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WESTERN CAPE

**INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF FIRST-YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS  
AT THE KHOMASDAL CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA**

**Penhafo HENOK**

Student number: 3984268

UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE FACULTY OF  
EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

**Supervisor: Dr Hugues Steve NDINGA-KOUMBA-BINZA**

**NOVEMBER 2023**

## DECLARATION

I, Penehafo HENOK, declare that this thesis entitled *INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF FIRST YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THE KHOMASDAL CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA* is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree or examination in any other university. All sources I have cited or quoted have been duly indicated and fully recognized by a complete list of references.

I am aware that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is the use of another's work and pretend that is one's own. I wish to reaffirm that this thesis is my own work and each significant contribution to this thesis is my own interpretation.

**Signature:**  P. Henok

**Date:**  07\_ November 2023\_



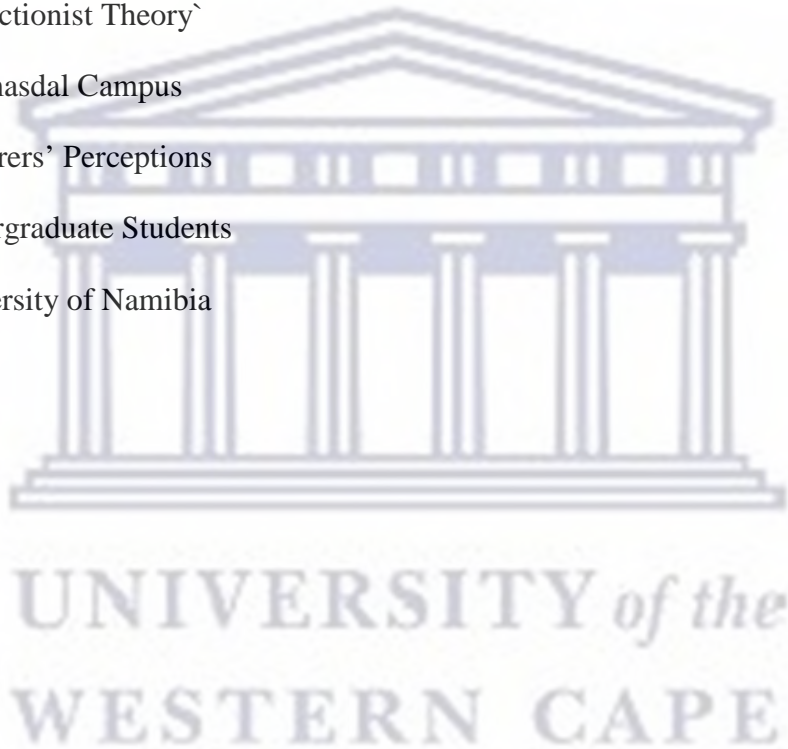
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## **Abstract**

This research investigates proficiency in English and communication skills among first-year education students at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia. Drawing on the Interactionist Theory and the Constructivist Theory, the study prospects and analyses the relative causes and effects of any discrepancy found as well as the perceptions of specific stakeholders. The study draws from the expressed sentiment of first-year English lecturers that their students lack sufficient communication skills. This deficiency is attributed to poor English proficiency. English is a second language for many students at the University of Namibia. The Namibian Constitution stipulates that the language policy must promote the use of English in schools. Even though English has been the primary language of instruction in schools and institutions of higher learning for more than three decades, some students' proficiency in the language is still relatively low, especially in terms of their ability to communicate in writing and speaking. Understanding the English proficiency of the first-year students and their communication skills has enabled to develop a strategy targeting the improvement of the communication skills of these students. Twenty-six respondents took part in the research, including four key informants, two lecturers and twenty students. Students were deliberately selected for the questionnaire to illustrate the difficulties they face when writing and speaking English as a second language. The lecturers were also deliberately selected because they were the ones teaching these students. This study used qualitative research perspectives to gather information through methods such as observation, interviews, open-response questionnaire items and document analysis. The data were gathered in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of the administration of an assignment and the collection of twenty assignment scripts as the first set of data. Phase 2 consisted of the second set of data that was gathered through unstructured interviews, class observations and a questionnaire. The two sets of data were then integrated into one dataset for qualitative analysis. The findings of the study are valuable for understanding the students' English proficiency and communication skills. The findings can also be useful to develop a model characterizing the English proficiency and communication skills of first-year students. Communication skills are essential among university students.

## Keywords

1. Communication Skills
2. Constructivist Theory
3. Education
4. English Language
5. English Proficiency
6. Interactionist Theory`
7. Khomasdal Campus
8. Lecturers' Perceptions
9. Undergraduate Students
10. University of Namibia



## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, who laid the groundwork for my growth and life journey, my late father Henok Shilongo ISMAEL and my dearest mother Victoria Nangula MVULA, for their devotion, support, and unending prayers.



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## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to give the Almighty God, who is steadfastly faithful, my sincere gratitude and appreciation.

Second, I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Hugues Steve NDINGA-KOUMBA-BINZA, for all his advice, friendship and support throughout this process. Your commitment, insight and knowledge that you have bestowed upon me have made this study successful. You are the most understanding mentor I could have wished for.

My sincere gratitude goes out to my siblings for their unwavering support during my academic career. I sincerely thank you for all your love and encouragement. God's blessings upon you all!

In addition to the students who kindly agreed to participate, I would like to thank my colleagues who served as respondents or key informants for this study. Due to the sheer number of you and due to ethical considerations, I am unable to mention your names. I appreciate you taking the time to share with me your perspectives on learning and teaching.


I would like to thank my friend, Dr Julius LUKAS, who recommended me to my thesis supervisor and for his support through calls during this study. Dr. Sirkka TSHININGAYAMWE, your valuable advice and calls did not go unnoticed. Thank you for guiding and supporting me throughout my study. You have been a pillar of moral and professional support strength.

A special thank you goes to Ms. Margareth RUHOZU and Ms. Loide N. SHIFULA for their love and friendship. Your words of encouragement and calls throughout this journey made it possible for me to complete this study. Indeed, you have been a pillar of strength.

Thank you so much to all my friends and coworkers who called or texted me while I was occupied with this research. Your phone calls gave me hope and inspired me to maintain my drive and concentration. I also want to express my sincere gratitude and blessings to all my friends who supported me in any way while I was completing this thesis.

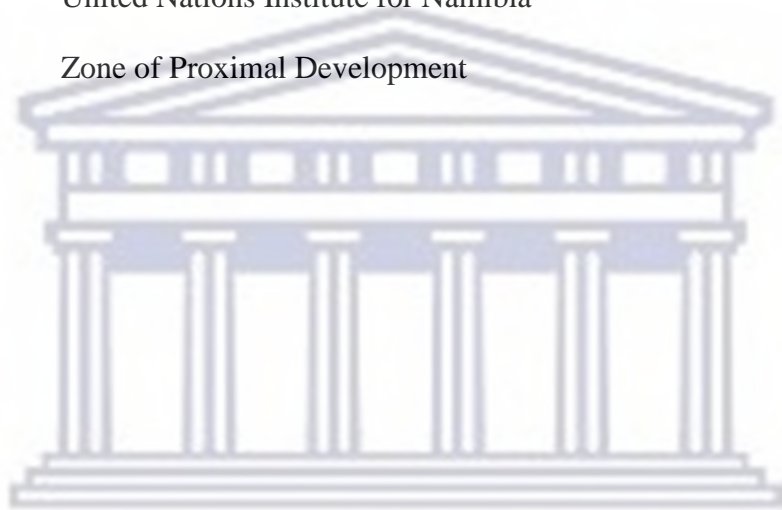
Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Justina AMAKALI for helping to edit my thesis. Her linguistic expertise and familiarity with the subject of the thesis have been very helpful in presenting this study in an elegant manner. I appreciate you for always keeping an eye on me and motivating me to put my all into completing this study. I solely remain responsible for any errors or shortcoming this thesis may contain.

## List of Abbreviations



AAC&U:	Association of American Colleges and Universities
AGR:	Association of Graduate Recruiters
AHELO:	Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes
ASC:	Academic Self Concept
BICS:	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP:	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CGPA:	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CHE:	Council on Higher Education
CSs:	Cascading Style sheet
DoBE:	Department of Basic Education
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
EMI:	English as Medium of Instruction
EMIS:	Education Management Information System
EPT:	English Proficiency Test
ETS:	Educational Testing Service
GPA:	Grade Point Average
HE:	Higher Education
LiEP:	Language in-Education Policy
LoLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
MEC:	Ministry of Education and Culture
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHR-NIH:	Office of Human Resources – National Institute of Health

SILL: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning  
SLO: Student Learning Outcome  
SWAPO: South West Africa People's Organization  
UNAM: University of Namibia  
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
UNIN: United Nations Institute for Namibia  
ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development



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## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. PRELIMINARIES

This study raises critical questions about the English language proficiency and communication skills of first-year Education students at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus. With a focus on oral and written communication, two of the most difficult skills in Second Language (SL), this study raises several important questions about how the current Namibian Language in Education Policy (LiEP) affects the teaching and learning of English Second Language (ESL) at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal campus. In addition to the difficulties that students face when writing and speaking in English, research has also been done on the intervention techniques that UNAM lecturers employ to assist students in overcoming or minimizing these difficulties. Furthermore, language policies in multilingual environments like Namibia and the ideologies behind the implementation of specific policies are discussed in this thesis.

The current chapter has the purpose of introducing the study. As such, it is structured into eight sections, including the current preliminaries section presented as Section 1.1. Section 1.2 outlines the study background and its context. The research problem and the rationale for the study are presented in Section 1.3. The goals and objectives of the study are presented in Section 1.4. In Section 1.5, the study's research questions are highlighted. The delimitation of the study area is covered in Section 1.6, and the significance of this research is covered in Section 1.7. The outline of each chapter and the study's structure are found in Section 1.8.

### 1.2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Namibia, like many other African countries, is a language diversity. With a population of 2,634,000 inhabitants and language landscape<sup>1</sup> of 23 living native languages (Eberhard *et al.*, 2023) in an area of 824,469 square kilometers, Namibia is said to be a multilingual and multicultural country (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). Being a language diversity country presents its own set of

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<sup>1</sup> I understand the concept of a country's language landscape the way Ndinga-Koumba-Binza (2005a & 2007) defines it as an "accurate picture of the languages used in a certain geographical area, including both the foreign and native languages in use in that specific area" (Ndinga-Koumba-Binza, 2007: 98).



challenges in terms of selecting an official language and a medium of instruction. After the attainment of independence, many countries chose the languages of their former colonizers to be official languages of the newly established independent states, along with one of their indigenous languages (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004; Moyo, 2002).

For example, Botswana's official languages are English and Tswana (Arthur & Martin, 2006). Kenya, in East Africa, also has two official languages: English and Swahili (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007). Some African countries have designated a single indigenous language as their national language. This is the case of Tanzania which has Swahili as the national language, Lesotho with Sotho as the national language, and Eswatini with Swati as the national language (Brock-Utne, & Holmarsdottir, 2004).

Namibia's government was in charge of choosing a national or official language when the country gained independence in 1990. Namibia designated English as its official administrative language, its sole language of instruction in schools, and its primary language for national and international affairs. Nevertheless, when adding Afrikaans, English and a few other localized foreign languages such as German, the Namibian language landscape has up to 30 languages spoken, despite having a small population (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). Among the indigenous languages, thirteen have standard orthography. The following 10 languages are currently taught in schools, according to EMIS statistics (Republic of Namibia, 2012):

- (i) Afrikaans,
- (ii) German,
- (iii) Khoekhoegowab,
- (iv) Oshiwambo (Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama),
- (v) Otjiherero,
- (vi) Rukwangali,
- (vii) Rumanyo,
- (viii) Setswana.
- (ix) Silozi, and
- (x) Thimbukushu

The Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama dialects are among the most widely spoken languages in Namibia, according to EMIS statistics (Republic of Namibia, 2012). In 2012, there were 245,060 learners enrolled in the junior primary phase, with 41,689 enrolling to be instructed in Oshindonga and 30,917 enrolling to be instructed in Oshikwanyama (Republic of Namibia, 2012). As a result, the Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama dialects have been chosen as the medium of instruction in schools.

Despite the fact that only 0.8% of the population speaks English, Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001) state that the government chose English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in schools for two reasons. The first reason was to leave behind the colonial era, which was dominated by Afrikaans, i.e. the language of the South African apartheid government. The second reason was for English to serve as a means of unifying the country since the government did not want to choose one indigenous language at the expense of others (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2001, Pütz 1995).

Even in areas where the majority of the population claimed to not understand English at all, English was widely accepted as the official language (Maho, 2004). According to Dugal *et al.* (1981), the purpose of using English is set as to avoid lingo-tribal affiliations and differences and to foster linguistic environments that promote national unity. Many Namibians use their native tongues and Afrikaans to communicate on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, the Namibian Language Policy encourages the use of mother tongues as a medium of instruction only from Grade 0 to Grade 3 (Republic of Namibia, 1993a & 1993b). Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001) state that the policy's goal was to replace Afrikaans, the colonial language, with English as "*the language of liberation*". In this study as well as in the Namibian context, the understanding of the concept of mother tongue is the same as defined by UNESCO (1953). According to UNESCO (1953), a mother tongue of a child is the language in which he/she first learns to express his or her ideas about himself or herself and the world in which he/she lives.

Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins (1988) define the mother tongue using four different criteria. These criteria are as follows:

- (i) Origin: one's language of first acquisition.
- (ii) Competence: the language one knows best.

- (iii) Function: the language one uses the most.
- (iv) Identification: the language one identifies with (internal identification) and the language others identify him/her with (external identification).

Three points about the definitions of the mother tongue are brought forward again by Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins (1988). These are the following:

- (i) The same person can have different mother tongues, depending on which definition is used.
- (ii) A person's mother tongue can change during his/her lifetime, even several times, according to all definitions except the definition by origin.
- (iii) The mother tongue definitions can be organized hierarchically according to the degree of linguistic human rights awareness of society.

In the 1990s, emphasis was placed on English instruction in Namibia. The primary local language should be taught in Grades 1-3 according to the Republic of Namibia's 2003 Language Policy (Republic of Namibia, 2003). Namibia's 2003 Language Policy further states that permission must be sought from the Minister of Basic Education, Sports, and Culture with a solidly persuasive justification if parents or the school want to use English as the language of instruction in the Lower Primary phase (Republic of Namibia, 2003). According to Töttemeyer (2010), 243 Namibian schools had ministerial approval to do so as of 2008. The mother tongue will be taught as a subject throughout primary and secondary school, with the switch to English as the language of instruction starting in Grade 4.

The idea of making English the official language and medium of teaching in schools has been challenged (Simasiku *et al.*, 2016; Donaldson, 2000). For instance, Donaldson (2000) claims that Afrikaans should have been designated as the primary language and medium of instruction in schools. This is because it is a lingua franca for several Namibians and a national language for vast numbers of Namibians (Stell & Groenewald, 2016; Stals, 2006), the significant proportion of whom are non-whites. In accord with Donaldson (2000), the Afrikaans language is comprehended by 70% of Namibians, making it an ideal state language and language of instruction (Legere *et al.*,

2000). According to Prah (2007), it is naive to believe that an Afrikaans education prevents one from functioning at a high level.

In addition, except for the mother tongue subject examination, all national examinations are given in English. According to the Language Policy, when there are many learners (20 or more) from different linguistic groups in a school, the school must make arrangements to provide instruction in the various languages (Republic of Namibia, 2003). According to Batibo (2014: 19), a June 2013 National Education Policy Review concluded that "*all indigenous languages are being promoted and used in education*". Batibo (2014: 19) adds that 16 of the country's native languages have been adequately documented and have educational materials for use in primary schools.

However, the importance of English in upper primary and secondary classrooms is contested on the grounds that children do not speak it well enough. According to Frydman (2011), the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in Namibian school systems would have a profoundly positive impact on Namibian education. The issue of the language of learning and teaching not being the same as the first language of both teachers and learners is mentioned by Likando & Wolhuter (2013: 161) when discussing the "*formidable challenges*" that the Namibian educational system faces.

According to Phillipson (1992), the continued use of an imposed language as the primary medium of instruction constitutes linguistic imperialism, i.e. a form of cultural imperialism. The native language and culture of the students are devalued when learners are taught in a foreign language as a medium of instruction. This leads to the conclusion that a language that is not used for education is undervalued.

Research by Murray (2007) and Benson (2004) show that students who did not study or receive instruction in their native language during their first three grades of school (Grades 1–3) will find it difficult to learn a second language like English. According to Floris (2014), students are exposed to gaining knowledge of the general English language rather than the language for academic purposes during their school years, and many of them learn English with the primary goal of passing language exams. As a result, in their English medium of instruction classes, they lack sufficient English skills and proficiency. Some people excel at speaking but struggle with writing, and vice versa (Simasiku *et al.*, 2016). When children are fluent in their home language, they can develop a set of skills that will help them to learn a second language later (Cummins, 1991).



Language and cognitive skills can be transferred more easily with the help of bilingual programs. Students can begin reading and writing in the second language once they have mastered basic literacy in the mother tongue and speaking proficiency in the target language. This effectively transfers the literacy skills they have learned in the target language.

The pedagogical tenets that underpin this effective transfer of skills are the interdependence theory and the notion of common underlying proficiency proposed by Cummins (1991 & 1999). It claims that once oral proficiency in the language is attained, knowledge of that language, literacy, and concepts can be accessed and used in the second language without having to learn them again. Literacy practices at home and in preschool settings in the Khomas Region of Namibia were the subject of Henok's (2014) study.

The purpose of Henok (2014)'s study was to determine whether children who attended pre-schools and happened to come from homes had been exposed to writing and reading skills. The results showed that many pre-schoolers knew where to find print and what it was used for when they first entered the program. Others understood how print functioned, such as how we read from left to right, how a book opens, and how letters represent sounds. Some toddlers recognized simple words and their own names. Young children who have mastered their native language when they enter preschool still need to learn how to read and write it (Henok, 2014). Thus, if students are proficient readers and writers in their mother tongues, they may bring this knowledge, these abilities, and these attitudes to the task of English reading.

In fact, research and theory consistently back up the advantages of teaching young children to read and write in their mother tongue first. This is true not only because it is simple to do so in a language you already know, but also because as English language proficiency grows, literacy skills are transferred from the primary language to English (Cummins, 2000; Henok, 2014). Therefore, language proficiency and primary language literacy help students develop their reading and writing skills more quickly (Cummins, 2000; Henok, 2014).

According to Benson (2004), learning in the home language increases learners' access to literacy skills, facilitates the learning of sounds and symbols for meaning making, and serves as a foundation for second language acquisition. Learning new languages helps children interact with others in class and better integrate their prior knowledge with new information. Murray (2007) concurs with Benson (2004)'s viewpoint that the extent of children's native language proficiency

is a powerful indicator of their English language development, and there is a positive and significant correlation with both literacy in the mother tongue/native language and learning English.

Furthermore, English is viewed as a vehicle or a tool for communication uniting different nations in metropolitan societies. According to Held *et al.* (1999: 346), English is at the heart of the global language system. It has become a lingua franca in many countries around the world, particularly in Africa. It has overtaken as the dominant language of globalized advertising and popular culture, as well as the primary mode of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia.

This globalization of English has also an impact on education as it has expanded the market for cross-border study. Every year, Namibian students travel abroad to pursue foreign education. As a result, they must be fluent in English in order to function academically and socially being abroad. This is adding to the fact that English is one the most widely spoken languages in the world.

At a national level, as mentioned earlier, for nearly three decades, English has been the medium of instruction in most Namibian classrooms from Grade 4 to Grade 12. Some teachers, however, are not fluent in the official language (Kisting, 2012). The English language is also taught throughout the curriculum. All subjects are taught and assessed in English, not in students' native languages. Nevertheless, as observed by Kisting (2012), the instructional language has been failing to provide widespread competence. Frans (2016) indicates a direct correlation between teachers' poor English skills and students' exam results.

In 2011 the Namibian government administered an English proficiency test through the University of Namibia. The primary goal was to identify in-service teachers' additional training needs. This test was taken by nearly 23,000 teachers. According to Kisting (2012), only a few teachers passed the test, while the rest were classified as Advanced, Intermediate, or Pre-Intermediate. The findings also revealed that 98% of Namibian teachers were not proficient in basic mathematics (Kisting, 2012). Over 70% of senior secondary school teachers were unable to read and write basic English (Kisting, 2012).

A variety of factors contributed to these shocking results. One of them is that most teachers attended school before English was designated as the official language of instruction. Their lack



of communication skills and proficiency in the medium of instruction has resulted in the further marginalization of disadvantaged students who are expected to learn in a language that their teachers do not fully understand (Republic of Namibia, 2003). Cummins (2007) emphasizes that learners' English proficiency is dependent on the instruction they receive. Learners are more likely to acquire more English proficiency if they receive extensive comprehensible input. However, if they receive limited input, much more work is required.

Since these are the same teachers who instruct learners, it is thought that these results will negatively affect the learners' performance in English when they have to be admitted for higher education. Only a small number of students have recently received a C symbol in English on their Grade 12 final exam. Since 2010, almost half of all Grade 10 test takers have received a failing grade on the Junior Secondary School Certificate (Kisting, 2012).

This clearly shows how inadequately the language of instruction is preparing students and learners for success in the future. English is used as a solemn language of instruction at the University of Namibia and other higher education institutions in Namibia where students are multilingual. Those who attend these institutions, on the other hand, are Namibians who have already developed sufficient English competency, either through quality instruction or extensive exposure to English. Thus, they constitute a minority rather than a majority of the population (Frydman, 2011).

A student must score 25 points in five subjects, with a C in English, to be admitted to the University of Namibia (UNAM). The Department of Language Development at UNAM has designed various English courses for students with varying needs and backgrounds. UNAM offers an English Access Course for students who have excelled in other subjects but struggled in English. A student must have a minimum of 25 points with an E or D symbol in English to be admitted to the English Access Course. For the entire year, students in this course receive English training. This course assists students who have previously been unable to obtain a C symbol in English in order to improve their English and gain university admission.

### 1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

The rationale of the current study comes within a worldwide context regarding the graduates' attributes. Good communication skills are generally expected as one of the graduates' attributes. However, employers and educators have long lamented that graduates of tertiary institutions lack communication skills (Chikazhe *et al.*, 2022; Nguyen, 2016; Hernandez-March *et al.*, 2009). This problem is not just prevalent in developing nations like Namibia. Industrialized nations all over the world are also faced with the same problem (Andrews & Higson, 2008). According to a report by the British Association of Graduate Recruiters, employers complain that many graduates lack 'soft skills' such as teamwork, communication, verbal and mathematical reasoning (Schulz, 2008). Graduates are often expected to be team players, to have cultural awareness, and to have language skills when they enter the job market (Ihsen, 2003).

Producing graduates in a range of fields is the top priority of universities in order to meet the demands of the international market. The graduate job market places equal emphasis on soft skills and academic achievement. Soft skills, such as communication abilities, are required to compete in the global market. Many global markets place a high value on soft skills and personalities when hiring new employees. As a result, universities must work to improve the soft skills of their graduates. Personality traits and behaviors are also mentioned as examples of soft skills (Kingsley, 2015). Any skill that can be classified as a personality trait or habit may be included.

Although soft skills are frequently innate personality traits (Matteson *et al.*, 2016; Davies *et al.*, 2015), they can also be learned and developed through practice and experience. Students need good communication skills, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking skills not only during their studies, but also when looking for work and in their personal lives. Students are required to give presentations in class and interact with lecturers and fellow students in and out of lecture rooms as part of their studies. During job interviews, new graduates would be tested on their communication skills, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking. As a result, the purpose of this research is to investigate the English language proficiency and communication skills of education students at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal campus. Universities must ensure that students have all the necessary skills to communicate and portray themselves clearly and effectively.

Communication skills are one of the important soft skills for university students. During their university years, students are often exposed to situations in both formal and informal settings where

they are required to use their communication skills, as well as critical and analytical thinking. Soft skills are required for activities such as class presentations and group activities or projects (Iksan *et al.*, 2012). Another set of soft skills that are frequently lacking in tertiary education is critical thinking. Both are connected to the capacity to solve problems. It is essential to critically filter the never-ending stream of incoming data, analyze it, and make decisions based on it, especially in today's information society.

Developing solutions to any kind of problems also requires analytical skills. In this situation, both a person's professional and personal life can benefit from having soft skills. The last soft skill that needs to be mentioned is creativity. It is advisable to employ this logical reasoning-based skill. By "*thinking outside the box*", which involves letting go of conventional rules and restrictions in order to find creative solutions to problems, creativity leads to problem-solving. In universities and workplaces, two common creative applications are brainstorming and mind mapping. In light of this, the current study aims to examine the communication abilities and English proficiency of first-year education students at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus.

For university students, effective communication skills are essential. University students should be able to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings using a variety of verbal and nonverbal cues, such as words, gestures, pictures, and so on. University students should be able to efficiently and effectively deliver key information derived from some complex ideas. The ability to listen attentively to understand the main points of an argument, detect bias, recognize over-generalization, and detect unsupported content or information during ongoing conversation is also emphasized (Chung *et al.*, 2014).

For first-year university students to succeed academically, they should participate in any activities outside of the lecture halls. This would assist them in developing communication skills more broadly and comprehensively, allowing them to fully develop their communication skills to an advanced level. Students should strive to improve their communication skills, whether oral or written, verbal or nonverbal, including gestures and expressions, in order to succeed in their studies, personal relationships and careers. Communication skills do not appear on their own; they must be developed (Ihmeideh *et al.*, 2010).

The present study aligns with many various studies that have been done on related topics. Such studies include those by Iksan *et al.* (2012), Asemanyi (2015), and Chung *et al.* (2014). It is also

possible to mentioned Sparks *et al.* (2014) for their research on evaluating written communication in higher education with a focus on a review and suggestions for next-generation assessment. At the University of Education Winneba, Asemanyi (2015) conducted a case study on how well the students performed in terms of communication skills. In Kenya's Turkana East district secondary schools, Mekonge (2017) investigated factors affecting students' acquisition of English-speaking abilities. On the other hand, the current study examines how students' communication abilities at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia are impacted by various levels of English proficiency.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The main goal of the current study is to ascertain how students' English language proficiency impact their communication skills. Subsequently, this study seeks to attain the following specific objectives:

- (i) to determine the causes of poor English language proficiency of first-year Education students at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia,
- (ii) to determine the efficiency of the communication skills courses offered to these students at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia, and
- (iii) to make recommendations with educational perspectives at both school and university levels.

