multiple viewpoints. Another rationale for using qualitative research is that it is naturalistic and very flexible as it pursues issues arising from the interactions with participants (Creswell, 2013; Teherani et al., 2015). By its very nature, qualitative research data enables the researcher to interpret data without losing the uniqueness of individual responses as it accommodates a variety of opinions. Another advantages of using qualitative research is that the data, which is made up largely of words and objects, can be aligned with existing theories. Moreover, the flexibility of

qualitative research creates room for the researcher to attend to issues as they arise. The use of qualitative research methods brought to the fore multiple points of view. This confirmed Maree's (2012) assertion that, while quantitative research is based on the belief that there is a single reality, qualitative research is based on the assumption of multiple realities. This is mainly attributable to the fact that the environment and individual qualities such as people's intelligence quotient and their lived experiences are important in understanding their realities. Unlike quantitative research, where data is presented numerically, qualitative data is presented verbally, thereby reducing the distance between the researcher and the participants.

#### **4.2.2 Research approach :Ethnographic inquiry**

In this study I used an ethnographic design which requires researchers to spend an extended period of time studying participants' behavioural patterns without imposing on their personal views (Cohen, 2011; Christensen and Johnson, 2014; Leedy, 2014; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017; O'Leary, 2017). The ethnographic procedure involves extensive field work and summarising research outcomes in a descriptive, yet complex way. In this study, the findings were discussed using research participants' actual words (verbatim) based on how they interacted in a classroom setting (Larkin, 2013). Another noteworthy trait of ethnography is that it specialises in allowing the participants' voices to emerge (Anney, 2014; Pandey and Patnaik, 2014; Noble and Smith, 2015). In this study, key themes emerged from data gathered in a naturalistic classroom setting. In view of the above mentioned merits, I found ethnography best suited for studying teachers' instructional practices. According to Creswell (2013), ethnography helps the researchers to analyse structured activities and the social facts of education which they represent.

In phenomenological research, assumptions are verified by comparing them with each other and juxtaposing them with existing literature (Maree, 2012). In this study I entered the research site with the assumption that English academic writing could be challenging to teach in Zimbabwe, as English is the second language to both teachers and learners. In order to investigate the multifaceted nature of the teaching of English academic writing proficiency, I used various instruments to collect data. Such research instruments included lesson observations, document analysis and interviews with language teachers on their teaching strategies used to teach English academic writing proficiency. Lesson observations provided me with a clearer picture of how Form Two teachers fostered academic writing skills in their

learners. The structured activities were observable in the teaching and learning of English academic writing skills to ESL learners at the two selected schools which were the sites for the research. My aim was to observe how various teaching methods affected the learners. To this end, I analysed raw data and made meaningful deductions. My epistemological experience in ESL teaching also guided the inquiry process. I acknowledged that, although the teaching approaches have evolved over time, there are nomothetic guidelines which continue to influence teachers' choice of instruction.

### **4.2.3 Researcher's profile**

I am a Shona first language speaker who is keen to investigate the teaching of English second language in Zimbabwean secondary schools. I currently hold a Diploma in Education from Hillside Teachers' College, an undergraduate degree and a MEd degree from the University of Zimbabwe, where I studied English as a major. My eighteen years of teaching experience has exposed me to how ESL is conceptualized and enlightened me on strategies employed by teachers to teach English. The key goal of this study was to move beyond the perspective of the people being studied and using social science concepts, forms and procedures to describe the people and explain their behaviour, which in this case, is the teaching of ESL at secondary school level. The various data collection instruments I used were aimed at obtaining an insider perspective into the teaching and learning of English academic writing proficiency skills in two Form Two classrooms. Undertaking this research established my understanding of theoretical phenomenon embedded in formulating research questions that I needed for both teacher and learner interviews. The interviews exposed me to some of the theoretical underpinnings informing the choice of teaching methodology. To make the interviews effective, I maintained precision by rephrasing questions, where necessary and giving time limits to participants whenever they became wordy. Leedy (2014) and Cohen et al. (2017) emphasise that if well used, interviews give participants the opportunity to voice their ideas, feelings and thoughts.

In conducting this qualitative research, my role as a researcher was that of an 'insider' in that I had eighteen years of ESL teaching experience both as a secondary school teacher and a lecturer at Morgan Zintec Teachers' Training College. My experience was invaluable in that I was able to tap into my experience to interpret the relevance of the data gathered during lesson

observation and document analysis. Maree (2012) emphasises the importance of the introspecting 'self' as part of the research process. By virtue of being a former teacher, I was fully aware of the prerequisite personal documents every teacher should possess and the volume of work expected per language skill on a weekly basis. Interacting with ESL teachers gave me an idea of how they operate, their achievements and frustrations in the profession.

As an ethnographer, objectivity of enquiry was achieved through reflective analysis. Creswell (2012) defines reflexivity as the self-conscious engagement between the researcher and the phenomena under investigation. Reflexivity is useful as a way of dealing with subjectivity in that one can introspect on the strengths or weaknesses of given practices. According to Maree (2012), ethnomethodology tends to tolerate subjectivity as inevitable especially where phenomena are studied in the natural setting. The rationale is that the outcome of the research is a result of the negotiation of meaning between the researcher and the participants.

As the researcher, I designed this study and selected suitable participants. In selecting participants, I explained to them the research topic, the objectives of the enquiry and their role in the process. In addition, I followed guidelines stipulated in the College of Education Research Ethics Committee Guidelines, University of South Africa (Unisa) (cf. Appendix A). Naturally, because participants were recruited a little later in the research, they were unequal stakeholders in the research process. Although I de-emphasized my role as a PhD student during the research, the power imbalance continued to be felt by the participants especially as I tried to enlist information about their practical classroom experiences. Learners were initially reluctant to volunteer information during the focus group interviews. However, they warmed up as time wore on. This power imbalance somewhat compromised my attempts at producing a purely collaborative result.

#### **4.2.4 Selection of sites**

Two private secondary schools, namely, Higher Achievers and Hilbright Science schools were purposively selected. Daniel (2016) defines purposive sampling as a sampling strategy typical of qualitative research which is based on the selection of phenomena based on certain criteria. As private schools, these institutions receive no funding from government. Both are located in close proximity of each other in suburban areas of metropolitan Harare and are feeder schools for a high income group of learners.

The criteria for the choice of the two schools was as follows:

- a) English is the medium of instruction at both schools. To most learners, English is both an interactional and instructional language;
- b) Learners are registered with the Cambridge Examination Board, a prestigious worldwide board sanctioned by the British Council;
- c) The schools both produced excellent academic results for Cambridge Ordinary Level examinations for three years (2015-2017) in succession;
- d) The schools have state-of-the-art facilities and have consistently competed with each other to earn the Cambridge Outstanding Learner Awards for the best results in various subject areas in Zimbabwe.

Hilbright and Higher Achievers College are both high fee paying schools which attract learners from the upper class, most of whom use English as the main home language, even though their families are black Zimbabweans. In both schools, the ESL results in the last three years (2016-2017) ranged from 80-90%. In 2016 and 2017, both Hilbright and Higher Achievers were awarded the Best Student Prize by the Cambridge Examination Board for producing the best ESL results in Zimbabwe. Hilbright has an enrolment of 350 learners with a teacher: learner ratio of 1: 20. High Achievers has an enrolment of 425 pupils and a teacher: learner ratio of 1:25. Low teacher: learner ratios have an impact on the quality of ESL instruction and achievement. Table 4.1 provides the pass rates in both schools for Ordinary level 2015 to 2017 academic years.

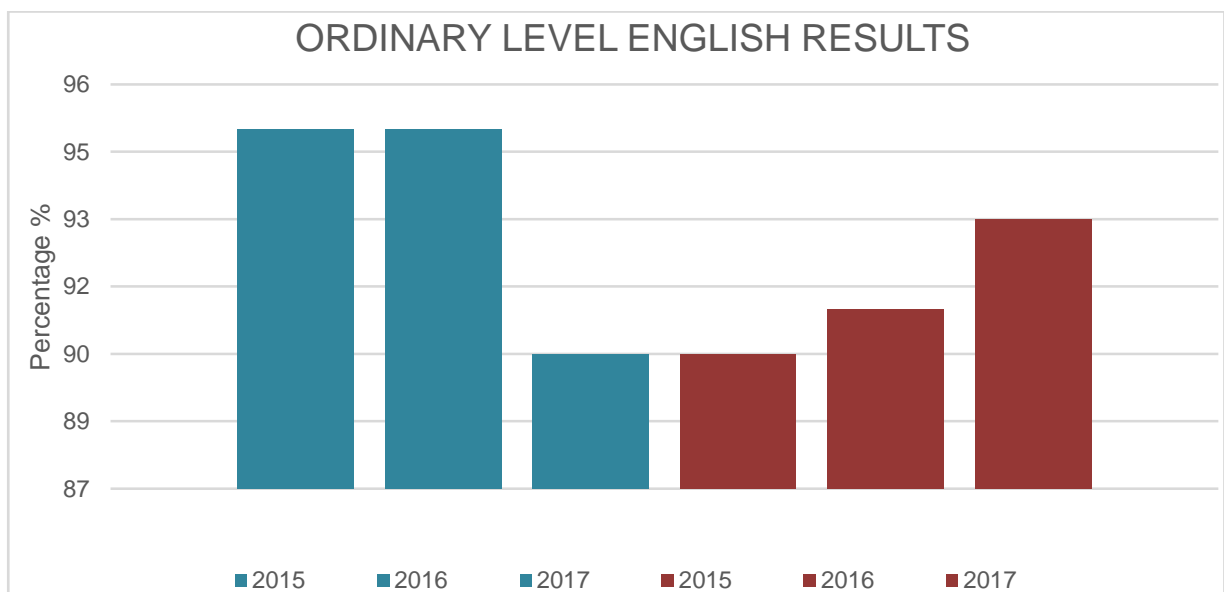
Table 4.1. Participating schools' results for Ordinary Level examinations

| Name of school | Year | Percentage pass rate | Grade achieved: A | Grade achieved: B | Grade achieved: C | Grade achieved: D | Grade achieved: E | U |
|----------------|------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| HILBRIGHT      | 2015 | 95                   | 6                 | 10                | 3                 | -                 | -                 | 1 |
|                | 2016 | 95                   | 8                 | 8                 | 4                 | 1                 | -                 | - |
|                | 2017 | 90                   | 9                 |                   |                   |                   |                   |   |
| HIGH ACHIEVERS | 2015 | 90                   | 9                 | 12                | 8                 | 1                 | 2                 | - |
|                | 2016 | 91                   | 8                 | 9                 | 7                 | 2                 | -                 | - |
|                | 2017 | 93                   | 9                 | 12                | 5                 | 2                 | -                 | - |

1) Table 4.1 depicts the above average performance by ESL learners with most grades falling in the A and B grade, giving evidence of learners' reasonable levels of language proficiency. Normal distributions are important in statistics because they help natural and social sciences to represent real-valued random variables whose distributions are not known. Many properties of normal distributions are generalisable to larger learner populations in other private schools (*Casella, George; Berger, Roger, 2010*)

2)

Table 4.2 below provides the distribution of ESL results



Hilbright

The statistical graph above portrays a bar graph of a normal distribution of grades where there are only a few outliers who probably could be second language users of the language who are still struggling to gain total mastery of the English language. The results demonstrate evidence of good teaching. However, the need to improve the quality of passes adds to impetus to the relevance of this study.

#### 4.2.5 Selection of participants

Purposive sampling was also used to select information-rich participants for this study to yield an in-depth understanding of the group’s actual experiences. Firstly, two Form Two teachers who teach ESL were purposively selected to participate in this study. Pseudonyms (Jane and Maggie) were assigned to each teacher to protect identity and ensure privacy both teachers were females and the criterion for their selection was based on their teaching experience and level of education. Secondly, two Heads of Department (HoD), one per school, were selected as well as the school principal of each school. Their characteristics are tabulated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Characteristics of Form Two teachers, Heads of Department and school principals

| School    | Pseudonym | Qualification   | Gender | No of learners in class | Teaching experience             | Age | First language |
|-----------|-----------|---|--------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|----------------|
| Hilbright | Jane      | M ED (Solusi University)<br>(Diploma in Education, University of Zimbabwe)<br>Diploma in Education, Belvedere Teachers’ College | Female | 25                      | 12 years (5 years at Hilbright) | 36  | Shona          |



|                |                   |   |        |    |                                     |    |                |
|----------------|-------------------|---|--------|----|-------------------------------------|----|----------------|
| Hilbright      | Mrs Moyo<br>(HoD) | MEd (Midlands State University)<br>B Ed (University of Zimbabwe)<br>Diploma in Education (Hillside Teachers' College) | Female | 24 | 20 years (4 years at Hilbright)     | 48 | <b>Ndebele</b> |
| High Achievers | Maggie            | BA (University of Zimbabwe)<br>Diploma in Education (University of Zimbabwe)  | Female | 20 | 21 years (8 at High Achievers)      | 42 | Shona          |
| High Achievers | Mrs Dube<br>(HoD) | MEd (University of Zimbabwe)<br>BA (University of Zimbabwe)   | Female | 20 | 8 years (6 years at High Achievers) | 40 | Ndebele        |

|               |                           |  |      |                                 |   |    |         |
|---------------|---------------------------|--|------|---------------------------------|---|----|---------|
| Hilbright     | PAT<br>(school principal) | Masters in Arts Degree<br>(University of Zimbabwe)<br>(Honours in Arts Degree University of Zimbabwe)  | MALE | 25 years<br>(18 at this school) |   | 47 | Shona   |
| High achiever | DON<br>(school principal) | Honours Degree<br>(University of Zimbabwe)<br>Certificate in Education<br>(Hillside Teachers' College) | MALE | 20 years<br>(10 at this school) | - | 44 | Ndebele |

Table 4.2 indicates that both teachers and both HoD's are adequately qualified and have considerable teaching experience. Jane has a postgraduate qualification in education (M Ed) and professional qualification and Maggie holds a BA degree and professional qualification. The Form Two teachers have 8 and 21 years 'experience respectively. Both HoDs hold postgraduate qualifications, the M Ed degree. Experience ranges from 8-20 years. The school principal of Hilbright is Pat who is male and a Shona first language speaker. He is 47 years old with 18years experience as the school principal at this school. He had an Honours and a Master's Degrees in languages acquired from the University of Zimbabwe.

Don, the principal of Highachiever is male and a Ndebele first language speaker. He is an experienced professional with 20 years teaching experience. He has been a school principal at this school for a period of 10 years. Don had an Honours Degree from the University of Zimbabwe and a certificate in education from Hillside Teachers 'College. Both the principals

are well qualified with years of experience in their positions and as such they qualified to participate in this study. The first languages of all the professional participants were indigenous languages (Shona and Ndebele); thus, they were all ESL speakers.

#### **4.2.6 Data collection instruments**

In qualitative research data is commonly gathered by multiple methods of data collection such as interviews, document analysis and observations. A multi-method approach is strongly supported by Lillywhite (2011), Marcom (2014), Teherani et al. (2015), Bowen (2017) and , Ndamba, Sithole and Van Wyk (2017). In this section, I provide an explanation of the multiple instruments used to collect data, namely, document analysis, initial interviews, reflective interviews, lesson observations and focus group interviews. These data collection instruments are discussed in the sections below based on the phases of data collection. The collection (and analysis of data) was done in four phases. The first phase was document analysis and initial interviews with the two Form Two ESL teachers and two HoDs. The initial interviews were for collection of biographical data whereas subsequent interviews targeted enlisting participants' reflective views on the teaching of English academic writing skills. Phase two and three involved lesson observation and individual interviews with the two school principals.

The various data collection instruments used in this study were aimed at obtaining an insider perspective into the teaching and learning of English academic writing proficiency skills in two Form Two classrooms. The insider perspective or emic view includes the meanings and the views of the people being studied. What is critical is for the researcher to remain objective. Qualitative researchers acknowledge that any research is biased and that researchers enter the research setting with an etic perspective. This refers to an external social scientific view of reality (Fitterman, 2009) and is the perspective of the objective researcher studying a group of people. The goal is to move beyond the perspective of the people being studied and use social science concepts, forms and procedures to describe the people and explain their behaviour. The researcher is viewed as the main instrument of data collection. According to Creswell (2014), the researcher has a reflexive role. Reflexivity in qualitative research refers to the researcher's awareness of his/her role in the study and open acknowledgement of this role should be done in a way that honours and respects the site and participants. My role as a researcher in this study was to stay long in the field of study. I spent a period of eight weeks in the field.

A detailed description of my role in the research has been explained (cf. par. 4.2.3) and is further explained at each phase of data collection and analysis.

#### **4.2.6.1 Phase one: Document analysis, initial interviews with the teacher and HOD participants**

Phase one included the analysis of key documents and the initial interviews with the teacher participants, Maggie and Jane, and the two HoDs.

##### **a) Documents selected**

Creswell (2013) describes document analysis as a qualitative research tool in which documents are assessed to give a voice and meaning relevant to the research topic. According to Hadi and Closs (2016), document analysis is the process of critiquing any product ranging from letters, diaries, reports and other supporting documents. In this thesis, document analysis was adopted as one of the key data collection techniques engaged to ascertain how teachers teach English academic writing proficiency skills. The ESL syllabus, scheme-cum-plan, the record of test marks and written learner exercises in their exercise books were the key sources of data which gave me insight into the assumptions and theories informing the teachers' practice (Bokan-smith, 2016).

I firstly examined official documents such as the ESL Cambridge syllabus to gain insight into the context in which the teaching strategies are employed. Thereafter, I examined the participant teachers' schemes of work to ascertain if these documents were in tandem with the participant teachers' philosophies and beliefs about ESL teaching. The teachers' evaluations in schemes of work, were indicative of the two teachers' views on interactional rights and best approaches to developing linguistic and communicative competence. The documents were critiqued as a way of fulfilling the expectations of ethnographic case study. Most teachers' remarks were reflective of perceived best practice. I observed that generally, areas of perceived difficulty were schemed for more frequently. The classroom activities were indicative of the preferred language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Perceived difficulties and learners' attitudes towards certain content was indicated in the daily evaluation section of the schemes. The scheme cum plan is a guiding, yet mandatory ESL curriculum document which fuses the scheme of work and the lesson plan. Comparing the Cambridge syllabus and teacher schemes

allowed me to evaluate the level of teachers' reliance on these important documents in their teaching. The identified documents were equally deemed to be reflective of the perceptions and philosophies guiding teachers' actions in the teaching process. The syllabus and schemes of work, like all other curriculum documents, are invaluable especially where qualitative researchers seek convergence and corroboration of research findings. From the selected documents, it became easy to establish the context of the research as well as identify issues that required further investigation.

Learners' exercise books manifested the quality and quantity of written assignments. Creswell (2014) emphasises that document analysis is a crucial aspect of the interpretive paradigm. Assessing the context of a document provided me with an understanding of challenges that learners could be experiencing with regard to the ESL content they were learning. Tracking common underlying learners' writing challenges becomes easier when researchers analyse existing concrete artifacts like learners' exercise books and teachers' schemes of work. Documents could be further analysed to obtain background information on the general linguistic challenges that learners encountered as they tried to develop proficiency in ESL writing. Document analysis had the advantage of providing me with supplementary data to support data collected using other research instruments. It is from documents that conditions impinging on the phenomena were derived (Teherani et al., 2015). For this reason, I quantified the use of specific words, phrases and remarks and organised them according to the frequency of their occurrence. All emerging patterns were analysed based on the theory informing the research (cf. Chapter 2).

Alshenqeeti (2014) credits document analysis with providing empirical evidence to research objectives. In the current study, documents were analysed to verify the theoretical base informing the teachers' choice of teaching strategies. Some of the questions addressed during the analysis were: Who developed the schemes of work? When? Why? Which data in the schemes of work contributed to the development of academic writing proficiency? The content of and remarks in learners' exercise books and teachers' schemes were essentially viewed like the responses of participants who contribute answers to the research questions. Schemes of work were examined to check if selected topics were likely to develop English academic writing proficiency adequately. Factual presentations and teachers' remarks on learners' work were evaluated to ascertain the extent to which they contributed to the development of linguistic proficiency.

Documents are deemed to be a cost-effective way of collecting data as they are easily accessible. They are stable in that the data collection is not easily altered by researcher bias. Documents were selected on the basis that they do not have a distorting effect of the researcher's presence as they can be tracked. All emerging patterns were critiqued based on the grounded theory informing the research, in this case, the teachers and learners' efforts at developing English academic writing proficiency. Researchers can easily use them to track changes in research and corroborate findings. Usually, if documentary evidence contradicts existing theoretical findings, the investigator is free to investigate further. Where necessary, extensive literature reviews were done on the topic: "The teachers' efforts at developing academic writing skills". I was positive that the analyses would eventually produce the empirical knowledge that Duranti and Duranti (2009) advocate to provide the theoretical underpinnings informing participant teachers' current teaching styles with the view to establishing how much they influenced the choice of teaching strategies for English academic writing proficiency.

b) Analysis of selected documents

Learners' exercise books were checked to establish how frequently teachers administered written work and to assess how effectively teachers inculcated academic writing proficiency skills. Exercise books exposed each teacher's creativity, learners' progress and attitude towards their school work through the quantity of work given. The quantity of work covered is generally used as a measure of the quality of one's teaching. I examined the major topics covered and their relevance to the development of academic language proficiency. Next, I coded data into the following categories: the teacher's beliefs about the strategies necessary for the development of English academic writing skills; the teacher's beliefs about classroom interactional patterns; the place of curriculum documents; and the learners' rights and obligations in the classroom. The analysis focused on the range of errors emanating from the learners' written work. In addition, I scrutinised artifacts such as charts and models and the list of textbooks to verify if they were in tandem with expectations of the Cambridge syllabus. Special attention was drawn to how the learners' written assignments contributed to the development of writing proficiency. An analysis of learners' exercise books helped me to verify learner' writing errors. I inferred the causes of learners' linguistic errors then checked how teachers attempted correcting them.

Exercise books were examined until a point of saturation was reached whereby further probing did not bring out new patterns of findings from data collected. Document analysis enabled me to keep an accurate data trail. Learners' books tend to manifest common types of errors that impede communication as well as guide teachers' selection of teaching techniques that enhance writing proficiency levels. Learner errors were analysed according to error categories as tabulated in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 Learners' errors**

| <b>Errors made</b>       | <b>Frequency of errors</b> | <b>% Error frequency</b> | <b>Annotaios for identifying errors</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Punctuation              | 3/10                       | 30%                      | P.                                      |
| Subject verbal agreement | 4/10                       | 40%                      | S+V agreement                           |
| Runon sentences          | 5/10                       | 50%                      | Sent. Too long                          |
| Wrong grammar            | 4/10                       | 40%                      | gr                                      |
| Paragraphing             | 3.5/10                     | 35%                      | par                                     |
| Wrong tense              | 3/10                       | 30%                      | t.                                      |

After identifying the errors, I checked if subsequent written work assigned by the teachers sought to correct the arising interlingual and intralingual errors. Analysis of exercise books further took cognisance of preferred teaching approaches and how effectively they facilitated language acquisition.

The schemes of work provided a more complete picture of the teacher's modes of ESL instruction. The schemes revealed Jane and Maggie's resources and helped me to determine the extent to which exams shape teaching styles. Bokan-smith (2016) indicates that schemes may reveal the structural view of language teaching, where language is categorised into smaller units that can be taught as separate linguistic entities and the integrative view, where language is regarded as a composite element. The integrative approach insists that language proficiency is socially constructed by both the teacher and the learners. To supporters of the integrative

approach, any fragmentation of language into smaller units violates the key purpose of language teaching.

c) Initial interviews with the teachers and HoDs

Creswell (2013:87) defines interviews as research instruments that are used to gather data on covert variables such as participants' attitudes, beliefs and motives. Interviews enabled me to gather data by talking to key participants. In the current research, simulated recall face-to-face interviews were employed in order to glean information on how teachers develop ESL competences in the learners with specific reference to English academic writing proficiency. The two Form Two teachers were interviewed on the crucial aspects of English as medium of instruction and their reasons for adopting certain teaching strategies. The initial interviews with each teacher lasted for 45 minutes respectively and were recorded with the teacher's permission. The aim of this initial interview was to familiarise myself with the school as well as getting to know these teachers. It was essential that rapport be established with the two participating teachers. The questions posed to teachers during the initial interview (cf. Appendix E) included their qualifications, teaching experience, home language and activities they engaged in order to enhance the learners' academic writing proficiency. The teachers shared ideas on the relationship between reading and quality of writing, best techniques for enhancing acquisition of first and second language and best practices in developing cohesion in learners' work. Additional issues included factors enhancing or militating against the acquisition of the four language competences: discourse, grammatical, socio-linguistic and strategic competences. Interviews with the HODs was geared towards understanding how they supported the two ESL teachers. Interviews with the two HOD's lasted for 45 minutes respectively and were recorded with their permission. The questions posed to the HOD's included their qualifications, teaching experience, activities they engaged in to support the ESL teachers.

#### **4.2.6.2 Phase two and three of data collection: Individual interviews with two school principals, and classroom observations**

During phases two and three, data were collected using individual interviews with the two school principals as well as classroom observations. The data collection procedures are discussed in the sections below.



a) Individual interviews with the school Principals

The principals of the two purposefully selected secondary schools were individually interviewed in order to assess how they supported the teaching of academic writing in their respective schools. Face to face interviews were conducted in their respective offices at their schools at the end of the school day. The scheduling of interviews at this time was to avoid disruption of the principals' school routines. Only one interview was conducted with each of them and each interview was an hour long. An interview guide was used during interview (cf appendix H) and these interviews were recorded with the school principals' permission.

The questions posed to the school principals during interviews included amongst others the role of indigenous languages in their schools, the importance of English in education and the best way of supporting learners in their acquisition of English academic language proficiency skills

b) Lesson observations

The two participating Form Two teachers from both schools were observed teaching 42 lessons, thirty minutes long each over a period of eight weeks (two months). Lewis (2015) defines observation as the process of gathering data without attempting to manipulate it. In this study, I was a nonparticipant observer who noted ongoing teaching processes but did not seek to manipulate the variables. I observed individual teaching strategies and checked for consistencies and emerging patterns in the practice of the teachers in a context where English is the medium of instruction. Observation was an appropriate data collection instrument because it accurately captured teachers' mannerisms as they implemented existing language in education policies in the teaching and learning processes.

One characteristic of observation is that it allows researchers to collect data without trying to influence or manipulate the end result (Creswell, 2013; Larkin, 2013; Teherani et al., 2015). I opted for this research method for several reasons. Firstly, it allowed me adequate time to focus on note making and detailed observation and analysis. Secondly, observation enabled me to analyse the contexts of lesson delivery and measure non-elicited behaviour, which occurred spontaneously in most cases. Thirdly, observation allowed me to study phenomena at close

range. Lastly, it further gave me more detailed description of phenomena than was possible in document analysis and interviews. Observations gave me an understanding of how teachers navigate through the three stages of English academic writing, namely: planning, using a mind map to organise ideas and transforming language rules into intended meanings.

Much of the observation process was structured. I borrowed elements of Meyer's (1998) observation grid (cf Appendix J). This grid allows one to record the number of times the teacher talks to the learners, opportunities created for learners interaction amongst other. To make sure the lesson recording was accurate, I tallied the number in the relevant box on Meyer's observation grid schedule each time a certain behaviour was repeated. See (cf. Appendix I). The tallies gave me a more accurate view of the lesson proceedings and gave me insight into the different teaching styles and different modes of interaction with the students. Tallying helped me evaluate the success of a teaching session. The grid enabled me to focus on the teaching activities conducted during lesson observations.

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

Chilisa, Bagele and Kawulich (2012) define data analysis as the systematic procedure for reviewing, organising and interpreting collected data corpus. According to Creswell (2013), the three basic approaches to data analysis in phenomenological research are a structural analysis, interpretational analysis and reflective analysis. The three approaches involve noticing patterns, collecting phrases that facilitate thematic interpretations, then recognising emerging patterns. Creswell (2013) defines interpretational analysis as the procedure through which researchers analyse case study data in order to establish themes, constructs and patterns that can be used to describe and explain phenomena under investigation. In this research, schemes of work, learners' books and the syllabus were analysed using the content analysis approach, whereby the content of learners' books were examined to check if they adequately covered content that enhances linguistic proficiency skills (cf. 4.2.6.1b). The researcher should be careful not to be judgmental while trying to make sense of the data. In the current study, data collected was subjected to thematic analysis. I followed the recommendation that researchers should write detailed descriptions of emerging themes and data patterns ((Tessier, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Approaches, 2017). Themes were interpreted in the context of participants' definitions of situations and available literature. Some themes were embedded but others were inductive.

In reflective analysis, researchers employ intuition and personal judgment to investigate existing phenomena. Interviews were examined using the narrative analysis method, where participants were afforded the opportunity to share lived experiences in their experience of teaching and acquiring English academic writing proficiency. Interview data were recorded and transcribed to provide a permanent record of what had transpired.

Data transcription is the process of sifting and organising data and imposing some form of order on it (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Lewis, 2015; Aydin, 2016; Soongpankhaio, 2016). This is a rigorous process as the transcriber has to select pertinent details only. In this research, I transcribed data through memoing, or the process of jotting down notes on margins of observational, interview and documented data. In the transcription process I read and reread data to understand it better. Scholars (Cohen, 2011; Christensen and Johnson, 2014; Leedy, 2014; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017) posit that detailed notes written by researchers facilitate the coding process. It was imperative that I analysed what was said, actions that were performed and what was portrayed during the observations and interviews sessions. Codes and themes form the heart of qualitative research (Davidson, 2009; Cooper, 2010; Tessier, 2012; Alshenqeeti, 2014). Where a certain code recurred, an emergent theme was identified and established. Manion and Morrison (2010) call the above-mentioned style of data analysis, open coding. Braun (2012) avers that researchers can do open coding following the line by line, paragraph by paragraph or unit by unit approach. After re-reading the notes, I categorised them into codes and themes. The next stage was that the broad codes were synchronised around the common ideas related to the development of English academic writing proficiency. The data corpus was analysed for content driven themes that emerged in the focus group interviews with the learners and interview with the school heads (cf. Appendix E). All results derived from this process were triangulated with findings from lesson observation, ESL teacher interviews, interviews with HoDs and school principals and document analysis.

#### **4.4 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA**

To ensure trustworthiness of data, several measures were closely followed. Firstly, data was checked for credibility and transferability through triangulation of lesson observation, focus group and individual interviews and document analysis findings. Trustworthiness was achieved when data from one type of research instrument, for example, the focus group interview, was

compared with results from other types of research instruments. Where results corroborated, the research was considered trustworthy.

#### **4.4.1 Credibility**

Loh (2013) defines credibility as the demonstration that a true data collection process was engaged in. Results from the phenomena under scrutiny were triangulated to ensure transferability of the information to similar settings. Congruent data results in this research were archived through my prolonged engagement in the two research sites. Triangulation was achieved by the interviews with the two Form Two teachers, the two school principals and two HoDs (cf. Appendix G). Lesson observations and focus group interview results further buttressed the credibility of the research findings in that they practically demonstrated the participant teachers' beliefs. I spent eight weeks conducting lesson observations in each of the two schools and held multiple individual interviews with the two English language teachers. The use of different data gathering instruments ensured rigour and ameliorated the shortcomings of other data collection instruments. Triangulation of results reduced researcher bias in the interpretation of the results. To enhance credibility of the research, I further provided sufficient detail of the data collection and analysis procedures.

According to Loh (2013), in qualitative research, credibility of the research findings is further enhanced through the use of participants' voices which took the form of interviews and lesson observation sessions that I conducted. Several scholars (Gunawan, 2015; Hadi and José Closs, 2016) have coined the concept of “confidence in truth,” where credible findings can be applied to other settings and the results will still be similar. In the current research, credibility was enhanced by the degree to which research results were compared with theoretical assumptions and proved independent from coincidental anecdotes.

Member checking, which Bokan-smith (2016) defines as the process of final report review by the participants, is a crucial stage in research. Member checking of an analysis of learners' exercise books helped me to verify learner' writing errors. Member checking with experts in the field made the research results robust. Through member checking, I managed to verify incumbent theories and inferences made by participants. Peer validation presented a fuller understanding of the data findings, kept bias in check and enhanced accuracy.

#### **4.4.2 Transferability**

Anney (2014) defines transferability as the extent to which research results can be employed in new contexts. According to Anney (2014), if the emerging results can be repeated in an entirely new context, then they are dependable. Qualitative researchers interpret divergent results to mean the existence of multiple realities. Research results should generally be transferable (Lewis, 2015; Aydin, 2016; Cohen et al., 2017). Member checking took the form of peer validation. The peers in this case are the two fellow lecturers who are familiar with this branch of research. The lecturers I engaged work in the Linguistics Department at the University of Zimbabwe. Their experience in second language teaching allowed for a fuller interpretation of the field findings. To maintain researcher integrity I allowed my research results to be scrutinised by research experts to expose weaknesses that needed to be addressed. Transferability was enhanced by thick description of data and triangulation of data gathered from interviews, document analysis and observation. Generally, all research data addressed the same research questions.

#### **4.4.3 Dependability**

Dependability addressed the issue of using authentic measures to examine the process of inquiry. According to Manion and Morrison (2017), O’Leary, (2017) and Braun, (2019), the objective was to enhance the quality of data by analysing how it was collected, kept and triangulated to attain some level of confidence. I adopted step wise replication, where two or more researchers coded and analysed the same data separately then we compared results. Any inconsistencies were addressed to improve confirmability and dependability. Where results were similar, dependability was achieved. To buttress the research findings, all interpretation and recommendations were supported by research data.

O’Leary (2017), Braun, (2019) and Anney (2014) highlight the close relationship between credibility and reliability in that any demonstration of one confirms the existence of the other. Dependability zeros in on the researcher’s plans and how they are executed, the field work done and the accuracy of the data collected. All findings, interpretations and recommendations concur with empirical data from renowned scholars. Hadi and José Closs (2016) stress the importance of the triangulation process to authenticate research results.