#### **1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main question of this study can be outlined as follows:

How does the level of English proficiency of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus affect their communication skills?

The main research question is supported by the following sub-questions.

- (i) What could be the causes of the English language deficiency of these students?



- (ii) What are the challenges encountered by UNAM undergraduate students related to English language proficiency?
- (iii) How do lecturers perceive their students' English language proficiency?
- (iv) Which strategies could be used by lecturers to improve students' proficiency in the English language?
- (v) Which strategies could be used by lecturers to improve students' communication skills?

### **1.6. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY AREA**

The University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus is where this study was carried out. The main priority of this UNAM's campus is the training of pre-primary and primary teacher. The current study focuses on the first-year students who had to improve their English score in order to be admitted in UNAM programmes. At Grade 12 level, these students had previously failed English as a Second Language (ESL).

First-year students who did not take any courses to improve their English score obtained in Grade 12 to gain admission to UNAM are not included in the study. Only students who needed to improve their Grade 12 English score wrote the student works (essays) analyzed in this study. The lectures I attended and recorded were all given by lecturers teaching English communication skills modules.

### **1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It has been observed that Namibian teachers speak English very poorly (Kisting, 2010). This is not an unusual scenario, as Wolfaardt (2001) has confirmed that many Namibian teachers were trained in Afrikaans and only studied English as a second language prior to Namibia's independence. According to Wolfaardt (2001), this has a detrimental effect on their general English proficiency, which in turn has an effect on the performance and proficiency of their learners in the language. Moreover, Nghikembua (2013:18) states that "*given the status of English as the official language in the country, Namibian secondary school learners' performance in ESL is unsatisfactory.*" This is disheartening because students must receive good grades in English in order to be admitted to

higher education institutions. Without a doubt, students who do poorly in English are unlikely to be able to attend higher education and, as a result, are not likely to have more promising futures.

According to Mungungu (2012:12), exam answer scripts demonstrate Namibian learners' incapacity to write in English, as they are typically very bad at the language. Nonetheless, secondary school students studying English exhibit weak writing abilities not just in exams but also in other regular writing assignments (Nghikembua, 2013). Additionally, according to Nghikembua (2013), the reading and writing paper for both core and extended level receives 60% of the assessment in Namibia's ESL (ordinal level) syllabus. This means that many of the Namibian learners fail to obtain a C symbol in the Grade 12 English final examination.

The students write continuously for 150–200 words in prose (Barry *et al.*, 2014). This suggests that students who struggle with writing are unlikely to pass the ESL exam, and as a result, as was previously mentioned, they are also unlikely to have access to higher education in Namibia and elsewhere. All the studies mentioned above, concentrated on a school level and on written communication. It is against this background that, a study on oral and written communication and at tertiary institution was undertaken.

The findings of this study may provide the schools with an understanding of how to improve the English proficiency and communication skills of the learners. The final report of this study may benefit any university, lecturers, students, curriculum developers, teachers and learners.

The results may also aid in the understanding of how the current Namibian Language Education Policy affects learners' academic performance in general and their performance in English Second Language in particular. The results of this study may equally help to explain some of the writing issues and challenges students face at the Khomasdal Campus.

Finally, the study would make recommendations on how the current language in education policy can be adapted. Based on what the study reveals about the value of UNAM communication skills courses may need to be asserted or reinforced.



## **1.8. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The present thesis is organized and structured as follows:

### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

The first chapter, which serves as the current introduction, provides background information and justification of this study. The goals and objectives of the research are also covered in this chapter. The research questions, limitations, and significance of the current study are the final topics covered in this chapter.

### *Chapter 2: Literature Review*

The literature on language planning and policy in Africa, language policy in Namibia, and the curricula for the UNAM's Department of Language Development are all examined in Chapter 2. Literature on language proficiency, communication skills, and the four language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening are also included in this chapter. The last section of this chapter looks at literature on academic performance and language proficiency.

### *Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework*

The Interactionist Perspective Theory and the Social Constructivist Theory are presented as the theoretical foundation of the current study's theoretical framework in Chapter 3. Both theories are described in detail in the chapter. The chapter also presents previous research using these theories and anticipated theoretical contributions.

### *Chapter 4: Research Methodology*

The research processes, including the research approach, the research population, the research instruments, the sampling techniques, and the ethical procedures, is covered in detail in Chapter 4.

### *Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis*

Data presentation and analysis are the key points in Chapter 5. The data obtained includes course descriptions, study materials, student work, survey results, and classroom observations.

### *Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion*

The study's findings are presented in Chapter 6, along with a discussion of the study. The results of the data analysis are presented.

*Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations*

Chapter 7 concludes the study. Particularly in this chapter, recommendations are provided on the use of intervention strategies by lecturers to assist their students in developing their communication and English language skills. The chapter closes with a discussion of the study's limitations and suggestions for further research.



## Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. PRELIMINARIES

This chapter examines the literature on language planning and policy with a focus on the African context, on the Namibian language policy, and on the UNAM'S Department of Language Development Syllabi. The chapter also discusses literature on language proficiency, communication skills, and four language skills. Finally, this chapter reviews academic performance and language proficiency literature.

### 2.2. LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY IN AFRICA

It is commonly known that each country in Africa is a language diversity. A reading of the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of *Ethnologue* (Eberhard *et al.*, 2023) shows that not a single country in Africa is monolingual in terms of its language landscape. Each country with language diversity is thus required to undertake language planning projects and develop language policies, which may serve social, political and economic ideals (Ouedraogo, 2000).

The purpose of language planning in general is to develop and investigate various approaches to trying to solve language-related problems in order to make the best (or ideal) decision in a language context (McKay & Hornberger, 1996). Language planning and language policy are therefore inextricably linked, with language policy always being the outcome of language planning (McKay & Hornberger, 1996). A wise language policy is therefore necessary for proper language planning, and a better language policy demands unquestionably better educational results. In fact, any nation wishing to enhance educational outcomes must prioritize proper language planning. According to McKay & Hornberger (1996), language planning is a scientific field with the goal of achieving socially desirable results.

Kennedy (1983) defines language planning as a problem-solving activity involving intentional language change for concrete objectives that may be social, political, educational, or a combination of all three. Kennedy's definition is similar to that of (Crystal, 2010). Sukumane (1998) defined language planning as the deliberate attempt to shape how others behave with regard to learning, structuring, and utilizing other language codes.

This supports the claim made by Heugh *et al.* (1995) that historically language has been planned "from above" typically to serve the interests of middle-class elites. Furthermore, important decisions must be made during the language planning phase in emerging economies (Crystal, 2010). This is because official language policies are defined and/or adopted using language planning (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). These decisions made towards language planning often draw from the language ideologies or from historical language attitudes (Gal, 2023; Catedral & Djuraeva, 2018; Soler & Vihman, 2018).

Language laws have evolved similarly in African nations (Frydman, 2011). African nations were colonized by Western nations like France, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany. The colonizers eventually imposed their respective languages as the languages of instruction and administration on their respective colonies. Many African countries gained independence beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, and those newly independent countries were faced with the challenge of developing new national language policies distinct from those of their oppressors. The main reason for changing language policies was to bring together a diverse range of ethnolinguistic groups within their country into a unified national whole.

Many African countries are multilingual, which makes selecting a national language difficult. As was previously mentioned, the majority of African governments made their colonizers' language their official language for use in government, business, and schools (Kangira, 2016). For countries such as Gabon, Ndinga-Koumba-Binza (2005a, 2005b and 2007) believes that the decision to adopt the former colonial language as official language was simply a move to continue with the colonial language policy. This seems to be the case in most French-speaking African countries (Spencer, 1971).

According to Bokamba (2007), some governments chose to identify and promote a single indigenous language as a national language alongside another dominant western language as the state's two official languages. As previously stated, this is seen in countries where Swahili and English are the official languages, such as Kenya and Tanzania. Aside from the two countries mentioned above, the situation in Malawi should be mentioned. Following Malawi's independence from Britain, government officials designated Chichewa and English as official languages (Bokamba, 2007). Despite Malawi having 13 indigenous languages, Chichewa became the dominant language during the colonial period, and English was the language of their colonizers



(Bokamba, 2007). During the colonial era, English was the language of high learning, parliament, and law, and was spoken by the country's elites. They wanted to keep the status quo after independence. Despite these two languages being official, English has surpassed Chichewa (Kayambazinthu, 2004).

South Africa is a multilingual country with over 25 indigenous languages (Frydman, 2011). Dutch was the dominant language in South Africa during the Dutch colonial rule (Theal, 1969). The official languages during British colonial rule were English and Dutch, but English was the most prominent and preferred (Hartshorne, 1992; Desai, 1994). By parliament's decision in 1920, Afrikaans became a separate language from Dutch and thus replaced Dutch in all public and family domains (Roberge, 2002). Apartheid was established as South Africa's political system with Afrikaans as the main official language over English with the arrival of Afrikaners to power in 1947 (November, 1991). Following democratic elections and the end of Apartheid in 1994, a new Constitution was adopted in 1996 that recognizes 11 official languages (Desai 1994 & 2012). However, due to English's status as the international lingua franca and as more neutral when considering South Africa's painful past, English is more preferred in all public domains, particularly in the business and education sectors (Levinsohn, 2007).

In the UNICEF review of language policy and implementation in the eastern and southern African region, Trudell (2016) indicates that national language policies favor local languages, whereas in practice English is the most preferred. According to Trudell (2016: 283), political or pedagogical motivations influence the choice. Trudell (2016) goes on to say that Ethiopia's choice of local languages is hampered by the "*global prestige and influence of international languages*" (Trudell, 2016: 287). She also mentions that English is the preferred language for classroom practice in many countries. Furthermore, Dweik & Qawar (2015)'s study on language choice demonstrates that a variety of variables, such as social status, gender, educational level, ethnicity, age, occupation, rural or urban origin, speaker, topic, setting, media, and formality of the situation, all have an impact on language choice in any context.

According to Dweik & Qawar (2015), individuals occasionally decide on a language because they think it will give them a competitive edge, economic advantages, social network expansion, and better opportunities. They conclude by demonstrating that speakers must develop a positive attitude toward a language in order to avoid resistance that may be associated with a negative

attitude toward a specific language. Based on these findings, I contend that many countries choose English as a language instruction because they believe it is the most important language for global use. I also contend that this way of thinking undermines the development of other languages and their ability to perform quality work.

Adams *et al.* (2012) show how Kenyans maintain their language by selecting the language for use at home in their study of the domains of language use and choice in Kibera, Kenya. The authors establish how difficult it is to select an indigenous language, especially when it coexists with English. They observe that in such multilingual situations, the decision is usually based on policy politics. The findings of their study confirm that parents frequently want to preserve their native languages; as a result, they choose indigenous languages for their children in addition to English. Their research supports the current focus of the Language in-Education Policy (LiEP) on offering learners opportunities to maintain their native languages while also learning another language, possibly English. As a result, the emphasis is on promoting additive multilingualism.

Furthermore, Söderlundh (2013) notes in a study about language choice and linguistic variation in classes normally taught in English that selecting a language is not an easy task and may not be completed on a single occasion. He states that language selection must be done regularly as the language situation changes. The study's findings show that students continue to use languages other than their LoLT in the classroom when they share the language or understand each other's language. Söderlundh (2013) concludes by stating that the purpose of and attitude toward the language influence language choice.

### **2.3. NAMIBIA LANGUAGE POLICY**

To introduce the current section, it is important to mention first the impact of Namibia's current language policy and language in-education policy. This is evident in the way first-year students are taught and learn English as a Second Language (ESL), with a focus on their proficiency and communication skills. Aside from students' English proficiency, the intervention strategies used by educators to help students or learners in improving their oral and spoken communication skills in English has also been researched.



According to Brown (2014), a government's position on the formal or constitutional status of a language or languages in a sovereign nation, which frequently includes the function or purpose of a language in educational, business, as well as democratic institutions, is referred to as language policy. This concurs with Crystal (2010) who thinks that one of the most important ways a nation's language policy manifests itself is in the kind of linguistic instruction provisions it makes for children. Based on this understanding, a country's language in-education policy should therefore specify which languages and dialects will be learned in schools, about which period, and for how long (Crystal, 2010). This has seemed to be the purpose of the Namibian language policy since independence attainment in 1990.

In terms of the learners' proficiency in all four language skills, the English language plays a very important role in the Namibian school curriculum. Hornberger & Johnson (2007) define language policy as a policy mechanism that impacts the framework, purpose, use, or acquisition of language. Whereas Gorter & Cenoz (2017) highlight that language policy affects curriculum implementation and assessment goals that measure the application's achievements; assessment results always impact changes in language policy, and the circle continues again. Li & Wu (2009) notice that in a multilingual setting, organizational language education regulations may not always correlate to language classroom practices. Cummins & Persad's (2014) pedagogical approach emphasizes and encourages students to draw on prior knowledge as a foundation for their interpretation of new information; it is assumed that students should use their mother tongue to invoke and deepen their conceptual understanding.

According to Swain & Lapkin (2013), using the home language/mother tongue in a second language class can help students process new and complex material. In a student experiment, Swain & Lapkin (2013) pinpoint three major functions of the home language/mother tongue. Students used a managerial function to comprehend what they had to do in the first function; students focused in the second function; and students paid enough attention to what to do in the third function, and subsequent students observed using interpersonal skills.

Swain & Lapkin (2013) draw the conclusion that while the home language/mother tongue can aid in learning and teaching when proficiency is low, it should be overlooked once the second language is advanced. Students benefit when they are using their language in constructive, functional, and relevant ways, according to Bhuiyan (2017). As a result, students from African languages suffer

tremendously whenever the test language and their native language do not coincide (Bergbauer *et al.*, 2016; Webb *et al.*, 2010).

Namibia gained independence nearly thirty years after the majority of African nations, and after the latter had established their respective language policies. Due to Namibia's unique African history, which includes both colonial and apartheid rule, the development of its language policy took a slightly different path than that of most other African states. Unlike other African countries, Namibia made English, a foreign language with no history in Namibia, the sole official language of the country.

Many people have stated that this type of policy has had far-reaching, negative consequences for Namibia's people and development. In the first three Grades of school, thirteen languages are taught, i.e., ten African languages and three European languages. Germany colonized Namibia as German South West Africa between 1884 and 1915 (Goldblatt, 1971; Wallace & Kinaban, 2011; Bley, 1996). In some Namibian schools, German is still taught as a language of instruction in addition to being one of the national languages (Frydman, 2011).

On December 17, 1920, South Africa received a League of Nations sanction to manage the former German colony of South West Africa, to the detriment of Great Britain, following Germany's defeat in World War I that occurred between 1914 and 1918 (Dugard, 1973; Kerina, 1981; Cooper, 1981). This led South Africa to invade and take control of Namibia in the same year until 1990, when it gained independence on 21 March 1990. Prior to independence, Afrikaans was the primary official language of instruction from Grade 4 onwards (Frydman, 2011). The SWAPO<sup>2</sup> Government's language policy in preparedness for freedom felt compelled to substitute Afrikaans, the oppressors' language, because it subverted the self-concept and growth in the developing of the African linguistic groups (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2001).

It is learnt from Phillipson (1992) that in a situation of linguistic imperialism the choice for another language to get rid of the colonial language may not be random or unplanned. Certain criteria can be used to assess a language's suitability as the primary official language (Phillipson, 1992). This

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<sup>2</sup> The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) is the former independence movement that led Namibia to independence in 1990. It has been the ruling party in Namibia since then.

selection list is often based on political motives. Phillipson (1992) raises a certain number of criteria, and the following were applied in setting English as the sole official language of Namibia:

- (i) unity,
- (ii) acceptability,
- (iii) familiarity,
- (iv) feasibility,
- (v) science and technology,
- (vi) Pan Africanism,
- (vii) wider communication, and
- (viii) United Nations.

Phillipson (1992)'s criteria which are of extreme relevance but were not chosen are the following:

- (i) ease of learning,
- (ii) Namibian cultural authenticity, and
- (iii) empowering the underprivileged (which could include democratization and self-reliance).

Phillipson (1992)'s criteria have also been criticized for overlapping. Phillipson (1992) acknowledges that it is hard to avoid the outcome that the requirements that seem to have been chosen in order for English to emerge as the clear winner. Iiping (2013) argues that the criteria were applied to Afrikaans, English, French, German, and Namibian indigenous languages. It appears that English scored better than the other languages as seen **Table 1** further below.

It was believed that English was the "*language of unity*" (Wolfaardt, 2005: 2357). The only official language of Namibia is English. As mentioned earlier, according to Article 3 of the Namibian Constitution, English is the only language used for communication in all executive, legislative, and judicial bodies in Namibia. Despite the fact that only 0.8% of the entire population in Namibia

spoke English as a mother tongue as of the 1991 Census, English was chosen as the country's official language (Brock- Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2001).

**Table 1** below is an overview of the factors considered in the decision of making English the sole official language of Namibia. The table is an adaptation from Phillipson (1992). Phillipson (1992: 290) states that “+ equals three points, -/+ equals one point, and – equals no point”.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Afrikaans</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Indigenous languages</b>
Unity	-	+	+	-	-
Acceptability	-	+	+	-	+
Familiarity	+	+	-	+	+
Science and technology	-	+	+	+	-
Pan-Africanism	-	+	-/+	-	-
Wider communication	-	+	+	+	-
United Nations	-	+	+	+	-
<b>Total points</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>

**Table 1:** *The Suitability of Nominated Languages as Namibia’s Official Language*

Based on **Table 1** above, one can infer that English was the official language of choice because of biased criteria. The criteria that the United Nations Institute of Namibia (UNIN) considered in choosing English as Namibia's official language are briefly discussed in the section that follows.

### **2.3.1. Unity**

One of the post-SWAPO government's priorities was to promote national unity by creating political, economic, religious, cultural, racial, and linguistic conditions that promote national unity (Phillipson, 1992: 289). English was expected to boost national unity and reduce competition



among Namibia's indigenous ethnic groups and languages (Iiping, 2013: 37). However, Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001) refute this argument by stating that English is spoken by only 0.8% of Namibians. This small population of less than 1% cannot unite a country like Namibia, which has approximately 30 indigenous languages (Frydman, 2011).

### **2.3.2. Acceptability**

The SWAPO government aimed for a language with no negative connotations, one that would be accepted by all Namibians. Afrikaans was regarded as the "*colonial language*" (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2001). Because English is not associated with any negative attitudes in Namibia, it was viewed as the "*only language*" that would be accepted by all Namibians. This perception is the same in French-speaking Africa where English is hardly associated with colonialism (Plonski *et al.*, 2013; Ndinga-Koumba-Binza, 2006). However, English may not be a colonial language in Namibia and French-speaking Africa, yet a colonial language in a pan-African context.

In fact, in promoting the perception of English as a neutral language, the SWAPO government deliberately ignored that in a broad context and especially in English-speaking African countries, "*English was established as the language of power in all colonies*" (Schneider, 2018: 42). It is a well-known fact that the expansion of the English language in the British Empire was by force and colonialism (Buschfeld & Kautzsch, 2017; Baugh & Cable, 2002; Pennycook, 1998), and the English is together with French the prime colonial languages in Africa (Plonski *et al.*, 2013; Michelman, 1995).

Consequently, the acceptance of English based on the perception that it may not be a colonial language appears to be an ill-informed decision by the Namibian people.

### **2.3.3. Feasibility**

One of the requirements was the price and commitment required to elevate a language to official position. Finances, logistics, and administration are required to elevate the language to official status (UNIN, 1981: 38). In the context of Namibia, English outperformed all other languages in this criterion because English has a large number of resources. The majority of Namibians in exile



had the good fortune to study at prestigious universities all over the world, and they were fluent in English.

The SWAPO government expected these professionals to teach, design curriculum, and perform other critical language development tasks (UNIN, 1981). However, there was no assurance, according to Cluver (1992; 126), that a professional with Namibian training would go back and assist with the adoption of English as the nation's official language (UNIN, 1981).

#### **2.3.4. Science and Technology**

SWAPO was seeking a language that would advance and support Namibia's industrial and economic development based on this criterion (UNIN, 1981). Thus, Namibians ought to be able to communicate effectively with their international business partners. On the other hand, according to Cooke & William (2002), the use of English as an official language does not guarantee economic and social development. They added that although some less developed nations use English to measure development, their influence on social and economic development has been relatively small.

One of the factors in the SWAPO government's decision to make English the official language after independence was the fact that English is widely used in almost all fields of science and technology. In addition to being the language of the United Nations, it is also the one used for publishing materials to support learning, training, and research programs both inside and outside of the nation (UNIN, 1981: 38).

#### **2.3.5. Pan Africanism**

English was chosen as the official language because it fosters ties between Namibians and other progressive African communities (UNIN, 1981). According to SWAPO, English is widely spoken among Africans and is introduced to many African communities. However, Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001) claim that English does not adhere to the principles of pan-Africanism. They clarify that the majority of African nations do not have English as their official language. They

argued that Kiswahili, which is spoken by about 40 million people as their official language in Africa, would have been a better option.

### **2.3.6. Wider Communication**

The standard of greater communication also favored the English language. In fact, the SWAPO post-independence government calculated that 30 million people spoke English as their first language and 374 million as a second language (Cluver, 1992: 127). SWAPO thought that English would open up the world to Namibians by serving as a language of greater communication.

### **2.3.7. United Nations**

The United Nations has collaborated with the SWAPO government throughout the freedom struggle, after independence, and up to present days. As a result, the SWAPO government determined that it was critical to maintaining communication channels because English is the language in which they had been communicating. As was previously mentioned, some of the criteria used to decide on English as Namibia's official language were wholly irrelevant, even though this criterion was somewhat relevant.

The standards that were applied in selecting English as the official language of an independent Namibia have drawn criticism from a number of academics. For example, Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001) believe that SWAPO overlooked several crucial factors. In their words (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2001:303), *"some of the criteria which were also supposed to be considered in choosing the official language of Namibia" included "ease of learning," "Namibian cultural authenticity," and "empowering the under-privileged"*, which could include democratization and self-reliance.

One more complaint is that, according to Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001:305), *"all Namibia's own languages were just lumped together and none given separate treatment while the three European languages and the one European-based language (Afrikaans) were given separate treatment"*. This demonstrated, at least in part, that SWAPO had no interest in designating one of the Namibian languages as the country's official tongue. Therefore, in order to counteract the

division that the South African regime intentionally fostered, Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001:306) *"do not deny the fact that the option of trying to merge some of the different orthographies of languages (some of which are actually just dialects) could have been considered"*.

Furthermore, Phillipson (1992) was a vocal opponent of Namibia's decision to designate English as its official language. He (1992) claimed that the above-discussed criteria were fairly similar. According to Phillipson (1992:293), *"the 'United Nations' criterion could be included under 'wider communication', as could Pan-Africanism"*. Moreover, according to Phillipson (1993:293), *"the need to combat divisiveness that South Africa has engineered and the unity of Namibians are two related purposes of choosing English as the official language... These are not international, but national factors"* (Phillipson, 1992:293).

Consequently, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the standards by which English was designated as an official language were chosen in order to ensure that English came out on top (Ipinge, 2013). As was previously mentioned, the decision to designate English as Namibia's official language implied that LOLT would take place in schools. Therefore, a thorough explanation of the Namibian LiEP after independence—which was implemented after English was declared the official language of an independent Namibia—is given in the following section.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) issued the *"Language Policy for Schools 1992-1996 and beyond"* (Republic of Namibia, 1993b), which contains the following stipulations:

- (a) The 7- year primary education phase should enable learners to acquire reasonable competence in English, the official language of the country and should be prepared for English as a medium of instruction throughout the secondary phase.
- (b) Learners should be taught in their mother tongue from Grade 1 to 3, and the teaching of mother tongues throughout formal education provided that there are necessary resources.
- (c) Each learner should have at least two languages as subjects.
- (d) Beyond the primary school phase (1-7), the medium of instruction for all schools shall be the Namibian official language, English.

In the early grades, the policy places a strong emphasis on the value of using one's native language for instruction. On the other hand, a school can opt to use students' native tongues, regional languages, or English as the official language (Republic of Namibia, 1993a: 9). The policy, in the opinion of some officials, including those in the Ministry of Education, was created to favor English instruction over local languages. The policy, according to one official, does not support linguistic diversity, as was traditionally the case in Namibia. Historically, Namibians have been multilingual, but current policy is working against this (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2000).

The status of Namibian regional languages may be in danger if English is used as the primary language of instruction (EMI) starting in Grade 1. (Republic of Namibia, 1993b). English-medium instruction (EMI) is the practice of teaching university courses in nations where English is not the primary language of the majority of the population (Macaro *et al.*, 2018). Language choice has an effect on formal education because it is a part of daily life. The choice of a language that is only learned or used for a few hours at school causes issues in formal education because one cannot easily construct knowledge of the content. This is because the language we think in and use every day aids cognitive development.

Trudell (2016) confirms the pedagogical benefits of using a learner's native language rather than a different language. According to Trudell (2016), LoLT has a positive impact on "*students' learning outcomes*" and "*learning experience*" (Trudell, 2016: 286). This is why parents should make informed and valuable decisions about which school their children should attend and where their preferred LoLT should be administered.

Studies have shown, according to Pienaar-Louw (1997) and Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2001), that most pupils, teachers, and parents think that English ought to be the main language of instruction starting in the first year of school because they think that non-English speakers are unable to contribute to society and that the earlier learners are exposed to English, the more proficient they will become in it. Due to the policy's openness, many learners are not receiving early primary education in their mother tongues, despite the policy's official guidelines. According to Töttemeyer (2010), the Ministry of Education granted permission to 243 schools in the country to offer instruction solely in English beginning in Grade 1. As a result of parental pressure, more schools are implementing an English-only policy.