#### **4.4.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability describes the extent to which research results can be confirmed by other researchers (Creswell, 2013). Hadi and José Closs (2016) describe confidence as “trustworthiness” and highlight four conditions that render results reliable. Firstly, the results must be credible, dependable, transferable and confirmable. Authentic results should remain consistent and replicable over time. Once results are replicable, then the instrument is considered to be reliable. Since qualitative research does not entail statistical results, I had to find alternative ways of establishing validity and reliability. One way is by getting remarks from peers on the data analysis. As a researcher, I ought to prove that the research results are not figments of my own creativity, and provide an audit trail which allows me to trace the research process stage by stage. To achieve confirmability, I used a journal where I noted any significant events that were relevant to my investigation. Finally, I triangulated the results from the different research instruments used as proposed by Creswell (2013). Allowing fellow researchers to confirm the authenticity of the results rendered the results robust. Once research results are confirmable, they can be considered to be dependable.

Interviewing participants from schools with similar social backgrounds provided me with multiple sources of data from which to formulate credible themes. The triangulation of the literature review, interviews and document analysis helped me to identify emerging themes and overlapping areas. The combination of data sources provided deeper and comprehensive results.

Member checking is one technique that is at the heart of qualitative research. Hadi and José Closs (2016) define member checking as the process of availing the final research report to the participants in a bid to verify and authenticate findings. Braun (2019) avers that member checking provides a context in which participants can recollect their experiences during the research period and objectively analyse their responses. I offered participants a chance to member check after I had compiled my research report.

#### **4.4.5 Ethical measures**

A number of ethical measures were considered while carrying out this research. Firstly, I obtained an ethical clearance certificate with College of Education, University of South Africa Ethics Committee. Cohen et al. (2017) aver that participants must voluntarily register to participate in the research. In line with this, participants were informed accordingly that they needed to sign both consent forms (teacher participants, HoD's and parents) and assent forms (learner participants) to participate in this study. Participation in this research was voluntary. Participants were also given an option to opt out of the research study when they felt that they could not continue participating. I also emphasised the issues of confidentiality and I did not disclose participants' names or that of their schools in my report.

As a researcher, I do not wish to remain oblivious of potential setbacks. By virtue of the researcher having an upper hand in research, there may be an invisible power imbalance between the researcher and participants. Learners might feel obliged to participate in the research simply out of a sense of duty. At times, learners may feel that their views were misrepresented as the researcher was being guided by a particular school of thought and pre-conceptions. Such differing points of view were discussed amicably. The ultimate results may manifest a particular version of reality but I allowed for the incorporation of divergent opinions.

Conducting a qualitative research is demanding, including travelling for interviews and miscellaneous costs. However, the researcher should meet agreed standard criteria. In this study all video recordings were securely that only the supervisor and I had access to them. I printed interview scripts at my house and I stored all manuscripts in a smart folder.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter has described the methodology guiding this research study. The subsequent analysis is detailed in Chapter 5. The chapter explained in detail the justification for using qualitative research methods. Key considerations for the research study were highlighted. Chapter 5 will address in detail all the four research questions which this thesis set out to answer.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the ethnographic data findings from the empirical investigation. The main research question which this study sought to investigate is the teaching of English academic writing proficiency in two selected Zimbabwean secondary schools. Empirical data were collected using observations, initial teacher interview, focus groups, semi structured interviews and document analysis. The findings from the empirical investigation are discussed according to four phases as informed by the instruments used for data collection.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief description of the two sampled schools to contextualize the findings. The second section of the chapter discusses the findings of the empirical data based on the different research instrument used namely: findings from individual interviews with the teachers, findings from observations as well as focus groups. These findings are classified into the four main themes and sub themes: genres teachers focus on when teaching writing, how teachers develop academic writing skills in learners, teaching processes, availability of teaching resources, teacher feedback and focus group feedback. The chapter concludes by examining the relationship between reading and writing skills. Each sub theme focuses on the teacher's input, learner participation and parental/guardian involvement in the development of academic writing skills. Furthermore, data gathered from interviews with the teachers is presented and discussed to elucidate on the teaching of English writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners. Lastly, the results of focus group discussions with the learners are presented and discussed to elucidate on learners' perceived successes and challenges with learning and mastering English academic writing proficiency skills taught to them.

#### **5.2 A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Zimbabwe has different categories of schools. These categories are based on the availability of resources and learner performance measured by quality of academic success. Empirical data for this study were collected from two private high schools, which are middle-class day schools located in a suburb in Harare. Interviews with headteachers revealed that the Ministry Regional



Offices has permitted both private school principals to recruit teachers of their choice, otherwise, the standard practice in all government schools is that the Ministry deploys teachers.

Both schools are elitist private schools, are well-provisioned and very expensive. In keeping with the assertion by Gomez (2014) that middle-class learners have a long history of excellent academic performance, the selected schools uphold middle-class teaching and learning ethics, characterised by integrity, hard-work and a results-oriented culture. As a result, they attract vibrant, well-qualified and proficient teachers. It may also be assumed that access to mass media and a variety of books in the learners' homes impacts positively on their educational performance of which, academic language proficiency skills is part.

### **5.2.1 Hilbright School**

Hilbright School , is situated in Avondale, 9.5 kilometers from Harare city center which is one of Harare's most affluent suburb. The school enrol students from Form 1 to 6 (i.e., Grades 7 to 12). Due to its catchment area, the enrolled learners are all from affluent socio-economic backgrounds. Most learners are a product of private primary education as a result by the time they reach secondary school, they have acquired sufficient English proficiency to cope with English as a medium of instruction. By virtue of the good primary schools they attended, Hilbright learners usually come to secondary school with sufficient English vocabulary. The total number of teachers from Form 1 to 6 is 12 and the total learner enrolment is 300. Class sizes range from 20-25 learners to allow for optimal teacher-pupil interactions, giving a ratio of approximately 1:25 learners. According to Bokan-smith (2016), the fewer the learners a teacher has to deal with, the more productive the interactions within the classroom context. Most learners are Shona and Ndebele speakers with a handful of other African language speakers from the Southern Africa region (SADAC). However, both school do not have English first language speakers as such learners do not have first language English role models. In such environments Nation (2018) claims that the English proficiency levels may not be as optimal as expected.

The school has a small computer lab which is well resourced. I noticed that the computer lab is specifically set aside for computer lessons and is never used as a resource for ESL teaching purposes. Due to a tight timetable, learners do not have adequate access to the computer lab where they can play computer-assisted language games which enhance second language

acquisition. Given the socio-economic background of these learners, these learners have computers in their home environments and are computer literate.

The school has a mission statement which acts as a guideline to both staff and learners. The school's Mission Statement reads as follows: *"To become a unique science education college which upholds values of honesty, transparency and hard work in Zimbabwe and Africa."* A business like atmosphere prevails in the school with teaching as the core business; this is upheld by staff and learners. A well-stocked school library and reading materials boost learners' reading and provide them with enjoyable learning processes. The school management emphasises the importance of effective teaching and outstanding performance. School attendance is mandatory and the school requires parents to report when their children are absent from school. Punctuality is excellent and truancy is rare. Learners behave respectfully towards their dedicated teachers. I observed that the class always stood to greet their teachers as each lesson commenced. Learners always responded to the teachers' call for order during class and group discussions.

Teachers were modestly dressed and this set a good precedence for the learners. The dress code evoked feelings of respect and exemplary learner behaviour. Teachers' commitment to duty could be attested by the orderly and well researched lessons I observed. Teachers respected the siren that marked the end of each lesson by giving way to the next teacher. The school head employed Peters (2017) administrative style of "Management by Walking Around" as I frequently bumped into him during my fieldwork. Over the 10-years period since its inception, the participating school has accumulated significant teaching and learning resources.

At Hilbright school, English receives more attention than all other subjects in the curriculum, is adequately staffed and is allocated more instructional time (seven 35-minute periods per week) on the timetable than other subjects in the curriculum. However, the school head, Don (pseudonym), feels that it is risky to allocate more time on the timetable to a single subject (English), since all subjects deserve equal attention to boost the overall quality of passes. Students in this and the other selected school are not streamed, which may partly explain why their performance, although good, is not an A grade or 100% pass rate. Students are admitted mainly on the premise of a stable economic base as the fees are steep, ranging between 2000 and 2500 (for new students) US dollars exclusive of levy (pegged at 600usd), textbook and uniforms purchase. This is high, considering that few parents have access to or are remunerated

in US dollars due to the existing monetary policy in Zimbabwe. Parents' desire to place their children on a higher English proficiency pedestal sees most parents sacrificing to pay these fees at Hilbright School. Graduates from Hilbright have a reputable record of excelling in the esteemed TOEFEL and IESL, international tests that are a pre-requisite for entrance into international universities in European countries.

### **5.2.2 High Achiever School**

High Achiever school, is situated in Borrowdale suburb, an affluent residential area, 17 kilometres north-east of the area popularly known as the northern suburbs of the capital city, Harare. The school enrolls learners from Early Childhood Education to Form 6 (i.e., Grades 0 to 12). The intention of the school is to induct learners into the school's ethos from a tender age and see them gradually develop into rounded citizens who uphold the school's ethos. Due to its catchment area, the enrolled students are generally, from affluent socio-economic backgrounds. Because most learners have attended private primary schools, it is envisaged that by the time they get to high school, they will have acquired adequate English proficiency to cope with English as a medium of instruction. The total number of teachers from Form 1 to 6 is 12 and the student enrolment is 300. The school's Mission Statement is *"Committed to providing excellent academic and moral education which results in holistic, lifelong learning."* High Achievers has 11 teachers and a total enrolment of about +/-250 students, most of whom display a positive disposition towards school as revealed by their constant school attendance and dedication in doing their homework. The teacher learner ratio is 1:23 learners on average. The medium of instruction in this private school is English. English is regarded as a very important subject in the curriculum by both parents and learners, hence, is learnt with a passion. The value attached to linguistic competence is confirmed by Abukhattala (2013); and Hussein (2016) who aver that mastery of English creates opportunities for immersion into diverse cultures as well as additional economic benefits. This is buttressed by the fact that English is a compulsory subject and also used as a medium of instruction in all Zimbabwean schools.

The majority of the learners at this school come from stable, affluent family backgrounds as evidenced by parents' ability to pay high fees of 2100 US Dollars in addition to 500usd levy and expensive uniforms. Other evidence of affluence was that all learners came to school with lunch boxes which were of high quality. Considering the current monetary policy which restricts trading in US dollars, raising the above fees can be a real challenge for the ordinary

Zimbabwean parent. The school upholds high quality ethos of dignity and respect for authority and each other. Learners attend school dressed in their smart, complete uniforms, creating a businesslike atmosphere. School attendance is mandatory for both teachers and learners as reflected in the class registers. Record of mark book indicated that homework was completed by all learners showing the serious level with which learners regard their school work. Lessons are demarcated by a siren, which is sounded at the end of every 40-minute session. Learners and teachers respected the siren. The school has a computer lab stocked with 30 computers, allowing each student per class to have access to a computer. Apart from ICT lesson time, learners also have access to the computer lab during free periods. If well utilised, computers create greater opportunities for ESL development. However, in the lessons I observed, Maggie did not teach writing skills using computers.

Teachers strictly adhere to the lesson time and come to class fully prepared, which instils a sense of discipline within the student body. The teachers were well dressed in jacket and tie (males) and decent attire for females. Class monitors had a schedule indicating whether the various subject teachers had attended lessons. Because of the register system all teachers ensured punctual attendance to all classes. The school is run by HoDs who enforce regulations through class visits and book inspections. The headteacher may, however, veto the judgments made by the HoDs. Pat (pseudonym), the headteacher of High Achievers, stressed his ability to create a conducive environment for efficient learning to take place. Pat believes that his strictness with both teachers and learners yields positive results. He also indicated that he is responsible for developing the school ethos.

### **5.3 FINDINGS: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

The following documents were analysed namely the scheme cum plan and learners' exercise books. These documents will be discussed in the section below

#### **5.3.1 Teachers' Scheme Cum Plan**

The scheme cum plan is a document outlining the topics, objectives, methods, teacher and learner activities and evaluation of the lesson progression. Other documents that were rich data sources were schemes of work. The schemes of work gave me a more complete picture of the teacher's modes of ESL instruction. Data from lesson observation and schemes of work were

combined to minimise bias and establish credibility of findings. Through the schemes, I got an idea of the two teachers' beliefs on teachers appropriate interactional practices, best approaches to developing linguistic and communicative competence and the value of curriculum documents. O'Leary (2014) posits that documents may be treated as good as informants providing key information. Jane's schemes showed bias towards grammar while Maggie's schemes demonstrated a slant towards comprehension and reading proficiency. Clearly, areas of perceived importance such as grammar and comprehension, were planned for for more frequently than others. The learning and teaching practices were evident in the selected classroom activities. Perceived difficulties and learners' attitudes towards certain content was indicated in the daily evaluation section of the schemes. Both Jane and Maggie's remarks were reflective of their practice.

**Table 5.1 Scheme Cum Plan of the two ESL teachers**

| <b>SCHOOL A</b> |                 |                           |             | <b>SCHOOL B</b>           |                           |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>DATE</b>     | <b>TOPIC</b>    | <b>SOURCE OF MATERIAL</b> | <b>DATE</b> | <b>TOPIC</b>              | <b>SOURCE OF MATERIAL</b> |
| 8/10/19         | SPELLING        | English for Today Book 2  | 2/7/18      | COMPOSITION (Descriptive) | Past Exam Paper           |
| 11/10/19        | NOUN CLASSES    | English for Today Book 2  | 7/7/18      | HORMONYMS                 | English for Today Book 2  |
| 14/10/19        | COMPREHENSION   | Newspaper cutting         | 8/7/18      | ANTONYMS                  | English for Today         |
| 17/10/19        | SUMMARY WRITING | English for Today         | 9/7/18      | COMPREHENSION             | Past exam paper           |
| 19/10/19        | NOUN CLASSES    | English for Today Book 2  | 10/7/18     | SUMMARY                   | English for Today Book 2  |

|          |                                |                             |          |                                   |                                  |
|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 21/10/19 | ADJECTIVES                     | Common errors in English    | 11/7/18  | SUFFIXES                          | Structures and Skills in English |
| 22/10/19 | ESSAY WRITING (Report writing) | English for Today Book 2    | 13/7/18  | SUPPLEMENTARY READING             | English for Today Book 2         |
| 24/9/19  | READING                        |                             | 15/7/18  | ADJECTIVES                        | Wall Chart                       |
| 25/10/19 | SUFFIXES                       | English for Today Book 2    | 16/7/18  | ABSTRACT NOUNS                    | Past Exam Paper                  |
| 27/10/19 | SUBJECT+VERBAL AGREEMENT       | English for Today           | 17/7/18  | COMPREHENSION                     | English for Today                |
| 28/10/19 | ABSTRACT NOUNS                 | Common errors in English    | 18/7/18  | EXPRESSING INTENSITY              | Past Exam Paper                  |
| 29/10/19 | COMPREHENSION                  | English for Today           | 18/7/18  | COMPARATIVES                      | Past Exam Paper                  |
| 30/10/19 | USING "TOO" AND "TO"           | Common errors in English    | 19/7/18  | SUPPLEMENTARY READING             | Class set book                   |
| 1/11/19  | COMPARISONS 'MORE THAN'        | English for Today Book 2    | 21/7/18  | SUPERLATIVES ---- est             | Newsday Newspaper                |
| 3/11/19  | COMPREHENSION                  | English for Zimbabwe Book 2 | 22/7/18  | COMPOSITION (Argumentative essay) | English for Today Book 2         |
| 4/11/19  | SUMMARY                        | English for Today           | 24/11/18 | COMPREHENSION                     | Class set book                   |
| 5/11/19  | ADJECTIVES BAD, WORSE, WORST   | Common errors in English    | 25/7/18  | VOCABULARY                        | English for Today                |

|          |                                   |                          |         |                                     |                          |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7/11/19  | READING                           | Library books            | 26/7/18 | SUMMARY                             | Newspaper cuttings       |
| 8/11/19  | CATCHY PHRASES                    | English for Today Book 2 | 27/7/18 | SUPPLEMENTARY READING               | Library books            |
| 9/11/19  | VOCABULARY                        | English for Today Book 2 | 28/7/18 | PUNCTUATION- (COMMA AND SEMI COLON) | Common errors in English |
| 10/11/19 | COMPARISONS USING -er, -ier,-iest | English for Today Book 2 | 29/7/18 | ANAGRAMS                            | English for Today        |
| 11/11/19 | SUMMARY RULES                     | English for Today Book 2 | 30/7/18 | COMPREHENSION                       | English for Today Book 2 |
| 12/11/19 | DEBATING                          | Internet                 | 2/8/18  | DEBATING                            | English for Today Book 2 |
| 13/11/19 | PUNCTUATION- COMMA,SEMI COLON     | English for Today Book 2 | 4/8/18  | SUMMARY                             | GCE Revision             |
| 14/11/19 | ANAGRAMS                          | English For Today Book 2 | 5/8/18  | COMPOSITION                         | GCE Revision             |

A close analysis of the different compartments in the schemes suggests that practitioners believe that effective teaching entails dividing expected linguistic proficiencies into smaller teachable entities. Rodgers et al. (2014) and Chibawu and Saluwu (2020) call this the "Structural approach to language teaching." Apparently, this is the approach that is used in most Zimbabwean syllabuses and textbooks. There is a direct contradiction between the Structural Approach to language teaching and the recommended Communicative Approach to Language teaching (Mart, 2018; Khartib, 2019; Rudolph, 2019). While the Structural Approach to language teaching recommends fragmentation of language skills into understandable units, the Communicative Approach recommends teaching language as a wholesome skill in a bid to

create meaning in a social context. Rudolph (2019), Mart (2018), Khartib (2019) and Rudolph (2019) who subscribe to the Communicative Approach believe that language proficiency is socially constructed and fragmenting it interrupts the purpose of language. There was however, an effort to incorporate both receptive and productive language skills in all lessons observed. Schemes of work acted as conduits for the voices of the two teachers. From the schemes, learners' books and syllabus, I discerned the existing scenarios in the language classrooms as well as the processes teachers adopted in an effort to develop academic writing. Jane's cum schemes are typical of Kumaravadivelu's (2001) views that successful ESL teachers should be able to identify writing challenges, teach around these challenges, assess the outcomes and find lasting solutions.

Table 5.1 indicates the extent to which both Jane and Maggie depend on the textbook as the major source of teaching content. The key text book constitutes 80% of Jane's teaching resources and 65.9% of Maggie's. Jane seems to believe that teaching content is best derived from the textbooks yet electronic media, newspapers and other artefacts could have been employed to add variety to teaching content.

Document analysis helped me to assess learner writing proficiency levels in great depth. I got acquainted with practice exercises that teachers administer to their classes in an endeavour to develop English academic writing proficiency. Documents enabled me to contextualise teachers' reasons for the selection of particular teaching strategies. For instance, Maggie reasoned that the inclusion of numerous grammar lessons targets the correction of problems in academic writing faced by learners. On the other hand, Jane feels that exposing learners to a variety of reading materials naturally corrects grammatical inadequacies.

### **5.3.2 Learners' books**

An analysis of learners' essay books reveals that academic writing performance is dependent on a number of variables. The type of academic writing assignment, for example, descriptive, narrative, argumentative, exposition or criticism determined the final mark.

Jane appended constructive comments at the end of each essay. In a follow-up interview, Jane explained:



*'Intensive marking discourages learners. Seeing their book all red creates a negative attitude towards the subject.'*

Benito (2015) argues that thorough marking improves learner performance in a more significant way than less intensive marking and general remarks. However, debate is still raging on the impact of intensive marking; Lee (2019) argues that intensive grading discourages secondary school learners.

Maggie uses the intensive marking method of grading which indicates errors with symbols and abbreviations. Her essays are marked for content, organisation, relevance of content, coherence and fluency. Like Jane, she writes a sentence or two at the end of the essay. The key challenges learners exhibited were as follows a) poor selection of diction; b) weak expression; and e) very little use of emotive verbs.

It was imperative that I analyse documents to understand the context in which research participants operated. The documents gave a historical background of past events and highlighted factors impinging on phenomena. I noticed that teachers met basic Ministry of Education requirements of administering an essay fortnightly with topics ranging from descriptive essays, narratives to guided compositions. At Hilbright School, one argumentative essay had been assigned. Through an analysis of learners' exercise books I realized that learners performed better in narrative essays where ideas are drawn from films, personal experiences and televisions. Further probing revealed that teachers and learners preferred narrative and descriptive to argumentative essays. These were regarded as less demanding since marking is based on individual learner's creativity rather than how factually convincing the essay sounds. It became evident from the marks analysis that learners' performance varied depending on their familiarity with the topic, and effectiveness of instruction received.

High Achievers school struck a balance by administering all types of essays. An interview with the Maggie revealed that learners ought to be trained to think deeply, tease apart concepts and expose deep insights. However, in spite of preferences on topics assigned, the learners manifested the same range of errors depending on individual learners' proficiency levels. In one composition writing session, Maggie used the direct method whereby the class devised a common plan, then the teacher asked for suggestions on best ways of creating suspense, developing adorable and despicable characters and how to paint a tense or a relaxed

atmosphere. Using these techniques made the writing process simpler. The same thoroughness is not apparent in Jane's lessons, hence, her learners' books manifested gross errors which was a cause for concern.

I analysed the errors by creating a table which categorised frequent errors made by 15 learners in an essay. Learners' essays revealed an array of grammatical aberrations which weakened learners' academic writing in a significant way. Most errors emanated from partial acquisition of the language. Key errors were associated with poor spelling. According to the analysis of learners' exercise books, 35% of learners had problems with spelling while 28% mixed up homophones and parts of speech. Another 23% showed concord errors, that is, subject and verb agreement. Misuse of prepositions accounted for 12% of the errors. In some cases learners either wrongly split or wrongly fused a word. 5% of the errors were a result of learners either using wrong tenses or shifting tenses. 2% of the essays were poorly paragraphed. Paragraphs were either underdeveloped or too long. In some cases topic sentences were poorly composed. Finally, I noted that ambiguity comprised 8% of the errors. There is great need for teachers of ESL to pay particular attention to these errors so that learners can be directed to best ways of avoiding them.

An analysis of learners' written work revealed that most errors lay in poor subject verbal agreement and tense shifting. An examples of incorrect tense construction is: "I did not brought the book to school today" from Hilbright school. The learner wrongly combines 'did' and the past indefinite tense form. Although other students presented a similar error, only two of the lessons taught during the eight weeks of observation directly addressed this critical issue. On 30/10/19 one student from High Achiever school was absent. When the teacher enquired about his whereabouts from the class, a learner said, "He attends school here but her mother works in town." The teacher immediately corrected the error and addressed it in her second lesson during my visit to her school. The second most frequently occurring error was direct translation from mother tongue.

Comments appended at the end of each essay were targeted at creating an analytical dialogue between the learner and the teacher. An example of a comment was: "Use more emotive descriptions." Peer comments were written in pencil. These were targeted at helping fellow learners to improve their work. The marking exercise, which targeted the writer, made learners evaluators of their peers' performance and indirectly benefited the marker. Learners were given

a chance to self-correct after the initial feedback. Double ticks were employed to highlight proficient language use.

According to Rooke (2012), writing proficiency is an invaluable stepping stone to the development of other thinking skills and acquisition of academic knowledge across all academic disciplines, English included. The ability to write is believed to boost learners' ability to link ideas and critique knowledge. Both teachers' remarks in written assignments helped learners to overcome their anxieties and develop positive attitudes towards academic writing. A number of trends were observed during the analysis of exercise books. I noted Jane and Maggie's efforts towards instilling academic writing skills in the learners by teaching spelling and punctuation and building coherent sentence structures. One common observation was that learners experienced difficulty with grammatical elements such as conjunctions, subject-verb agreement, mother tongue interference, punctuation, lack of coherence and lack of creativity. Of the eight written exercises administered in School A, four were vocabulary-related. Jane's view concurred with Bokan-smith (2016) that a word can only be declared fully mastered if learners have a grammatical understanding of diction, semantic associations and ability to use the word in new contexts. Maggie had a similar thrust but emphasis was more on learning context-embedded vocabulary. With regard to the reduction of the frequency of learners' written vocabulary errors, school A placed little emphasis on these levels of proficiency. Maggie's vocabulary assignments exhibited attempts at boosting learners' understanding of diction through exhaustive practice. An example is the vocabulary exercise based on newspaper cuttings assigned on 23/0/18. The learners stuck the cuttings in their books and Maggie assigned a vocabulary exercise lesson based on the cuttings. The practice was not only informative but effectively contextualised the new diction. Jane realised the assertion by Natro (1990) and Host (1998) that learners incidentally acquire a wide range of vocabulary between the ages 12-17. Bokan-smith (2016) calls the age at which learners acquire optimum depth of vocabulary, the Critical Age Hypothesis. For this reason, Maggie made reading newspapers an indispensable source of new vocabulary items for her classes. This view fits in well with Krashen and Bland (2014) who posits that explicit instruction plays a minor role in vocabulary development. The exposure to an array of vocabulary facilitates eloquent dialogue between the teacher and learners during lesson proceedings.

### 5.3.3 Record of marks for Jane's class

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 shows the record of marks of the classes of both ESL teachers who participated in this study respectively.

**Table 5.2 Mark record for Jane' class**

Record of marks for Jane's class

|                      |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |        |
|----------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Composition          | 19/30  | 18/30   | 20/30   | 21/30   | 17/30   | 20/30   | 22/30   | 21/30  | 18/30  | 20/30  |
| Comprehension        | 9/10   | 5/10    | 9/10    | 6/10    | 9/10    | 8/10    | 7/10    | 9/10   | 8/10   | 8/10   |
| Grammar              | 7/10   | 7/10    | 9/10    | 8/10    | 10/10   | 9/10    | 10/10   | 9/10   | 8/10   | 10/10  |
| Summary              | 15/20  | 14/20   | 22/30   | 21/30   | 13/20   | 14/20   | 16/20   | 16/20  | 14/20  | 17/20  |
| Student No.          | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8      | 9      | 10     |
| Date of written work | 9/7/18 | 22/7/18 | 23/7/18 | 26/7/18 | 27/7/18 | 29/7/18 | 30/7/18 | 1/7/18 | 3/8/18 | 4/8/18 |

Jane's mark record book revealed 55% of the learners scoring 9/10 or 10/10 in grammar exercises but 5/10 or less in comprehension exercises. 40% of the learners scored high marks in both grammar and composition work while 5% was in the slightly below average category. Jane's mark record book showed 40% of the learners scoring between 9/10-10/10 in grammar, 60% scored an average of 7/10 to 5/10. Learners scored fewer marks in composition and comprehension. This could be because the latter skills require higher order thinking and academic writing skills. While the marks are pass marks, they range more in the 'B' grade category. Generally, learners' summary writing skills also need refinement. Keeping a comprehensive record of marks is advantageous to Jane in that she can identify areas to focus on in her teaching.

**Table 5.3 Mark record for Maggie’s class**

Record of marks for Maggie's class Record of marks for Maggie's class

|                         |         |         |          |         |         |         |          |          |          |          |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Composition             | 19/30   | 18/30   | 21/30    | 19/30   | 20/30   | 18/30   | 20/30    | 19/30    | 18/30    | 21/30    |
| Comprehen<br>Sion       | 8/10    | 7/10    | 9/10     | 10/10   | 9/10    | 8/10    | 9/10     | 9/10     | 8/10     | 9/10     |
| Grammar                 | 9/10    | 9/10    | 9/10     | 8/10    | 10/10   | 10/10   | 9/10     | 10/10    | 10/10    | 9/10     |
| Summary                 | 15/20   | 12/30   | 16/20    | 14/20   | 15/20   | 14/20   | 13/20    | 16/20    | 17/20    | 16/20    |
| Student No.             | 1       | 2       | 3        | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7        | 8        | 9        | 10       |
| Date of<br>written work | 2/10/18 | 4/10/18 | 15/10/18 | 6/11/18 | 7/11/18 | 9/11/18 | 16/11/18 | 18/11/18 | 20/11/18 | 25/11/18 |

The above results demonstrate that Maggie’s class marks are skewed more to the Cambridge exam 'A' grade while Jane's class is more skewed towards the Cambridge 'B' grade. Maggie’s class had an average performance of 8/10 to 10/10 in comprehension. Again, this shows learners from both schools have an acumen to write proficiently in both grammar and comprehension but find composition writing a challenge.

#### **5.4 FINDINGS FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

In this section findings are presented according to the different phases of data collection using different research instruments.

##### **5.4.1 Lesson observations at Hilbright school**

Lesson observations were conducted for a period of eight weeks at both schools. Following are the notable observations during lesson progression. Initially, Jane was a bit nervous about being observed teaching writing, but as time passed we warmed to each other. We had several discussions about teaching academic writing skills. Jane demonstrated commitment to teaching

writing. She took great care planning her writing lessons. Jane pointed out that teaching academic writing skills is “an intricate process which embraces grammar, comprehension, semantics, phonics, supplementary reading, oral skills, vocabulary acquisition and spelling. Catering for all these skills is indeed a mammoth task for the second language teacher." In the first week of lesson observation, learners participated in a discussion of their writing challenges, strengths and how they expected the teacher to help them become avid writers (5.5.1.1). Although her first language is Shona, Jane’s teaching expertise stands out. Jane conducted lively writing lessons. Her planned activities manifested thoroughness of preparation and astute innovation. Jane's teaching approach confirms the assertion by Fey and Strand (2006) that, with proper guidance, bilinguals are capable of attaining high levels of fluency in a second language. Effective teaching approaches result in learners acquiring the necessary language proficiency skills requisite for academic success. Jane expressed a determination to ensure that by the time her learners write Ordinary Level examinations, they should have acquired requisite language skills relevant for exceptional academic performance.

**DAY 1 AND 2 OF LESSON OBSERVATION 30/9/19 and 1/10/2019**  
**TOPIC ‘I WISHED THE EARTH WOULD OPEN UP AND SWALLOW ME’**

**DURATION 30 MINUTES: 08.00-8.30 and 09.30-10.30am**

**Lesson Presented is in the following picture:**

| WEEK ENDING | WORK PLANNED                                 | OBJECTIVES  | SOURCE OF MATERIAL                  | AIDS                                 | TR-PUPIL ACTIVITIES  | GE |
|-------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----|
|             |  | By the end of the lesson pupils should be able to:  |                                     |                                      |  |    |
| -10-19      | Comprehension<br>The ghost of tinkers' shade | -answer questions correctly<br>-infer meanings of words<br>-discuss authenticity of ghosts<br>-respond to set questions | Step Ahead English book 2 pp. 34-37 | -pictures in the book                | -The teacher asks about types of ghosts and their authenticity<br>--silent reading of the story<br>-Class discussion on the story line through use of wh-questions.<br>-pupils write an exercise |    |
|             | Vocabulary                                   | -infer meanings of words<br>-construct meaning sentences using the vocabulary words                                     | English Today book 2 p. 9-11        | -pictures in the book<br>-chalkboard | -recap on word inference<br>-pupils write an exercise<br>-class revision   |    |
|             | Language work<br>Adjectival phrases          | -define an adjectival phrase<br>-identify phrases in the given sentences  | English Today book 2 p. 11-12       | -chalkboard<br>Chart                 | -The tr asks adjectives<br>-class discussion on adjectival phrases<br>-pupils write an exercise<br>-class revision   |    |
|             | Composition<br>A wedding I attended          | -write coherently<br>-explain what happened on the day  | -Teacher's own topic                | -pictures<br>Chalkboard              | -The teacher tells pupils about a wedding she attended<br>-class discussion on the topic<br>-recap on composition writing<br>-pupils write the essay as home work                                |    |
|             | Mr Gidharee's                                |   | -English Today book 2 p. 12-14      | -pictures<br>-chalkboard             |  |    |

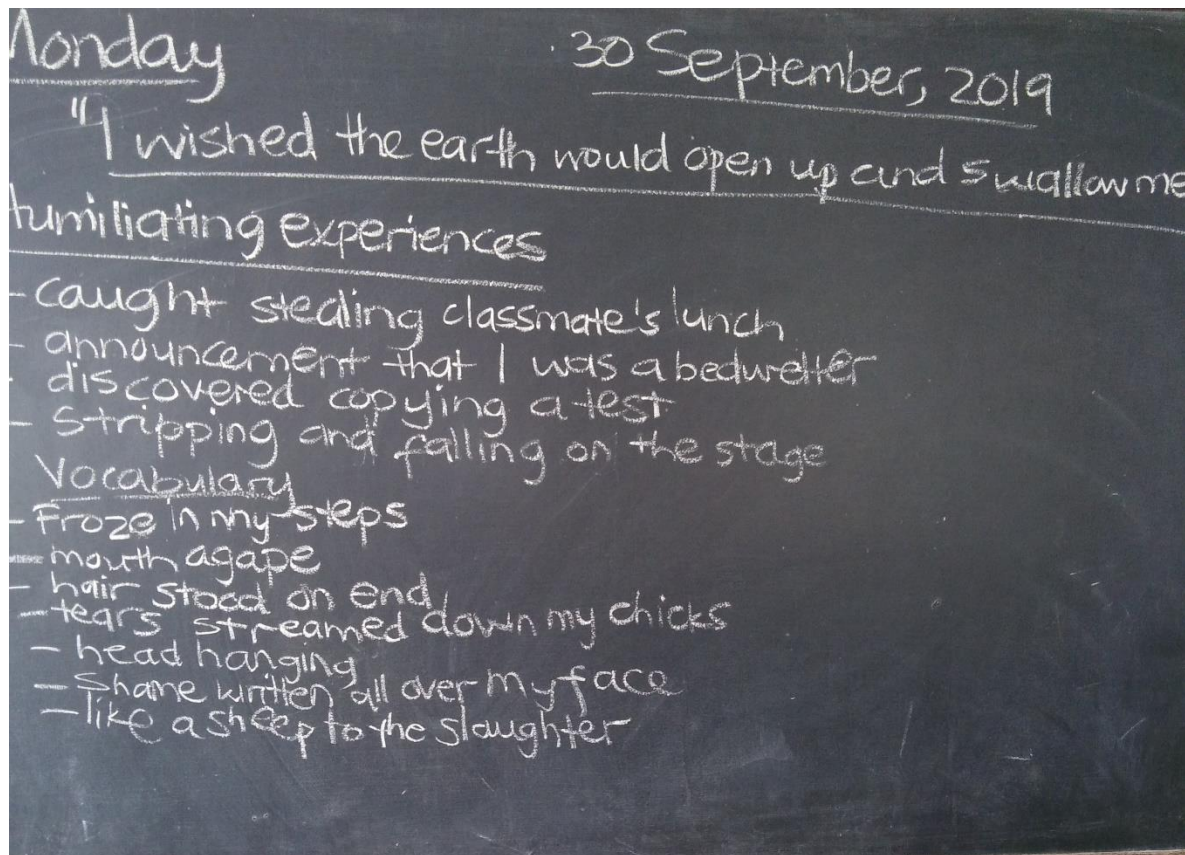
During the first two days of lesson observation at Hilbright school, Teacher Jane presented her lessons on composition writing. The topic for her lesson was entitled: "I wished the earth would open up and swallow me." This was the first day of the lesson and it was 8am; we arrived in class on time and upon our arrival the learners stood to greet us. Jane introduced me to the learners and explained that I would be visiting for four weeks. She told them not to mind me, I explained to the class the reasons for my visit whereafter Jane asked them to sit down.

After these introductory remarks, Jane started the lesson by writing the topic on the board. She requested learners to mention incidents which made them to wish that the earth would open up and swallow them. The class identified several embarrassing situations that would create this feeling. The class was divided into groups to brainstorm relevant details of these humiliating moments. Ideas raised were as follows:

- 1) Being caught stealing a classmate's lunch
- 2) One's stepmother coming to school to announce that one had stolen pocket money
- 3) Being found sniffing glue at the school grounds.
- 4) Stealing a classmate's lunch

Thereafter, the teacher asked groups of five learners to write possible topic sentences for each paragraph and give feedback to the class. Individuals were tasked to write the essay. This was a typical writing lesson which evoked learners' thinking and writing abilities. The teacher adequately stimulated discussion and creativity through probing for relevant ideas. In this lesson, the teacher encouraged learners to conduct research in order to find additional information related to the topic as part of their homework. The lesson stages engaged all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing skills which are prerequisites for the development of writing proficiency. Read (2010) suggests that incorporating the four language skills is an effective way of developing academic language proficiency skills. Jane encouraged cooperative writing which Baradaran and Sarfarazi (2011) recommend for writing error reduction.

On day two, the class shared insights gained from parental assistance as well as the phrases for use in the writing the essay. Thereafter, the teacher led a discussion of potential vocabulary that learners could employ while writing the essay.



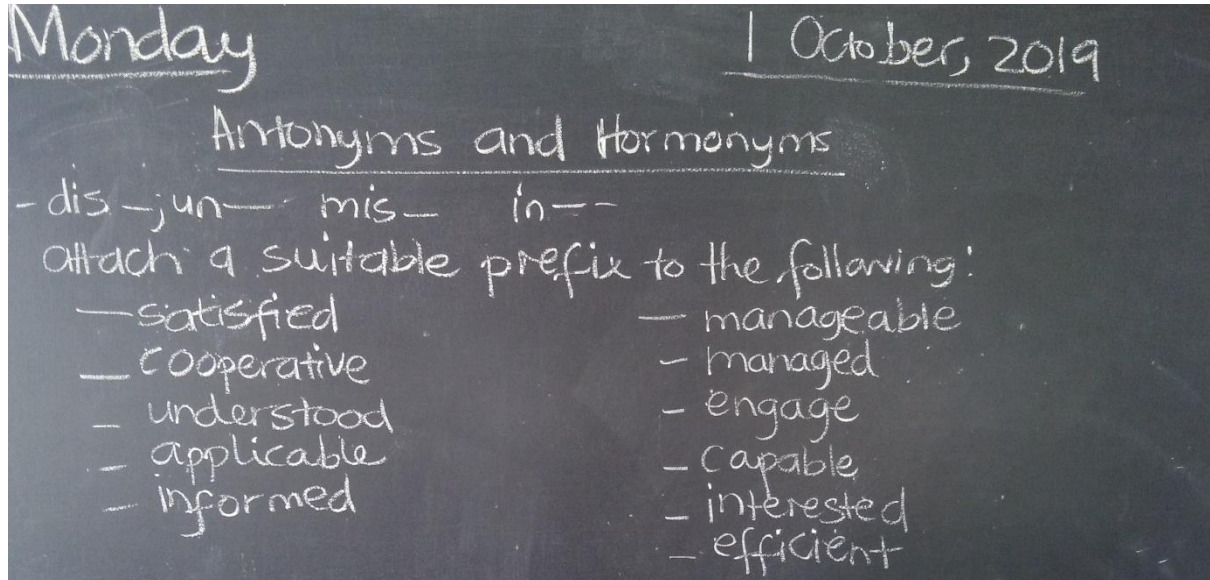
The vocabulary list above was written on the board for reference. The class elaborated and acted out some word meanings. Ten pairs were tasked to practise constructing sentences using the isolated vocabulary. Four groups of five to six members were encouraged to write conclusions which were read to the class and commented on. Tim's group crafted the following conclusions, "Like a sheep to the slaughter, I trudged to my seat, head hanging, desperately wishing the earth would open up and swallow me." This conclusion was quite apt for a Form Two level of proficiency. Thereafter, individual essay writing ensued. I observed that Jane was able to create an authentic learning space where learners were eager to participate. Second language researchers (Krashen, 2014; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008) emphasise the need to create an appropriate classroom environment in which learners are free to participate. An appropriate environment facilitated the development of proficiency among the learners.



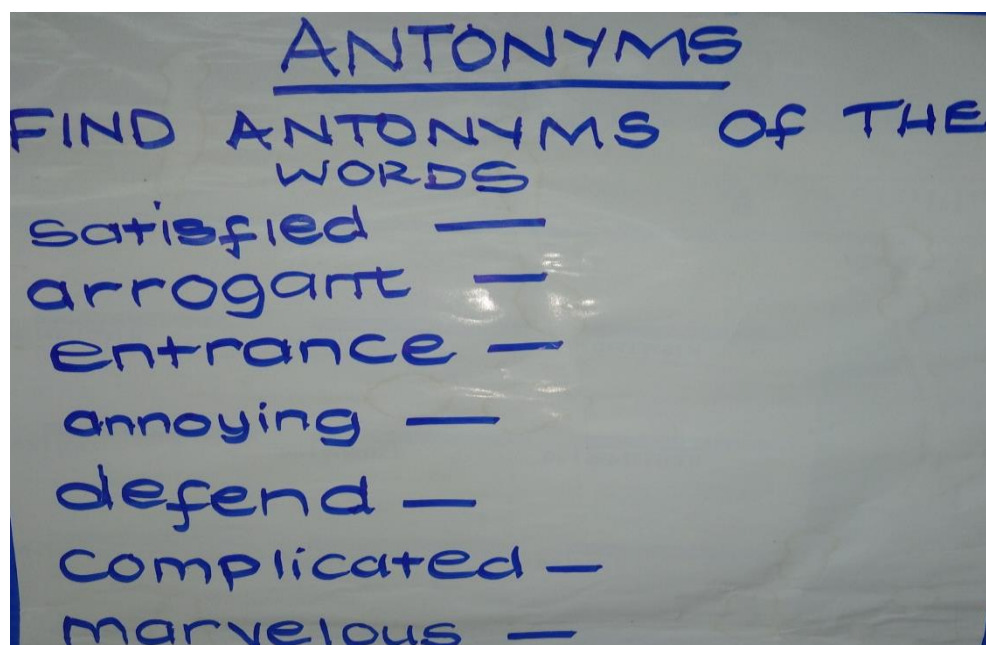
**Day 3: Duration 30 minutes**

**Date: 7/10/19**

**Topic: Language Structures "Antonyms, using prefixes dis-, un-, in, mis-, mal-"  
English Today Book 2 p. 73**



Jane began the lesson by emphasising the need for wide reading to broaden one's vocabulary repertoire. She then explained that one of the principles of English is to avoid using two words where one can do, for instance, 'This textbook is sub-standard.' instead of 'This textbook is not up to standard.' In groups, learners gave more examples of statements that could be shortened by using an opposite. The teacher displayed the following chart with more working examples of words that do not necessarily take a prefix to formulate antonyms for pair drills.



Feedback from pairs was accurate in most cases except for George's pair, which missed the opposite of "complicated." Corrective feedback was given for the benefit of the entire class. The class completed the written exercise on antonyms on p. 73.

An admirable trait in Jane is her desire to maintain qualitative standards in her work by assigning two language exercises per week. The fact that Jane follows a unit to unit style is indicative of the Linear Approach to teaching. It is doubtful if the sequential, unit-by-unit approach will adequately meet individual learner's needs since some might take longer to master concepts. Jane seems to view the quantity of work as a measure of one's commitment to one's job. Her target is to beat the Ministry requirement of administering two language exercises weekly. There is danger in Jane's approach to teaching in that as teachers struggle to cover quantitative work volumes, quality might be compromised. Jane's belief in using the textbook as a key source of teaching content was confirmed in the observation schedules, where I noticed that her main source of material was the key textbook, *English for Today Book 2*. Jane tends to teach textbook content that she finds readily prepared and easy to administer. Jane criticises teachers whose work falls below expectation when she describes them as "...doing their work haphazardly." According to Gora (2017), the syllabus should act as a guideline as to what to teach and how to teach it. On being probed why she preferred the textbook to the syllabus, Jane said, "The textbook offers detailed guidelines on how to teach ESL content on a week by week basis unlike the syllabus, which simply itemised topics without suggestions as to how to teach them." While this is plausible, Jane should ensure that she prepares learners to cope with high flexibility with language expected by the Cambridge examinations.

**Day 4: 14/10/19**

**Topic: Summary Writing Past Examination Paper**

**Duration: 30 minutes**

|        |   |   |   |  |   |
|--------|---|---|---|--|---|
|        | <p>Composition<br/>The Day I Really Felt Embarrassed</p> <p>Library</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- express themselves meaningfully</li> <li>- write the topic in coherence</li> <li>- use good vocabulary to express ideas</li> <li>- read novels, newspapers and magazines</li> <li>- answer questions orally</li> </ul>             | <p>Tr's own file</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Son of the Soil</li> <li>- Oliver Twist</li> <li>- newspapers</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- picture of a lady falling down</li> <li>- pictures in the book</li> <li>- chalkboard</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tr tells pupils a short story related to the topic</li> <li>- class discussion on the topic</li> <li>- recap on the structure of a composition</li> <li>- pupils write the composition</li> <li>- Tr distributes reading materials to pupils</li> <li>- Tr supervises pupils reading books</li> <li>- three or four pupils tell others what they would have read</li> <li>- Tr concludes the lesson by asking oral questions</li> </ul>                        |
| WEEK 3 | <p>Summary writing "I can't wait for long."</p>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- define a summary</li> <li>- narrate the recent comprehension passage precisely</li> <li>- write notes on summary writing</li> <li>- identify summary points</li> <li>- write a summary</li> <li>- spell words correctly</li> </ul> | <p>English Today Bk 3 pg 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- English Revisited pg 114</li> <li>- Step Ahead Bk 3 pg 40</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- chalkboard</li> <li>- chart</li> <li>- chalkboard</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tr asks a provoking question</li> <li>- class discussion on summary writing</li> <li>- writing notes on summary writing</li> <li>- silent reading of the passage</li> <li>- in pairs pupils identify summary points</li> <li>- class discussion on the points</li> <li>- pupils write the summary</li> <li>- Tr writes a sentence with wrong spelling</li> <li>- class discussion on writing wrong spellings</li> <li>- Tr dictates words to pupils</li> </ul> |

The summary writing lesson started with a recap of the previous comprehension passage: "I can't wait for long", *English Today* p. 36. Below, is a picture of the comprehension passage taught:



ked thought  
 d explained  
 ncluded added

## E. Reading comprehension 2

### "I can't wait for long" (2)

direct speech

king they use direct  
 are reporting what  
 e you use indirect or  
 mber of things have  
 ng this.

and closing inverted

5

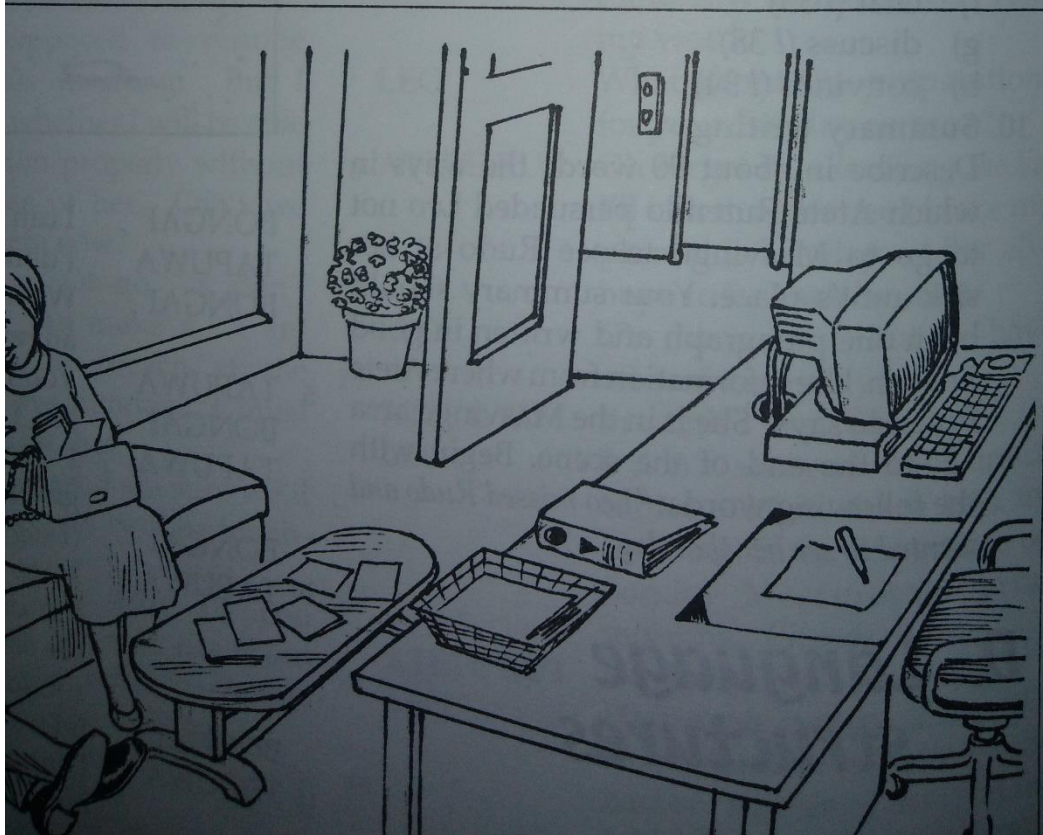
e of the doing word)

ATETE REV

*(Impatiently)* I am getting tired  
 of sitting here doing nothing.  
 I could have done a lot in the  
 last forty-five minutes or hour  
 that I have been sitting here.

TOGARA

*(Flipping the pages of the  
 newspaper)* I am sure the



|    |           |   |    |           |   |
|----|-----------|---|----|-----------|---|
| 10 | ATETE REV | lawyer will soon be here. We have waited for long enough. This is why I insisted that you phone him for an appointment. Modern lawyers are highly organized. You just can't bump into them like this.   | 60 | LEO       | <i>hand slowly and examines it. He sweats. Removes handkerchief from his pocket to dry the sweat</i> Mmm.. (Slowly). Where is the parcel from?  |
| 15 | TOGARA    | (Referring to desk calendar) Look, his calendar is full of engagements. He cannot afford to be away any longer.   | 65 | TOGARA    | There is a card inside. (Taking parcel) Let me show you. The parcel is from somebody who abbreviates his name as L.J. Complicated? Isn't it?  |
| 20 | ATETE REV | I hope I'll be able to finish my business here in town before mid-day.  | 70 | LEO       | (Tapping desk) Any idea who this L.J. could be?   |
|    | LEO       | (Enters right, dressed in a suit, with a brief-case) Welcome.   |    | TOGARA    | Not at all.   |
| 25 |           | (Going towards the two) Sorry, I'm late.  | 75 | LEO       | Where he stays?   |
|    | ATETE RUV | We should have phoned for an appointment. (The two standing up)   |    | ATETE REV | (Interrupting) In fact, L.J. is not the only person who is in regular contact with this woman. She has got a worldful of men. Look.   |
| 30 | LEO       | Never mind.   | 80 |           | (Removes many cards from her handbag, opens one after another).   |
|    | TOGARA    | (Shaking hands with Leo) Chamunorwa is my name.   |    |           | This one is from a man called Leo. (Throws card on the table. Another one, this one Leo again (Throws on the table) Another card from Leé, another from Jimmy (Another card) From Lee. Another card from Jimmy. (In the meantime Leo is wiping sweat from his face and is looking confused) |
|    | LEO       | How do you do?  | 85 |           | L.J. (Another card) James (Another card). Leo (Throws remaining cards on the table) Mr Lawyer, how do you take that? (Making gestures with fingers). One woman - five men - imagine! And my brother here is said to be the husband.   |
| 35 | TOGARA    | This is my sister.  | 90 |           |   |
|    | LEO       | (Shaking hands with Atete Revayi) How do you do? (The two sat down while Leo-James took his seat behind the desk. As he puts his desk in order, he pushes the nameplate in such a way that it faces the audience but away from the two clients) | 95 |           |   |
| 40 | TOGARA    | I can see your calendar is full of engagements.   |    |           |   |
| 45 | LEO       | Many people's problems to solve.  |    |           |   |
|    | ATETE REV | Ours is a big one. A very big one.  |    |           |   |
|    | LEO       | I hope I will be of help.   |    |           |   |
| 50 | ATETE REV | The wife. His wife Rudo, (Pointing at Togara) is horrible. She is a horrible woman.   |    |           |   |
|    | LEO       | Yes?  |    |           |   |
| 55 | TOGARA    | You see. I discovered this parcel in my house (Puts parcel on the table. Leo recognizes the parcel. He is shocked but tries to suppress that. He moves his  |    |           |   |

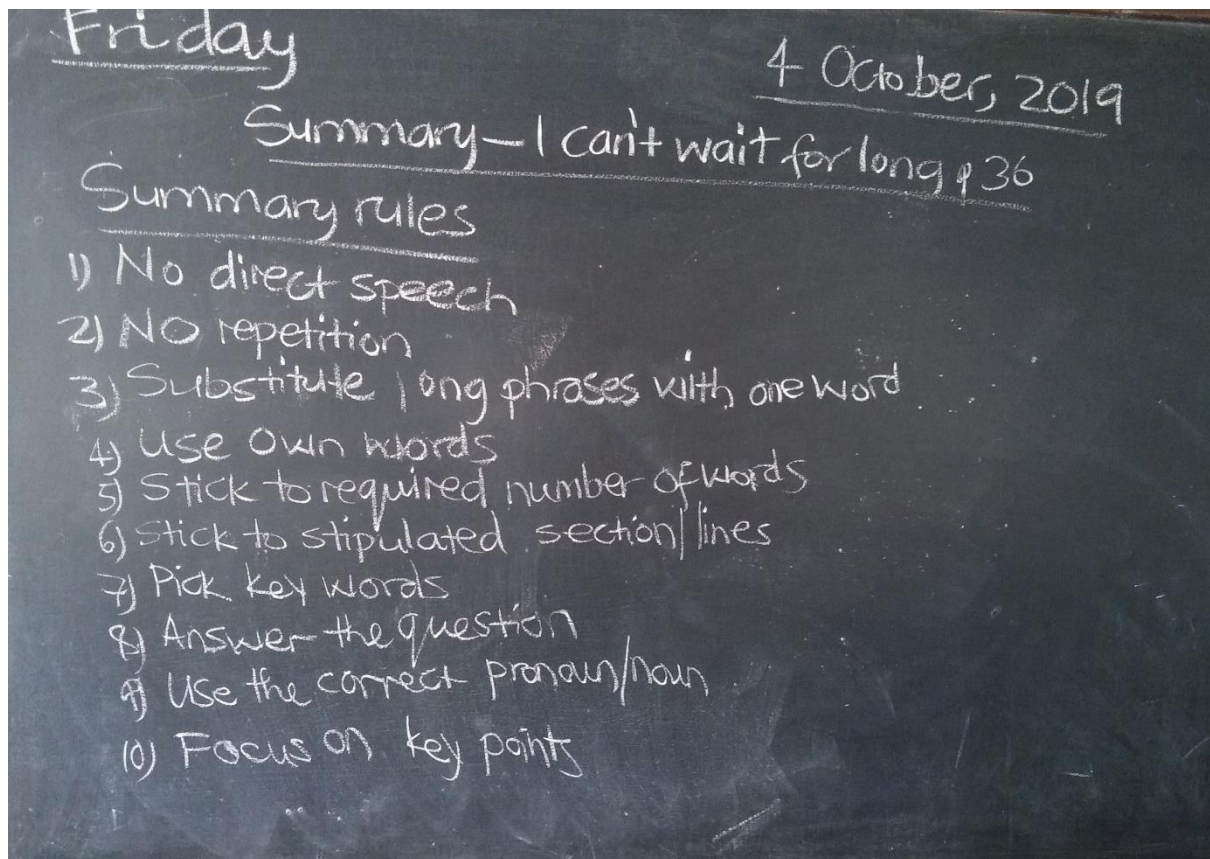
37

### Questions

1. Where does the scene take place?
2. Who is in Leo's office when the scene begins?
3. Why is Atete Revayi impatient at the beginning of the scene?
4. What was Togara doing to entertain himself while waiting?

After reading the passage, the teacher asked three students to summarise the story in six sentences. Learners took turns to add more salient details that their peers had overlooked. The teacher used the occurrence to introduce summary skills. The following summary rules we discussed:





Her emphasis was that summary skills are rigorous and relevant for examinations and at tertiary level. With the learners' help, the teacher outlined principles of summarising which included: no repetition of ideas, strict selection of detail relevant to question, no direct speech, sticking to word limit and omission of examples. Jane stressed the need for precision and conveying correct meaning when tackling summary. Each word used should capture the reader's attention. Following these guidelines, Jane distributed the past paper for a second reading. The summary question was put up on the board and the class identified the section which addressed it. Key words were discussed as well as their relevance to the question. In their groups, learners listed 15 relevant points which were analysed during the class discussion. According to Graham and Gillespie (2011), group work is an interactional pattern which not only forces learners to pay attention but teaches them to work collaboratively. Thereafter, potential connective words were listed by the whole class and individuals wrote the summary. The teacher encouraged learners to plan, draft and edit their summaries to minimise error occurrence.

I found this to be a typical summary lesson in which learners practised all four ESL proficiency skills. They read the passage, listened to feedback from their colleagues, discussed key points and finally wrote the summary. Group work allowed diversification and peer correction and created room for a broader perspective of thinking. Jane demonstrated that she is fully aware

of the existence of a complementary relationship between the four macro skills. Exhaustive preparation for writing is essential because it minimises chances for making errors. Thorough discussion of the passage demystified the general belief by students that summary is one of the most difficult genres of all writing (Gillespie & Graham, 2011: 15).

**Day 5:**

**Topic: Mood graphs English Today, p.30**

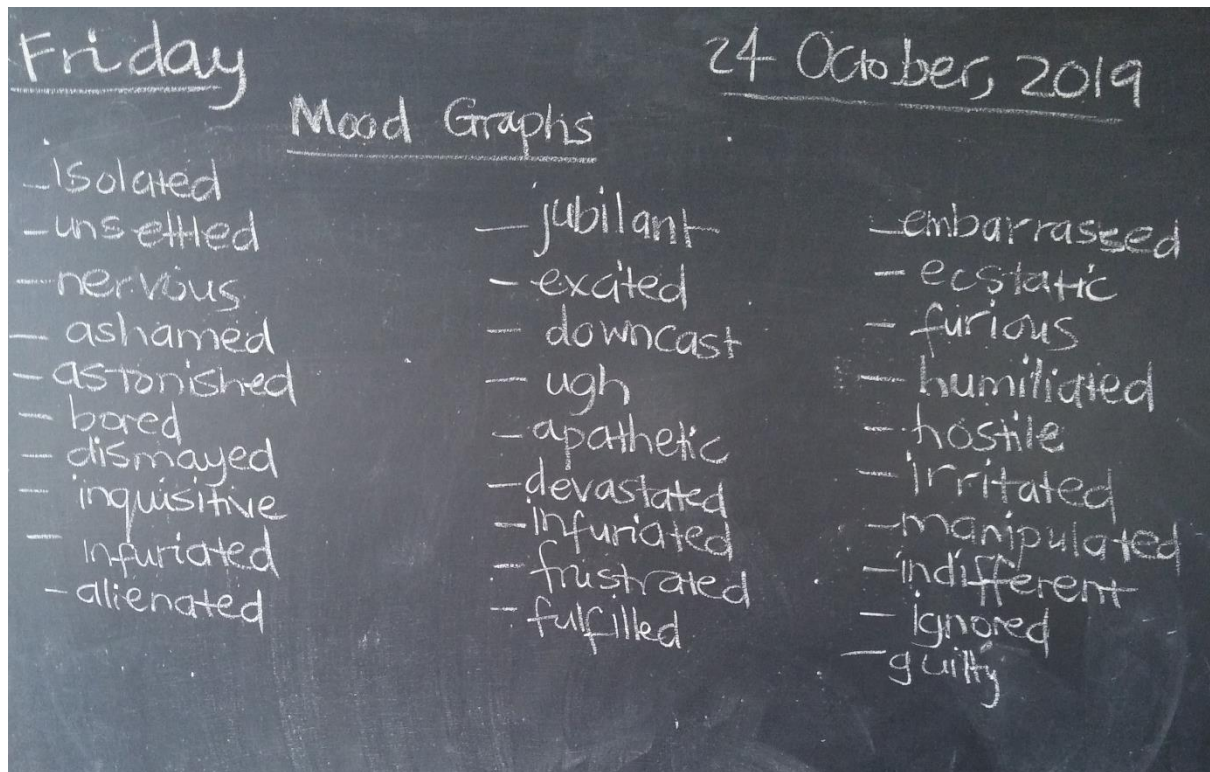
**Duration: 30 minutes 09:30-10:30**

**Date: 24/10/19**

|                                      |   |   |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Word formation                       | - form the correct adjective from the given noun  | 1,2,3,4,10a,b, c, d and e<br>- Junior English 2 p. 15 |  | - Teacher supervises pupils writing the test<br>- collection of books for marking  |
| Corrections                          | - identify their mistakes<br>- write the correct answers                                    | - English Today p. 38<br>- Junior English 3 p. 15     | - boys and girls<br>- chalkboard       | - reading of the passage<br>- class discussion on the passage<br>- answering of questions<br>- pupils write corrections  |
| Registers (Mood graphs)              | - define the term register<br>- identify/read factors that determine choice of register     | Practice Book pg4-5                                   | - boys and girls<br>- stones           | - Teacher steps her foot on one of the pupils<br>- Tr asks pupils how they would react to that<br>- class discussion on the factors that determine choice of register<br>- pupils write notes on registers |
| Language work Comparative adjectives | - define an adjective<br>- complete sentences by using the comparatives of given adjectives | English Today p. 17-18<br>- pictures<br>- chalkboard  | - pictures in the book<br>- chalkboard | - Tr asks pupils to define an adjective<br>- class discussion on comparative adjectives<br>- pupils write an exercise<br>- class revision  |

The teacher started the lesson by reading a story, "I can't wait for long", describing

different moods. The class identified the adjectives and categorised them. Below are adjectives describing mood:



Learners were encouraged to classify the above moods under positive and negative moods. Jane encouraged learners to write better by introducing the moods graphs into their story lines. The class was grouped into five members per group then assigned sentences to attach to a variety of moods. The teacher requested learners in groups to share their lists with the rest of the class. Learners came up with the following lists for the different situations: 1) 'You are sitting at home alone and everyone else has gone on a road trip' Describe your mood. The following list was common in all groups:



- isolated
- abandoned
- downcast
- stressed
- alienated
- frustrated

2) You are at a wedding celebration. Describe your mood.

- Overwhelmed
- ough
- ecstatic
- eager
- happy
- jubilant
- hilarious

3) You have just fought your young brother.

- aggressive
- downcast
- infuriated
- guilty
- hostile
- enraged
- empty

4) Your mother has beaten you for misbehaving in a public place.

- downcast
- embarrassed
- empty
- humiliated
- dismayed
- frustrated

5) A friend has prepared a surprise party for you.

- Excited
- astonished
- hilarious
- ecstatic
- fulfilled
- happy
- jubilant

After group discussions, the learners wrote an exercise in which they described five case scenarios, matched them to at least five moods from the teacher's list above and submitted their books for marking. While these ideas sound plausible, when tasking learners to write, the teacher placed very little emphasis on the need for peer editing before final submission to the teacher, showing a contradiction between the intended and the actual practice. Learners admitted failing to do the peer editing phase of writing due to pressure from other subject areas.

**Day 6**

**TOPIC : Free writing**

**DURATION: 30 minutes 09:30-10:30**

**DATE: 31 /10/19**

|  |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Composition<br/>Free Writing</p>          | <p>-suggest topic sentences that build up to a story<br/>-<br/>-discuss tips on how to choose essay topics (easy-go, hard rock)<br/>-express imaginary situations related to given topics<br/>-express ideas coherently</p> | <p>1,2,3,4, 5, c, d, f<br/>-English Today book 2 pg21<br/><br/>-Past exam paper 2009</p> | <p>-letter<br/>Sugar cane stalk</p>                | <p>- class discussion on the passage and the teacher highlights learners mistakes<br/>- answering of questions<br/>- pupils write corrections<br/><br/>The tr asks a provoking question<br/>Teacher classifies learners for discussion of selected questions<br/>-Teacher emphasises the need for an "Ahaa!" experience<br/>-class discussion possible topic sentences<br/>-pupils write essays individually</p> |
| <p>Language Work<br/>Prepositional verbs</p> | <p>-define a prepositional verb<br/>-fill in the gap with the correct preposition</p>   | <p>-English Today book 2 p. 12</p>   | <p>-chalkboard</p>                                 | <p>-The teacher asks about verbs and prepositions<br/>-class discussion on prepositional verbs<br/>-pupils write an exercise<br/>-class revision-</p>  |
| <p>Library</p>                               | <p>read novels, newspapers and magazines<br/>-answer questions orally</p>   | <p>-A Son of the Soil<br/>-Oliver Twist<br/>-newspaper</p>                               | <p>-chalkboard<br/>-pictures in the book<br/>-</p> | <p>-The teacher gives out reading material to pupils<br/>-The teacher supervises pupils reading books<br/>-three or four pupils tell others what they would have read</p>  |

This composition writing exercise was based on a past examination paper that the teacher had selected.

# Mock Examination 3

## English Language Paper 1

Time: 1 ½ hrs

Total marks: 40

### Instructions

1. Answer **one** question from Section A and the question in Section B.
2. You are advised to spend about one hour on Section A and about thirty minutes on Section B.
3. Mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation will be penalised.

### Section A: Free composition (25 marks)

1. How I spend the last school holiday.
2. Write a story which includes the following statement:  
EITHER: "That day I wished I had not been born."  
Or "There was a smile on every face around me."
3. Gossiping.
4. A successful project.
5. How far do you agree with the statement that rich people have more worries than poor people?

### Section B: Guided composition (15 marks)

You have had a meeting for all Form Two pupils at your school. Many complaints were raised on how parents make the children do so much work at home that they cannot do homework or study.

Write a report on the points raised to be

You may use some or all of the points below and add some of your own.

- planting, weeding and harvesting in the fields before coming to school
- no time to eat and prepare for school
- milking cows
- fetching water and firewood
- cleaning the house and yard
- cooking and washing dishes
- how much work can school children help with

## English Language Paper II

Time: 1 ½ hrs

Total marks: 40

### Instructions

1. Answer **all** questions.
2. You are advised to spend about one hour on Section A and 30 minutes on Section B.
3. Mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation will be penalised.

### Section A: Comprehension (25 marks)

Read the following passage carefully before you answer any questions. Answer **all** the questions.

#### When evil reigns

Tanaka sat by himself on a flat-topped waist-high tree stump, which stood close to a small, grass thatched pole and clay hut from which he had recently emerged. His face was serious as though he was determined to do something. His mind was occupied with thoughts of wrestling, boxing, hurling,

Jane classified essay topics according to easy-go, hard and rock hard (very difficult) and allowed learners to pick a topic. Learners grouped themselves according to topics selected and brainstormed potential ideas they could include. In the free writing lesson, the teacher employed a sugar cane (artifact) to demonstrate how to write good paragraphs. The node on



the cane symbolised the topic sentence while the stalk typified the developers. There was further emphasis on how to write a good introduction, body and conclusion. The need for coherence was explained categorically. The teacher emphasised the need to have an "Aha experience" (the climax/telling moment) in each narrative essay. According to Jane, offering an array of essay writing topics catered for all learners' mixed writing abilities. The independent, open ended topics, however, proved to be challenging to most learners because many errors surfaced in the final piece of work. This lesson was typical of the linear approach to writing whereby learners were taught how to write the introduction, body and conclusion of a story in a systematic fashion. Jane reminded her class to write simple sentences. Graham and Gillesple (2011) assert that second language learners perform poorly in free writing sessions. A multitude of writing errors surfaced because Form Two ESL learners are novices who are still battling with language acquisition. To address these challenges, Jane used the emerging errors as teaching points for subsequent lessons. When the class corrected errors, a new writing concept was introduced.