According to Brock-Utne (2007), the mother tongue performs a significant role in the growth of a child's early notions. It should be acknowledged that language is strongly linked to the mind in this regard. It is the means by which we internalize and think. We could not indeed think usually without employing the use of language. The mother tongue can also be used to help one navigate a cultural environment. As a result, language is inextricably linked to culture. The primary language, as the initial language a child acquires to articulate himself or herself and the realm in which she or he dwells, has a mental and socio-cultural impact on a child (Benjamin, 2004).

Using the child's native language during the initial years of school enhances continuity in the education process and thus maximizes cognitive growth. A gap between home and school is created when a child learns one language at home, one with that he or she is fully acquainted, and then has to swap to a foreign language, a vehicle of a cultural context mentally and emotionally detached from the child. The proximity between school and home can lead to feelings of inferiority and frustration toward oneself, teachers, and schools (UNESCO, 1953).

Taylor (2002) quotes Wolfaardt (2005) who urges that students should spend the first three years of their education receiving instruction in their native tongue. Children who receive instruction in their native tongue for the first three years perform better than some who start out learning in English. In her proposition for a gradual shift from mother tongue to English instruction, Taylor (2002) quotes Wolfaardt (2005), who states that if pupils come from various backgrounds, instruction should be performed in 10% English, raising to 90% by grade 7. Separate classes for students in grades 1–3 who have the same home language should be provided. Krashen (1985) proposes a hypothesis to endorse Cummins' (1988) asserts that a child can learn a second language effectively when his or her first language is preserved and established: He claims that education in the student's first language can greatly aid English learning.

### **2.3.8. English: Medium of Instruction from Grade 4 to University Level in Namibia**

According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986: 13), "*language is essential to any human society as a means of communication as well as a carrier of culture.*" The Namibian government claims that shortly after the country's independence, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport set out to create a language policy that would specify the official language or the language of



instruction in Namibian schools that was acceptable to all (Swarts, 1995). Since English was already recognized as the official state language, Swarts (1995) claimed that it was more of a communication channel than a pedagogical method of instruction.

The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture held meetings across the nation to talk about language policy for Namibian educational systems after the country gained independence in March 1990 (Republic of Namibia, 2003: 2). Then, it was decided that starting in Grade 4, English would serve as the main language of instruction. English is the language of instruction at Namibian institutions of higher learning, including the University of Namibia, beginning in grade 4 (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015).

With the exception of first language as a subject, English is used as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in many educational settings, including schools and higher educational institutions like UNAM. It is also a required subject beginning in the first grade. The development of a nation's language and the quality of education both depend on the language of learning and teaching, or LoLT. It is crucial to show how various academics define LoLT (UNESCO, 2003). The language used in the classroom by both the teacher and the student is referred to as the language of learning and teaching.

Thus, "*the medium of instruction*" or "*the language of instruction*" are both synonymous with LoLT. According to UNESCO (2003), the language of instruction is the one used to impart the fundamentals of the educational system. Additionally, the South African Department of Basic Education (DoBE, 2010) describes LoLT as the communication medium used for in-class instruction and assessment. Basic knowledge and skills are taught to students and learners in this language (Prah, 2003). Additionally, the LoLT should be the learner's mother tongue or home language, according to UNESCO (2011) and the DoBE (2010). It is the language used for communication between the teacher and the learner, lecturers and students. Considering what was stated in the definitions, LoLT in this study refers to a device that instructors and students use to create meaning. It ought to be a language that all students have the chance to learn. The only way for students to learn information and apply it to all aspects of life is through the use of language, which is essential. Although English is required in most Namibian schools and higher education institutions as the primary language of instruction (LoL), it is hardly ever spoken or used in rural areas (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). According to Namibia's Language-in-Education Policy

(LiEP) (Wolfaardt, 2005: 2358), bilingual education is taught using students' first language (L1) from Grades 1-3 before switching to English as the language of instruction from Grades 4 onward. Many rural primary school students only encounter English in the classroom, and as a result, their English language proficiency is deemed to be significantly relatively low when compared to students in urban schools, who are exposed to even more English (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). Because of this situation, it is challenging for students to comprehend not only English as a subject but also other subjects that are taught and written in English (Harris, 2011: 7; Wolfaardt, 2004: 370).

Prior to enrolling in the program, UNAM students are required to demonstrate a sufficient level of English language proficiency, and it is generally believed that if they can meet the admissions requirements, studying in English shouldn't be difficult. Additionally, many universities recognize the linguistic benefits of EMI, indicating an interest that English language proficiency will advance concurrently with subject-matter knowledge (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Language skills are quite often believed to improve as a 'byproduct' of studying English content (Taguchi, 2014). However, academic English proficiency has been proven to affect students' performance in a wide range of ways in many Namibian institutions of higher learning, including subject knowledge acquisition, longer course completion times, increased drop-out rates, issues related to interacting course content, and asking/answering fewer questions (Galloway *et al.*, 2017). Such 'language-related obstacles' highlight the need for extra language and academic support for students (Bradford, 2013; Galloway *et al.*, 2017; Galloway *et al.*, 2020; Ishikura, 2015; Kelo *et al.*, 2010; Lassegard, 2006).

Apart from that, there are a few difficulties with teaching English in Namibia. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing English as a language of instruction, so their proficiency in the language is essential. Learning languages necessitates the use of effective teaching techniques. Language theory, learning theory, design objectives, the syllabus, different types of instructional activities, and the role of educational materials and techniques should all be explored (Otaala, 2001).

Otaala (2001) carried out a two-year, distance-learning study of Namibian primary and secondary educators registered in the University of Namibia Diploma in Education in African Languages. She found that some teachers' instructional methods were ineffective. Teachers, for example, spoke the majority of the time during the lesson whereas learners took extensive notes on the

chalkboard, teachers spoke Afrikaans or other local languages during English lessons, and several teachers demotivated learners from posing questions. Furthermore, she revealed that several teachers were unqualified to teach English or other subjects, that so many teachers only tried to teach to finalize the curriculum, and that developing oratory and other conversational skills was considered a time waste. Numerous teachers were not able to decipher the syllabus, and if tips were given, they were ensuring adherence to in order to avoid making mistakes.

The large percentage of Namibian teachers speak English as a second or third language, and Afrikaans was their school language. They may have difficulty expressing themselves in English, or worse, they may not understand the subject matter. It is difficult for a teacher to create learning is based on interaction and dialogue when they do not speak English fluently.

England & Lawrence (1996) observe some teachers in Ondangwa and Oshakati schools and discovered that some teachers prefer to use their native language in content area classes rather than English to help students understand difficult concepts. Students who struggle with English often rely on rote learning when learning subject material. They also mention how stressed out teachers were due to the language policy. One teacher, for instance, refused to read a listening comprehension passage as part of the assessment because she was self-conscious about her English.

The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture's advisor Henderson (1994: 41) notes that "*many teachers struggle with using English across the curriculum.*" She further asserts:

The issue appears to be academic at the primary level, and it is more severe at the junior secondary level. Because of their inability to cope with English as a teaching language, teachers are forced to use the regional language in the classroom and to teach in a more formal manner in order to control the use of language in the classroom. Teachers may eventually find themselves outmatched in terms of English proficiency by their students. Inadequate English language competence is a major issue that affects the vast majority of teachers teaching at all levels in Namibian schools (Henderson, 1994: 41-42).

According to some educators, codeswitching is the only method that can help students get past the challenges posed by using English as their primary language of instruction. Code-switching is common in Tanzania, which reduces students' chances of becoming proficient in English while

also making it difficult for them to understand their work because they rely too much on their teachers to translate into Kiswahili (Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997).

Furthermore, educators are not required to try to make sure that schoolchildren comprehend the message in English because the subject's prime concern is that students comprehend the subject's content. Baker (2006), on the contrary hand, dissuades code-switching by asserting that trying to translate into a child's native language may inhibit the child from acquiring the type of language that must be one of the objectives of a sound bilingual program. According to Baker (2006), if learners function at the context-embedded standard in classroom language, they may be unable to comprehend curriculum content and participate in higher-order mental abilities such as synthesizing, debate, assessment, evaluation, and inference.

According to Donald *et al.* (1997), the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process can be negatively impacted when a learner or teacher feels ill-prepared and uninformed, or otherwise empowered and competent in using a second language as a language of instruction. In order for students and teachers to feel at ease using English outside of the classroom, there must be motivation. They need to be willing to experiment with new concepts and ideas through language interaction. Academic performance will be based on how well-versed and at ease both teachers and students are using English as a language of instruction. Teachers need adequate in-service training in order to raise the caliber of their instruction (Benjamin, 2004).

#### **2.4. UNAM DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT SYLLABI AND CURRICULA**

English is becoming the default dominant language, an overwhelming majority of students with vastly differing proficiency levels and who use English as an additional language will enroll at universities worldwide. Apart from being Namibia's inevitable lingua franca, English is widely viewed as a language of opportunity. Due to its eminence, English is used as the primary language of instruction in a large number of Namibian schools beginning in Grade 4. It is also a language of instruction in the higher education sector. As a result, the University of Namibia made an effort to accommodate all students with greatly varying levels of proficiency.

The UNAM Department of Language Development Syllabi and Curricula as they relate to enhancing students' English proficiency and communication skills across the university are crucial,



according to the study's researcher, for the study's readers to be aware of. To begin with language proficiency classes offered to students who have previously displayed language deficiencies, the Department offers additional language support to UNAM students (and then mostly with a focus on English as a second language). The second reason was that a course was a component of a "bridging" program, a time of study before beginning tertiary education that was designed to adequately prepare students for the demands of university life.

#### **2.4.1. UNAM Department of Language Development Syllabi**

The department is indeed serving as the University of Namibia's center for language learning, instruction, and research. The primary goal is to enhance English proficiency and teaching University core subjects such as:

- (i) Academic Writing for Postgraduate Students,
- (ii) English for Academic Purposes,
- (iii) English Communication and Study Skills
- (iv) English for General Communication
- (v) English Access and
- (vi) English for Certificate Purposes.

One or more of the aforementioned core courses/modules are required of all University of Namibia undergraduate students. Postgraduate students must enroll in the department's Academic Writing for Postgraduate Students course during their studies. The department also offers a huge selection of courses in both foreign and Namibian languages. The general public and business community in Windhoek, Oshakati, Keetmanshoop, Rundu, and Katima Mulilo can also take advantage of its consulting services. As a national center for language excellence, the Language Department works to benefit students, faculty members, and the general public.



### **2.4.2. English Access Course**

For the English Access Course, students must have completed Grade 12 with a minimum of 25 points (in 5 subjects, including English) and an E or D in English. These students have obtained the minimum number of points needed for admission to UNAM, with the exception of the mandatory minimum C-symbol in English. The English Access Course, a one-year full-time program, is intended to improve students' English skills to the level required by UNAM.

### **2.4.3. English for General Communication Course**

Students who received a D in English at the Namibia Secondary School Certificate Ordinary Level are required to take the English for General Communication Course (ULEG2410), a one-year course. This course is rated as Level 4 by the Namibian Qualifications Framework (NQA). Students who have a D in English from secondary school and who otherwise meet the requirements for a degree program are the majority of the students enrolled in this course. The course emphasizes grammar rules as well as the four language skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

The skills that students will need for their careers and beyond are covered in this course, along with an introduction to university, where the teaching and learning processes differ from those in secondary schools. Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of various text types, effective writing abilities, and effective speaking abilities in a range of situations after completing this course. The following skills are covered in the course: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The researcher looked at both the students' written and verbal communication for the purposes of this study.

#### **• Writing instruction**

Students learn how to determine the purpose of literary sources as well as how to differentiate between various kinds of work such as journal articles, correspondences, as well as compositions. Students are also instructed how to encapsulate texts.

### • Speaking skills lessons

Students learn how to speak clearly, appropriate eye contact, recognize relevant information, offer compliments, emotional sensitivity, as well as provide useful insights. Presentation skills, such as preparation and organizing for presentations, are also taught, and these are included, among other things,

- (i) the audience
- (ii) the introduction of oneself and the subject
- (iii) the objectives of the presentation
- (iv) a chance to give the audience an opportunity to ask questions and make comments and
- (iv) a chance to present summary of the presentation and conclusions.

Lessons, workshops, tutorials, and oral presentations by students are added resources for the course. Although it is common practice to distribute educational materials electronically, other distribution methods, particularly among distance learners, include mobile devices, chat rooms, blog sites, Facebook, Twitter, CDs, and hard copies. Additionally, experts and professionals in the related fields may be contacted to act as educational resources (English for General Communication Syllabus, 2012).

#### **2.4.4. English Communication and Study Skills Course**

Similar to English for General Communication, the English Communication and Study Skills course is rated as Level 4 on the NQF (ULEG 2410). The difference is that English for General Communication is offered throughout the year, while English Communication and Study Skills is only offered during a semester.

An English C symbol at the NSSC Ordinary Level is required for the English Communication and Study Skills course. The goal of the English Communication and Study Skills course is to familiarize students with academic life. Students who are required to study in a foreign

environment and in a language that is not their first or, in some cases, not even their second language will benefit from this course. Students will require these abilities throughout their academic careers and beyond. Other skills include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. After successfully completing this course, students will be able to use their written communication skills in a variety of contexts, spell and pronounce words correctly, and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of genres.