**Day 7**

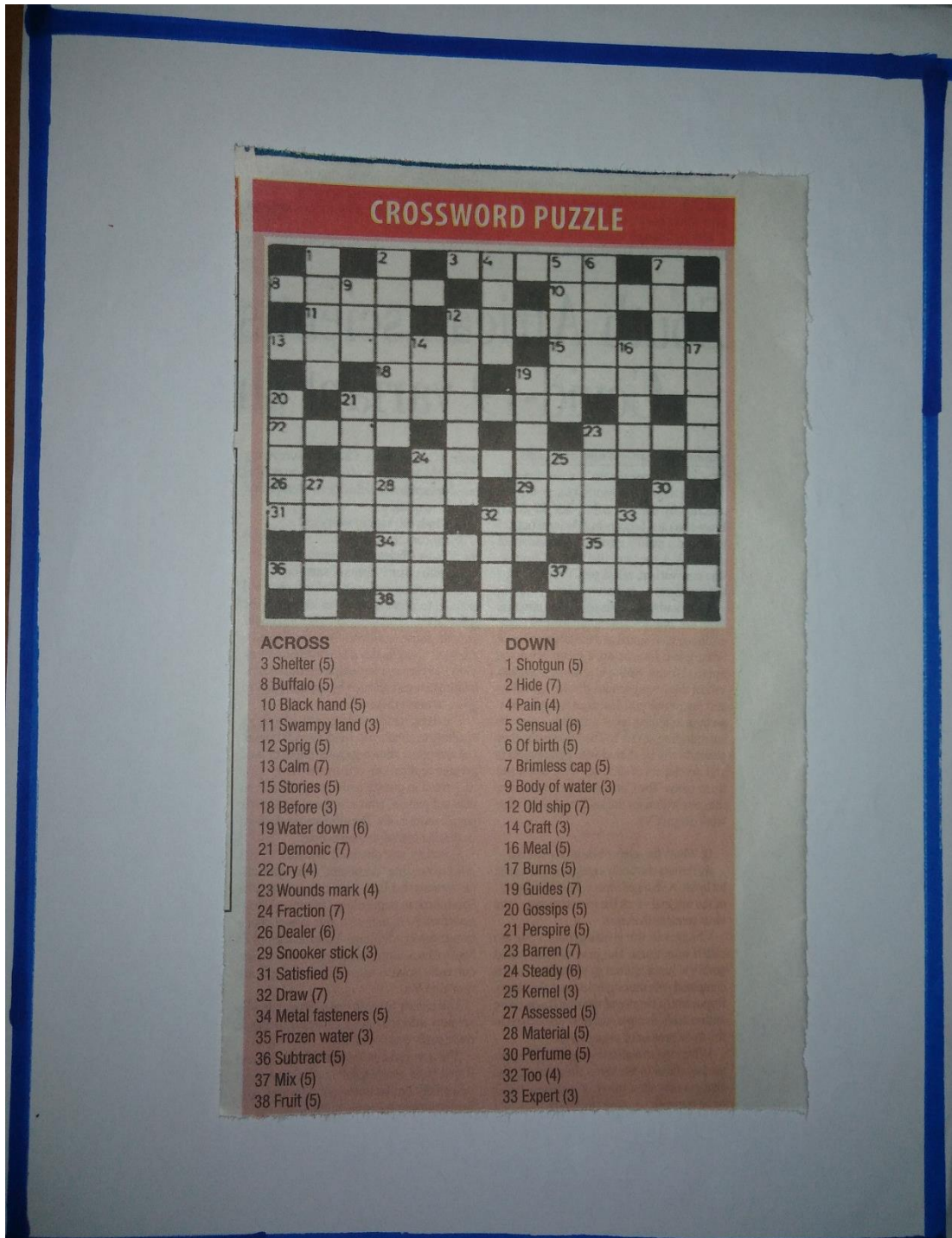
**TOPIC: Vocabulary Development Lesson**

**DURATION: 30 minutes 08:00-08:30**

**DATE: 1/11/19**

|        |  |   |  |                                  |   |
|--------|--|---|--|----------------------------------|---|
|        |  |   |  |                                  | -The teacher concludes the lesson by asking oral questions  |
| WEEK 9 | Language Work<br>Word formation<br>Nouns | -form nouns from verbs<br>-construct meaningful sentences using the formed nouns  | Step Ahead<br>bk 3 pg 12-13                      | Chalkboard                       | The tr asks a provoking question<br>-class discussion on nouns and verbs<br>-learners write an exercise<br>-class revision            |
|        | Vocabulary Development                   | -formulate words from a given puzzle<br>-identify the importance of puzzles in essay writing.<br>-create questions from the clues given | Newspaper cutting                                | Newspaper cutting                | -Teacher explains procedure for working on a puzzle<br>-pairs unravel the words<br>-groups use clue provided to create own questions. |
|        | Library                                  | -critically read novels, newspapers and magazines<br>-answer questions orally   | A Son of the Soil<br>-Oliver Twist<br>-newspaper | -picture series in the book<br>- | -The tr gives out reading material to pupils<br>-The tr supervises pupils reading books   |

On day 7, Jane photocopied a crossword puzzle from the newspaper and asked learners to tackle it.



She realised the close link between a rich vocabulary repertoire and academic writing proficiency. In addition to the puzzle, Jane administered a mini-quiz after the class had been divided into two rival camps as a way of stimulating vocabulary development as recommended by Prof and Hussein (2016). The puzzle and quiz exercises required higher order reasoning skills. Learners would find answers in the subsequent newspaper. It was fascinating to see how learners responded to set questions such as "What's the location of the hanging gardens of Babylon?" Jane had an interesting way of probing slow learners to assist them to arrive at the correct answer. The curiosity to get the correct answer stimulated learners' desire to read the local newspaper and this indirectly aided vocabulary acquisition. Quizzes and puzzles boosted the class' oral and writing confidence. Whenever, Jane observed an information gap during the quiz, she would encourage her class to ask additional questions. Jane's approach took conscience of Gunning's (2013) observation that learners with limited vocabulary repertoire experience challenges with writing especially, in secondary school. Exposing these learning to a variety of vocabulary sources enhances the acquisition process. Learners were challenged to continue practising with other crossword puzzles from different sources as a way of improving not only their spelling but also their reasoning skills.

I think Jane's lesson was successful because she explored all the four macro skills in depth. Learners were given a chance to discuss the puzzle in groups of five people (oral and cooperative skills), Individual learners wrote answers to the second puzzle (written skills), then they took turns to read the quiz questions (listening and reading skills). The teacher encouraged further practice in reading the newspaper as a whole and not just the crossword puzzle section. Learners were encouraged to visit the school library for the same, which promoted continued language practice.

**Day 8: Composition "When they did not agree with her idea, she angrily stormed out."**

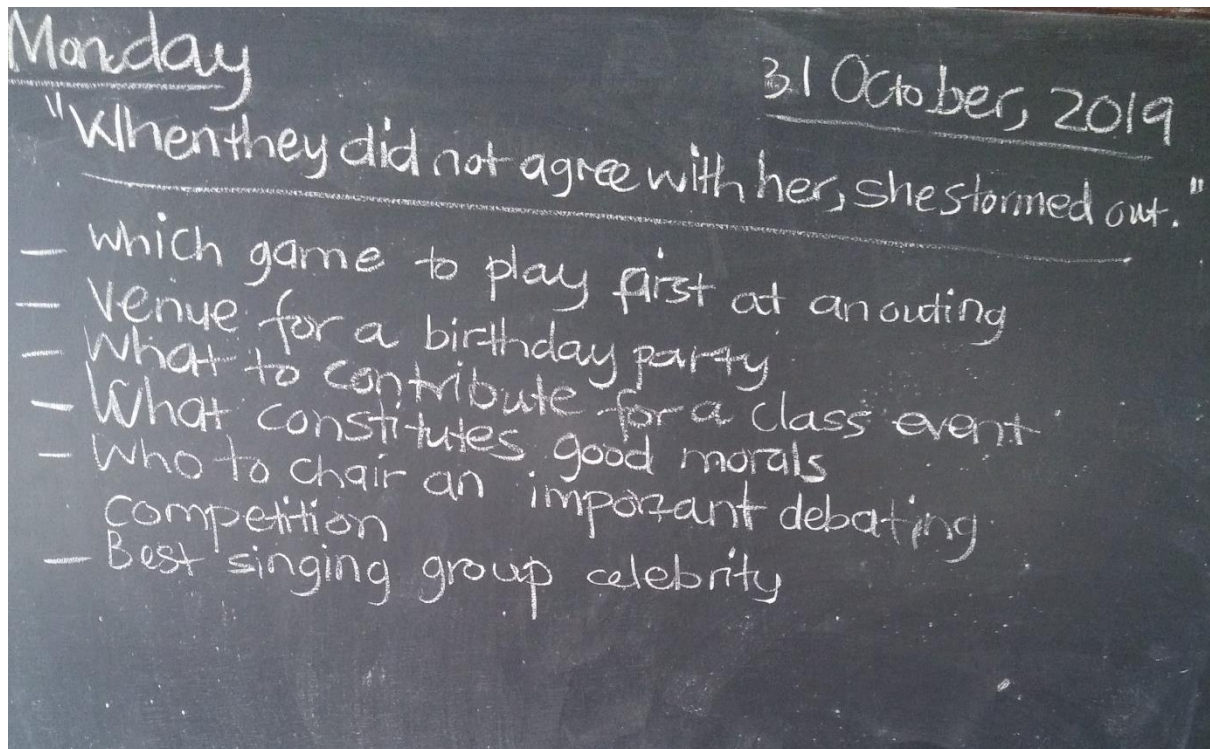
**DURATION: 30 Minutes 08.00-08.30**

**DATE: 16 November 2019**

|                                     |  |  |                         |                                  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
|                                     |  |  |                         |                                  | -three or four pupils tell others what they would have read<br>-The tr concludes the lesson by asking oral questions  |
| WEEK 10                             | Composition<br>"When they disagreed with her solution, she quickly stormed out of the room." | -suggest situations for disagreement<br>-suggest topic sentences<br>-write individual essays | Teacher's resource file | -Work sheets<br>-Picture series- | -Teacher reads out sample disagreement scene<br>-pupils discuss contentious position<br>-class suggests conflict resolution strategies<br>-groups discuss topic then individuals write the essay. |
| WEEK 11-12 END OF TERM EXAMINATIONS |  |  |                         |                                  |   |

An example follows of the lesson taught on 16 November on the topic, "When they did not agree with her solution, she angrily stormed out." Jane introduced the meaning of 'Climax', then asked learners to list causes of conflict in groups, thus developing the possible body of the narrative. Pairs described the mood traits of someone who easily gets annoyed. The suggested descriptions were: *bossy, irritable, big-headed, headstrong, self-important, manipulating, aggressive, all-knowing, arrogant and intolerant*. During the brainstorming learners listed suggestions on work sheets why someone would desert a meeting so abruptly. Some of the suggested ideas were:





Some of these ideas tickled learners' imagination and provided them with ideas for inclusion in their narratives. Thereafter, learners were tasked to write the above mentioned essay topic individually: *"When they disagreed with her idea, she stormed out of the room."* The pedagogical style adopted assumed that learners are already proficient in ESL. She had high expectations of what the learners could achieve. Through brainstorming, knowledge was co-constructed between the writer and the significant others before embarking on individual writing. Pairs were tasked to construct potential topic sentences which individuals developed into paragraphs. This was a useful move calculated at reducing not only error occurrences but also enhancing the quality of the essays. Jane endorsed the Process Model of academic writing as the most ideal method for Form Two learners who are believed to be immature writers. Jane was convinced that the Process Model of writing effectively equipped learners with prerequisite academic writing skills expected at tertiary level. I observed that, although the content was scaffolded to accommodate more complex concepts, Jane occasionally employed visual aids such as work sheets and wall charts to boost her teaching. Generally, when learners have limited oral practice with essays, several errors surface.



This particular lesson could have been effective if the teacher had created more feedback from peers which is advantageous in that it averts major language errors and eases the language acquisition process as well as motivating learners to do better. By the time the script is marked by the teacher, most gross errors would have been eliminated with the help of peers.

Jane's focus on essay writing affirmed her belief that proficient writing skills are mandatory in academic settings where learners are expected to write coherently in generating memos, business letters and constructing CVs. To Jane, writing is the core of learners' educational pursuits. Her lessons usually pointed students to these requisite writing skills.

**Day 8:**

**Comprehension-"The lunch problem" *English Today* pp 65-67**

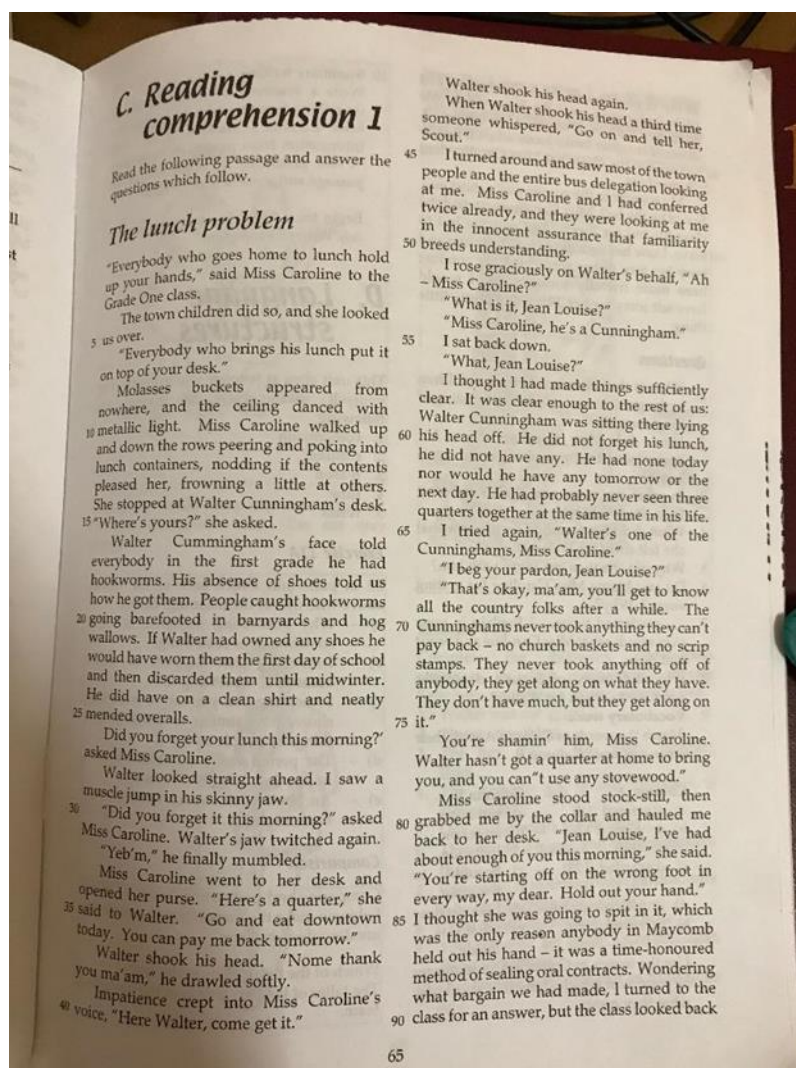
**DATE: 15 November, 2019**

**Duration 30 minutes**

|         | Language work<br>Verb tenses   |   |   |  |  |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| 1/11/19 | Language –Verb Tenses          | -identify all the verb tenses<br>-fill in the gaps with the correct verb tense  | Step Ahead p. 31  | pictures in the book   | The teacher asks a provoking question<br>-class discussion on verb tenses<br>-pupils write an exercise<br>-class revision                        |
|         | Supplementary reading          | -read novels, newspapers and magazines<br>-answer questions orally  | -No violets   | Work cards   | -The teacher gives out reading material to pupils<br>-The teacher supervises pupils reading books  |
|         | Revision (Comprehension)       | -review difficult questions<br>-explain why their earlier responses were wrong  | English Today book 3 pg39 questions 1,2,3,4,10a,b, c, d and e<br>-English Today book 3 pg21 | Past exam paper  | -three or four pupils tell others what they would have read<br>-The teacher concludes the lesson by asking oral questions                        |
|         | Modifiers                      | -define modifiers<br>-explain ways of expressing ideas precisely<br>-identify modifiers from a previous comprehension passage | English Today p. 29   | -wall chart<br>-different objects around the classroom eg. desks etc | -Teacher displays chart for definition<br>-learners exemplify modifiers<br>-class analyses listed words<br>-individuals respond to set questions |
| 8/11/19 | Composition<br>Friendly letter | write the introduction ,salutation and conclusion correctly   | English Today p. 56   | chalkboard<br>-written letter  | pupils state what they know about letter writing<br>-class discussion on letter writing to a friend  |
|         | Language work<br>Verb tenses   | -identify all the verb tenses<br>-fill in the gaps with the correct verb tense  | - Step Ahead pg 31  |  | -pupils write work as home<br>The tr asks a provoking question   |

The last lesson presented at Hilbright was on teaching comprehension writing, Jane followed an interesting routine of conducting pronunciation drills with the new vocabulary prior to tackling comprehension passages. The picture below depicts her lesson plan. Secondly, she would get the learners to predict the content of the story using pictorial illustrations. She then listed unfamiliar vocabulary items namely;

- discarded
- hauled
- assurance
- twitched
- muffled
- abandoned
- inhabitable
- harangued
- manhandled



She then asked learners to explain the meaning of these words in context. Thereafter, learners inferred the content of the following passage before taking turns to read aloud. This reading lesson was followed by simulation questions such as 'How would you have reacted if you were Miss Caroline in the story'? Responding to these set questions gave learners a better grasp of the sequence of events in the passage and their connectedness. Jane requested learners to draw a picture of what transpired, then describe it in a paragraph. This exercise assisted learners in understanding the story better, making it easier for them to recall. Gunning (2014: 243) encourages teachers to adopt this multi-sensory approach to teaching writing. Jane used the

same passage for a follow-up written grammar lesson. Following this approach in teaching writing skills enabled the teacher to deliberately navigate all four macro skills in academic language teaching.

#### 5.4.2. Lesson Observations at High Achiever School : Maggie’s classroom

**Date: 6/10/19**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 09:00-09:30**

**Day 1- Comprehension "The Ghost of Tinkers' Shed from Step Ahead by Shimmer Chinodya" p. 34**

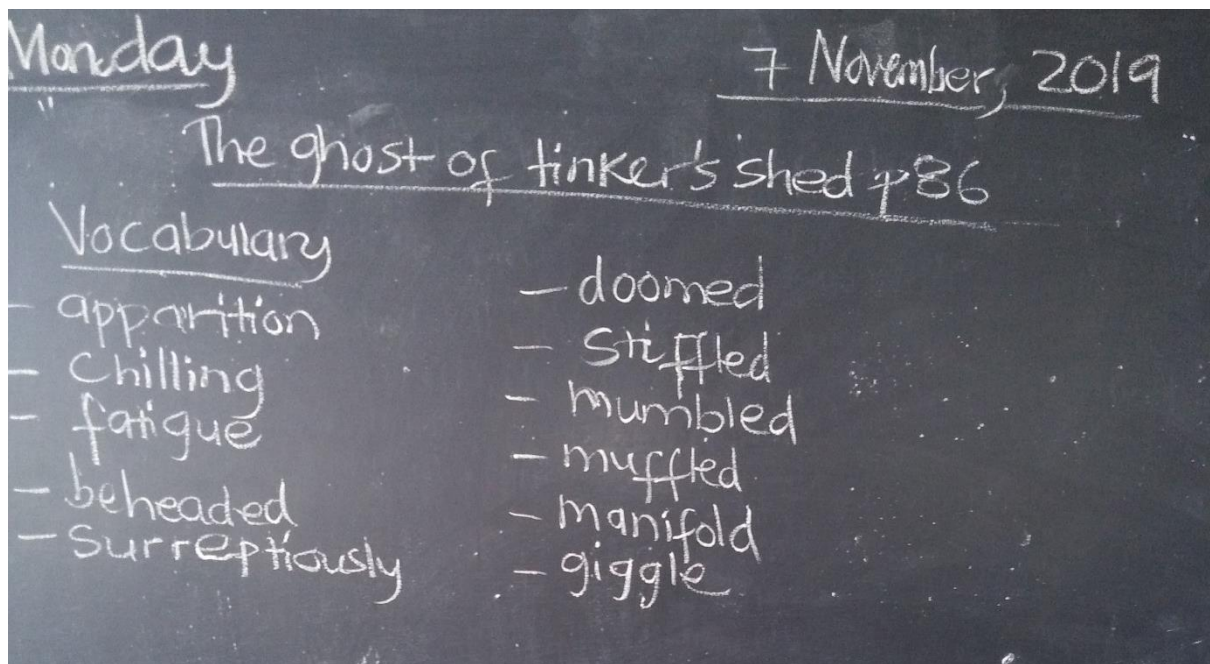
| WEEK ENDING | WORK PLANNED                                 | OBJECTIVES  | SOURCE OF MATERIAL                  | AIDS                                 | TR-PUPIL ACTIVITIES  | GE |
|-------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----|
|             |  | <b>By the end of the lesson pupils should be able to:</b>   |                                     |                                      |  |    |
| -10-19      | Comprehension<br>The ghost of tinkers' shade | -answer questions correctly<br>-infer meanings of words<br>-discuss authenticity of ghosts<br>-respond to set questions | Step Ahead English book 2 pp. 34-37 | -pictures in the book                | -The teacher asks about types of ghosts and their authenticity<br>--silent reading of the story<br>-Class discussion on the story line through use of wh-questions.<br>-pupils write an exercise |    |
|             | Vocabulary                                   | -infer meanings of words<br>-construct meaning sentences using the vocabulary words                                     | English Today book 2 p. 9-11        | -pictures in the book<br>-chalkboard | -recap on word inference<br>-pupils write an exercise<br>-class revision   |    |
|             | Language work<br>Adjectival phrases          | -define an adjectival phrase<br>-identify phrases in the given sentences  | English Today book 2 p. 11-12       | -chalkboard<br>Chart                 | -The tr asks adjectives<br>-class discussion on adjectival phrases<br>-pupils write an exercise<br>-class revision   |    |
|             | Composition<br>A wedding I attended          | -write coherently<br>-explain what happened on the day  | -Teacher's own topic                | -pictures<br>Chalkboard              | -The teacher tells pupils about a wedding she attended<br>-class discussion on the topic<br>-recap on composition writing<br>-pupils write the essay as home work                                |    |
|             | Mr Gidharee's                                |   | -English Today book 2 p. 12-14      | -pictures<br>-chalkboard             |  |    |

On my first visit for classroom observations with Maggie, we arrived at her Form Two classroom on time. As soon as we entered the classroom all the learners stood to greet us. After the introductory remarks the teacher told the learners to sit down. She then introduced me to her class and explained to them that I would be spending some time with them, as such they



should not mind me. I was then given an opportunity to introduce myself to them as well as to inform them of the purpose of my visit which they were already aware of.

This was a Monday morning. The teacher began her lesson by defining a ghost. She then gave the learners an opportunity to narrate their encounters with ghosts. The authenticity of the existence of ghosts was verified from the learners' accounts. The teacher shared jokes with the class on how she wished to be invited to a ghost infested area so she could prove they are mythical figures associated with superstition. New vocabulary items were put up on the board for definition and exemplification.



The teacher gave learners an opportunity of predicting what the story was all about and how the story would end from the pictures in the book. Thereafter, the class took turns to read the passage. As learners were reading the story aloud, the teacher posed questions to ensure that learners understood what was being read.

Learners were then requested to verify the authenticity of the ghost in the passage. The discussion sparked some debate but at the end, the class agreed that it was not a real ghost but mere imagination. Five groups of five members each were tasked to answer questions that the teacher had prepared on work sheets. Work sheet questions were revised at class level. Difficult questions were simplified before the written exercise derived from the textbook.

**Date: 10/10/19**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 11:00-11:30**

**Day 2- Writing "Using too....to"**

|          |                                |  |                               |                       |   |
|----------|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 11-10-19 | Revenge2                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-answer questions correctly</li> <li>-infer meanings of words</li> </ul>  | English Today book 2 p. 12-14 | -chalkboard           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher asks questions from previous reading</li> <li>-silent reading of the passage</li> <li>Class discussion on the passage read</li> <li>-answering of questions</li> <li>-pupils write an exercise</li> </ul>               |
|          | Vocabulary                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-give short meanings of the given words</li> <li>-construct meaningful sentences using the words</li> </ul>                               |                               |                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-recap on word inference</li> <li>-class discussion on the given words</li> <li>-pupils write an exercise</li> <li>-class revision</li> </ul>  |
|          | Language work Using "too...to" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-identify various ways of expressing intensity</li> <li>-explain how too...to can be used</li> <li>-write a follow up exercise</li> </ul> | -English Today p. 45          | -chart<br>-work cards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher asks for different ways of expressing intensity</li> <li>-class does oral practice in pairs</li> <li>-pupils write an exercise</li> <li>-individuals write the exercise</li> </ul>                                      |
|          | Spellings                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-write the correct spelling of the jumbled words</li> <li>-pronounce the words correctly</li> </ul>                                       | -teacher's own words          | -chalkboard           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The teacher writes a jumbled word on the board and ask pupils to work out the word</li> <li>-class discussion on the importance of writing correct spellings</li> <li>-pupils write an exercise</li> <li>-class revision</li> </ul> |

The teacher revised the previous comprehension passage on "The ghost of Tinkers' shed" in *Step Ahead* p. 34 using what, where, when, why and who questions. The passage is a description of an imaginary ghost that a teenager "encountered" in some abandoned spot. The class responded very well as the story was still fresh in their minds and had sparked debate on the authenticity of ghosts. Answers demonstrated a thorough grasp of the story by learners. The

teacher introduced the concept of expressing intensity using "too...to" to the class and learners exemplified accordingly. Some of the examples given by students were:

- 1) It was too hot to stand in the open arena.
- 2) The test was too difficult to be administered to Form Twos.
- 3) The English lesson was too exciting to miss.
- 4) He is too smart to fail the test.

The following phrases were written on the board then learners constructed various sentences based on the topic ‘ Expressing intensity using too...to.’ When teacher was satisfied with the responses, she introduced another way of expressing intensity using ‘so...that.’ Later, she assigned the written exercise below from a worksheet. The class wrote the exercise individually in fifteen minutes.

| EVENT WITH EMPHASIS                      | REMARKABLE EFFECT                                 |
|--|---|
| The meteor storm was <b>so beautiful</b> | <b>that</b> we watched it all night. (remarkable) |
|  | <b>that</b> we couldn't believe our eyes.         |
|  | <b>that</b> we called everyone out to see it.     |
|  | <b>that</b> we shouted "ooow" and "awww".         |
|  | <b>that</b> we wished it would never end.         |
|  | <b>*that we watched it.</b> (not remarkable)      |

From the lesson observed, it was apparent that Maggie is either consciously or unconsciously an adherent of Krashen's Natural Order and Input hypothesis. She derived a written exercise for the learners from a comprehension passage and in so doing made learners aware of the link between the various language activities, that is, reading, writing, speaking and listening. According to Krashen and Bland (2014), learners ought to first mature in their understanding of content then develop active language acquisition. That is why the teacher presented lots of practice exercises before administering the individual assignment. The high grades attained in the written work manifested a thorough grasp of the comprehension passage content.

Commenting on best practices of developing learners' writing skills, Maggie said she always matched teaching content to learners' zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Richards, 2006). Maggie saw her role as that of availing input that is slightly above the learners' level of proficiency in order for them to master new concepts. This view is in tandem with Krashen's i +I model (Krashen and Bland, 2014), which asserts that learners must first be exposed to slightly more complex material than what they already know in order for them to acquire better language proficiency. In the lessons observed, teaching started from known to unknown content. I noticed that by reviewing the passage Maggie pitched teaching content to learners' level of understanding first, and then she scaffolded content to more complex concepts derived from the internet .

Originally, I meant to take photographs of the few artifacts she used but this was not feasible since the lessons were mainly based on teacher talk and blackboard work. It was disruptive capturing all the chalkboard work while the lesson was in progress. Quite often the board was cleaned for additional work to be put up.

**Date: 17/10/19**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 2:00-2:30p.m**

**Day 3- Spelling**

This lesson was presented after 2:00pm and the learners were just coming from lunch break. Maggie was aware that proficient writing skills stem from accurate spelling; she thus informed her class in advance of an impending spelling test to enable her learners to prepare. She informed that the test would be based on examining the implements farmers use to grow cash crops. The class was urged to practise spelling any agricultural implements likely to be found at a farm such as a "disk harrow, a shovel, rack and others." Initially, the teacher dictated the following spellings then pairs took turns to spell out the words orally.

- 1) Disc harrow
- 2) Wrack
- 3) Pick
- 4) Hammer
- 5) Nozzle
- 6) Jack hammer
- 7) Furrow
- 8) Shovel
- 9) Hammer
- 10) Rivert



Learners then wrote a fill-in exercise which was mainly based on the farm equipment from *Step Ahead* p. 56. After this exercise which lasted for ten minutes, the teacher taught the learners about the difference between the sounds and how certain words are written. She gave an example of the following words: "plough and plow, rid and read, dough and dour." According to Scanlon (2010), word games enhance learners' understanding of the English sound system and improve their spelling. The rest of the spelling test was derived from the previous comprehension passage. Quite clearly, Maggie deliberately planned her lessons for impact. Gunning (2014: 360) says that well-planned lessons generally capture learners' attention and positively impact their writing ability.

### Day 4 Reading – Supplementary Reading, “The Roadblock” Chapter 3

Date: 20/10/19

Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 2:00-2:30p.m

|          |   |  |  |   |   |
|----------|---|--|--|---|---|
|          |   |  |  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-class discussion on verb tenses</li> <li>-pupils write an exercise</li> <li>-class revision</li> </ul>  |
| 15/11/19 | Composition<br>Friendly letter<br>Language work<br>Word formation<br><br>(2 lessons)<br><br>Supplementary reading | write the introduction ,salutation and conclusion correctly<br><br>formulate words from the word COMMANDED<br>-construct meaningful sentences<br><br>-read the passage fluently<br>-isolate significant catchy phrases<br>-summarise the chapter                                       | Past Exam paper<br><br>English Today bk 2 p. 15<br><br>“The roadblock” | chalkboard<br>-written letter<br><br>-artefacts<br>-wall chart<br><br>-class reader<br>-work sheets | The teacher asks pupils about letter writing<br>-class discussion on letter writing to a friend<br>-pupils write work as home work<br><br>The teacher asks a provoking question<br>-class discussion on word formation<br>-in pairs pupils form<br><br>-the class reviews plot of the supplementary reader<br>-Teacher asks leading questions<br>-individuals summarise the current chapter |
| 22/11/19 | Test<br>Comprehension<br>Punctuation<br>Preposition<br><br>Guided writing”<br>An incident on the bus”             | answer questions correctly<br>Infer meanings of words<br>-fill in gaps with the correct preposition<br>-punctuate the given passage correctly<br><br>-discuss catchy phrases for use in the essay<br>-suggest incidents that would cause a stir<br>-write appropriate topic sentences. | English Today p. 77<br><br>Common errors in English p. 86              |   | The teacher explains to pupils how the test should be written<br>-The teacher supervises pupils writing the test<br>-collection of books<br><br>-teacher jots down topic for class discussion<br>-groups suggest incidents that would cause trouble on a bus<br>-class suggests topic sentences for essay writing   |



This lesson was the first lesson of the day as it started after the morning assembly at 07:30 am. Maggie was always punctual. After greeting the learners and telling them to be seated, she introduced the lesson. She told learners to take out their prescribed novel and open Chapter 3. In this particular lesson, the class took turns to read the novel, "The Roadblock." Maggie asked questions to check for understanding of the plot. During interactions with her class, Maggie also addressed incidental pronunciation problems. For instance Noah, a male student, mispronounced the word 'queue' and the teacher immediately called on another learner to correct. Netty, a female student, mispronounced 'mishaps' and she was immediately assisted with correct pronunciation cues. Group activities were followed by class discussions. These methods were assumed to facilitate language acquisition and improve ESL levels of oral proficiency to acceptable Junior Certificate levels. When Maggie failed to get a response to questions, she paused and rephrased the question for clarification. Whenever a learner gave a partial answer, she invited other learners to add detail, thus, offering them an opportunity to sharpen their oral proficiency skills. The Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) is considered an effective method of verifying facts and recalling events. It is advantageous in that the teacher can immediately give feedback on right or wrong answers. The drawback is that it does not promote much discussion. According to Saxena (2010), the IRE interaction pattern is considered constructivist in nature in that it allows the teacher a chance to manipulate learners' responses to scaffold information.

**Day 5 -Language "Modifiers–adverbs", *English Today*, p. 29**

**Date: 23/10/19**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 9:30-10.00p.m**

|                                      |   |   |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Word formation                       | - form the correct adjective from the given noun  | 1,2,3,4,10a,b, c, d and e<br>- Junior English 2 p. 15 |  | - Teacher supervises pupils writing the test<br>- collection of books for marking  |
| Corrections                          | - identify their mistakes<br>- write the correct answers                                    | - English Today p. 38<br>- Junior English 3 p. 15     | - boys and girls<br>- chalkboard       | - reading of the passage<br>- class discussion on the passage<br>- answering of questions<br>- pupils write corrections  |
| Registers (Mood graphs)              | - define the term register<br>- identify/read factors that determine choice of register     | Practice Book pg4-5                                   | - boys and girls<br>- stones           | - Teacher steps her foot on one of the pupils<br>- Tr asks pupils how they would react to that<br>- class discussion on the factors that determine choice of register<br>- pupils write notes on registers |
| Language work Comparative adjectives | - define an adjective<br>- complete sentences by using the comparatives of given adjectives | English Today p. 17-18<br>- pictures<br>- chalkboard  | - pictures in the book<br>- chalkboard | - Tr asks pupils to define an adjective<br>- class discussion on comparative adjectives<br>- pupils write an exercise<br>- class revision  |

The lesson started with a definition of modifiers which was agreed to be " words that give additional detail and meaning to a verb". The teacher put up a sentence "The car looks completely damaged and unroadworthy." Towanda managed to identify the modifiers but tackling the exercise below challenging for him.

### **Exercise 5C**

Complete the following sentences by putting the verbs in brackets in their correct form.

1. The family — (plan) to go on a long holiday last year.
2. The children — (excite) by the idea of going away.
3. They said that they — (are) going to visit the grandfather's farm first.
4. Tawanda — (remind) John to take a notebook.
5. A friend from Ghana — (come) to join them on this trip.
6. Going places — (is) fun for everybody.
7. John said that he — (go) to Ghana the following holiday.
8. People — (visit) places of interest and relatives during holidays.
9. After the long drive, I — (think) it was time we went home.
10. I look forward to — (visit) my aunt in Rusape.

After giving three more examples, the teacher wrote a list of words that learners had to modify in pairs. Feedback was given to the class and corrections were made. The class was referred back to a previous comprehension passage "The ghost of Tinkers' Shed" p.34 where they had to isolate more modifiers in groups of five. Some of the modifiers isolated by the class were 'stealthily, surreptitiously, swiftly, mockingly, hurriedly, anxiously.' Pairs were encouraged to use the modifiers in new sentences and share their findings during a five minute oral discussion. Generally, all the pairs did well in this exercise. Afterwards, the teacher explained how learners could use dictionaries to identify more complex modifiers. Groups of four discussed the first five questions above before individually attempting number 6-10 on page 29 above. I found this to be typical language lesson which takes cognisance of the importance of grammar in the development of academic language proficiency. The teacher seemed conscious of the importance of grammar in perfecting academic writing skills. Maggie was fully aware that reading stimulated language acquisition and the writing process.

Methods adopted by the teacher to teach academic writing skills were striking. Maggie's instructional style merged comprehension and the development of writing techniques. The motivation to focus on these categories was stimulated by the Cambridge Language syllabus document which stresses the need to mould learners in all the above categories of language acquisition. According to the syllabus document, proficient academic writing is evidenced by one's ability to read with comprehension, employ appropriate vocabulary in various discourse patterns and the eloquent expression of ideas. Although reading, comprehension and mastery of vocabulary border on oral proficiency, they contribute significantly to writing instruction (DBE, 2011b:18), so they will be discussed separately. According to Milligan, Clegg and Tikly (2016), academic writing ability is an offshoot of teacher and learner effort as well as parental involvement in availing contexts for vocabulary development and mastery of oral skills.

**Day 6: Supplementary reading, “The Roadblock/ No Violets”**

**Date: 2/11/19**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 2:00-2:30p.m**

|         | Language work<br>Verb tenses   |   |   |  |  |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| 1/11/19 | Language –Verb Tenses          | -identify all the verb tenses<br>-fill in the gaps with the correct verb tense  | Step Ahead p. 31  | pictures in the book   | The teacher asks a provoking question<br>-class discussion on verb tenses<br>-pupils write an exercise<br>-class revision                        |
|         | Supplementary reading          | -read novels, newspapers and magazines<br>-answer questions orally  | -No violets   | Work cards   | -The teacher gives out reading material to pupils<br>-The teacher supervises pupils reading books  |
|         | Revision (Comprehension)       | -review difficult questions<br>-explain why their earlier responses were wrong  | English Today book 3 pg39 questions 1,2,3,4,10a,b, c, d and e<br>-English Today book 3 pg21 | Past exam paper  | -three or four pupils tell others what they would have read<br>-The teacher concludes the lesson by asking oral questions                        |
|         | Modifiers                      | -define modifiers<br>-explain ways of expressing ideas precisely<br>-identify modifiers from a previous comprehension passage | English Today p. 29   | -wall chart<br>-different objects around the classroom eg. desks etc | -Teacher displays chart for definition<br>-learners exemplify modifiers<br>-class analyses listed words<br>-individuals respond to set questions |
| 8/11/19 | Composition<br>Friendly letter | write the introduction ,salutation and conclusion correctly   | English Today p. 56   | chalkboard<br>-written letter  | pupils state what they know about letter writing<br>-class discussion on letter writing to a friend  |
|         | Language work<br>Verb tenses   | -identify all the verb tenses<br>-fill in the gaps with the correct verb tense  | - Step Ahead pg 31  |  | -pupils write work as home<br>The tr asks a provoking question   |

Fridays seemed to be the most exciting days for Maggie's lessons because participation was generally high. The teacher had asked learners to read the chapter from either 'The Roadblock' or 'No Violets' in advance. Maggie distributed work sheets where she had written interesting anecdotes from Chapter four of each of the the supplementary readers. Learners mimed the actions, explained the context of the section and how it wove in with the rest of the selected novel. Of particular note, was a description of how Uncle slumped into his chair upon discovering that his house had been sold behind his back. Unfamiliar vocabulary such as 'implored, plummeted, reminisce, obsession, weather-beaten and organic' was exhaustively discussed and exemplified orally by the whole class. Individuals noted new vocabulary in their vocabulary books. The teacher further divided the class into five different ability groups of three female learners of above average performance and two males of average performance, and assigned tasks for discussion and feedback to the whole class. Group members took turns to write and report feedback. The class was asked to construct sentences using the isolated vocabulary items. Each learner owned a vocabulary book where they were expected to record new vocabulary items and construct sentences that demonstrated an understanding of three different meanings associated with particular vocabulary items. Thus, learners' writing skills were equally sharpened along with comprehension skills.



**DAY: 7**

**Guided Essay Writing - "An incident on the bus"**

**Date: 13/11/19**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 2:00-2:30 p.m**

|          |   |  |  |   |   |
|----------|---|--|--|---|---|
|          |   |  |  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-class discussion on verb tenses</li> <li>-pupils write an exercise</li> <li>-class revision</li> </ul>  |
| 15/11/19 | Composition<br>Friendly letter<br>Language work<br>Word formation<br><br>(2 lessons)<br><br>Supplementary reading | write the introduction ,salutation and conclusion correctly<br><br>formulate words from the word COMMANDED<br>-construct meaningful sentences<br><br>-read the passage fluently<br>-isolate significant catchy phrases<br>-summarise the chapter                                       | Past Exam paper<br><br>English Today bk 2 p. 15<br><br>"The roadblock" | chalkboard<br>-written letter<br><br>-artefacts<br>-wall chart<br><br>-class reader<br>-work sheets | The teacher asks pupils about letter writing<br>-class discussion on letter writing to a friend<br>-pupils write work as home work<br><br>The teacher asks a provoking question<br>-class discussion on word formation<br>-in pairs pupils form<br><br>-the class reviews plot of the supplementary reader<br>-Teacher asks leading questions<br>-individuals summarise the current chapter |
| 22/11/19 | Test<br>Comprehension<br>Punctuation<br>Preposition<br><br>Guided writing"<br>An incident on the bus"             | answer questions correctly<br>Infer meanings of words<br>-fill in gaps with the correct preposition<br>-punctuate the given passage correctly<br><br>-discuss catchy phrases for use in the essay<br>-suggest incidents that would cause a stir<br>-write appropriate topic sentences. | English Today p. 77<br><br>Common errors in English p. 86              |   | The teacher explains to pupils how the test should be written<br>-The teacher supervises pupils writing the test<br>-collection of books<br><br>-teacher jots down topic for class discussion<br>-groups suggest incidents that would cause trouble on a bus<br>-class suggests topic sentences for essay writing   |

The teacher started the lesson by sharing the following conversation derived from a previous comprehension passage.

### Exercise 1E

#### The present tense

Turn back to Reading comprehension 1 entitled "Poachers" and re-write the first two paragraphs changing the story to the present tense. Underline the verbs you will have changed.

#### Example

"When the sun starts to set, the animals gather together to have a discussion. The zebras are tired after all the excitement of the long day.

#### ● Note:

Writing your descriptive composition in the present is a very powerful way of expressing yourself. Try it a number of times and see which way you are better in.

## E. Reading comprehension 2

The following passage is a sad story about a double loss of life. Read on and answer the questions which follow.

### The death of a mother and child

The impala ran, stopped warily at the edge of a clearing. He sensed that something was wrong. Delicately, daintily, he raised his silky muzzle and sniffed in the air. Ten metres behind him, his does, as the animals' wives are called, waited patiently, content they would come to no harm under his protection.

Nothing happened and he moved slowly forward, placing each tiny pointed foot carefully in front of the others. The doe followed. A few young calves tripped at their mothers' heels, anxious to see what lay ahead.

It was one of the mothers who hit the snare. It had been placed neck high at the edge of the thick bush and she walked straight into it. She was moving very slowly, anxious to protect her baby from any impending danger. The thin, almost invisible wire closed gently around her neck, tightening imperceptibly as she moved forward.

She felt the pressure of the wire on her back and leapt forward in alarm. The cruel stand of thin steel bit deep into her neck, cutting through the skin and muscles as she leapt forward. She was thrown onto her back on top of the calf which had been following in her footsteps. He gave an anguished bleat as he fell under his mother.

The doe ignored her offspring in her terror and pain. She did not wonder what had happened to the rest of the herd. She knew instinctively that they had abandoned her to her fate. Life in the bush is cruel and there is no time to worry about others.

The lamb again bleated piteously. He wanted to rejoin the rest of the herd and gambol with his friends. He nudged his mother again and again, imploring her to go but she either kicked him weakly aside or ignored him. He found it very difficult to understand.

Twenty metres away, a hyena stood watching. His ugly, yellow-toothed head sunk between his big, high shoulders. He surveyed the scene and felt nothing for the pain of the doe and her offspring. All he saw was food. He noticed vultures circling over ahead and knew he did not have much time. Saliva was pouring down the sides of his mouth, and he threw back his head, howled his weird, crazy cry. It started as a whoop, then became an insane, quavering giggle.

Selected learners took turns to read the above script which had rich linguistic terms. Learners were further divided into four groups of five learners to identify catchy vocabulary items. Some of the items included, 'stopped warily at the edge of the cliff; sniffed in the air; ignored her offspring in her terror and pain; she knew instinctively; bleated piteously; his weird, crazy cry.' Groups were encouraged to add other relevant phrases. Evidently, the discussion of these catchy vocabulary items which were derived from the conversation expanded learners' ability to converse in English. The teacher reviewed the catchy phrases with the class then introduced

the day's topic. Learners were tasked to draft essays on "An incident on the Bus." She explained the need to pay attention to catchy vocabulary items when composing essays. The guiding questions for the particular topic included: "What was the incident? Who were the characters involved? Describe the characters' appearance, describe the character's relationship with others, discuss the characters' contribution to the development of the story." As learners responded to these guiding questions, they formulated individual essays. Fareed and Bilal (2016) encourage teachers to engage learners in the creation of authentic contexts when assigning essay work. Looking at the lesson stages, I think the teacher successfully created an authentic background which equipped learners for subsequent essay writing.

Individual attention was frequently given during lesson progression especially as learners wrote the essays. I observed that learners did not voluntarily walk to the teacher's table for consultation but the teacher took the initiative to move between desks during discussions. Maggie's lessons were generally interactional. The Interactional model of teaching was coined by Richards and Theodore around 1985. It is a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach which thrives on interaction between students and teachers and provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Krashen, 1985). As learners practiced speaking in the second language, input was appropriately modified. In this teaching approach learners are core-creators of knowledge with the teacher's guidance. The teacher is considered the ultimate authority who edicts the pace of lesson progression. Typical of the approach, both participant teachers initiated meaningful engagement with learners through pair, group and class discussions. Interactive teaching methods motivated learners to pay attention and participate. According to (Ellis 1993) and Richards and Theodore (2014), interaction within the classroom offers opportunities for comprehension checks and language practice. Another advantage of the interactional teaching style is that it offers learners an opportunity for experiential learning. Dialogue and discussion created room to engage in a variety of ways by exchanging thoughts, emotions and information.



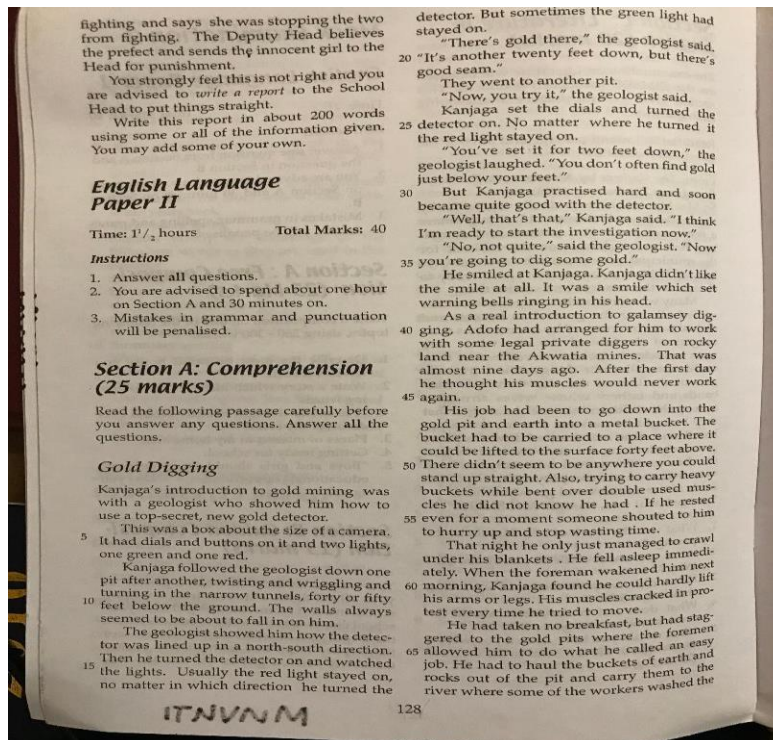
Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 9:00-9:30am

Day 8 - Comprehension "Gold Digging" English Today Book 2, pp. 128-129

Date: 16/11/19

|   |   |                                   |   |  |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <p>Comprehension "Gold Digging."</p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-isolate technical vocabulary</li> <li>-discuss vocabulary that is related to Geography</li> <li>-read passage with understanding</li> <li>-respond to set questions.</li> </ul> | <p>English Today p.p. 131-133</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Samples of minerals</li> <li>-pictures of gold</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-pps write the essay individually</li> <li>-pps describes the gold digging process</li> <li>-tr reads passage as pps follow lines in their books</li> <li>-class summarises the key points</li> <li>-individuals write the essay</li> </ul>     |
| <p>Composition "My worst nightmare"</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-define a nightmare</li> <li>-suggest causes of nightmares</li> <li>-compile appropriate diction for the topic</li> </ul>  | <p>-teacher's resource file</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-pictures of horrible monsters</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-tr asks pps to define a nightmare</li> <li>-a chart is displayed and groups brainstorm on possible ideas for the essay</li> <li>-tr puts up potential topic sentences for groups to complete</li> <li>-individuals write the essay.</li> </ul> |

Maggie used several steps to teach writing through comprehension passages. Her lesson was based on the following story:



She listed the technical vocabulary (emerged, contemporary, waned, intruder, immersed, crinkle) that the learners would encounter in a given passage and rehearsed the meaning and usage with the class. The teacher incorporated Geography into the discussion of the passage that was geographical in nature. New words were defined: '*tunnels, shaft, detector, staggered, geologist*' and used in different contexts before the reading of the passage began. Maggie employed the instructional technique called, 'Before, During and After' (BDA) to promote mastery of reading passage. She would pose wh-questions that aroused learners' imagination and relate answers to the passage content. The BDA approach helped to use prior knowledge to understand the present text through making inferences, interrogating the text and recreating new phenomenon. The teacher posed follow-up questions on the board for learners to ponder. Some of the questions were: a) Who is the main character? b) What is his/her key role in the story? c) What does the writer think of the character? d) What would you do if faced with a similar situation? The class read the passage for a general grasp, then for important details. Maggie activated learners' prior knowledge by relating the stories to their personal experiences. By the time learners did individual writing, they were familiar with the passage content. Potentially difficult questions were analysed by the whole class prior to individual writing tasks. Thereafter, individuals responded in writing to set questions.

Learners proved to be avid readers who easily comprehended and wrote meaningful responses to the passages content except Gina and George who struggled with written work. The two needed extra assistance with spelling as well as comprehending the essay as such their answers were not accurate. Maggie showed them how to decode the new vocabulary items by demonstrating how to sound the words and what they meant. Gunning (2014: 366) points out that there is a correlation between poor reading ability, a learner's ability to comprehend general meaning and writing ability. It became apparent that proficient reading skills positively impacted learners' writing ability. According to Cockrum and Shanker (2013: 221), proficient writing is the final goal of reading. As learners read, they learn to write meaningfully from relatable experiences. Maggie tried hard to stick to the English as medium of instruction. In fact, whenever learners used Shona, she was very quick to correct them and provided an English alternative.

**Day 8-Composition writing "My worst nightmare"**

**Duration- 30 Minutes**

**Lesson Duration: 30 Minutes 2:00-2:30am**

**Date: 19/11/19**

|  |   |   |                                       |   |  |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
|  | <p>Comprehension<br/>"Gold Digging."</p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-isolate technical vocabulary</li> <li>-discuss vocabulary that is related to Geography</li> <li>-read passage with understanding</li> <li>-respond to set questions.</li> </ul> | <p>English Today<br/>p.p. 131-133</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Samples of minerals</li> <li>-pictures of gold</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-pps write the essay individually</li> <li>-pps describes the gold digging process</li> <li>-tr reads passage as pps follow lines in their books</li> <li>-class summarises the key points</li> <li>-individuals write the essay</li> </ul>     |
|  | <p>Composition<br/>"My worst nightmare"</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-define a nightmare</li> <li>-suggest causes of nightmares</li> <li>-compile appropriate diction for the topic</li> </ul>  | <p>-teacher's resource file</p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-pictures of horrible monsters</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-tr asks pps to define a nightmare</li> <li>-a chart is displayed and groups brainstorm on possible ideas for the essay</li> <li>-tr puts up potential topic sentences for groups to complete</li> <li>-individuals write the essay.</li> </ul> |

Lesson observation segments prove that Maggie prefers using the Process Approach to essay writing over other approaches. This was evidenced in the way she presented content. Maggie read the following model essay, "Attacked by robbers."

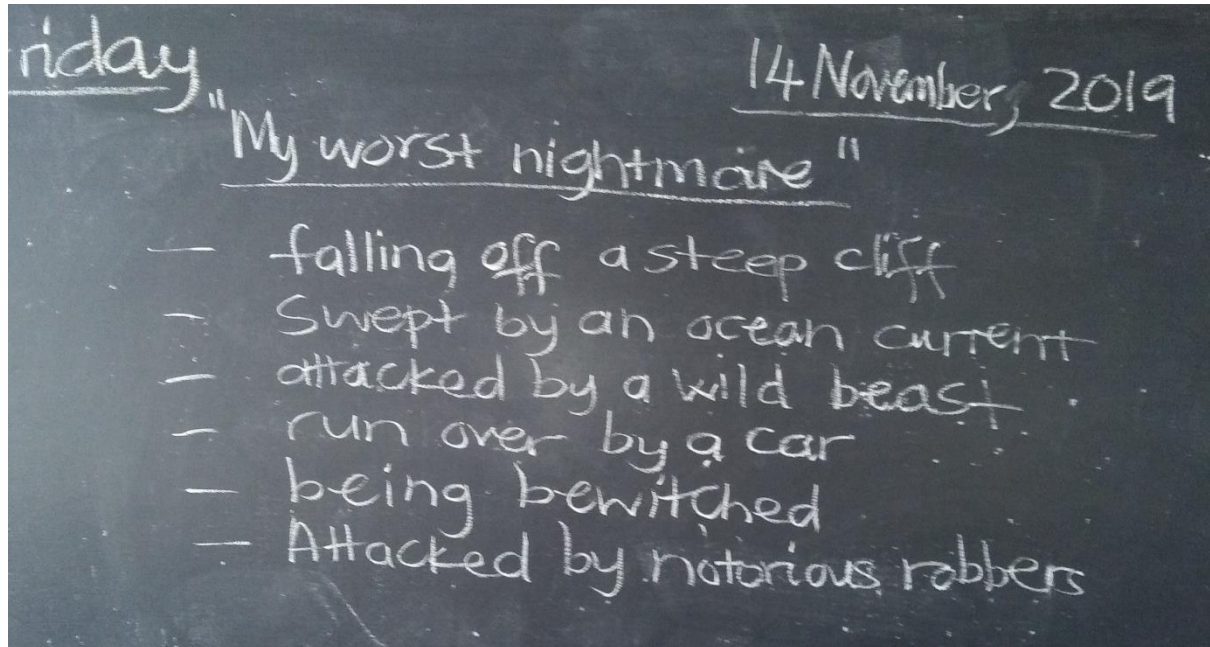
**Exercise 2**

Francis snaked across the last patch of open ground and burrowed deep into the bushes around the base of a fig tree. Suddenly there came the crunch of boots on gravel: then silence. Francis sensed that the men were stealing towards him. The next moment a deafening volume of sound assailed Francis from all sides as the men closed in, beating the undergrowth with the butts of their rifles. Seconds later they beat at the branches and leaves above Francis. The broad leaves of the tree soaked up the blows and did not reveal any sight of their refugee below. There was another spell of frantic beating, and then the boots moved on. Francis trembled with relief.

to her class then asked learners to comment on its strengths and weaknesses. The strengths included the following a) inappropriate use of diction, b) appeal to reader's imaginations and



c) the apt use of figurative expressions. Maggie's approach to teaching writing is more inclined to the Process Approach to writing which focuses on both receptive (listening and speaking) and d) the productive (reading and writing) skills. A different topic, "My worst nightmare" was then introduced for the class to brainstorm.



Proposed ideas were listed on the board in point form as shown in the above chalkboard work. Pairs grouped the ideas into paragraphs. Learners were encouraged to write individual essays but to align their essays to the sampled essays as much as possible. Wei (2017) explains that the product approach to writing values the end product more than the writing process. However, Maggie's lesson is a move away from the traditional perception that writing is a solitary exercise. Basically, writing entails a complex set of skills inclusive of composing, analysing, synthesising and organising ideas. Hence, weak learners frequently struggle to fully master the art. The approach is problematic in that there is the looming danger that learners may end up memorising the sample texts and reproducing them in the examination.

Maggie had an inclination to assign narrative essays which are known to appeal more to learners' imagination. In this lesson, Maggie used a sample essay (artifact) to cultivate her learners' writing proficiency skills. The content was scaffolded to accommodate more complex concepts. Most group activities were followed by class discussions and written work. These methods were assumed to facilitate language acquisition and improve levels of proficiency to acceptable Zimbabwe Junior Certificate levels.

## **5.5 FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS WITH THE TWO ESL TEACHERS**

In this section I discuss the interview findings that emanated from interviews with the two ESL Form Two teachers who participated in the study. Three individual interviews were conducted with each of the two ESL Form Two teachers during October, and early November, 2018. The first interviews were conducted beginning of October focusing on identifying theories that influence the two teachers' writing instructional practices and how they intended to apply the Process Model in teaching academic writing proficiency skills. The second interviews were conducted in mid- October and the final interviews were conducted in November.

I engaged the two teachers in several informal interviews during the empirical investigation which I diarised. Each interview schedule was thirty minutes long; these interviews were conducted in English although at times I did switch to Shona as both participating teachers were also proficient in the language. The use of Shona was to establish rapport and to create a conducive, relaxed environment. Using Shona did not present a challenge as I am a Shona first language speaker and I studied Shona as a subject throughout my schooling. Although participants were free to use Shona, they easily switched from Shona to English or vice versa depending on their preference. Six major themes emerged from the analysed individual interview data.

Table 5.5 provides both major themes and sub-themes which emerged from the analysed data of individual interviews.

**Table 54: Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes**

| Themes  | Sub-Themes  |
|---|---|
| <p>1. The significance of English proficiency skills</p>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The prestige of the English language</li> <li>- Private school culture of excellence as generated by parents and the school ethos</li> <li>- Teachers' motivational strategies in the development of ESL proficiency skills.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>2. Teaching approaches for developing ESL writing proficiency skills</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combination of traditional teacher oriented approaches, pair, group and whole class discussions</li> <li>- Encouraging higher order skills such as how to infer and how to identify bias.</li> <li>- Introducing topics on current affairs</li> <li>- Adopting 3-5 key textbooks to upgrade available teaching content</li> </ul>  |
| <p>3. Challenges in teaching ESL writing proficiency skills</p>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learners' lack of intrinsic motivation</li> <li>- Use of unsuitable textbooks that do not effectively support the Cambridge Examination syllabus</li> <li>- General lack of exposure to authentic role models and writing in the second language (immersion)</li> <li>- Lack of adequate training in using computers to teach writing skills</li> <li>- Intensive marking which focuses too much on learner errors and discourages learners</li> <li>- Lack of robust approach to the teaching of writing courses in teachers' training colleges.</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| - Availability of authentic teaching and learning materials | - Inadequate employment of authentic teaching artifacts                                   |
| 4. Teacher feedback   | - Comments in learners' assignments<br>- Feedback from peers (marking each other's' work) |

### 5.5.1 The significance of English proficiency skills

The first main theme that emanated from individual interviews with the two ESL teachers was the significance of English proficiency skills. Three sub-themes emerged from this main them which are as follows: a) private school culture of excellence as generated by parents and the school ethos, b) teachers' motivational strategies in the development of ESL proficiency skills and c) language typology. Each of the three sub-themes will be discussed separately in the section below.

#### 5.5.1.1 The prestige of the English language

The findings from interview results with two ESL teachers from participating schools revealed that they encouraged acquisition of English academic writing proficiency skills over acquisition of first language writing proficiency skills. Jane said:

*“Hilbright school teaches Shona up to Form Two level. Thereafter, we focus on developing academic English writing since it is the language for academic success”. (Jane)*

This statement was supported by Maggie, who indicated:

*“Our school does not teach indigenous languages at all. We focus more on English because our learners write the Cambridge examination which does not examine indigenous languages”.*

The responses from the two teachers highlights the prejudices that underpin the learning of indigenous languages. Zimbabwean private schools' focus on English- primary instruction, and thus, negate the observation by UNESCO (2012) that first language instruction is ideologically sound as it leads to political inclusiveness. According to Cummins (1978; 1984; 2000; 2012), learners learn best when learning in their first language as proficiency in first language facilitates the learning of any second language. This argument is further supported by Vygotsky (1978) who sees a strong relationship between language and cognition. According to Vygotsky (1978), language proficiency plays an important role in education as learners who are not proficient in the medium of instruction will fail to express their thoughts adequately. Hilbright and High Achievers teachers' positive attitude towards English reflects the significance attached to English by the larger society of the affluent parents and Zimbabwean citizens in general (Sibanda, 2018; Ndaba, 2018; Lemmer, Nyoni and Manyike, 2019). English hegemony is accepted without question, hence, even teachers accept its prestige as the language of the economy as well as a global language. The hegemony of English as a global language is referred to by Geo and Bucket (2007), Munyaradzi (2019), Janks (2017) and Shava and Manyike (2018) as a paradigm of neo-colonialism and Western capitalism which creates a myth that English is a superior and dominant language. This result in the acceptance of its spread as normal and unavoidable. This is despite the fact that most students experience academic failure due to lack of proficiency in English which is also the medium of instruction in the majority of schools in both in English speaking and non-English speaking countries (Manyike and Mukhari, 2017).

The study results further revealed that due to the societal perceptions of the importance of English, learners also prefer developing their second language rather than learning to write their first language.

*"Learners prefer developing their English writing proficiency skills to their first language writing skills because English enables them to write academic assignments. Local languages are insignificant in the world of work. None of the subject textbooks are written in local languages, so the motivation to learn the language is limited." (Jane)*

In support of Jane's statement above, Maggie stated thus:



*"Most of the graduates we produce enroll in tertiary education institutions in European countries, as such most learners are of the opinion that local languages are irrelevant. Economic benefits of learning the first language are questionable. Indigenous languages can wait. Besides, learners are not proud to learn local languages."*

The quotations above show teachers' views of learners' preference of English over their first language. Learners' perceptions are further encouraged by society and teachers who teach for exams and not for the love of teaching and learning. The two teachers who participated in this study are both working in private schools. Most parents of learners attending these schools are professionals. These parents pay huge sums of money in school fees for their children to receive quality education. English proficiency skills is part of that quality hence these teachers are proud that they either do not teach indigenous languages at all or do so only up to Grade 7. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the relationship between language and culture. He is of the opinion that in learning a language one's cultural values and ethos are transmitted. Private schools in all non-English speaking countries tend to devalue learners' cultures as only the dominant culture which is English is accepted in these schools. I argue that teaching is not only about academic success but the socio-cultural aspects also need to be considered within the schooling system. Learners need to be taught to be appreciative of their identity and culture plays a role in defining oneself (Manyike, 2017). In negating their languages these learners' cultures are also negated which leads to alienation from one's community.

It is also clear from the quotations above that the participating teachers, although Shona first language speakers, view first language (mother tongue) education as non-essential. They are proud that their learners attend international universities upon graduating Grade 12. One teacher also stressed the importance of the Cambridge examination which does not examine indigenous languages.

Clearly, learners are prejudiced against first languages and so their teachers shift focus onto the acquisition of English writing skills. The two teachers' exclusive focus on the development of ESL writing ability alone overlooks Cummins' (2000) theory, which highlights that additive bilingualism improves learning and provides a firm foundation for second language acquisition. Baker (1994: 120) further postulates existence of a positive transfer between bilinguals' languages which triggers the development of high levels of learners' IQs. Díaz-Rico

and Weed (2010) add that students working in an additive bilingual environment tend to perform better in linguistic assignments than those from a subtractive bilingual environments. In essence, teachers should target developing ESL writers who are not alienated from their people, language and culture. In fact, Baker (1994) argues that inculcating first language writing proficiency produces learners who are not only academically successful but are also culturally responsive. I argue that neglect of the first language caused learners' second language academic writing ability to stagnate.

The interviewed teachers' responses below showed ignorance of the advantages of first language in developing second language writing skills. Jane said:

*L1 and second language are two distinct languages in terms of spelling and orthography, so I am not clear how writing in first language might affect writing in second language. Learning to write in the local languages has few advantages as all other subjects are taught in second language, so it is better to focus on teaching the second language writing skills.*

*Our learners write the Cambridge English First language examination, so we use every available opportunity to sharpen their second language writing skills to match the expected high standards of English. Indigenous languages can wait.*

The above responses show neglect of mother tongue due to ignorance of existence of positive transfer between first language and second language writing skills. The participating teachers were uninformed of Cummins's theory of the interdependence hypothesis and his CUP.

According to researchers it is important for learners to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency skills since such skills transfer across languages, such as synthesis of information. Emphasis on English learning results in subtractive bilingualism (Manyike and Lemmer, 2012; Manyike and Lemmer, 2015; Cummins 2012). The participating teachers appeared to have an erroneous view that their learners will benefit more from exposure to English. In fact, the vast majority of published academic research has highlighted that intensive exposure to first language writing consolidates second language writing (Cummins, 1979; Declenserie and Genesee, 2014; Montee, 2017; Martirosyan, 2015; Selvaraj, Melanie & Azlina Abdul Aziz,

2019). I argue that the neglect of teaching proficiency skills in learners' first language will result in undermining learners' identity. Schools that fail to affirm learners' cultural identities are unable to produce learners who are well-rounded and who could be productive members of their society. I am of the opinion that this mismatch between the learners' culture and the school culture results in erosion of learners' cultural identities, making it difficult for them to part of the broader society. These learners would have benefitted more from first language instruction as already alluded to the paragraphs above.

The above quotations reflect the significance attached to English by the teachers, affluent parents and larger society because of its economic and academic benefits (Philipson, 2016). De facto school policies have revered English as a language of economic muscle and social mobility. The Cambridge Examination Board also elevates English writing proficiency as an indicator of academic attainment.

#### **5.5.1.2 Private school culture of excellence**

The research results revealed that the two private schools have established a culture of excellence as well as professionalism. The two schools were able to excel academically due to the support they received from learners' parents as well as the school principals. The following statements below indicate teachers' appreciation of the support they received from the various stakeholders.

*'Our school gets a lot of economic and moral support which positively impacts learners' academic writing skills and performance in general.'*

This support comes in the following forms

*Some parents donate library books and stationery, in addition to paying school fees.*

*Parents and principals constantly encourage learners to work hard.*

*The school motto, "Higher, still higher with Science education is echoed daily during assembly."(Jane)*

Supporting the Jane's sentiments, Maggie said:

*'The school head ensures teachers have all the resources necessary for learners for effective teaching and learning to take place.*

The teacher indicated that parents play an important in the education of their children and stated that:

*Parents support learners by supervising homework and encouraging them to excel.*

At school level learners are motivated to work hard and this is evidenced in Maggie's words:

*Learners are encouraged to participate in writing competitions and are regularly reminded to aspire for excellence.*

The above-mentioned efforts are typical of middle and upper class culture within the Zimbabwean schooling system especially in for-profit schools. Parents and school principals do everything within their reach to inculcate a culture of excellence amongst learners (Ngwenya and Pretorius, 2014; Nyemba and Chitoyi, 2018). This value of academic excellence is constantly reinforced in school assemblies and during public addresses to learners. Learners are motivated as they also have good role models at home (Ngwenya and Pretorius, 2014; Nyemba and Chitoyi, 2018). Furthermore, the fact that they are from middle class backgrounds implies sufficient reading materials at home (Mkansi 2017). I argue that these learners parents' level of education enables them to actively engage with the schools as they are not intimidated by the school culture. Such social capital allows them to work cooperatively with schools to ensure that their children succeed academically. The influence of the immediate environment in shaping society is further alluded to by Vygotsky (1978; 1984; 1986) who observes an irrefutable link between one's cultural values and language development. All these concerted efforts result in the development of adequate writing proficiency skills which are essential for academic success.

### 5.5.1.3 Teachers' motivational strategies to enhance ESL proficiency skills

Another sub-theme which emerges is teachers' motivational strategies to enhance ESL proficiency skills.

Val Mon and De Costa (2016) posit that a motivated teacher positively impacts the way learners learn a second language. Maggie is commended for designing Communicative tasks that facilitated the development of BICS as recommended by (Cummins, 1979). Maggie's class comprised learners who were explorers, experimenting with language to produce creative pieces of work. Successful experimentation with language developed autonomous learners who could tackle more demanding academic writing requirements. I argue that the motivational styles adopted by the participant teachers eventually increased learners' linguistic confidence.

According to these teachers, their learners' academic success could also be accorded to school and teachers' ability to motivate learners to work hard in order to succeed.