Although speaking and writing skills are covered in the course, this investigation will only focus on those two. In this course, students are introduced to both the genre approach process and the purpose of writing. Yan (2005: 20) claims that the process of genre approach teaches students how to treat the various steps in the composition process, how to analyze a text for its context and purpose, and the significance of proper spelling and punctuation in early drafts of writing.

During this process, students are also taught how to distinguish between written and spoken language, sentence types, sentence structure (morphology and syntax), paragraph writing, cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, paraphrasing, summarizing, and using topic sentences. They are also taught how to choose and synthesize ideas. In order to construct sentences, words and phrases must be put together according to a specific syntax, which requires knowledge of and adherence to rules.

While reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are all covered in the course, this research will only pay attention to speaking and writing skills. Students are introduced to the genre approach procedure in this course as well as the writing objective. Yan (2005) claims that the procedure of genre approach places emphasis on teaching students the value of proper spelling and punctuation in first drafts of writing, how to handle the various stages of the formulation phase, and how to analyze a text for context and intent. The distinction between written and spoken language, sentence types, sentence construction (morphology and syntax), paragraph writing, cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, paraphrasing, summarizing, topic sentences, writing introductions and conclusions, and choosing and synthesizing ideas are all skills that are taught to students during this time.

The process of grouping words and phrases to form sentences in a language is called syntax; it involves learning and adhering to a particular order.

Newton and others (2011: 1) According to Newton *et al.* (2011: 1), it is crucial to start a very fruitful study of words early on that emphasizes relevant word structure and morphological characteristics awareness of reading skills.

#### • **Speaking skills lessons**

Speaking in group discussions, oral presentations, conversational skills, and general speaking are all stressed in this course. Oral presentations by students, lectures, and tutorials all contribute to the course's success. Electronic learning resources like study aids, the internet, and required readings are made available, as well as other channels like mobile/cell phones, chat rooms, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Facebook, CDs, and hard copies, especially for distance learners. Recognized authorities and professionals in the relevant fields may also be invited to participate as learning resources (English Communication and Study Skills Syllabus, 2013).

#### **2.4.5. English for Academic Purpose Course**

Level 5 English for Academic Purposes is a 160-hour course. Students must have completed English Communication and Study Skills in Grade 12 and either passed the course or received a B symbol for English at the Ordinary level or a 4 for English at the Higher level. The course is compulsory and is offered for one semester.

Students are taught how to write different types of essays, including presentations of arguments for and against, writing effective introductions, conclusions, and writing reports. They are also taught how to write paragraphs, cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, paraphrasing, summarizing, and essay planning. Students learn presentation skills and how to present both pro and con arguments as part of the creative thinking process that goes into teaching speaking.

As part of the English for Academic Purposes course, students present oral presentations, lectures, seminars, and tutorials. Electronic learning resources like study aids, the internet, and required readings are made available, and additional channels like mobile/cell phones, chat rooms, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Facebook, CDs, and hard copies are also made available, especially for distance



learners. Recognized authorities and professionals in particular fields may also be invited to serve as learning resources (English for Academic Purposes syllabus, 2010).

## **2.5. LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Whereas, language proficiency encompasses having an instruction of a language that allows one to perform various either in the written or spoken mode, academic conversation, according to Zamel (1998) & Blanton (1998), is substantially more written than spoken. Proficiency is also defined as a language user's command of the formal and functional facets of language, which enables them to convey and comprehend meaning precisely, fluently, and adequately in a frame of reference.

Reading and writing skills are much more predominant than listening and speaking skills. In any scenario, aside from more formal and systematic project presentations, students rarely engage in much 'academic' speaking. Although students have plenty of opportunities for interaction orally about academic concerns in conversation sessions/tutorials/seminars, it is reasonable to assume that such discourse occurs on a much more interpersonal level - in the context that it is presumably less constricted for 'truthfulness of usage' than writing.

Formal spoken academic rhetoric is more typically associated with lecturers, notably when they read papers about their studies in formal at conference presentations. Writing, without a doubt, takes precedence when lecturers evaluate students' work. Although students must listen constructively in order to seek (and obtain) information in a lecture setting, lecturers tend to use a far more informal register when teaching than, say, when writing a scholarly journal article. The main focus on writing and reading in the tertiary context is most probably attributable to writing establishing a 'line' of continuity outside of the mind in the text (Ong, 1982). If a distraction baffles or obliterates the scope from which the researcher is now reading, the context can be derived by selectively glancing back over the reading the material.

As a result, whilst also listening to a lecture and internalizing information through oral discussion are crucial, listening and speaking abilities are frequently neglected in written academic contexts. It is interesting to note that formal learning in lecture halls continues to take place primarily through students listening to lecturers in the traditional tertiary context. It is also worth noting that very



few students in the researcher's classes utilize effective note-taking techniques in her class, as well as in numerous of their other classes (personal impression and communication with students), indicating a lack of expertise with effective listening strategies. Perhaps even more research into the facilitation of more constructive listening in a tertiary academic setting is required due to the apparent insufficient student awareness and general inactivity pertaining the use of pertinent listening strategies in lectures. If listening is considered as a fundamental ability in information processing, productive listening strategies cannot be overshadowed in the context of educational literacy support.

Language proficiency, also known as linguistic proficiency, is an individual's ability to speak or perform in a learned language. Language proficiency, whether speaking or understanding, is essential for those attempting to learn a second language (Wilson, 1999). It is critical for those teaching the language to understand their students' level of proficiency because it is critical to their success during the learning process. According to Kisting (2012), there are three levels of language proficiency: advanced, intermediate, and pre-intermediate.

Students who study in nations where English is a second language struggle to communicate in English (Nalasco & Arthur, 1988). In order to read and write in a first language, one must first speak and then listen, according to Millie & Vilella (2009). They advise that the same order be used when learning a second language as a result. Additionally, Kurniasih (2011) explains that students must work on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to learn a language and use it as a form of communication. After mastering these elements, the learners are expected to be able to incorporate them into communication acts. It takes time to become proficient in all four language skills; each skill process enhances a learner's capacity to use the others. Students' ability to speak is improved by listening to others speak. Contrarily, reading supports students' writing-based communication skills development. Grammar rules are accidentally encountered by them while reading. Reading aids students in expanding their vocabulary as well as their understanding of grammar and language structure. Writing eventually helps students develop phonic knowledge and read more fluently because they begin to link oral language they have mastered with written language.

### 2.5.1. Language as a Tool

A language is a system for communicating thoughts and feelings through signs and symbols, according to McWhirter *et al.* (1996). These signs and symbols are used to encode and decode data. According to Kern (2008), a language is more than just a means of communication; it is also a means of thought generation, a map for understanding the world, a secret to new knowledge, a window into human history, and a source of joy and inspiration. Each language is unique and takes many different forms. Every person makes use of these resources when communicating. There are various languages in the world. We must know a specific language in order to communicate in that language. Language proficiency, also known as linguistic proficiency, is an individual's ability to speak or perform in a learned language. For those attempting to learn a second language, proficiency is essential (Dunworth, 2006). It is critical for those teaching a language to understand their students' level of proficiency because it is critical to their success during the learning process.

Proficiency is also defined as a language user's command of the formal and functional aspects of the language that are intended to enable them to convey and comprehend meaning precisely, fluently, and adequately in perspective. The concept of communicative competence, first defined and explained by Hymes (1972) and later by others, serves as the foundation for proficiency training (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). The iteration developed by Canale & Swain (1980), which has four components, is possibly the most popular one in language instruction.

- (i) grammatical competence (concerned with the well-formedness of language),
- (ii) sociolinguistic competence (the ability to be appropriate with language),
- (iii) discourse competence (knowledge of the connections between utterances in a text to form a meaningful whole) and,
- (iv) strategic acumen (the ability to compensate for imperfect language knowledge).

The term "proficiency" refers to a state of general competence in a language and, as such, includes a set of generic skills and abilities captured in Canale & Swain's (1980) framework and reflected in instruction that emphasizes areas like grammar and syntax, general listening skills, vocabulary development, general reading and writing skills, the development of communication strategies,

and an area that is frequently ignored, the pragmatics of communication and related concerns with politics. The most crucial thing is that students have the chance to practice using their formal and functional language skills in real-world situations, both inside and outside of the classroom, with confidence and fluency.

### **2.5.2. Language Skills**

Skill-based instruction is the focus of English as a Second Language instruction. To prepare students to use English effectively in their academic studies—whether that means managing demanding reading assignments, writing in a variety of academic genres, understanding lectures, or taking part in tutorials and group discussions—is one of the main objectives of English second language instruction. The emphasis on language skills does not detract from the importance of systematic instruction aimed at increasing students' language knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar. Language-focused instruction should be integrated into skills-based ESL instruction throughout formal ESL classes. Finally, ESL programs should aim to help students develop the skills, strategies, and metacognitive awareness required for academic success (Alexander *et al.*, 2008; Charles & Pecorari, 2015; De Chazal, 2014).

Although the researcher has chosen to address each of the four skills in its own section in this volume, this does not imply that each skill should be taught separately. The reason for this is simply to describe in detail what each skill entails. In language classrooms (and in mainstream academic classes), the skills interact in a variety of ways; for example, speaking rarely occurs without listening, writing is usually linked to reading, and listening (to lectures, for example) is usually linked to reading and writing. Even when the skills are timetabled separately in the classroom, the complex embedding of skills is usually unavoidable, such as when a listening comprehension activity requires students to read questions before listening and answering them in writing. Like using English for academic study, this kind of skill integration is essential to popular approaches to teaching languages like Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI).

Nonetheless, there are compelling reasons to investigate the nature of each skill in its own right. First, the four skills remain an organizing principle for many ESL curricula, as well as published

textbooks and high-stakes international English proficiency tests. Second, being an effective teacher of any of the four skills (whether taught in discrete-skill classes or an integrated fashion) requires a thorough understanding of the skills as well as expertise in skill-specific pedagogical principles and practices. Effective writing instruction, for example, is best achieved when teachers (a) understand the writing process and (b) are aware of the various options for providing feedback on written work, as well as the research evidence supporting these options.

Another example is that listening instruction is improved when teachers are skilled at structuring listening experiences so that students can systematically develop bottom-up and top-down listening skills and strategies. Teachers benefit from being familiar with skill-specific practices and understanding why certain activities or approaches are more effective than others for developing each specific skill for all four skills. To that end, the advice that the researcher can give in this study is based on extensive research into the four skills and the efficacy (or lack thereof) of skill-specific pedagogical options.

Because more diverse students from different home languages enroll in higher education (HE) each year, researchers are particularly interested in the role that language proficiency plays in students' academic success (Keeve *et al.*, 2012; Burger, 2017). Van Zyl (2009) asserts that language proficiency entails both pragmatic and organizational language abilities. Two different categories of organizational skills are grammatical skills and textual language skills. Aspects of grammar such as syntax, morphology, and vocabulary are crucial for the appropriate use of language in a particular situation (Bachman, 1990).

Textual abilities are described as a person's capacity to organize language so that it is meaningful rather than just a series of pointless linguistic expressions (Archibald, 1997). The potential to effectively utilize language to accomplish a particular goal, in addition to the capacity to comprehend language in a particular circumstance, are referred to as pragmatic language skills (Van Zyl, 2009). According to Yeld (2003), in order to achieve success at the HE level, students ought to have linguistic, text - based, and usable (pragmatic) language skills. Cummins (1984) further proposed that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) cannot advance prior to actually basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). Several international studies have been carried out on the impact of language proficiency on student academic success.



A study conducted at the University of Adelaide in Australia found that students who passed language proficiency exams had a significantly higher chance of succeeding in school (Anderson *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, Cronin (2003) and Feast (2002) found that linguistic competence boosts academic success. According to Brooks & Adams (2002), language proficiency has a greater impact on students' success than culture, learning, or teaching methods. Korobova (2012), asserts a link between linguistic competence and academic success. Similar findings were found in studies conducted in the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively, (Cook *et al.* (2004) and Kuh *et al.* (2006).

The problem of language proficiency is made more difficult by the eleven official languages used in South Africa. The majority of students in higher education receive instruction in a language other than their mother tongue because English is used as a universal language. Many SA researchers argued that two elements must be considered when assessing the effect of language on student success (Dalvit & De Klerk, 2005; Coetzee-Van Rooy 2000; Weideman & Van Rensburg, 2002). First, it's important for students to learn in their native language, and then their levels of language proficiency should be considered (CHE, 2010; Van Rooy & Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2015). There are drawbacks to learning a second or third language, according to numerous studies. On average, students who learn in their mother tongue perform 6% better than students who do not learn in their mother tongue (Gunning, 2002; Heugh, 2000; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2000; De Klerk, 2002).

Cummins' (1984) theory may help to explain these findings, which are supported by the CHE (2010), Favish (2005), and Ngcobo (2009) reports that the gap caused by low language proficiency is a significant factor in students' failure in HE. This theory states that CALP cannot emerge before BICS. The CALP of students who are taught in a language other than their mother tongue suffers. In relation to this study, it is significant to remember that most students in South Africa who are not white come from racial groups where English is not the primary language spoken at home. These students are more likely to be instructed in a language other than their mother tongue as a result (Van Zyl, 2016).