*I motivate learners by creating a friendly classroom environment and in cooperating communicative activities into the lesson.*

Jane further mentioned the importance of lesson presentation in motivating learners and stated:

*I also present writing assignments in an innovative way. Using motivational feedback also engages learners' interest.*

Jane is also aware that learners need to chance to practise to become good writers and stated:

*I also encourage learners to write as much as possible during their free time.'*

The strategies used by the ESL teachers appeared to be different as it can be gleaned from the quotations below.

*'The motivational strategies I find useful are introducing many reading activities.*

*I realise that reading gives learners a starting point for writing. I make writing an exciting activity by incorporating group and pair work into the lesson.*

*Publishing learners' written work is one way of motivating them to write.*

Although they used varied activities to motivate their learners, the results appeared to have been the same. Jane and Maggie adopted innovative ways of presenting teaching content. It was imperative that the teachers capture learners' attention by designing captivating learning activities. Kaweera, Yawiloeng and Tachom (2019) and Zaswita and Ihsan (2019) argue that appropriate activities have the tendency to lower learners' writing anxiety. For successful implementation of motivational strategies, the teacher has to love teaching the writing process as well.

## **5.5.2 Teaching approaches used in language classrooms**

The second main theme which emerged from interview data with the two ESL teachers was the effective teaching approaches used in teaching writing proficiency skills.

### **5.5.2.1 Combination of traditional teacher oriented approaches, pair, group and whole class discussions**

Under the theme of teaching approaches, interviewed teachers reported that they used a myriad of activities to boost learners' writing capability.

*I do not use one method of teaching writing. I realised that reading is closely aligned to writing, so I encourage my class to keep a reading card indicating novels they have read. Through reading, learners' spelling, vocabulary and expression is enhanced. I also carefully guide learners through the writing process. My class contributes articles to the school's weekly magazine. (Jane)*

*The art of writing is multifaceted as it requires learners to sharpen their reading, listening, and speaking skills. In my class, I provide a lot of opportunities for learners to practise the above skills individually, in groups and in pairs. I assign spelling competitions, debating sessions,*

*writing poems and describing photographs. At times I assign homework so the parents can get a feel of their children's performance. (Maggie)*

The above responses show that teachers are aware of the need for creating enough opportunities for learners to read and write. This concurs with Touhid (2018) who found that if students cannot read effectively, they fail to grasp important concepts, score poorly on tests and ultimately, fail to meet educational milestones. Maggie is aware of the need for collaborative writing as such she frequently employs pair and group activities. Collaborative activities enhance the writing process as such it is supported by Vygotsky (1978) as learners learn better if actively engaged in the learning process. Through group work, learners are able to assist their peers with writing challenges and also learn from each other. Additionally, learners with poor writing skills enjoy co-authoring activities done in pairs or groups. From a theoretical perspective, the use of pair and group work in writing is further supported by Munawar and Abid Chaudhary (2019), Zamani (2016) and Juson & Yusuf (2019). These authors claim that learners who participate in collaborative activity manifest higher intellectual levels than those learners who work individually. This view is further supported by Farrah (2011:138), Swain (1998) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2007) who further reported that learners who do collaborative work produce more successful writing than by individual effort. The collaborative process helps them to develop general communication and writing skills. The same language development theorists aver that increasing social interaction with a more knowledgeable language resource increases linguistic input (Vygotsky 1978; 1979). I argue that learners are likely to improve their writing capabilities through collaborative processes unlike when they are working individually. The teachers' role should be that of providing a framework in which learners exercise their freedom of expression and scaffold content in the process. So far, theorists have argued that the most effective framework is the Process Model of writing. While Jane keeps track of learners' reading culture through the reading card system, there is a need to put in place strict follow-up mechanisms to ensure all learners are benefiting from the reading and writing exercises.

### **5.5.2.2 Planning ideas logically**

In essay writing it is important to plan in advance before starting to write. This view was supported by the results of the analysed data. According to the participating teachers, planning before the resumption of essays writing was beneficial to the learners. Pre-planning activities

assist learners as they start writing with full knowledge of the content they are expected to write about and they grasp how to arrange the paragraphs sequentially. The following quotes from the teachers illustrate this belief.

*'Each paragraph in the essay should cohere with the next one and the conclusion and of course the end should bring a sense of closure. (Jane)*

*'Other ideas for improving writing are carefully planning the writing process helps learners arrange writing in a logical sequence that flows well and is easy to read.(Maggie)*

The two teachers demonstrate that they do not use a single method for teaching writing but a combination of techniques. Clearly, appropriate teaching techniques create clarity in the writing process.

*I start by explaining to them the importance of the introduction and provide them with examples of good introductions. (Jane)*

*I start by reading bad and good introductions and ask the learners which articles appealed to them and why. Learners also discuss what they did not like about what they consider as boring introductions. (Maggie)*

This was further supported by Jane who indicated:

*I also request my students to start with exciting introductions.*

Both teachers emphasised that the introduction should capture the readers' attention and the writer should sustain the interest to the conclusion. In fact, organised paragraphs enable any reader to follow a piece of writing. The teachers realise that a big block of content without paragraphs can confuse and annoy readers. If sentences are grouped together illogically, the essays becomes difficult to read. The teachers are commended for being eclectic in their approach to composition teaching (Graham, 2018; Colewel, 2018). However, the teachers are encouraged to display examples of well-written essays or even to publish them as a way of motivating learners. Al-gharabally (2015) carried out a study in which he proved that weak learners are motivated to write better when emulating a good model. Learners benefit from



peer and teacher feedback during the editing process (Marpaung, 2019). Reviewing the work after a day or two may help learners notice poor selection of diction, wrong spellings and other writing shortcomings.

### **5.5.2.3 Introducing topics on current affairs**

The teachers concur that introducing topics on current affairs can be challenging as illustrated by the following statements:

*This is a bit difficult topic to teach. However, students can make predictions prior to reading a story. They can stop at various points in the story to make a comment, respond to what is happening or make further predictions. Finally, they can respond to what they read through a variety of post-reading activities. (Jane)*

Maggie agreed:

*Teaching writing of current affairs is a bit challenging. Form Two learners are not that concerned about issues happening around them. I sometimes ask them to write a letter to a character in a story and relating the event to their personal experience. At times I ask learners to write an ending to a story. (Maggie)*

The above teaching activities have a way of allowing students to connect with the story, the characters, to explore beliefs and develop problem-solving skills. Maggie rightly observed that Form Two's do not worry much about current affairs. Thus, teachers have to go out of their way to engage them in affairs which do not normally interest them. I argue that a strategy can be to involve learners in events that improve living conditions for the poor in the community, for example, collecting food, clothing and toys for distribution at orphanages. Another strategy could be writing a letter of concern to community officials suggesting strategies for improving the living situations of the homeless. The quality of writing could improve if teachers adopted suggestions by MacInnis, MacDonald and Scott (2016:14) who outline a six-step social action model that helps learners to examine issues. The steps are: identifying the issue, investigating causes of the issue, taking a stance, defending the stance, taking action, and then evaluating the

results. This step-by-step approach creates opportunities for students to examine issues systematically in a hands-on way.

Further, teachers could show a taped newscast of an issue and request learners to assume the role of reporters interpreting the issue. The teachers might collect and display newspaper clippings then discuss them as a class. Throughout the discussion, learners may assume the primary role of responsible citizens involved in taking action over some injustice. Once learners have a reference for developing frameworks for gathering and analysing new information, they are better placed to deal with any issues arising. Learners might benefit from being required to write position papers. Griva and Chostelidou (2013), Ampofo and Owusu (2015), Brining (2015) and Callender (2017) assert that exposing learners to current affairs fosters analytical thinking in learners. Learners become enabled to speak with authority on international matters, politics, business, finance, science and technology. Exposure to current affairs also broadens learners' perspectives of life and better able to contemplate their role in the contemporary world. Additionally, (Brining 2015) argues that reading and writing about current affairs in a second language creates more opportunities for sharpening general language proficiency.

#### **5.5.2.4 Designing writing activities**

Teachers' approaches to teaching language proficiency play an important role in determining learners' linguistic skill acquisition. The two interviewed teachers were aware of this link and commented as follows:

Jane said:

*I expose learners to the target language using cumulative activities such as drills, reading comprehension, listening to tapes before they finally write. Sometimes I introduce learners to model essays.*

However, Maggie used different strategies as she explained:

*I introduce the topic, allow time for discussion then explain lesson procedure before learners proceed to writing. I encourage learners to plan their work, edit and proofread it.*

The two teachers' strategies show that they acknowledge that writing is a complex process which requires a variety of teaching strategies and clarity of expression. They provide learners with activities which boost learners' writing. Classroom realities, however, overlook the link between different language, skills namely reading, speaking listening and reading.

The interview results further revealed the teaching models which informed the two ESL teaching practices. Jane said:

*I basically follow the Process and Linear theoretical models because of their constructivist tendencies.*

Maggie added:

*I find the Process Model more enriching for novice writers.*

The above responses manifest dependence on the Process Model. This model significantly addresses some of the writing challenges through brainstorming, pre-writing, drafting, editing and producing the final document. Although process writing stages may not follow a linear pattern, when employed accurately it results in academic success as writing proficiency skills improves. Existing literature suggests that the Process Model reaps greater benefits than other writing approaches (Milligan, Clegg and Tikly, 2016; Valleroy, 2012; Milligan, Clegg and Tikly, 2016; Wei, 2017). Nyarko *et al.* (2018) opine that major error occurrences diminish when adhering to the Process Model.

Another effective strategy that participating teachers employed when teaching writing proficiency skills was explained as follows:

*I teach composition writing, grammar, spelling, punctuation as the key elements in the development of writing skills. I employ games in teaching*

*grammar when working with lower forms then zero in on appreciation, criticism and argumentation when teaching higher forms.(Jane)*

Although Maggie also used games her approach appeared to be slightly different from Jane as illustrated below.

*I use games and songs to teach comprehension, reading and essay writing techniques so I can prepare learners to tackle the more demanding skills expected at Ordinary level. I also teach summary writing, a variety of essay writing techniques, speaking and sentence construction tips.*

Some of the techniques adopted to enhance the writing instruction are short stories, songs (Miller, 2019; Lems, 2018; Tse, 2015), health related issues, activities encouraging higher order skills such as how to infer and identify bias. These scholars are of the opinion that songs are a powerful tool for language learning as learners learn a language without realising that they are learning. Some approaches used to give appropriate support to learners include guided practice and independent practice in groups. The teachers created more opportunities to transfer skills and ideas from one situation to another. One of the popular writing approaches was portfolio development. In this approach, learners kept a collection of newspaper articles on different cultures and wrote book reviews based on their reading from the library. Sometimes they kept their responses to certain literature they read about. Jane employed what she called the "*Think-pair-share approach.*" In this approach, the teacher posed a topic or question, allowed students to think privately about the question for a short time before sharing findings with a partner and then engaging in the writing process. According to Jane:

*Participating in pair and group discussions helped learners to consider other people's perspectives and develop effective problem solving skills.*

Group and pair work gave students the opportunity to think before they respond.

Another set of activities related to the use of "what if, and what else" questions. Maggie highlighted that there were no right or wrong answers. In these situations learners expressed a variety of opinions or emotions and discussed the idea that sometimes the best solution is to agree to disagree. In the "What else ..." questions, learners were encouraged to go beyond their

first responses. In these talking circles the topics under consideration had no right or wrong answers. The purpose of talking circles was to create a safe environment for learners to share their points of view without feeling judged. This process helped learners to gain trust in their classmates.

*Brainstorming is a useful technique for generating writing ideas, and creating enthusiasm for essay topics.*(Jane)

Both teachers indicated that they used the information gathered during brainstorming as a starting point for writing assignments. Guide and Strategies (2002) indicate that brainstorming creates a platform for learners to think about a given essay topic. Through brainstorming learners were able to analyse problems, gather ideas and give an in-depth understanding of appropriate content. Teachers' input helped to keep learners on track and explore new ideas. If topics were unfamiliar, teachers reported that they encouraged students to read broadly about the topic before they wrote anything down to ensure they understood the issues they were studying before proceeding.

Sometimes Jane asked learners to:

*Make predictions about what would happen next in school, national or world events then connect the events their personal lives.*

Maggie added:

*She occasionally used Venn diagrams to compare and contrast information about two or more objects, concepts or ideas for instance, to tease apart safe and unsafe, or healthy and unhealthy lifestyle habits.*

The intersection in the Venn diagram was used to record similarities between the two writing concepts. Maggie helped students organise information and see relationships. She employed such activities as reading texts, listening to a speaker and viewing films. The teachers appeared to borrow from Krashen's (2003) philosophy of language acquisition-learning theory which suggests that humans develop second language competence through both acquisition techniques and formal learning. Krashen (1982) further postulates that optimum language

acquisition and proficiency can be attained through conscious language instruction. Krashen (1980:102) advises that teachers' emphasis should be on boosting linguistic input; thereby spoken language will manifest automatically. In this regard, teacher resourcefulness was evident in the way observed lessons were carefully structured. The need for creativity is supported by Long (1988), a constructivist, who propounds that language acquisition is optimised if the knowledgeable source is inventive. Learners' involvement in an array of activities boosted their linguistic repertoires.

Both teachers indicated use of games and songs because they appeal more to Form Two classes than the upper forms. The use of songs and games in language teaching are said to be important as learners' affective filters are lowered. According to Krashen (2014), language is best learnt when learners purposefully use the target language. Giuridiche and Universit (2013), Calvin and Calvin (2017) and Cheung (2018) allude to the importance of creating conducive classroom language learning environments that resemble natural language learning. I however disagree with the two teachers that games and songs cannot be used in upper forms because these remain relevant and effective irrespective of learners' age. The teachers' consideration of matching age appropriate writing activities concurs with Piaget (1978) who theorises that the writing ability improves as children's mental faculties mature. Piaget (1978:44) is convinced that children's cognitive capacity occurs according to unique development milestones between the ages of 18 months, 7 years and 11 to 12 years. In Zimbabwe, the 11-12 year child falls in the Form Two age group. Lennenberg (1967) calls this age at which the brain has optimal capacity to acquire a second language, the Critical Period Hypothesis. The loss of brain plasticity begins around puberty which explains the challenges most learners experience in learning additional languages thereafter. The Critical Period Theory is supported by Lennenberg (1967) and Pinter (2009), who assert that provision of appropriate writing activities at each developmental stage enriches the language acquisition process. If the critical age is effectively harnessed, learners' writing abilities can be amplified. Employing games would uphold Crystal's (1997:236) notion that the complex process of language acquisition results from visible stimulus response (S-R) processes. Selection of games also satisfies the behaviourist emphasis on the need for language-rich environments which stimulate language development. I, however, argue that although songs and games have the potential to enhance written language, both participating teachers under-utilised them.

Jane pointed out, *"Using songs can be disruptive to other classes."*

Maggie had a different reason for not using songs regularly: *"Sometimes I find it difficult to identify an appropriate song."*

Jane mentioned that she boosted language acquisition by teaching grammar. Jane's stance borrows from Chomsky's (1980) theory of the language Acquisition Device (LAD) which draws attention to the inborn capacity to learn a language. Chomsky (1980) maintains that children are born with major principles of language acquisition in place. These innate linguistic principles lie dormant until the child is mature enough to apply them. It is the LAD which enables them to work out underlying grammatical principles in any language. Chomsky (1980) argues, furthermore, that the mere absorption of words leads to nonsense phrases that must be corrected through the teaching of structure and grammar. Both participant teachers incorporated teaching of grammar, did error correction and taught target language use. The participant teachers assign learners writing tasks that they are able to cope with individually and only assist with what they cannot manage without the teacher's help. Krashen (1980)'s Input Hypothesis postulates that for effective mastery the learner should be exposed to comprehensible input. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that children will increase their receptive vocabulary if exposed to vocabulary that is a little more complex than what they currently possess. While matching content to learners' developmental level is a good idea, the participant teachers should note that if input is too complex, learners may become overwhelmed. Conversely, if input is too easy, they might not feel challenged to progress.

*Sometimes I device two written exercises, an easier one for slow learners and a more challenging one for fast learners. (Jane)*

*Personally, I assign less challenging tasks to my weaker learners and challenging ones to the fast learners. (Maggie)*

Except in a few exceptions, teachers found it easy to close the gap between home and school. Success in closing the gap could be attributable to the language rich home backgrounds that learners came from.

Both teachers indicated that group work or pair work resulted in improved performance. This is what they said

*Learners are more responsive to pair work. (Jane)*

*My class is most alert when I group them for discussion. (Maggie)*

This is in support of Santmire, Giraud and Grosskopf's (1999) study which revealed that learners who are instructed using social constructivist methods experience greater academic success than those taught using traditional language teaching methods (cf. also Kim, 2005; Dhindsa and Emran, 2006; Kent, 2005; Giraud, 1999). Constructivism is characterized by cooperative learning and giving autonomy to the learners, creating a complex yet authentic learning environment for their benefit (Dewey, 1968).

Other teaching approaches highlighted by the teachers included encouraging higher order skills such as how to infer and identify bias. Most learners struggle to obtain sufficient and relevant sources of information for writing short stories, let alone adopting an appropriate academic writing style (Gonye, Mareva, Dudu and Sib, 2012). Reasons range from delayed essay writing instruction, large classes, students' negative attitude towards their academic English writing, direct translation from mother tongue, and poor teaching styles by teachers. Teachers should make deliberate efforts to address these problems. Learners need additional practice in designing the plot, setting, climax and conclusion especially when writing short stories.

### **5.5.3 Challenges of teaching ESL writing proficiency skills**

Despite the exhaustive teaching styles adopted by the participant teachers, learning challenges still featured. The challenges take the form of a) lack of intrinsic motivation to write, b) use of inappropriate textbooks that do not fully support the Cambridge syllabus, c) general lack of exposure to authentic role models, d) inadequate teacher training courses and e) inadequate teacher's feedback.

#### **5.5.3.1 Learners' lack of intrinsic motivation to write for pleasure**

Teachers interviewed stated that learners are generally not self-motivated to write for pleasure.

*Today's learners would rather spend time watching television than writing.*

*As a result, their writing proficiency skill is weak. (Jane)*



*I have noticed that most learners are not motivated to write. They find it easier to play computer games than write as a past time. (Maggie)*

Lack of intrinsic motivation to write is a common phenomenon among Zimbabwean learners. The observations by the two teachers have been corroborated by Thi and Anh (2019) who propound that, generally, learners spend very little time improving their writing skills. Resultantly, their writing ability remains deficient. Moses and Mohamad (2019) concur that proficient writers think about issues clearly and retain content better. Hence, ESL teachers should labour to enhance these requisite writing skills.

The use of English dictionaries should be encouraged by both teachers. I, however, argue that teachers could enhance learners' motivation to write if they employed websites such as the BBC which proposes a number of interactive activities in an English. These teaching activities are useful as they promote autonomous learning. Classroom practitioners could benefit from consulting the international e-journals of English language and linguistics research to compensate for their lack of exposure to native speakers of English. Where possible, teachers and learners should spend a period of time abroad in an English-speaking country to get exposure to a totally English speaking environment. Such an exposure may lead both teachers to adopt appropriate academic writing styles for their classes (Gonye et al., 2012).

I argue that learners' motivation to write could improve if teachers assigned work which helped them to express their feelings, thoughts and to compete in a literacy rich Cambridge curriculum. To encourage learners to write, teachers may also set regular writing competitions at class level. Livingstone (2015); Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2015); Teherani *et al.* (2015); Cole and Feng (2015); Kamalja (2016); Nthulana (2016); Anylenda, Mary (2017); Bowen (2017); Touhid (2018); Moses and Mohamad, 2019; and Thi and Anh (2019) assert that effective implementation of these strategies will narrow learning gaps and reduce the number of learners with poor writing skills. Another strategy could be taking advantage of learners' love for computers by promoting digital literacy along with other literacy skills. Computers are advantageous in that they normally produce more error-free texts due to the inbuilt spell-check software. In the process learners will feel empowered to write better. The disadvantage of computers is, however, that learners may adopt a technocentric attitude where they think that the equipment is more important than the instructor.

### **5.5.3.2 Use of unsuitable textbooks that do not effectively support the Cambridge Examination syllabus**

Interviewed teachers expressed the need to adopt three to five key textbooks with a bias towards Western culture to buffer currently available Zimbabwean textbooks.

*Our key textbook is English Today. We sometimes use, English for Zimbabwe and Step Ahead. All these books are authored by Zimbabweans. The school is facing challenges importing other textbooks with a Western orientation.* (Jane)

*The major textbooks are English Today, Common Errors in English and Structures and Skills in English. Ideally, we should be using other textbooks based on Western experiences.* (Maggie)

Judging from the participant teachers' responses, ESL teachers do not show confidence in the textbooks currently in use at the selected private schools. The dissatisfaction is premised on the fact that selection of appropriate textbooks and learning materials is one of the most important steps in the successful teaching of writing skills. Brown (1995) asserts that textbooks can be used as instruments to attain objectives of writing skills. Use of relevant textbooks arouses learners' interests and leads them to acquire the requisite writing proficiency skills faster than will normally be the case. Such books inform teachers on what and how to teach as well as the order of teaching the various skills (Davies and Pearse, 2000). It is through textbooks that ESL teachers standardise instruction.

The above responses demonstrate that teachers are aware of the value of employing a variety of textbooks especially books authored by first language users. However, the available textbooks are authored by second language users, who may not necessarily be proficient in the English. The contents of most Zimbabwean textbooks user-friendly but sometimes distorted in order to avoid controversial issues. I argue that teachers do not necessarily attain the expected high quality results because the textbooks they use may be cognitively less demanding. Available Zimbabwean textbooks are somewhat contrived and artificial in presentation of the language material; hence, they do not adequately enhance the language acquisition process. There is need to co-opt textbooks recommended by Cambridge Examination Board. Adopting

three to five key textbooks would help to upgrade available teaching content to develop expected writing proficiencies. As long as the teachers use inappropriate textbooks, learners may fail to develop proficient writing skills fully, resulting in subtractive bilingualism (Cummins, 1995: 2012).

### **5.5.3.3 General lack of exposure to authentic role models and writing in the second language**

Despite her "thorough" training and personal creativity, during the interview, Jane occasionally manifested grammatical errors, for example,

*I did told them to edit their work before submission.* (Jane)

Maggie had a better command of the English language than her counterpart. When a teacher manifests slips of the tongue too often, she cannot effectively foster linguistic and academic proficiency in learners. The errors can be explained in the context of a research study by Nel and Muller (2010) who propounded that it is difficult to attain total competence in a second language without complete immersion into that language. Nation (2018) emphasises that the teacher should model crucial language aspects. Halle et al. (2011) and Davidson et al. (2011) demonstrated that poor modelling of language results in learners manifesting linguistic difficulties which later turn into academic difficulties. According to Cummins (2009), a strong immersion environment increases the development of ESL language skills. Immersion programmes have also been known to impact academic performance and writing proficiency positively in both the first and second languages (Marian, Shook and Schroeder, 2013; Collier and Thomas, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2005). Additionally, bilingual children tend to manifest better writing skills because they have a better awareness of language forms (Bialystok and Martin, 2004; Carlson and Meltzoff, 2008). Being exposed to an immersion programme has important advantages in intelligence and cognitive growth (Sampath, 2005; Lindholm-Leary, 2005). Unfortunately, ESL pedagogy in Zimbabwe has been hampered by the fact that the majority of teachers are second language speakers who, like the learners, have fewer opportunities for contact with first language users. Barimani (2013) carried out a study in which he observed that learners who are exposed to immersion programmes eventually become communicatively competent.

In addition to reaping benefits from immersion, it is vital that teachers encourage learners to think in English to increase their oral and written fluency. Learners can also be encouraged to keep an English journal where they practise writing. They could start with a few sentences a day and then gradually increase the writing practice. Journals also become an outlet through which learners can express their feelings. Learners should be encouraged to write a sentence using new vocabulary items encountered on a daily basis. Motivation and encouragement are invaluable in teaching writing to second language learners.

#### **5.5.3.4 Persistence of learner errors**

According to the two participating teachers, a major challenge of teaching writing in a second language is persistence of errors. The interview results with the two ESL teachers revealed that Form Two learners make certain errors in their writing. The common errors as identified by the two teachers are as follows: grammatical abrasions, spelling errors and use of inappropriate diction. Most errors are believed by the ESL teachers to emanate from mother tongue interference. The quotations below are indication of such beliefs.

*"The major errors causing poor academic writing performance are a result of mother tongue interference, poor tense usage, use of inappropriate vocabulary. Writing errors are compounded by poor planning, lack of cohesion and failure to sustain an argument. (Jane)*

Added to these are other common mistakes which Form Two learners make according to Maggie:

*Learners sometimes write good essays but occasionally misuse tenses, use wrong spelling and directly translate ideas from the mother tongue.*

The above responses indicate that learners struggle with formulation of syntactic structures, spelling, choice of vocabulary and mother tongue interference. Learners tend to assume that first language and second language work in the same way. Resultantly, they make faulty deductions of grammar rules leading to erroneous sentence constructions. Tense mixing was highlighted as a major challenge. According to (Cummins, 1979), first language interference is evidence that learners are transferring rules of first language onto the second language

learning process. Vygotsky (1978) further explains existence of errors as evidence of the LAD. Vygotsky (1978) argues that as learners employ their inbuilt capacity to create sentences (LAD), errors inevitably emerge as part of the language learning process.

Apparently, the same learners exhibited a reasonably good command of spoken language during lesson observation. Cummins (1979; 2004; 2012) points out that BICS is developed independently from writing skills. Therefore, it is very possible for one to develop oral proficiency without necessarily developing a corresponding written proficiency. Furthermore, Cummins (1978, 2004; 2012) differentiates between context embedded and context reduced language. In this he was showing that reading books with illustrations is an example of context embedded texts whereas those texts without illustration are context reduced. Livingstone (2015), Teba (2017), Ali (2018), Moses and Mohamad (2019) and Thi and Anh (2019) are of the opinion that reading is much an easier skill whereas writing is a much complex skill to learn. It should be the teachers' prerogative to sharpen both oral and writing skills. During the interview, the observed teachers seemed uninformed about error sheets. I argue that adoption and implementation of the error list sheet could lead to error reduction at both schools. Error awareness sheets where learners record and analyse their errors avails teachers a chance to work closely with learners and to suggest ways of dealing with the identified errors and of avoiding their recurrence.

With regard to dealing with learners' writing errors, the interviews revealed that teachers used the following strategies:

*I correct learner errors by rephrasing wrong answers in good English. Sometimes I allow learners to self-correct with the help of peers. Another effective strategy of dealing with learner errors is giving metalinguistic clues such as, 'Is this the most appropriate way of expressing the answer?' Such an open ended questions motivate learners to come up with more suitable alternative answers. (Jane)*

Maggie dealt with learners' writing errors using the following strategies:

*The best way of correcting learner errors is by making errors my teaching points. It is also important to let the class explain why certain answers are*

*wrong. Another error correction strategy I use is creating room for learners to discover their errors instead of using explicit correction.*

Data from interviewed teachers outlined useful strategies of dealing with writing errors. If well implemented, the strategies yield excellent results. Krashen (2014) discourages explicit error correction. According to Krashen and Bland (2014), explicit correction raises learners' affective filters unnecessarily. Once a learner's affective filter is high, language acquisition is jeopardised. The existing body of research has indicated that recasting learners' answers may help learners to correct a faulty utterance better than explicit instruction..

Interviewed teachers further indicated that learners' performance varied depending on familiarity of topic and effectiveness of instruction.

*I have noticed that learners' performance fluctuates depending on the complexity of the writing assignment. (Jane)*

*There is a tendency for learners to score high marks in some assignments than others. For instance, learners perform better in narrative writing than other types of essays. (Maggie)*

Both teachers unanimously agreed that the type of assignment has a bearing on ultimate performance. Arguably, teachers' personal acumen affected the rate at which learners acquired writing skills and eliminated errors. Ingebrand (2016) explains that type of genre is a significant predictor of writing quality. Ingerbrand (2016) observed that the main genre of interest in composition writing were narratives and science reports and urges teachers to focus on opinion pieces and informative/explanatory essays. Hayes and Olinghouse (2014) discovered that learners' writing performance differed depending on the selected topic. A close analysis of the lessons taught proves that narrative essays dominated the composition writing segments. However, given adequate writing prompts, learners, including poor writers, can be assisted to write in any genre (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hayes & Olinghouse, 2014).

Some of the factors impacting writing output are personal fluency, familiarity of topic, and genre familiarity (Graham & Harris, 2000; McCutchen, 2011).. The interviewed teachers indicated that learner performance depended on familiarity of topic assigned, anticipated

vocabulary and the time taken to prepare learners for the writing process. It was found that students received lower scores on opinion writing compared to their informative compositions. It was also found that better reading comprehension was associated with better writing performance in both genres.

Apparently, learners who made multiple drafts and employed peer correction while writing their essays scored higher grades than those who did not undergo all the writing stages. Learners found narrative essays easier to tackle because they required them to tell a story, whether real or fictional. Emphasis is on creating a good introduction, convincing setting, an intriguing climax and a captivating conclusion. Argumentative essays are more complex because they require learners to prove a point using supporting evidence. Learners are expected to persuade their readers through logic and powerful arguments and learners should be able to state reasons for believing in something. According to Access (2013), syntactic complexity of argumentative essays affects learners' ability to make deductions, interpret evidence, and evaluate ideas. Most Form Two learners were unable to produce fluent argumentative essays as compared to narrative and informative essays. Language teachers seemed to lack skills in developing language learners into becoming critical thinkers.

#### **5.5.3.5 Inadequate use of teaching artifacts**

The following excerpts capture the two teachers' attitude towards teaching artifacts:

*Charts are useful but a bit too time consuming to prepare. My work load is too big, considering I have to mark learners' books as well. Readymade texts have vocabulary that is complex enough. (Jane)*

*I occasionally use charts but basically, I get teaching content from textbooks. Cambridge examination question papers have Eurocentric contexts which rarely feature in Zimbabwean local textbooks. (Maggie)*

While Nation (2018) posits that teaching aids stimulate the development of writing skills, the participant teachers' classes were characterised by blank walls that had no charts or teaching aids. Teaching aids have been identified as an integral aspect in teaching writing as they help learners to improve their reading and writing competence. Apart from engaging learners'

senses, they also foster effective communication between the teacher and learners (Abedine 2012; Akhter 2014). Teaching aids inspire learners to improve academic writing literacy. Through teaching aids, the teacher has a chance to optimise group and pair work in developing learners' writing ability. Additionally, teachers may integrate technology as part of paradigm shift from a teacher-centred approach to learning. Language scholars have theorised that web-based lessons positively impact the writing process more than all other writing techniques put together (Đurđanović, Arts and Serbia, 2015; Siwela, 2020; Chibuwe and Salawu, 2020). Faced with all these advantages, teachers disadvantage learners by not employing teaching aids. The writing process remains dull and uninspiring. I argue that the quality of teaching could have been enhanced if teaching resources were effectively employed.

Apart from the inadequate use of teaching aids, the interview results revealed additional challenges encountered in teaching writing proficiency skills to Form Two learners. The type of challenges are revealed in the quotations below:

*Our current Form Two class does not have white students who use English as a home language. (Jane)*

*We don't have white students in the school anymore. If we had students who used English as a native language, they could be helpful in correcting their friends' pronunciation and general writing skills. (Maggie)*

One major challenge highlighted was absence of total immersion programmes featured as one of the major obstacles to ESL writing instruction. Although the schools in my research sample are well-resourced, have highly qualified teachers, their learners still lagged behind due to absence of total immersion in an English first language community. Second language learners in Zimbabwe have limited contact with native English, hence, they remain confined in their Zimbabwean culture and ESL writing patterns so they adopt the sink or swim method of writing proficiency development. Learners benefit from immersion into a linguistic community. If exposure is intentional, acquisition is likely to occur unconsciously and involuntarily (De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor 2005:7; Krashen, 1988).

By introducing reading periods, both Maggie and Jane attempted to create a language-rich environment where learners unconsciously pick up the language. Wide reading has been their



way of fostering linguistic competence as indicated in the statements. Strategies used by the two teachers to improve their learners' writing proficiency skills include the following:

*I discovered that modern day learners read less and less, so I encourage them to write book reviews which I inspect on a weekly basis. (Jane)*

*Most learners in my class do not take reading as a past time. This limits their opportunities for language acquisition, so I have reserved Friday lessons as library lessons. To ensure reading has taken place, I require them to summarise novels they will have read. (Maggie)*

Due to insufficient exposure to language, Bialstok (2001) posits that the majority of second language learners exhibit an average vocabulary in the second language as compared to the first language. In light of this finding, it is not surprising that although both schools have attained a pass rate of between 90-100% rate annually in the last four years, the quality of the passes are only generally satisfactory. The two schools' biggest challenge is to attain qualitative 'A' passes. Cummins (2001) outlines that it is rare for a bilingual to be equally proficient in two different languages. Most bilinguals tend to have one strong language and a second weaker one. This occurrence is attributed to subtractive bilingualism where schools give pre-eminence to the second language over the first to the point that the second language almost replaces the first language. Lindholm-Leary (2003:181) laments an eventuality where black children in high density suburbs and rural schools will end up bogged down with two, poorly developed languages. Both teachers pointed out that:

*Learners code switch a lot during class discussions because they do not have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves in English language. (Jane)*

*No matter how hard I try to enforce speaking in English, learners usually mix vernacular, colloquialism and English. I always have to remind them to use English language consistently. (Maggie)*

Precisely, the above scenario observed by teachers proves that most of the private school learners are semi-lingual. To avert this scenario, school authorities and policy makers should

enforce learning of minority languages in the school curriculum so learners derive benefits from additive bilingualism.

Data gathered concerning teaching resources were somewhat conflicting. The participant teachers claimed that their schools had adequate teaching resources. However, both teachers seldom employed these teaching aids as observed during lesson observation. Given Cummins' (2006) assertion that language learning blooms through intensive exposure to a language rich environment, inadequate implementation of the teaching aids inadvertently disadvantaged learners.

### **5.5.3.6 Inadequate teacher training courses**

Interviews indicated the teacher training which the two participating teachers had undergone stressed selected teaching pedagogy.