Additionally, Basson (2006) discovers that language proficiency is generally low among South African students, particularly among non-native language speakers. Similar to this, Ayliff (2010) notes that too little emphasis is placed on the development of cognitive language proficiency



during language teaching in schools, resulting in students entering higher education with weak academic literacy skills. Naudé *et al.* (2011) assert that there is a connection between students' academic success and their language ability. They think that when evaluating the academic performance of speakers of languages other than their mother tongue, language proficiency should be given special consideration. Other researchers in South Africa found a connection between language competence and academic success (Eiselen & Geysler, 2003; Koch, 2007; Louwrens & Smit, 2003; Makgalemele, 2005; Stephen, 2007; Yeld, 2003).

It is widely accepted that in order to achieve positive learning outcomes in their study programs, students in higher education (HE) must be proficient in their discipline's academic literacies (Butler, 2011). However, academic literacies proficiency amongst beginning students in HE varies due to the historical and social contexts of a discipline, as well as students' academic abilities, language skills, and cultural backgrounds (Elton, 2010; Goldingay *et al.*, 2012). Academic literacies play a significant role in determining first-year students' successful participation and engagement in their study programs, according to studies in this field (Chanock, 2013; Walker & An-e, 2013; Wingate, 2012).

Academic literacies are oral and written interaction genres, registers, graphics, linguistic structures; preferred, expected, cultivated, conventionalized, or ritualistic interactional patterns (Duff, 2010). While studies have looked into the difficulties that first-year students face in acquiring these literacies (Buzzi *et al.*, 2012; Hocking & Fieldhouse, 2011; Walker & An-e, 2013) and the programs that have been put in place to address them (Chanock *et al.*, 2010;

Nallaya (2018) conducted a study titled “*An exploration of how first year students are inducted into their discipline’s academic discourses*”. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate how first-year students are inducted into their discipline's academic literacies, as this is frequently identified as a contributing factor to the student experience. The study involved interviewing 35 students and five lecturers from an Australian university's study programs. The results revealed:

- (i). there was a disparity between different stakeholders’ expectations about the learning and teaching needs of students in Higher Education;
- (ii). not all first-year students had the expected academic literacies to engage in the discourses of their discipline;

- (iii). scaffolding of disciplinary literacies was not being undertaken consistently; and
- (iv). lecturers were uncertain about the level of scaffolding that should be provided to first-year students.

### **2.5.3. Academic Literacies and Learning**

In higher education, academic literacies are frequently linked to specific topic (disciplinary) syntactic, discursive, and multimodal conventions as well as styles, genre sets, and registers, often with a relatively formal register (Duff, 2010). Additionally included, are the skills of critical thinking, repository searching, knowledge of and experience with academic techniques like referencing and formal register, as well as the capacity to subvert a variety of educational genres (McWilliams & Allan, 2014).

Writing and learning are regarded as social practices into which students must be initiated. The academic literacies approach emphasizes practices over texts (Lillis & Scott, 2007). The incorporation of students into their discipline's academic practices should not be taken lightly. According to Duff (2010: 69), student induction into their disciplinary literacies is a dynamic process that includes *"modeling, feedback, and uptake; varying levels of investment and agency on the part of learners; the negotiation of power and identities; and significant personal transformations for at least some participants."*

Academic literacies are effectively acquired when scaffolding and development occur over the course of a study program and are embedded in the course content (Lea & Street, 1998; Wingate, 2012). Many parts of the world have looked into how students are introduced to their discipline's literacies. Researchers in the United States of America, such as Bizzell (1982) and Bartholomae (1986), were concerned about how students were initiated into the literacy practices of their institution and discipline as early as the 1980s. Ballard & Clanchy (1987) in Australia suggested that similar to Bizzell (1982) and Bartholomae (1986), but through an anthropological lens, students were frequently unaware of or did not understand the conventions and practices employed in higher education.

As a result, they needed to be taught about these concepts. Ballard & Clanchy (1987) propose that if the conventions and rules of a discipline's literacies were made clear, students' writing challenges

could be addressed. As a result, Hounsell (1988) in the UK believed that academic literacies were a "code" that students could decipher if their innate characteristics were made clear. It was implied in all of these contexts that academic literacies comprise a set of practices used by a community of practitioners, even though the terms "*academic discourse*" and "*literacies*" were used in place of each other in the United States and the United Kingdom. These practices are specific to the practitioners and the context in which they work. These literacies present difficulties for some beginning students. These practices are specific to the practitioners and the context in which they work. These literacies present difficulties for some beginning students. As a result, students must be made aware of these practices in order for them to acquire and apply these conventions in their studies.

#### **2.5.4. Academic Literacies and First-Year Students**

Academic literacies frequently pose a challenge to first-year students in higher education (Chanock, 2000; Devereux & Wilson, 2008). This is becoming increasingly important as there are more non-traditional students in universities today than in the past. Non-traditional students are those who take a break from their studies after high school, study part-time and work full-time, have dependents, are single parents, or have not completed high school, according to the National Center for Education Statistics in the United States of America. The Department of Education and Training in Australia (2015) further defines this category to include indigenous students, who have a disability, speak English as an Additional Language, come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, live in regional and remote areas, or study in non-traditional disciplines.

Brady (2013) contends that non-traditional students should be taught discipline-specific literacies because they may be disadvantaged due to their economic, social, and cultural capital. According to Klinger & Murray (2012), non-traditional students do not perform as well as their peers (Klinger & Murray, 2012). According to Gale & Parker (2013), the completion rates of non-traditional students are generally lower. Some students, particularly those from non-traditional pathways, may be unable to demonstrate specific behaviors expected in the study program without some form of scaffolding that clarifies their discipline's values and practices and provides them with the language, expertise support, and possibilities they require to enter into a new society and its core competencies with increasing competence (Duff, 2010).

Academic literacies should also be scaffolded so that students can meet classroom challenges and be effective and productive participants in their study program (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Ivanič, 1998; Macken-Horarik *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, while a competent level of academic literacies is required for successful engagement and participation in the study program, the ultimate goal is for students to demonstrate their proficiency in their discipline's discourses, first during professional placements and then in the workplace upon graduation. One of the core qualities listed in many universities' graduate qualities is the ability to communicate both verbally and in writing.

According to a study conducted by Michigan State University's Collegiate Employment Research Institute (2007), one of the reasons new graduates were either reprimanded or fired was their inability to effectively communicate both verbally and in writing. This finding was similar to another study conducted at Johnson and Wales University in the 1990s. Similarly, an investigation conducted by Graduate Careers Australia (2016) discovers that employers ranked interpersonal and communication skills (oral and written) as the most important selection criteria when recruiting graduates. This demonstrates the value of academic and professional communication skill development and scaffolding in study programs to help students become proficient in the literacies of their discipline.

Seloni (2012) used a micro-ethnographic approach to research the socialization of academic literacy among first-year doctoral students in the United States. The research findings from a micro-ethnographic examination of the socialization of academic literacy among six doctoral students studying multilingual education during their first year were presented in the paper. The study's main goal was to gain a deeper understanding of academic content in a second language while also examining the academic socialization processes that these multilingual students underwent as they built academic skills and social connections. The information was gathered over the course of a year from videotaped conversations that took place outside of class and student interviews. The study's findings indicate that socialization into academic discourse practices is an advanced and multifaceted strategy that students can use to collaboratively derive meaning and engage in interactive dialogues outside of the classroom environment in order to learn how to be respectable members of their academic fields.

According to the results, academic socialization happens in a variety of settings during the first year of a doctoral program, including initial contact frames, institutional academic spaces, and



collaborative academic cultures. According to this study, these socialization areas gave students a "safe haven" where they could feel free to question the academic norms they had to deal with in their first year and try to become reflective members of the doctoral communities in their respective fields. According to the study's findings, academic socialization is a multifaceted and intricate process. Multilingual doctoral students are academically socialized in a variety of contexts. Academic socialization requires important spaces for interaction outside of the classroom.

According to Ntereke & Ramoroka (2017), reading and interpreting textbooks and other required material is a crucial part of succeeding at the university level. Reading comprehension is the cornerstone of education and is necessary for learning all academic subjects. However, research on the reading abilities of both first- and second-language speakers reveals that proficient reading is a difficult process that calls for a combination of various skills and strategies to balance out each other while processing a text simultaneously (Anderson, 1991; Carrell, 1989; Rumelhart, 1984; Stanovich, 1980). For instance, a skilled reader should be knowledgeable in linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills. Students can read a range of texts across the curriculum with the aid of the following reading comprehension techniques:

- (i) making connections,
- (ii) engaging with the text,
- (iii) active meaning construction,
- (iv) monitoring understanding,
- (v) analysis and synthesis, and
- (vi) critical reading.

According to research, proficient second language readers can use a wider variety and combination of these skills and strategies to aid in their understanding and interpretation of a text, for instance (Anderson, 1990; Carrell, 1989; Rumelhart, 1984; Stanovich, 1980). Ntereke & Ramoroka's (2017) study on the reading proficiency of first-year undergraduate students at the University of Botswana assesses the first-year students' reading levels to ascertain how well-prepared they are for university reading. Additionally, it was intended to determine whether there had been any appreciable progress after first-year students had finished their academic literacy course.



The participants were 51 University of Botswana first-year undergraduate humanities students taking the communication and academic literacy course. A reading test that had been modified for Zulu was used to collect the data, and it was given at the beginning of the first semester. To determine whether their performance had changed after taking the academic literacy course, the students took the same exam at the end of the semester. The results of this study show that students' levels of reading proficiency vary widely when they first enroll in college and that many first-year students are underprepared for university reading.

## **2.6. SPEAKING PROFICIENCY**

Because language is the medium through which people communicate, it plays a crucial role in people's daily lives. Speaking is a crucial component of second language teaching and learning because it involves developing and exchanging meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in a variety of contexts, according to Chaney & Burk (1998). The four primary language skills that develop in the English language in that order are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Chaney & Burk, 1998). When reading and writing are taught in this order, it is obvious that speaking and listening skills are essential because they enable the learner to write and read what they can understand and speak.

Thus, speaking is described as an oral mode or a more complicated productive skill that involves more than just pronouncing words (Chaney & Burk, 1998). When people speak, they do so in one of three ways: interactively (discussion and dialogue), partially interactively (lecture), or non-interactively (sermons and speeches). Phone calls and in-person conversations are both examples of interactive speaking situations where listening and speaking are alternated. We have the option to ask our conversation partner for clarification, repetition, or slower speech in this circumstance. On the other hand, partially interactive scenarios involve delivering a speech in front of a live audience with the agreement that the audience will not interrupt the speech.

Still able to see the audience, the speaker can gauge their body language and facial expressions to see if they are being understood. Developing your speaking abilities is crucial when learning a second language. Despite this, according to Baker & Westrup (2003), teachers in many nations ignore speaking skills in favor of grammar or vocabulary instruction because speaking abilities are

not evaluated. Many colleges and universities, including UNAM, value students' English language proficiency, which has evolved into a standard for assessing linguistic performance (Nunan, 2003). Students are evaluated in communicative language teaching and speaking activities such as imitating, responding to verbal cues, and interactive conversation (Chaney & Burk, 1998). The oral content presentation should be practical and functional in real life. Appropriate feedback should also be provided, but not at the expense of interfering with the communication process, which discourages further verbal communication. Additionally, strategies like seeking clarification, paraphrasing, using gestures, and starting conversations with words like "hey," "so," and "by the way" should be encouraged. Fluency and accuracy in English usage should also be addressed. In order to develop verbal fluency and confidence, students should practice using appropriate English structures, be exposed to them, and engage in oral productive activities like role-playing, debates, listening comprehension, and drama.

Because speaking skills are the foundation of English teaching, they must receive a lot of attention during the learning process. All four interconnected skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—need equal attention. Listening and speaking, on the other hand, haven't gotten nearly as much attention over the years as reading and writing have. Schools and universities must evaluate students' speaking skills in order to close this achievement gap. The four language skills can be evaluated using role-playing, dictation, giving oral speeches, listening comprehension, and reciting poetry.

However, it is challenging to test the skills in large classes. Even though speaking is important, teaching speaking skills has long been considered undervalued, and English language instructors have continued to instruct speaking as the memorization of dialogues or repetition of drills. The only way for students to express themselves and learn how to adhere to the social and cultural norms that are appropriate in each communicative circumstance is through the development and improvement of their communicative skills in today's society. Nunan (2003) defined fluency as the capacity to use language confidently, quickly, and with few pauses. By involving their teachers and peers in meaningful activities and tasks that encourage the development of oral language, students should be given the chance to use spoken English. Students can hone their English-speaking abilities through group projects, classroom presentations, brainstorming, information gaps, storytelling, simulations, and short conversations (Chaney & Burk, 1998).