*Jane: The teachers' training college that I attended concentrated more time on teaching content than teaching methods. Most of the methods I use are replication of how my teachers taught me.*

*Maggie: I think the quality of my teaching is influenced more by the methodology course I did in teacher' training college. Our lecturers exposed us to a myriad of teaching styles that I revert back to date.*

Jane's current teaching style was influenced predominantly by the key textbook. To Jane, academic writing proficiency is best developed through a neat step by step pattern envisaged in these texts. Arguably, reliance on the textbook alleviates teachers from the burden of meeting departmental and school administration expectations. The textbook based exercises are believed to be standard and ideal for formal teaching. However, textbook language tends to overlook spontaneous language situations arising from informal conversational discourse. While the comprehension passages had interesting stories, humorous anecdotes and sporting articles, they lacked questions that tackle higher order skills such as inferencing and dictation which dominate the Cambridge syllabus. The selected textbook lacked adequate writing practice exercises. Some Zimbabwean textbooks like *English Today* circumvent contemporary topics and neglect problem solving issues, thus, rendering them inadequate tools for Cambridge

Syllabus content coverage. Good textbooks should help the learners to see multiple points of view. Reid (2018) recommends use of three to five textbooks as no textbook is perfect as a sole source of writing content. I argue that textbooks should never be treated as a blueprint but should be supplemented with relevant information from journals, participation in exchange programmes and tap into the experience of trained teachers.

### **5.5.3.7 Teacher feedback**

The interviewed teachers admitted that poor teacher feedback is a factor in the acquisition of writing skills as indicated in the following comments on type of feedback teachers give to learners:

*I write comments when marking learners' written work. However, when I have too much marking, I simply grade the work. (Jane)*

*I attach constructive comments in most exercises written by students in order to improve their writing. (Maggie)*

While the teachers wrote feedback on learners' writing, some of it was ambiguous. I observed that comments like "*Well-trying, good and fair attempt*" did not quite point out learners' exact areas of weakness and how writing errors could be averted. The other type of feedback I noticed in learners' books was when the teachers used the following symbols: "Wo for wrong Word order, T for wrong Tense, Pr for wrong Preposition P, poor Punctuation O for poor organisation, Sp for wrong Spelling then V for wrong Vocabulary" while marking learners' books. Language scholars have stressed that it is imperative that ESL teachers dwell more on reader response and coaching comments instead of focusing on judgmental comments (Zaswita and Ihsan, 2019). The two teachers under study realised that constructive feedback is a vital form of language input as it plays an important part in teaching writing. The focus on feedback is buttressed by behaviourists, like Thorndike, Skinner, Watson, Pavlov and Chomsky, who stress the need for both positive and negative feedback. I posit that teachers ought to create a balance between the two extremes of feedback so that learners are clear on areas needing further work and what can be written better in order to sharpen learners' writing skills. Feedback plays a crucial role in learning to write and puts learners in a better position to detect their writing strengths and shortcomings. Feedback helps learners develop into proficient

writers. Feedback fosters a collaborative reader-editor relationship between teacher and learner. Teachers' comments provide the opportunity to respond to the individual needs of learners. Learners are provided with an incentive to write better. Hyland and Hyland (2001) posit that the best form of feedback is giving positive comments especially on areas such as on organisation of plot and grammatical expression. Linguists such as Hyland and Hyland (2001) have further observed that negative comments tend to stifle the desire to write. However, in a few cases learners may want their problems to be highlighted to effect greater cognitive engagement and reflection.

#### **5.4 DISCUSSION**

Data gathered from interview data highlighted a variety of instructional strategies employed by Zimbabwean teachers in teaching academic writing. It was clear that Maggie and Jane focused more on communicative competence rather than writing competence. Both teachers indicated that they were conscious of the need for oral practice, reserving ten to fifteen minutes of lesson time for oral activities. Oral proficiency was easily developed because learners already use English as a home language. Teachers confirmed that this teaching style stemmed from their college training peer teaching sessions where oral drills were considered paramount to successful classroom pedagogy. By employing oral drills teachers took into consideration the argument by Ozowuba (2018) that oral literacy development is key to the development of writing proficiency skills. Zhou and Niu (2015) further emphasise the need to create time for language practice before embarking on the writing process. The aforementioned scholars confirm that writing proficiency is an offshoot of solid oral proficiency. I however, noted that the type of questions asked seldom linked the classroom to the world of work.

Teachers pointed out that some exam papers sometimes repeated writing topics, thus, encouraging learners to memorise the ready-made essays on recurrent topics. Ahmed (2010) also observed similar effects of examination on ESL learners' writing skills. In some instances the teachers may fail to impart effective writing skills and strategies to the learners. Nik et al., (2010) identified that undergraduate ESL learners are not motivated to improve their writing skills. Learners' concentration and efforts may be limited only to attempt the writing section of the exam papers. This trend further reflects in lack of interest in reading and writing practice.

The participant teachers described their role as that of helping students to generate ideas for essay writing and helping them to plan and draft essays. Elimination of errors was done through encouraging learners to write multiple drafts. Successful writing activities were a result of collaboration with peers. Farrah (2011:139) compared the effects of collaborative and individual tasks and found that the students who produced jointly written tasks performed significantly better in written tasks. Collaborative learning increases comprehension, promotes critical thinking and makes learners responsible for their own learning.

Teaching English language proficiency in the Zimbabwean context is, however, compounded by failure to adopt well-developed technological teaching methods. However, the situation in affluent private schools is slightly different. During the interview Jane felt that she was blessed to be part of a highly resourced school. She expressed gratitude for the help she got from her principal, HoD and other ESL teachers in the school. However, I observed that even though Maggie claims to be teaching English as a first language, her English teaching methodologies are mostly borrowed from ESL teaching. I argue that if her learners got adequate opportunity to develop first language writing proficiency skills and are gradually transitioned into second language medium of instruction, they would attain greater academic writing proficiency (cf. Manyike and Lemmer, 2015; Manyike and Mukhari, 2017). Despite being ESL speakers, Jane and Maggie tried their best to implement most of these writing intervention strategies. However, the fact that they are ESL speakers sometimes limited their linguistic performance.

Data from interviews posited the need for constant feedback to learners' written assignments. According to behaviourist theorists, positive feedback encourages learners to experiment further with language while negative feedback might allude to linguistic areas needing attention. According to behaviourists, positively reinforced actions are likely to be repeated. Negative feedback, on the other hand, has been known to be demoralising for learners. Appropriate feedback may lead to a unique way of language input especially if it is accompanied by appropriate learning activities (Livingstone, 2015; Calvin and Calvin, 2017; Teba, 2017; Ali, 2018; Moses and Mohamad, 2019; Thi and Anh, 2019). The above responses from the participant teachers show that teachers think written feedback is more important than oral feedback. Jing (2010) expresses the value of oral feedback in form of a smile, thumbs up or even clapping of hands. By way of feedback, teachers took advantage of peer editing which gave stronger learners a chance to encourage their less capable peers. Thus, learners had time to reflect on where they went wrong. In the process, language input was enhanced.

## 5.5 RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

The table below outlines key themes that emerged from individual interview data with the two school principals and two HODs from the two participating schools. Two main themes emerged from the interview data, namely; factors affecting writing performance and the bilingual contribution to language development. In terms of factors affecting writing performance, the sub-themes are indicated in Table 5.8. which provides both major themes and sub-themes which emerged from the individual interviews with the principals. Two themes emerged from the interview data namely, Factors affecting the writing performance and Bilingualism. Each of these main themes has its own sub-themes.

The sub-themes relating to Factors affecting the writing performance are a) principals' negative attitudes towards indigenous languages, b) a poor conception of the Interdependency Theory, and c) a conducive school environment or lack thereof. The sub-themes relating to bilingualism were: a) the effect of bilingualism on the development of writing skills and b) code-switching as a way of enhancing writing proficiency skills.

## 5.6 TABLE OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The table below summarises both themes and sub-themes drawn from individual interviews.

Table

| Themes                                   | Sub Themes  |
|--|---|
| 1. Factors affecting writing performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents and principals' negative attitudes towards indigenous languages</li> <li>- A poor conception of the Interdependence Theory</li> <li>- Conducive school environment or lack thereof</li> <li>- Availability of resources</li> </ul> |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 2. Bilingualism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The benefits of bilingualism on the development of writing skills.</li> <li>- Code-switching as a way of enhancing the development of writing skills.</li> </ul> |
|-----------------|---|

### 5.6.1 Parents and principals’ negative attitude towards indigenous languages

The first sub-theme that emanated from the main theme emerging from individual interviews with the principals was the parents and principals’ negative attitudes towards indigenous languages. Interviews with the two principals and two HoDs revealed that Hilbright school and High Achiever school offer learners incidental exposure to first languages, as principals and HoDs are very particular about preserving the 'sanctity' of English language.

Pat, the Hilbright school principal, justified exclusion of indigenous language from the timetable, stating:

*I dropped Shona as an examinable subject due to resistance from both Shona and non-Shona speaking parents. Pat went on to quote Simpson (2015:34), who declares, "If previous generations learnt English without recourse to the mother tongue, then present day learners ought to follow suit."*

The same view was held by Don, the high achiever school principal, who indicated:

*School B teaches Shona, an indigenous language, up to Form Two only...teaching one indigenous language prejudices other existing local languages in Zimbabwe and would overpopulate the timetable. Zimbabwe currently has three main languages and sixteen dialects, and it is impossible to include all these on the timetable. Parents also want their children to learn English writing skills, so we teach Shona up to Form Two then focus our energies on teaching English.'*

This view was supported by Mrs Moyo, the HoD at Hilbright school who said:

*We discourage use of the mother tongue because it makes learners rowdy and inattentive in class. Besides, some learners are immigrants who might not understand the local languages.*

Mrs Dube, HoD of High Achiever school, concurred:

*The Mother Tongue Instruction (MTI) policy does not work successfully at our school. Parents want their children taught writing in English and that is what we do.*

The above statements by principals and HoDs' have overtones of looking down upon indigenous languages although these individuals are indigenous language speakers themselves. The results from interviews with principals attributed a certain level of blame for the general lack of English writing proficiency skills to indigenous languages. The interview results revealed that High Achievers does not offer indigenous languages as subjects are too many to be accommodated in the school time table. Further, interview data revealed that the two participating schools do not offer Zimbabwean indigenous languages because the learners are from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The Head of Department at High Achievers, Mrs Dube, also blamed the use of local languages for encouraging ill-discipline in the schools, a claim not supported by any empirical evidence. I am of the opinion that failure to acknowledge indigenous language by both schools teach these learners that their languages and cultures are inferior. Vygotsky (1978) and Manyike and Mukhari (2017) contend that there is a strong relationship between language and culture. According to Manyike (2016), learners whose culture is not affirmed by schools become alienated from their communities. Indeed, learners can only be proud of who they are and respect themselves if they have a strong sense of identity. Similarly, they are also able to respect other cultures which are different from theirs.

Certain interviewees were of the opinion that allowing the use of a particular local language might prejudice non-speakers of other languages. This stance is contrary to the provisions of the Zimbabwean Language policy of 2006, which endorses the use of indigenous languages as the languages of instruction up to Form Two level ( cf. Section 55, Part xi, Education Act of 1987; 1990; 1996; 2006).



The principals' responses demonstrate their reluctance to implement the Zimbabwean's revised language policy of 2013. These negative attitudes towards first language further conflict with the assertion by Cummins (1999; 2000; 2004, 2012) that promoting learners' first language produces higher levels of first language writing achievement at no cost to the second language. Cummins (2012) claims, furthermore, that attaining academic language proficiency skills in a first language will facilitate the learning of the second language. It may be concluded that the glaring inattention to indigenous languages is largely the result of ignorance of these significant second language learning theories.

Matsinhe (2013) blames such linguistic prejudices for creating a social disjuncture between the home and the school environment, resulting in subtractive bilingualism. When principals overlook the need to implement the National Language Policy which advocates use of the first language up to Form Two level to cater for ethnic and cultural diversity, the development of the writing ability is adversely affected. Regrettably, such entrenched negative attitudes have a ripple effect on the way in which learners perceive themselves, their first languages and their cultures.

### **5.6.2 Poor conception of the Interdependence Theory**

Another significant and related finding was that school principals have a poor conception of the Interdependence Theory. When asked to comment on the relevance of the theory to ESL writing, Don answered:

*The Interdependence Theory explains how languages intertwine, making the mastery of a second and subsequent languages easier.*

This statement was supported by Mrs Moyo who stated:

*The Interdependence Theory demonstrates the similarity between languages but I think it does not quite apply to our middle class students who use English more like their mother tongue.*

Mrs Dube commented:

*The Interdependence Theory highlights positive relationships between the first and second language and how these relationships can be manipulated to improve learners' linguistic expression.*

Pat, the school A principal, admitted his ignorance of the theory:

*Honestly, I have little idea of what the theory entails but I think teachers in the English Department do because my area of specialty in college was administration.*

However, the High Achiever school principal and the two HoDs were familiar with the CUP or the Interdependence Theory, which holds that proficiency in the first language facilitates linguistic proficiency in the second language (Krashen and Bland, 2014; Cummins, 1978; 1979; 1986; 2000). An understanding of additive bilingualism and its potential to enhance ESL writing skills is never fully explored if the first language is neglected. An understanding of how languages intersect significantly impacts attitudes towards the first language and second language and the teaching of these languages. School principals who understand Cummins (1978; 1979; 1984) Interdependence Theory may support teachers by encouraging positive learner attitudes towards first languages and grant the subjects equal slots on the school timetable, which was absent at both schools. I argue that principals' lack of understanding of important language development theories may curtail teachers' effective implementation of first language instruction as they need their principals support to do so.

The High Achievers school principal appeared oblivious to Cummins' (1978) Developmental Interdependence Theory that a poorly developed first language may result in subtractive bilingualism and poor ESL writing ability. Pat's standpoint may represent that of the Zimbabwean civic community but it is divorced from the current language policy standpoint, which highly esteems Zimbabwean indigenous languages and fervently encourages their use as mediums of instruction up to Form Two (Education Act of 1987 (as amended in 1990, 1996, 2006) in section 55, Part xi).

Unfortunately, indigenous languages are generally undermined by principals as they are associated with religious and traditional ceremonies such as church rituals and funerals, whereas English is associated with authority, advancement and academic excellence (Gora,

2017). It appears, therefore, that the colonial tendencies of exalting colonial languages are still visible in the current Zimbabwean education system.

### 5.6.3 Conducive school environment

A significant finding was the understanding that a conducive school environment enhances the development of learners' writing skills. The interviewees observed that learners' writing performance varied depending on the primary school environment they hailed from. According to the principals, learners from under-resourced primary school environments exhibited poor linguistic and writing abilities. Following are the principals and HoDs' remarks on this issue:

*A few Form Two learners have a weak linguistic expression, partly because basic grammar was poorly taught during the formative years of primary school due to lack of resources or poor teaching. (Pat)*

*I notice that Form Two learners from Government and council schools' manifest poor language abilities. This could be partly because of uncommitted teachers who man the schools. (Don)*

*Our pass rate is spoiled by learners from less resourced schools in the locations, who come to secondary school with poorly developed writing skills. (Mrs Moyo)*

*We have a challenge with the recruitment of Form One learners who manifest poor writing skills due to a poor teaching styles they were exposed to in primary school. (Mrs Dube)*

The principals and HoDs attributed poorly developed writing skills to the primary school experience. They seemed to overlook their mandate to enhance learners' subsequent writing abilities to age-appropriate levels. If left unchecked, these language deficits negatively impact on the language acquisition process at secondary school level and beyond. While it may be regarded as normal for Form Two learners to exhibit grammar, spelling and expression errors, these should gradually be eliminated within a rich linguistic environment. I argue that blaming the lack of writing expertise on the primary school years is not justified. Since language

develops in stages, the secondary school teachers should do their best to assist learners to make a smooth transition from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage of language development, as argued by Piaget (1978).

Principals and HoDs described their learners' performance as good and the overall learning environment as conducive. The description of the learning environment as conducive is, however, only partly accurate as during lesson observations I noticed that both schools do not meet some Cambridge standards, which are that schools should utilise magnetic boards with their writing classes if they are to catch up with the current technological advancement. These magnetic boards have been recommended in order to minimise occasional writing challenges. Secondly, both schools use locally produced textbooks such as *English Today*, *English for Zimbabwe* and *Step Ahead* that are not necessarily on the Cambridge list of recommended textbooks. The content of these books is less advanced than the examinable content. I shall dwell more on the textbooks in the segment dealing with document analysis.

Additionally, HoDs correctly observed that learners in private schools sometimes attain BICS yet they continue to struggle with the attainment of academic writing competence. The following statements confirm this discrepancy:

*Our learners generally have a good command of oral English. However, their writing is still imperfect.* (Mrs Moyo)

*Most learners concentrate on acquiring a native-like accent but their spelling is sometimes atrocious. Essay writing skills still leave a lot to be desired.* (Mrs Dube)

*Our school has very good public speakers. However, more has to be done on perfecting their written expression.* (Don)

*I think our learners should strive to develop written expression in as much as they perfect the oral skills. At present, their writing is still imperfect.*  
(Pat)

The responses cited above acknowledge the existence of partial academic writing proficiency amongst ESL learners in both schools. The observation of partial writing proficiency is buttressed by scholarly research undertaken in the US, Britain and South Africa (Cummins, 1979; Abukhattala, 2013; Krashen and Bland, 2014), where it was observed that most second language speakers attain discourse competence in the language of instruction but rarely develop the writing proficiency required for academic success in the same language. In the present study, exercise book analysis showed that the participant Form Two learners' writing still shows some gaps that the teachers indicated. Thi and Anh (2019) acknowledge the general existence of the gap between written and oral proficiency levels. Thi and Anh (2019) also posit that oral communication is complemented by performance features such as false starts, slips and hesitations which are unacceptable in written work. Academic writers are expected to write with clarity. I argue that principals and HoDs should take advantage of existence of learners' proficiency in BICS and develop it into written expression.

#### **5.6.4 Availability of resources**

Principals and HoDs at both schools expressed the belief that the secret to improving teacher efficiency is providing sufficient instructional resources.

*I support teachers by availing teaching and learning resources, occasionally observing lessons and financing teachers to attend educational seminars. (Pat)*

This received support from the others who stated thus:

*'The school has a well-stocked library and learners have a one is to one textbook ratio. (Don)*

*Our School Head ensures he supplies all needed resources. However, due to foreign currency shortages, he sometimes has to resort to locally available textbooks. (Mrs Dube)*

*To ensure improvement of writing skills, the school conducts computer-assisted language learning programmes, implements supervised reading programmes and subscribes to two local newspapers.(Mrs Moyo)*

The availability of resources was confirmed by data gathered from participant teachers. Interview excerpts revealed that Don, the principal at Hilbright, had acquired many library books because he believed that extensive reading positively impacted the learners' writing ability. Don emphasised that in addition to library books, learners were encouraged to own a dictionary. At Hilbright School, buying an English dictionary is mandatory for enrolment into Form One. During the interview, I also learnt that the Don believes that owning a dictionary aids spelling and other writing proficiencies. Prof and Hussein(2016) conducted a study in which they proved that students who frequently consult dictionaries attain greater achievement of English language writing than those who do not. As principals, Don and Pat are doing all they can to support academic writing skills in learners.

Mrs Dube also stated that children enhance their writing skills as they listen, speak and read. Teachers indicated that these resources enabled them to teach writing by integrating the macro skills. While these efforts sound plausible, observation and interview data revealed that the participant teachers scarcely used the computer-assisted programmes in writing instruction, thereby limiting the opportunities for vocabulary development. Both principals are, however, applauded for sponsoring inter-schools public speaking and debating competitions and maintaining a consistent teacher supervision schedule, which is implemented by HoDs.

Mrs Dube's stance on the complexity of acquiring writing ability is shared by several linguists, who have identified three crucial categories in the teaching process, namely: the learner's effort, instructional style and the complexity of the language system (Brown, 2007; Cook, 2008; Harmer, 2007; Rodgers et al., 2014; Richards, 2015). It appears the level of preparedness of Zimbabwe to partake in and benefit from ICT is still very low. The findings of this study revealed the non-availability of internet, projectors, electronic mail and electronic notice boards in private schools. Lack of skills of the teachers and an unreliable supply of electricity resulted in underutilisation of ICT. .

### 5.6.5 Bilingualism

This is the second main theme which emerged from the analysis of data drawn from interviews with the two school principals and the two HoDs. Under this theme, two sub-themes emerged, namely a) the effect of bilingualism on the development of writing skills, and b) Code-switching as a way of enhancing the development of writing skills. These two sub-themes are discussed in the section below.

#### 5.6.5.1 The effects of bilingualism on the development of writing skills

With regard to the question on the benefits of bilingualism on the development of writing proficiency skills, the results from the analysis of data revealed that the two principals and the HoDs were of the opinion that bilingualism was advantageous if English was paired with other modern languages other than Zimbabwean languages. The following comments of the principals reflect such a belief:

*I do not see a lot of advantages of the being Bilingual through learning to write in Zimbabwean local languages. I think it is better o pair up English with popular modern languages which are internationally revered. (Pat)*

*Bilingualism is advantageous in that it enables children to participate in the global bilingual community, but for now, teachers should just stick to teaching English till such a time when the school introduces French or German which is more accepted internationally." (Don)*

The HoDs had different views as follows:

*During college training, we learnt that the ability to switch between different languages makes bilinguals perform better academically. However, when I joined the school, only English was given preeminence, so I simply fitted into the school system. (Mrs Moyo)*

*I am fully aware that developing learners' first language buttresses their reading and writing ability but our schools focuses on the development of English (second language) writing skills only. (Mrs Dube)*

The responses of the principals demonstrate a lack of understanding of the potential benefits of additive bilingualism which they side-line. Principals think that modern languages like French and German are better substitutes for learners' first language but this view is not supported by academic research evidence. Stroud's (2014) research results, for example, confirm that bilinguals outperform monolinguals in written assignments. Other advantages are that bilingualism improves attitudes towards one's first language and culture (Griva and Chostelidou, 2013). In the cognitive development arena, bilinguals have been shown to master concepts easily, are very good at mathematics, remember concepts better, demonstrate an improved memory and write more coherently than their monolingual counterparts (Griva and Chostelidou, 2013; Stroud, 2014). There seems to be no definite effort from principals at tapping into these advantages of bilingualism. As such, they disadvantage the learners' development of literacy, emotional and cognitive skills. Regrettably, in Zimbabwe, the tendency towards subtractive bilingualism is predominant in private schools, which were formerly attended only by white and Asian learners. In these schools, the local culture and language tend to be side-lined while the Western culture and language are given prominence, as indicated by the principals' comments. Principals should note that the adoption of English as a first language results in a subtractive bilingual relationship between English and indigenous languages. In the process, learners lose their cultural identity. Cummins (2000) argues, therefore, that the first language should not be neglected if second language learners are to reach sufficient levels of writing proficiency.

Earlier on, the principals pointed out that the writing skills for Form Two learners developed gradually with appropriate instruction. Because of limited exposure to a first language, learners in both schools lack the benefits of additive bilingualism as described in Chapter 2. Stroud (2014) has indicated that bilinguals demonstrate better mastery of vocabulary and tend to plan and organise written work better than their monolingual counterparts. (Cummins, 2001) indicated that mastery of first language enhances writing sub-skills such as drafting points, revising, editing and composing essays. I argue, therefore, that the reason for the average writing proficiency level among Form Two learners is caused by neglecting the teaching of L1's in these private schools.. I am of the opinion that if these prejudices were addressed,



learners' writing skills would improve due to positive benefits derived from additive bilingualism (Mindit, 2008; Cummins 2000).

Some of the factors causing subtractive bilingualism are negative parental attitudes. Interviewed principals and HoDs confirmed that due to ignorance of benefits of bilingualism, parents pressure teachers to introduce English from as early as Grade 0 (non-formal education for 4-5 year olds) resulting in subtractive bilingualism.

*Parents expect us to teach their children in English, so we meet this stakeholder expectation and the expense of moulding bilinguals. (Pat)*

*Bilingualism will remain a nightmare because private school learners are taught English as a first language in their homes as early as Grade 0, so schools reinforce what parents are already inculcating. (Don)*

*It is standard practice that parents send children to private schools focus on refining learners' spoken and writing English skills, thus, shifting focus from Indigenous languages. (Mrs Dube)*

*Parents desire to see their children excelling in English writing proficiency more than local languages because they believe that English proficiency skills give learners brighter career prospects. (Mrs Moyo)*

The focus on English as a medium of Instruction conflicts with recommendations from language experts such as Littlehood (2013), Howell (2012) and Tarone (2013), who have opined that immersing learners in an exclusively English environment from a tender age may still result in partial bilingualism or semilingualism, as learners miss out on the benefits accrued from mastering a first language prior to the introduction of a second one. Principals who are prejudiced against their own speech community prevent their children from ever fully learning to write in the other language. Tarone (2013) argues, furthermore, that monolingual language learners tend to exhibit a shorter concentration span and poor written expression as compared to their bilingual counterparts. I argue that it is time for principals to consider redressing deeply-rooted cultural and linguistic inequalities between the first language and second language where English is invested with much more symbolic and cultural capital than local

languages. Only if these inequalities are addressed will learners experience additive bilingualism. Incorporating first languages as full-fledged languages in the private school curriculum could be the initial step towards developing balanced bilinguals.

### **5.6.6 Code-switching as a way of enhancing writing proficiency skills**

Asked to comment on the place of codeswitching in ESL writing development, principals and HoDs made the following remarks:

*I think codeswitching is a bit retrogressive as it deprives learners a chance to learn the target language. However, learners still prefer mixing English and local languages. (Pat)*

*We allow learners to codeswitch outside the classroom but encourage English only discourse during academic transactions. Using native languages may hinder communication with immigrant learners. (Don)*

*I feel that learners have the opportunity to use the first language at home but they need to focus on developing their second language during lessons. I encourage use of English only with my classes. (Mrs Moyo)*

*Learners are better off using English in all school settings so they can perfect both their spoken and written skills. (Mrs Dube)*

The above responses reflect that the English only medium of instruction is predominant in participant schools despite learners resorting to code switching as a coping mechanism. Participant principals and HoDs generally perceive code switching as a sign of linguistic deficiencies. This position is shared by opponents of code switching (Pennycook, 1994; Winge, 1998 and Praceck, 2003) who believe that native languages detract upcoming bilinguals from learning the target language. However, Cremin and Baker (2014) argue that code switching is a sign of implementation of linguistic resourcefulness which is beneficial to both the teachers and learners in perfecting their writing skill. The current negative attitudes towards code switching conflict with overwhelming scholarly evidence which points out that code switching strengthens linguistic competence among second language speakers (Nel and Muller, 2012;

Griva and Chostelidou, 2013; Alshenqeeti, 2014; Soongpankhao, 2016; Aydin, 2016; Bokan-smith, 2016). The above scholars posit that code switching strengthens mastery of two different language systems. Sensitive to these advantages, principals and HoDs should offer Form Two learners more opportunities to code switch in order to overcome linguistic shortcomings in situations where they cannot find the correct expression or vocabulary ideal for maintaining smooth conversation. Principals and HoDs should realise that two languages can complement each other in promoting cognitively engaged learning (Cummins, 2005) and that learners benefit from a bilingual and bi-literate setting.

The subsequent segment delves into results from Focus Group interviews. Findings drawn from Focus Group Interviews.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the results from empirical investigations were presented and discussed weaving in the theoretical framework which unpins this study. Furthermore, the reviewed literature was also used in providing an explanation of the research findings. The next chapter will provide a summary of the research findings as well as the recommendations made based on the study findings.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND**  
**CONCLUSIONS**

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 6 presents the major findings of the study, makes recommendations and concludes the study. The research was premised on the understanding that inadequately trained teachers are unable to teach academic writing proficiency to ESL learners. The major aim of the study was to investigate how ESL teachers in two private secondary schools in Harare District teach academic English writing proficiency to secondary school learners. The main research question was formulated as follows (par. 1.2):

1. How effective is the teaching of English academic writing proficiency in selected secondary schools in Zimbabwe?

Four sub-questions were formulated to answer the main research question namely:

- a) Which important theoretical frameworks and models influence the way language proficiency is conceptualised in literature and how are these models critiqued?
- b) Which key reforms have been implemented in the Zimbabwean education system since independence in a bid to create a new policy and legislative landscape, and how does the implementation of these reforms affect the teaching of English academic writing proficiency in schools?
- c) What strategies do ESL teachers use to teach English academic writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners in Zimbabwe?
- d) What recommendations can be made to improve the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners in Zimbabwe?

In responding to the sub-questions above, summaries of findings from the literature review (chapters 2 and 3) are presented to establish a framework against which findings from the qualitative investigations (chapters 4 and 5) are explicated. This chapter also discusses the research journey which provides a synopsis of my lived experience in conducting this study.

The study's contribution to theory, research participants, practice and further research is also discussed. Finally a conclusion for the study is drawn.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this section I provide a summary of the research findings from literature reviewed and this is followed by a discussion of findings from the qualitative investigation.

### **6.2.1 Summary of the literature review**

Chapter two starts off by discussing the theoretical framework which underpins this study which is Cummins' second language teaching theory and Vygotsky socio-cultural theory. Finally, the chapter discusses the bilingual education models which inform the teaching of ESL. Cummins theory distinguishes between school language (CALP) and everyday language (BICS) (cf 2.2.1). These two terms are useful in explaining the challenges that second language learners experience with reading and writing while appearing to have mastered communication skills. Furthermore, this distinction between social language and academic language is universally accepted by most researchers, teachers and policymakers. This construct is built into most research which informs the teaching of academic language across the curriculum. This distinction between social and academic language is further supported by large scale research (Biber, 1986; Carson, 1997). Despite such acceptance this distinction has been critiqued by other researchers such as Halbach (2012), Edelsky (1999) and Valadez (2000) to mention a few. These authors are of the opinion that such a distinction is misleading in that acquisition of both skills does not occur in a linear fashion. The BICS/CALP distinction assists in highlighting inappropriate and invalid second language assessments. The BICS/CALP distinction is further elaborated on by Cummins through his Task Difficulty Framework or the four quadrants (cf. 2.2.1.1). Using the four quadrant Cummins explains how tasks move from simple context embedded tasks to challenging context reduced tasks.

The reviewed literature revealed the importance of first language proficiency in facilitating second language learning. Cummins claims that there is a CUP among languages which makes transfer of skills from one language to the learning of the second language easier (cf. 2.2.3). This view is further supported by Cummins (1979) interdependence hypothesis. The

interdependence hypothesis (cf. 2.2.5) shows that proficiency in any language assists in the learning of a second language. A person able to read and write in any language does not learn how to decode when learning another language as decoding skills are the same (Manyike and Lemmer, 2012; 2015; Manyike and Phatudi, 2018). Similarly, the ability to synthesise information is also transferable to the learning of another language (Cummins, 1984). The threshold hypothesis deals with the importance of obtaining a certain language proficiency threshold which prevents semilingualism (Cummins 1978; 1980; 1984). The CUP facilitates the transfer of skills from one language to the other, whereas the BICS/CALP distinction shows the difference between everyday language and school language. BICS is acquired within a three to six months period of immersion in a language and is mostly supported by contextual cues. CALP on the other hand takes a period of six to twelve years to attain as it deals with decontextualised language (Cummins, 2010; 2012). Cummins conclusively shows the disadvantages of introducing a second language before learners' first languages are well developed. Such a transfer result in learners losing their first language's which he refers to as subtractive bilingualism (cf. 2.2.7.) In addition to the loss of the first language, such learners are further disadvantaged as they fail to acquire the second language adequately and this results in semilingualism.

The second theoretical framework discussed in Chapter two is Lev Vygotsky (1978), socio-cultural theory, which views learning as an interaction between the learner and more knowledgeable others, be it peers, teachers or parents (cf. 2.3.6). Siemenes (2014) outlines that social constructivists believe that learning is a result of interaction between the teacher, pupils, objects like textbooks, images and culturally organized activities and events. According to Vygotsky (1983), the teacher's role is that of providing a stimulating environment which allow learners to take responsibility of the development of their writing ability. Learning is thus scaffolded through building on what learners already know. Teachers are thus expected to establish learner's prior knowledge on the content they are about to teach. Vygotsky is famously known for his ZPD, which distinguishes what learners can do on their own and the assistance of the knowledgeable other (cf. 2.3.3). Vygotsky (1978a) also illuminates the necessity to assess learning but condemns traditional forms of assessment which are limited to achievements already actualised. Vygotsky (1979) advocates for more constructive and dynamic forms of assessments which focus on what learners can achieve with assistance (cf. 2.6.3). In line with Vygotsky's view on assessment, constructive models of assessing learners' academic writing proficiency in secondary schools are discussed. The use of scaffolding (cf.

2.7.2), collaboration (cf. 2.7.3) and self-assessment depart from traditional models of assessment for they focus on the process and not on the product of learning, and are predictive of learner potentials which can be developed and nurtured with assistance from more knowledgeable others. The literature reviewed also revealed approaches to teaching and assessing learners with diverse needs which include differentiated and individualised learning (cf. 2.8.1), collaboration in differentiated learning (cf. 2.8.2) and the use of a multisensory approach (cf. 2.8.3). These methods are consistent with principles of social-constructivist theory highlighted above. These methods focus on the need to tailor instruction to meet individual learners' needs, promote collaboration among learners and the exploitation of tools in the environment to scaffold learning

Chapter 3 discussed Zimbabwe's language in education policy prior and after independence and the place of indigenous languages in education in the country. The literature review revealed that formal education was initiated in Zimbabwe by the missionaries to enable the citizens to read the Bible. These missionaries were further responsible for the development of Zimbabwean indigenous languages into their written forms (Sibanda, 2018; Viriri, 2016). Since the indigenous people lacked proficiency in English, the medium of instruction was African languages during the first six months of schooling and thereafter learners were transitioned to English medium of instruction (par. 3.2.1). The colonial government recognised Shona and Ndebele as official languages to be used as mediums of instruction before such transition. The recognition of these languages elevated their status above other indigenous languages. According to Makoni (2013) and Sibanda (2018), the language in education policy during the colonial era was not planned but implemented on an adhoc basis.

The prohibition of the use of other indigenous languages in education resulted in speakers of these languages being forced to learn Shona and Ndebele. Black learners were further forced to transition into English medium of instruction before they had adequacy literacy skills in their first language (Kadenge & Kufakunesu, 2018; Kadenge & Mugari, 2015; Hikwa, 2015; The Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry, 1999). Despite the importance of developing first language academic language proficiency, these language in education policies remained unchanged after independence. Language reforms were tinkered with through the 1987 Education Act (Magwa, 2015; Kadenge & Mugari, 2015; Muchenje et al., 2013).

The current status of languages in Zimbabwe is stipulated in the 1987 Education Act which points out that “English is the official language; 16 local languages have been ascribed the status of national languages with restricted official use” (cf. 3.7.2). According to Kendall and Benson (2008), Djite (2008) and Sibanda (2018) language in education policies influence the conceptualisation and teaching of ESL. The 1987 Education Act grants provision for the use of other indigenous languages as medium of instruction provided approval for their use is granted by the Ministry of Education (Government of Zimbabwe 1987 Section 62 Sub-section 4). I am of the view that this Act failed to reform the language in education policies as it did not depart from previous policies. The English hegemony was not challenged and other previously marginalised languages were retained on the periphery. Although further attempt were made to revise the language in education policies through the Nziramasanga Commission (cf. 3.6.2), the recommendations of the Commission were never implemented and as such the status quo was upheld. Visible changes in the language in education policy were only made with the Education Act of 2006 wherein previously marginalized languages namely, Chitonga, TjiKalanga, ChiNambya, Tshivenda and Xichangana, were included in education as medium of instruction and could be taught as subjects up to Grade 7 (Magwa, 2015; Chivhanga & Chimhenga, 2013). Presently, all indigenous languages are recognised for use as medium of instruction in education in Zimbabwe through the 2013 amended Constitution. Zimbabwe recognized 15 indigenous languages to be used as medium of instruction together with English. Chapter three further elaborated on various challenges faced by private schools in implementing the current language in education policy (cf. 3.9). I Among other challenges it was observed that these schools appear unready to implement the language in education policies in education. The chapter ends with an evaluation of special initiatives that support language in education policy implementation in schools. A synopsis of Zimbabwean learners’ performance in English as a second language in schools is also presented in this chapter (cf. 3.14).

Chapter four provides an overview of the research design and research methods. The qualitative research paradigm (cf. 4.2.1), and the research methodology (cf. 4.2.2) were appraised which included population of the study, the sampling methods, the selection of the sites and the participants (cf. 4.2.5), data collection (cf. 4.2.6) and analysis (cf. 4.3) and trustworthiness and credibility (cf. 4.4). The chapter was concluded by discussing the measures of trustworthiness (cf. 4.4). In line with principles of ethnography, data were collected through document analysis,



classroom-based observation and interviews. The chapter further discussed ethical measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of data

Chapter five presented the findings from the qualitative investigation. Research findings from various research instruments used were discussed under each of the research instruments namely, document analysis, lesson observation, semi-structured interviews with participant teachers, HODs and principals.

### **Summary of the empirical investigation**

The following section summarises the empirical findings of this study. The data was gathered from lesson observations, interviews with the participant teachers, administrators, and focus group interviews with learners.

### **Findings from lesson observations and document analysis**

The results from lesson observations revealed that the participating ESL teachers adopted effective teaching approaches and participation structures were well defined. The effectiveness of their teaching approaches confirms that ESL teachers with academic language proficiency in their first language are able to transfer such skills to second language learners (Cummins 1978; 1979; 1984). Furthermore, the observation results demonstrated that learners exposed to a linguistically rich repertoire tend to develop better writing competence further confirming that it does not matter which language is taught first, availability of resources, rich literate environments and the perceived value of language influence the levels of proficiency acquired. Zhang (2019) argues that it is possible for learners in immersion programmes to attain academic writing proficiency levels that were equivalent to native speakers through positive transfer of linguistic skills from learners' first language to their second language. This is further supported by Cummins' (1979) Interdependence Hypothesis. A major observation was that when classroom practitioners were fully equipped to scaffold writing content, the learners excelled and readily mastered the requisite concepts. Apparently, when beginners with limited proficiency are exposed to product-based approaches, their academic writing skills are enhanced (cf. 5.3).

The observation results further revealed that although well resourced, Zimbabwean private schools are not tapping into the benefits of computer based teaching and learning. Yet studies

(Okutulu, 2013; Warschauer, 2015; Fellner and Apple, 2017) reveal that effective manipulation of technology could narrow the cultural and linguistic gap among English language learners in secondary schools. Employing technology would not only equip Zimbabwean private school learners with requisite academic writing proficiency skills but also enhance their overall digital literacy skills. Through interaction with computers, learners would have greater opportunities for practising English language in both academic and non-academic settings.

Observation results revealed that teachers were able to actively engage learners during lessons. The active engagement of learners in their learning is in line with Vygotsky's (1978; 1979; 1986) theory which emphasises that learning is not a passive process. The observation results further revealed the importance of scaffolding in learning further supporting Vygotsky learning theory. The two teachers were aware of the importance of scaffolding, hence all writing instructions were scaffolded and as such learner's prior knowledge was used to build in new knowledge. The use of the process writing model further supported the scaffolding process that were used during academic writing instruction. Scaffolding further assisted teachers to move learners into the ZPD wherein tasks that could not be performed on their own were accomplished through the assistance of the knowledgeable others, for example, teachers or peers in the classrooms. The observation results also revealed teachers' ability to integrate the four language skills in their lessons. Writing instructions were not conducted in isolation; they followed the reading of a passage, listening to the passage read, discussing the passage and then writing. Teaching these four language skills in an integrated way is what is missing in most language classes. Furthermore, active learner participating in language learning is also missing in most ESL classes which in term rob learners of the opportunity to use the language in an authentic context.

A key finding from this research was that writing competence does not come naturally but requires extensive practice. Successful development of second language writing skills requires learners to engage with a variety of writing genres. Reading is important in that it exposes learners to a wide range of vocabulary and well-constructed sentences by seasoned writers. Harwell (2016) considers reading as a warm-up activity which comes prior to writing. Ghamrawi (2014) asserts that the best way to develop proficient writing skills is focusing on lexis development programmes, an exhaustive speaking and reading programme and sharpening listening skills. Learners seemed to benefit from the practice sessions done prior to the production of written scripts. Lack of personal motivation and inadequate reading practice

negatively impacts the development of ESL writing skills. When learners are motivated to learn, they will find pleasure in participating in writing activities and do them to the best of their ability.

Data from observations further revealed that the teacher participants employed the Process Model of writing where learners, wrote, reviewed, pre-viewed and peer edited each other's work before submitting the final script to the teacher (par. 5.5.1; 5.5.3). The predominant teaching strategies employed during the lesson were mimicking, drama, debate, use of the questions based on DBA and segments to interrogate comprehension passages. Lessons strengths included appropriate use of diction, appeal to learners' imaginations and the apt use of figurative expressions. Such transformative teaching strategies signalled a move away from traditional perceptions of writing as a solitary exercise. Journal writing proved to be a useful way to foster academic writing skills. Through the teachers' scaffolding most learners were able to develop topic sentences for their essays and produced well-formulated essays. This is supported by Vygotsky's (1978; 1979; 1986) concept of the importance of mediated instruction and effective learning which is only attained through active engagement in the learning process. Teacher feedback enabled learners to self-correct. Most learners benefited from peer feedback but the few learners who did not take it seriously continued to struggle with writing. Teachers' approaches, such as brainstorming, appealed to learners' imagination. The brainstorming session expands answers using different vocabulary, restating answers and demonstrating actions. Most group activities were followed by class discussions and written work. These methods were assumed to facilitate language acquisition and improve proficiency to acceptable Zimbabwe Junior Certificate levels.

The participating ESL teachers were highly proficient in English although they were not English first language speakers. I believe their levels of education as well as the exposure they had played a role in improving their own language proficiency skills. Furthermore, working with learners from affluent communities with a reading culture and the availability of resources in their schools further enhances their teaching success. However, the observation results revealed that these teachers also experienced challenges in their teaching and these challenges are discussed in the section below.

The observation results revealed that Form Two learners tended to rely on their first language while writing, which affected their writing. Such transfer of first language to second language

academic writing manifested itself through the translation of words and borrowing syntax from the first language. First language interference in academic writing in Zimbabwe has been noted (Zaswita and Ihsan, 2019). The results further revealed that teachers believed they had insufficient time for teaching academic writing. Academic writing is further impaired by improper audio-visual aids, employment of traditional pedagogy and learners' weak academic backgrounds (Brining, 2015; Bokan-Smith, 2016). However, the findings of this study dispute their findings as the context of their studies differs from the context of this study which was conducted in an affluent environment with learners who enjoy a reading culture and good role models.

An analysis of the scheme of work revealed that it covered various topics such as comprehension, composition, debating, summarising, expressions (cf.5.1) An analysis of the teachers scheme of work revealed they were of the opinion that effective teaching entails dividing expected linguistic proficiencies into smaller teachable entities. Rodgers et al. (2014) and Chibawu and Saluwu 2020) call this the structural approach to language teaching. This approach is in contrast with the recommended communicative approach to language teaching. The results from an analysis of learners exercise books revealed that learners were given enough opportunity to practice their writing skills. I gleaned that the writing tasks varied enabling learners to use different writing genres. It further revealed teachers ability to provide quality feedback to the leaners written work.

### **6.2.2 Findings from interviews with the two ESL teachers**

The research results revealed that the two schools manifest a culture of excellence and professionalism. The two ESL teachers appreciated the support received from parents, the school principals and various stakeholders (cf. 5.8.4). Such support is prevalent in almost all affluent schools globally. Educated and affluent parents can actively engage with the schools because they are not intimidated by the school environment. They can at times become a hindrance to the school management because of their over-involvement, the interview results further revealed that school management is responsible for providing a conducive learning environment by recruiting their preferred teachers and ensuing that they are handsomely rewarded (cf. 5.8.4). Learners are motivated as they also have good role models both at school and at home. This value of academic excellence is constantly reinforced at assembly and during public addresses to learners. The influence of the immediate environment in shaping society is

confirmed by research which shows the irrefutable link between cultural values and language development (Scholar, Thi and Vo, 2012; Livingstone, 2015; Selvaraj *et al.*, 2019). These concerted efforts result in the development of adequate writing proficiency skills which are essential for academic success (cf. 2.4.1).

Lack of adequate writing practice is the major reason for an average performance in writing. Learners become better writers if they plan their writing and follow all the stages of the process model of writing (Graham 2018; Sowell 2019). Teachers in this study effectively followed the process writing model. The interview results revealed that learners who skipped the stages of the writing process model presented poor quality essays. This research enunciated that there is no universal standard of ESL teaching. Amongst other challenges experienced by the ESL teachers was the unavailability of Cambridge endorsed textbooks in their classrooms. Although the schools have well-resourced libraries, the available books do not support the Cambridge syllabus. The economic meltdown in Zimbabwe makes the provision of new prescribed books a challenge. However, I am of the opinion that this challenge, although serious, is mitigated by the availability of resources which enables learners to read extensively resulting in better performance. I am of the opinion that textbooks which employ complex vocabulary enhances learners' reading and writing ability and effectively prepares them for the Cambridge examinations. The absence of recommended textbooks made acquisition of requisite skills as required by the Cambridge examination a challenge (cf. 5.7). Most recommended textbooks demonstrate familiarity with American and British culture which Zimbabwean textbooks lack. Furthermore, learners are normally assessed using first language-medium techniques (Milligan, Clegg and Tikly, 2016) and yet in local teacher training, pedagogy is aligned to second language medium learning (Herrera-Mosquera and Tovar-Perdomo, 2017). This is a challenge as learners miss out on the necessary exposure to Westernised contexts that dominate the Cambridge examinations.

The results revealed that the quality of teaching and learning in private schools was of superior quality compared to other schools. Private schools in Zimbabwe are known for recruiting qualified university graduates, which explains their better performance. In addition, private schools are known to have smaller class sizes of 25 to 35 learners, which intensify individualised teacher and learner interactions. The learning environments in these schools is thus conducive. Moreover, although they followed prescribed textbooks, participant teachers occasionally introduced interesting variations in their teaching (cf. 5.5).

The results also revealed that learners struggled with formulation of syntactic structures, spelling, choice of vocabulary, the mixing of tenses, lack of coherence and first language interference in their essay writing (cf. 5.5.6).

### **6.2.3 Findings from the interviews with school principals and HoDs**

Interviews with the two principals and two HoDs revealed that the two private schools do not offer indigenous languages as subjects beyond Form Two level. Two of the reasons propounded were overcrowding the timetable and learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds (cf. 5.8.2). By refusing to acknowledge indigenous languages, both schools appear to be teaching learners to accept that their languages and the cultural values which are embedded in these languages, are inferior. Milligan et al. (2016) contend that there is a strong relationship between language and culture. Regrettably, learners whose culture is not affirmed by schools become alienated from their communities. Clearly, principals and HoDs are very particular about preserving the 'sanctity' of English language (cf. 5.8.2). These negative attitudes towards indigenous languages, coupled with lack of authentic role models results in persistence of learner errors.

Another significant and related finding was that principals and HoDs have a poor conception of the interdependence theory. An understanding of how languages intersect could result in the teaching of learners' first language to enhance their second language learning (Cummins, 1979; 1986; 2000). School principals who understand Interdependence Theory works support teachers by encouraging positive learner attitudes towards the first language or by giving the subjects equal slots on the school timetable which was absent at both schools. I argue that this lack of understanding of important language development theories may curtail teachers' effective implementation of these theoretical frameworks due to lack of support (cf. 8.3).

A significant finding was that principals and HoDs in the two schools described their learners' performance as good and the overall learning environment as conducive. According to them, learners from under-resourced primary school environments exhibit poor linguistic and writing abilities. The description of the learning environment as conducive is, however, not as accurate as during lesson observations I noticed that despite the advantages associated with technology, both schools do not utilise magnetic boards in their writing classes. Magnetic

boards have the advantage of minimising occasional writing challenges such as poor spelling and wrong expression (cf. 5.8.4). Additionally, HoDs pointed out that learners in private schools tend to manifest BICS yet they continue to struggle with the attainment of writing competence. This observation is supported by Cummins (1979), Abukhattala (2013) and Krashen and Bland (2014), who opines that second language speakers attain discourse competence in the language of instruction quicker but require more time to develop academic proficiency (cf. 5.8.7). Additionally, bilinguals have been shown to master concepts easily and write more coherently than their monolingual counterparts (Griva and Chostelidou, 2013; Stroud, 2014). Lamentably, despite all these advantages, there seems to be no definite effort from principals and HoDs at tapping into these advantages (cf. 5.8.6).

The results revealed learners' lack of opportunity to be immersed into English-speaking communities. Immersion is necessary for second language learners as it provides them with the opportunity of authentic role models and a better understanding of the culture (cf. 5.8.7). Research provides evidence that poor modelling of language results in learners manifesting linguistic difficulties which later turn into academic difficulties. According to Cummins (2009), a strong immersion environment increases the development of ESL language skills. Immersion programmes would avail a better awareness of language forms. Unfortunately, ESL pedagogy in Zimbabwe has been hampered by the fact that the majority of teachers are second language speakers of the language who, like the learners, have fewer opportunities for contact with first language users of the language (cf.5.8.7).

### **6.3 CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE**

This study makes a contribution to the body of theory as most studies of the teaching of English academic writing proficiency skills of ESL learners have been conducted in disadvantaged schools with learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings of this study provide results of the teaching of English academic writing proficiency in private schools with learners from affluent backgrounds. The best practices from these private schools could be shared with teachers from other schools in Zimbabwe.

## **6.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE PARTICIPANTS**

The research participants who were the ESL Form Two teachers, HoDs and school principals benefited from being part of this study as the process of teaching academic writing proficiency skills to secondary school learners was highlighted. It provided all the research participants with the opportunity to reflect on the teaching of ESL academic writing. Through participating in this study school principals became aware of the importance of first language instruction to second language learners. The ESL teachers were also assisted to appreciate that first language interference is natural in second language learning. This understanding will further enhance their teaching of academic writing to these learners.

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY**

This study was underpinned by the Cummins second language learning theories and Vygotsky's socio cultural theory. Specifically, Cummins (1979, 1980a, 1984) task difficulty model assist in guiding teachers on the nature of appropriate tasks to be provided to develop learners academic writing skills. Teachers were able to provide cognitively demanding tasks to their learners such as requiring them to synthesis information. I argue that Cummins model require adjustments as it was developed using research conducted in environments where English was the main language, In such environments there are enough role models for the learners. Vygotsky' (1978) socio-cultural learning theory further assisted in guiding the teaching of academic writing. Specifically, the ESL teachers were able to scaffold writing and created environments for learners to be actively engaged in their own learning through collaborating with peers and discussions. Through the use of process writing which acknowledges the five different ways in which learners outgrow writing errors teachers were able to move the learners into the ZPD. That is through writing, re-writing, and peer editing and writing the final draft. The Process Model has become a significant standard in the field of ESL writing skills as it guides learners into constructing written texts. This further buttresses the constructivist theory by stressing that learners ought to interact with teachers since they are invaluable sources of linguistic input (Maseko and Ndlovu, 2013; Maseko and Dhlamini, 2014). Employing different linguistic theories leads to positive results or outcomes for both learners and teachers. The findings from this research corroborate the usefulness of the Process Model as a means of exploring the teaching of ESL in Zimbabwean secondary schools.



However, the implementation must be based on the needs of each school because each school is unique.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE**

The above summary of findings is the basis on which implications for the future of writing skills development in Zimbabwe is based. Informed by the findings from both literature review and qualitative investigation, the following recommendations are made:

- Language teaching in Zimbabwean secondary schools should be enhanced using technology, this is viable in well-resourced private schools.
- ESL teachers should be involved in syllabi formulation and marking examinations to broaden their view of Cambridge Syllabus expectations.
- School principals should ensure that school timetables allow more opportunities to engage in independent writing practice.
- Encourage learners to develop a writing culture and the desire to write for pleasure.
- Authorities should refurbish and replenish existing public libraries with ICT to captivate learners' reading and writing interests.
- School principals, teachers and librarians need to encourage reading competitions in which the most avid reader per class is rewarded for reading and summarising the highest number of books.
- Encourage the efficient functioning of mobile libraries, as current ones are underutilised.
- Administer English language proficiency examinations for teachers at the recruitment stage to ensure successful instructional practices.
- ESL learners might write better if exposed to research-based writing skills, which enable them to investigate their own writing and justify it.
- Creation of young writers' forums where learners peer teach and exchange ideas about writing skills development are essential.
- School principals should sponsor their teachers to embark on a variety of pre-service training programmes such as the UK-based, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults

(CELTA) and the Trinity Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

## **6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future researchers may focus on ways of maintaining continued improvement of academic writing performance among learners in less affluent school categories such as government and council schools in order to attain a holistic picture on the writing proficiency among different categories of secondary school learners in Zimbabwe. It is suggested that future studies may expand the scope of the study by examining ESL language teaching at university level. It appears that the location of the schools, coupled with the socio-economic conditions of the learners in urban backgrounds, play a significant role in the expansion of learners' writing skills. Subsequent studies may endeavour to investigate areas such as parental contribution to the development of writing competence and the effect of parental educational level and economic status on academic writing performance of learners. It is also imperative that researchers examine other factors impacting academic writing performance and how it can be refined.

## **6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research study has some limitations. Firstly, the research is not representative of all Zimbabwean private schools as only two private schools were purposively selected. A major limitation for this study is that the two private schools selected are situated within the same geographic area. Another limitation of this study is that only two ESL teachers were selected; a larger sample could have enhanced the research findings for this study. Secondly, the global village has become an intricate web of ever-changing realities thus, rendering some of the observed 'straight-jacket' approaches to writing such as over-reliance on the textbook, drilling and rote learning, obsolete. There is need to adapt current writing strategies to match the ever-evolving changes in the modern world of ESL learning. Within the scope of this study, the researcher only concentrated on examining ESL strategies employed by Form Two teachers. Due to the small teacher-pupil ratio in private schools, the research is limited to very few participants. As a result, the research results may not be representative of all the Form Two learners at government and council schools.

## **6.9 CONCLUSION**

The goal of this study was to investigate the teaching of academic writing proficiency skills among secondary school ESL learners in Zimbabwe. The goal of this study was achieved and the results show the importance of the use of process writing in conjunction with other strategies to improve learners' writing proficiency skills. Teaching strategies were analysed in the context of existing second language acquisition and learning theories. An understanding of second language learning theories facilitates teachers' selection of teaching methods. It became apparent that teaching writing in a second language is a challenging task. However, adopting creative teaching styles yields best results. Successful teachers of academic writing focus on promoting learners' mastery of appropriate diction, spelling conventions and an understanding of cohesive devices as well as making use of the writing processes, such as planning, pre-writing, writing, editing, revising and overall text organisation. Learners writing skills were enhanced through carefully structured activities, appropriate feedback, coupled with clear and specific writing goals.

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**APPENDIX A: INFORMED PERMISSION, CONSENT AND ASSENT LETTERS**

University of Zimbabwe  
Box MP167  
Mount Pleasant  
Harare

7 July 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT HILBRIGHT  
SCIENCE COLLEGE/ HIGH ACHIEVERS COACH**

TO: THE SCHOOL HEADS AND THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

CC: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

Contact details of the person (+2637727576/+263772727117)

Dear Mr Pardon Mugari/Mr Chikandiwa, The School Head(s) and The Secretary of Education. I, Gracious Mupupuni am doing research under supervision of Professor Manyike, a professor at the University of South Africa, in the Department of Education towards a PhD. I am a self-sponsored PhD student. I am inviting your English Language Head of Department to participate in a study entitled "**TEACHING WRITING PROFICIENCY SKILLS TO ESL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ZIMBABWE.**" The aim of the study is to address the gap that exists the current English Second Language (ESL) instruction in Zimbabwean High Schools and the expected English Language requirements at tertiary institutions. It appears that Zimbabwean teachers do not fully tackle grammatical techniques and lexis that ESL speakers require in the workplace. The fundamental assumption is that for

students to be successful in academic writing in English they must have mastered the rudiments of grammar. The thrust of this study therefore, is to investigate how teachers are teaching Academic English Language Proficiency to high school learners and suggest ways of improving ESL teaching practice. Your school has been selected because of its exceptional results, so I wish to identify the secret of your success and make recommendations on best ways of teaching Academic English Writing Proficiency.

The study will entail lesson observations over a period of three months to determine whether teachers are aware of the need to teach all four language competences. The research will adopt the mixed methods principles of data collection and analysis to enable the researcher a chance to cross check one method with the other, thereby enhancing validity. Several research instruments will be followed. These include document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis which takes the form of lesson observations, interviews and examination of artefacts will help the researcher to determine the linkages between content being taught and the development of academic literacy.

The benefits of this study are that it will contribute to a better understanding of Zimbabwe's Language teaching policy reforms in secondary schools. It is hoped that the proposed study will stimulate school policy makers, administrators, researchers and teachers to reflect on Academic English Language Policies and enable them to effectively implement on best classroom practices. I also hope that examining how ESL is taught will enable me to make recommendations on the most effective strategies of teaching Academic English Language Proficiency skills.

There are no potential risks involved in this study.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail giving a written report to the school authorities which participants may have access too if necessary.

Yours sincerely

G. Mupupuni

GRACIOUS MUPUPUNI

(RESEARCHER)

**APPENDIX B: TEACHERS' CONSENT FORM**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the \_lesson proceedings, Focus Group Discussions and oral interviews. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) GRACIOUS MUPUPUNI

\_\_\_\_\_  
G.MUPUPUNI 7/7/19 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature Date

**APPENDIX C: PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A  
RESEARCH PROJECT**

University of Zimbabwe  
Box MP167  
Mount Pleasant  
Harare  
7 July 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

**EXAMPLE OF A LETTER REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS  
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

**Dear Parent**

Your \_\_\_\_\_ <son/daughter/child> is invited to participate in a study entitled  
**"TEACHING WRITING PROFICIENCY SKILLS TO ESL SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN ZIMBABWE."**

I am undertaking this study as part of my Doctoral research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is investigate how ESL is taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The study will examine ways of improving practice so that learners acquire a relative level of ESL proficiency by the time they enroll into tertiary institutions. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because she is learning ESL at my selected site. I expect to have 30 other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

- 1) Take part in a survey that shall be conducted in the three months that I will be stationed at the school. The interviews will be conducted strictly during school hours ( between 10am-11am) in the presence of my co-researcher and video recorder. The research will be conducted within a period of 3 months at three different secondary schools (Vainona, Mount Pleasant High and Hilbright Science College). Surveys will be conducted within 20-30 minutes per session.
- 2) Take part in an interview -The interviews will equally be conducted during daytime in the presence of my co-researchers and video man.
- 3) Take part in a group interview: Similarly, both group and individual interviews will be conducted during day time. My co-researcher will conduct the interviews while I take notes. the video man records all proceedings.
- 4) Complete a test The Scholastic tests will be distributed to the entire class and students will respond to set questions within a stipulated period. The duration for the test is one hour.

Other Video recordings will be done by a designated person for all the above proceedings. I am therefore seeking your voluntary permission to conduct these recordings both for the group and individual recordings.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study. However, the possible benefits to education are that teachers will get a chance to introspect into their practice and coin better ways of developing you're the learners' ESL proficiency. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place during regular classroom activities between 10am-11am with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. However, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternative activity will be available in form of visiting the school library to do supplementary reading.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

The benefits of this study are that teachers will refine their practice in the teaching of ESL. Learners are likely to develop their current linguistic repertoire especially as they prepare to undergo the interviews. It is anticipated that the research will also sharpen both learners and teachers reasoning skills especially as they contemplate why they select certain teaching methods. There are no foreseeable risks in this research.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

If you have questions about this study please ask me or my study supervisor, Prof. MANYIKE Department of Education, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0775423338 and my e-mail is gmupupuni@yahoo.co.uk. The e-mail of my supervisor is manyitv@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by the school headmaster and the UNISA Ethics Committee of the College of Education.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child:

Sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian's name (print )

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian's signature:

Date:

GRACIOUSMUPUPUNI

G.MUPUPUNI\_\_\_\_\_

21/8/2018\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name (print)

Researcher's signature

Date:

**APPENDIX D: LEARNERS' CONSENT FORM**

University of Zimbabwe

Box MP167

Mount Pleasant

Harare

21 August 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

**EXAMPLE OF A LETTER REQUESTING ASSENT FROM LEARNERS IN A  
SECONDARY SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

Title of your research "**TEACHING WRITING PROFICIENCY SKILLS TO ESL  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ZIMBABWE.**"

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Date 21/8/2018

I am doing a study on Teaching English Second Language as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways that your teachers can use to teach English Second Language Proficiency better. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study. I would like to ask you \_respond to questions about how your teachers teach the four language proficiency skills. In addition, you shall complete a questionnaire and participate in a focus



group discussion involving 6-8 participants.. Answering the \_questions will not take longer than 30 minutes per session.

I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

The possible benefits to education are that teachers will get a chance to introspect into their practice and coin better ways of developing your children's the ESL proficiency. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study. There are no potential risks in participating in this study. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at 0775423338. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: GRACIOUS MUPUPUNI

Phone number: 0775423338

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

**WRITTEN ASSENT**

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's name (print):                      Learner's signature:    Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's name (print)                      Witness; signature    Date

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name (print)                      Parent/guardian's signature    Date

GRACIOUS MUPUPUNI                      G. MUPUPUNI                      7/7/19  
Researcher's name (print)                      Researcher's signature:                      Date:

**APPENDIX E: INITIAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE ESL TEACHERS**

**SECTION A**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

1. GENDER.....(MALE/FEMALE)
2. SCHOOL NAME.....
3. LOCATION.....(RURAL/URBAN)
4. RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY.....(Government, Private, Church, other)
5. FORMS TAUGHT.....
6. Highest Qualification (T1, T2, Grad CE, B.Ed., Any other)
7. TEACHING EXPERIENCE (0-5YEARS, 5-10 YERS, ABOVE 10 YEARS)

**SECTION B**

**TEACHERS' BELIEFS ON TEACHING WRITING**

9. In your opinion, what influences the choice of language of instruction more, the national language policy or the teacher's personal beliefs? Justify your answer.

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10. What, in your view, is the contribution of the national and school syllabi to the teaching of English second language writing skills?

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11. Which English Second Language theories influence your conceptualisation of learners' language development?

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12. Which key Language-in-education reforms have influenced the teaching of English language in the schools?

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13. State key teaching strategies can be implemented to improve the teaching of academic English writing skills in Zimbabwe.

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14. Explain the models of writing which influence your teaching style.

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15. What are your views about the teaching of formal grammar to secondary school ESL learners?

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16. Which language do you prefer when teaching English and why?

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17. What do you consider to be your role in the essay writing lesson?

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18. How do you teach academic literacy skills to your class?

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19. Given the chance, which 3 subjects do learners prefer writing about?

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20. At what level does it seem appropriate to introduce narrative writing, drama, exposition, argumentation? Why?

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21. Which writing techniques would you adopt to enhance clarity, develop form and initiate originality?

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**SECTION C**

**CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

23. What relationship exists between reading and quality of writing? To what extent do you use the textbook and library books in the teaching of ESL writing skills?

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24. What do you perceive to be the relationship between the acquisition of a learner's L1 and L2?

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25. Comment on the contribution of code switching to the development of English Academic Writing skills in ESL learners in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools.

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26. How do you equip students for more complex academic writing tasks in tertiary institution?

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27. In your opinion, how effectively do teacher training institutions prepare teachers for the teaching of ESL proficiency skills?

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28. Which theories inform the way you teach English as a second language?

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29. How often do you devote time to teaching the culture of first language speakers of English?

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30. How often do you use group work in your ESL classes? How effective do you find group activity?

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31. Do you come from an environment where English is the first language?

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32. At what age were you exposed to English language?

.....

33. On a scale of 1-5, explain your own proficiency of the English language.

.....

34. Comment on the relationship between the teachers' level of language proficiency and development of ESL writing skills in learners.

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35. Comment on the contribution of code switching (mixing Shona /Ndebele with English) to the development of English Academic Writing skills in ESL learners in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools.

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36. What recommendations can you make towards improving the teaching of Academic writing skills?

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## APPENDIX F: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FORM

| DOCUMENTS TO BE ANALYSED                     | ASPECTS FOR ANALYSIS  | OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Timetable                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Total number of lessons on the timetable</li> <li>-Total number of lessons for Tshivenda home language</li> <li>-Number of reading lessons for Tshivenda per week</li> <li>- Duration of the lesson</li> </ul>  |                           |
| School syllabus                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Availability of the school syllabus</li> <li>-Teaching and assessment aims and objectives</li> <li>-Relatedness of topics selected and sequenced for the term</li> <li>-Content breakdown</li> <li>-Methodologies</li> <li>-Assessment strategies</li> <li>-Resources</li> </ul>  |                           |
| Scheme-cum-plan                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Topic/content</li> <li>-Aims and objectives</li> <li>-Activities for learning and assessment</li> <li>-Teaching methods used</li> <li>-Resources-learning aids and content material</li> <li>-Assessment strategies used</li> <li>-Evaluation – comments</li> </ul>   |                           |
| Reading record book and remedial record book | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Aspects taught and assessed</li> <li>-Frequency of administering assessments</li> <li>-Teacher’s comments on learner performance</li> <li>-Remedial/intervention strategies employed to assist learners with reading problems</li> </ul>  |                           |
| Reading tests                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Objectives of the assessment</li> <li>-Competences being assessed by the tests</li> <li>-Mode of assessment – silent or oral</li> <li>Appropriateness of material in relation to learners’ cognitive level</li> <li>-Cultural relevance and contextual meaningfulness</li> <li>-Sensitivity to dialectical variations</li> <li>-Performance evaluation</li> </ul> |                           |



**APPENDIX G: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS WITH ESL PARTICIPANT  
TEACHERS**

**SECTION A**

**POLICY ISSUES**

1. What are the policy guidelines in place for ESL writing instruction in Zimbabwean Secondary schools?

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2. What differences exist between pre-independence and post-independence English Second Language policies?

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3. What are the major aims of English Second Language teaching? How are these aims communicated to the teachers?

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4. What changes have taken place in the English Second Language syllabi?

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5. How clear is the English syllabus to the teachers who have to implement it?

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6. What challenges do teachers encounter in interpreting the syllabi?

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7. What writing competences does the 'Ordinary Level' syllabus teach? What other skills worth fostering does the Ordinary Level examination overlook?

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8. How do examinations influence the way English Second Language skills are taught?

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9. How do teachers and learners conceptualise writing?

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10. Which writing skills are adequately developed in the current ESL syllabus?

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11. What major shortcomings of English Second Language writing instruction do you notice as you carry out your duties? How can these shortcomings be corrected?

## APPENDIX H: LESSON OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Date of observation:

Lesson period:

Observations will be recorded in accordance with headings in the table below.

| Activity   | Observations |
|--|--------------|
| Reading component(s) and skills taught                 |              |
| Objectives covered                                     |              |
| Previous knowledge/assumptions                         |              |
| Teaching method(s) employed                            |              |
| Resources used   |              |
| Reading activities                                     |              |
| Learner participation and classroom interaction        |              |
| Catering for diverse needs of learners during teaching |              |
| Assessment strategies used                             |              |
| Teacher interpretation and use of assessment data      |              |



**APPENDIX I: CLASSROOM INTERACTION GUIDE**

| ACTIVITY   | School A | School B |
|--|----------|----------|
| (1) the number of times the teacher spoke to learners              |          |          |
| (2) the number of times learners gave responses                    |          |          |
| (3) the frequency of chalkboard use                                |          |          |
| (4) the frequency of consulting the scheme book                    |          |          |
| (5) the frequency of written assignments                           |          |          |
| (5) the frequency of written assignments                           |          |          |
| 6) the frequency of key textbook usage                             |          |          |
| (7) the frequency of using charts and audio-visual aids; and       |          |          |
| (8) adherence to or deviance from the language-in-education policy |          |          |