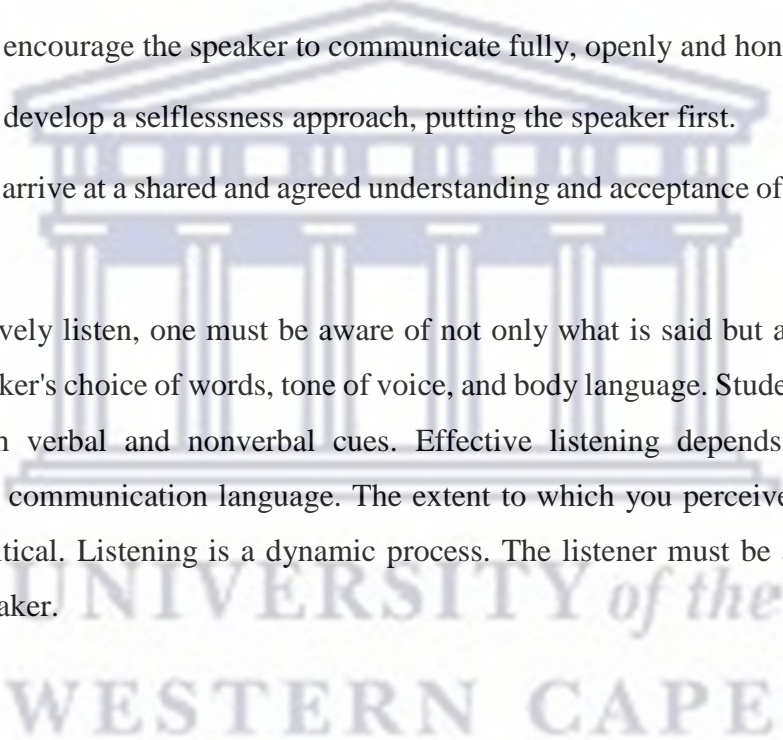
## 2.7. LISTENING PROFICIENCY

According to studies, the average person listens 45% of the time, speaks 30% of the time, reads 16% of the time, and writes 9% of the time (Adler *et al.* 2001). This simply means that we spend more time listening during our lifetime. The ability to capture audio input is referred to as listening proficiency. The student's listening proficiency can be determined by how well they hear, how proficient they are in the language of communication, and how well they retain what the lecturer says in the lecture room. The capacity to accurately receive and interpret messages during oral communication is another definition of listening (Adler *et al.* 2001). This indicates that the most crucial component of oral communication is listening. When people are unable to listen clearly and attentively, messages are easily misunderstood. As a result, there is a breakdown in communication, and the message sender may experience frustration or annoyance.

Students will spend the majority of their university years listening to lectures presented by their lecturers, listening to other students' presentations, or discussing various topics both in class and outside of class, therefore, they must develop their listening skills. Universities ought to emphasize listening skills because it is one of the most critical communication abilities that potential employers will be looking for. An excellent candidate for the job who has good listening skills will increase customer satisfaction, productivity, and error reduction. They will also increase information sharing, which will promote more creative and innovative work. Many researchers contend that the foundation of all fruitful human relationships is the ability to listen effectively. The cornerstone of success is effective listening.

Aside from the academic benefits of having good listening skills, having good listening skills has personal benefits. Some of the advantages include a large number of friends; friendship is very important in everyone's life, especially that of students. Some of the advantages of good listening skills include increased self-esteem and confidence, as well as higher grades in their studies and academic work. Being a good listener necessitates concentration and concentrated effort, both mental and physical.

According to Adler *et al.* (2001), there are eight possible purposes of listening and the purpose of listening will depend on the situation and the nature of the communication namely:

- 
- (i) To specifically focus on the messages being communicated, avoiding distractions and preconceptions.
  - (ii) To gain a full and accurate understanding of the speaker's point of view and ideas.
  - (iii) To critically assess what is being said.
  - (iv) To observe the non-verbal signals accompanying what is being said to enhance understanding.
  - (v) To show interest, concern and concentration.
  - (vi) To encourage the speaker to communicate fully, openly and honestly.
  - (vii) To develop a selflessness approach, putting the speaker first.
  - (viii) To arrive at a shared and agreed understanding and acceptance of both sides' views.

In order to effectively listen, one must be aware of not only what is said but also how it is said, including the speaker's choice of words, tone of voice, and body language. Students must therefore be aware of both verbal and nonverbal cues. Effective listening depends on the listener's proficiency in the communication language. The extent to which you perceive and comprehend the message is critical. Listening is a dynamic process. The listener must be as involved in the process as the speaker.

## **2.8. WRITING PROFICIENCY**

One of the four interrelated skills of learning English as a Second Language is writing. These abilities include things like speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Good speaking skills improve reading, good reading instruction improves writing, and good writing skills improve students' knowledge, speaking, and writing skills. Good listening skills encourage speaking (Lerner, 2000). The verbal and nonverbal communication skills are enhanced by these abilities. Many authors have tried to define writing. Writing is described as *"a method of marking letters, words, or other symbols on a surface with a pen, pencil, or similar implement"* by (Soanes & Stevenson 2008: 166).



The focus of this study will be Schmandt-Besserat & Erard (2008)'s definition of writing as graphic marks that, in this case, represent the grammatical constituents of the English language and serve as features of the linguistic structure. Writing is a skill that requires a lot of practice before someone can be said to be an expert (Langan, 2003). In contrast to speaking or conversing, where the listener can ask for clarification if he or she does not understand, writing is a complex process. All age groups and a larger audience can be reached by written work. Everyone, but especially students, need to be proficient writers. For the majority of their assessments, students are required to write essays, stories, reports, and exams. Their employers would continue to ask them to write reports, minutes, emails, and memoranda after they had finished their studies, to name a few.

Written communication is regarded as a fundamental skill and one of the most crucial skills for academic and professional success, according to surveys of relevant parties from higher education and the workforce (Afrin, 2016). Writing is the most frequently used skill to judge students' performance at almost all educational levels. English remains a challenge for Namibian university students. Written communication is the skill of effectively conveying a variety of messages, in a variety of formats, to a variety of audiences using a written medium (Markle *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, writing is a complex idea that is defined differently by various sources. Even professionals disagree on what makes for good writing (Behizadeh, 2014).

The focus on writing abilities points to the necessity of developing new writing proficiency tests to guide curricular and instructional improvement. Before using their first language to express themselves in the second, students must be taught the fundamental language skills of knowledge translation that translate cognitive knowledge, according to Garvin (2013). If this is not done, Garvin (2013: 77) cautions, their creativity will be stifled. Students must therefore enhance both their first and second language writing abilities. Since they are attempting to avoid using their imagination, self-expression, and creativity, second language writers find it challenging to maintain the lexical and structural constraints necessary to produce a text that sounds like an English text.

According to Garvin (2013: 77) students are empowered and take charge of their own learning when activities that foster creativity are created within reasonable subject-related constraints. The identities of the students may now be revealed in their writing. Achievement in many facets of life depends on effective communication. According to researchers like Dewey (1997), language is the



primary way that knowledge is acquired in both educational settings and day-to-day experiences because *"all human existence is ultimately social... it encompasses contact and communication"* (Dewey, 1997: 38). To interact successfully with others in the academic workplace and community settings, individuals must be able to communicate clearly and effectively.

Children learn to communicate in oral contexts when they are young, but as they get older, writing skills become much more important. The emphasis shifts from learning basic print literacy and transcription skills to writing about one's life experiences, expositions, or analyzing phenomena, and then to more difficult tasks like writing arguments or research papers. Written communication proficiency is regarded as a crucial student learning outcome in higher education, where it is vital that students learn how to write effectively (SLO). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2011) reported that 99% of the chief academic officers of 433 higher education institutions rated writing as one of the most crucial intellectual skills for their students. It is also important to mention the study conducted in the United States of America by the Educational Test Service (ETS, 2013), which involved interviews with vice presidents or provosts of academic affairs. Written communication was the competency that was most frequently mentioned as being essential for both academic and career success in a survey of more than 200 institutions on the general education skills that are most frequently measured. Globally, written communication is highly regarded.

Surprisingly, written communication is categorized as a soft skill expected of all students in the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project, which aims to evaluate the general educational objectives of university students around the world (OECD, 2012).

Similar reports from the workforce are found in higher education. Written communication was mentioned as one of the most desired skills in a sample of 431 employers from various industries surveyed by the Conference Board; over 93% of respondents stated that written communication was *"very important"* for the workplace, but 28% of respondents rated the writing abilities of 4-year college graduates entering the workforce as *"deficient"* (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006: 41). (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006: 41). Additionally, the AAC&U (2011) discovered that more than 89% of the 302 employers surveyed believed that colleges and universities should emphasize communication skills more than any other skill in the survey.

In the workplace, written communication skills are crucial, but many employers feel that recent graduates are unprepared for the writing assignments that come with the job. On the other hand, university graduates claim that mastering the art of writing well was one of the most crucial skills they discovered while pursuing their undergraduate degrees (Krahn & Silzer, 1995). These discrepancies in stakeholders' perceptions highlight the significance of valid, trustworthy written communication assessments as a learning outcome that can give institutions, employers, and individual students' useful information about their abilities. The importance of creating assessments that are instructionally relevant, providing feedback to teachers and students, and can be used to improve curriculum has recently been emphasized by calls for assessment reform (Gordon, 2013).

A next-generation written communication competency assessment in higher education may be used to suggest curriculum and instruction changes in the delivery of improving the students' writing skills, trying to make effective recruitment decisions, and/or giving feedback to students on their readiness for their future academic or professional pursuits. A precise definition of written communication that is supported by and consistent with recent empirical studies on writing in higher education should serve as the basis for this kind of assessment.

Effective communication skills, both verbal and written, are important, but there is some disagreement over how this competency should be defined. In their study, Markle *et al.* (2013) looked into the definitions of effective communication from seven important general education competency frameworks for higher education. This synthesis led the studies to define this competency as having the ability to *"communicate effectively multiple types of messages; communicate throughout multiple forms; and effectively deliver messages to vastly differing audiences"* (Markle *et al.*, 2013: 16). This definition concentrates on three elements of communication: the recipient, the form (or genre) of the message, and its type (or medium). Both oral and written communication channels require an understanding of these communication elements. However, they might not fully capture the breadth of skills that make up written communication proficiency. Investigating current frameworks with a focus on writing-specific outcomes is necessary given the widespread emphasis on written communication among interested parties. The definitions of writing abilities and communication meanings in general vary across conceptual frameworks. Similar to how different writing tests currently in use evaluate various

skills. There are many different definitions of effective writing at the college level, despite the apparent consensus on the importance of written communication as a crucial skill. A clear construct definition is needed to design and create the next generation of written communication tests for higher education (Sparks *et. al*, 2014).

Written communication has five dimensions, according to Sparks *et al.* (2014). These are:

- (i) social and rhetorical knowledge (which include comprehension of various purposes, audience members, contextual factors, genres, and forms of writing),
- (ii) critical reasoning (including analysis of reading materials, evaluating the effectiveness and reliability of information sources, and using research to support writing),
- (iii) writing processes (including planning, drafting, editing, revising, and responding to feedback), and
- (iv) knowledge of conventions (including both surrogate and formal conventions)
- (v) social and rhetorical knowledge (including the understanding of various purposes, audiences, contexts, genres, and forms of writing),
- (vi) composing in a variety of settings (e.g., using traditional and digital production modes, and integrating electronic sources into written work).

The aforementioned criteria appear to encompass all of the crucial facets of written communication and line up with criteria for writing in frameworks for higher education and the workforce.

Writing innovations and the blending of texts, data, and images are both possible in written communication (Rhodes, 2010: 1). In order to support understanding of complex written material, frameworks emphasize the need for university graduates to be able to integrate multimedia (e.g., visual aids, charts, graphs, and images) (Binkley *et al.*, 2010); "*use effective communication channels and methodologies,*" such as social media and electronic distribution; and to produce a variety of written forms, such as letters, essays, e-mails, websites, reports, or presentations. The multi-literacies perspective on writing emphasizes the value of multilingual and multimodal literacy in the twenty-first century (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Thus, writing entails producing text

using a variety of media, distribution channels, and communication technologies. The concept of multi-literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) is incorporated into this writing perspective and emphasizes the value of multilingual and multimodal literacy in the twenty-first century. Thus, writing entails producing text using a range of media, distribution channels, and communication technologies.

Pfeiffer (2018) looked into the literacies, practices, and skills involved in the formation of a writing identity. This study was motivated by the fact that college students who use a second language (L2) frequently find it difficult to communicate in writing. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the expressive writing practice experiences of multilingual college students. Writing in a second language, especially for L2 writers, is challenging to master. She uses the idea of a social (cognitive) process and its implications for writing ability to examine how people can truly understand the writing process when viewing students' writing in South Africa against the backdrop of multilingualism.

In the literature review, Bakhtin's idea of a hetero-glossic dialogic relationship was highlighted. This idea refers to the conflicts between the diversity of linguistic forms within a national language and uses expressive writing to move toward a standard central version. The perspectives, perceptions, and recommendations of students on their writing experiences were gathered using the interpretive epistemology-guided qualitative case study design. The aim of this study was to pinpoint the various kinds of strategies that could help L2 students with writing assignments in English. According to the findings, expressive writing is advantageous for multilingual students. When considered holistically, this research supports the use of expressive writing as a learning tool during the process of becoming academically literate.

Writing is a skill that comes in handy in many different contexts. According to Butler (2011), academic writing is frequently regarded as the primary means of communication used by individuals in the tertiary academic context to convey their ideas. It is also common knowledge that students may find it challenging to adapt to the standards (conventions and guidelines) that apply to the production of suitable written texts in this situation.

Simply put, academic writing does many things that personal writing does not: It has its own set of rules and procedures. To put it simply, academic writing does many things that personal writing does not: It has its own set of rules and procedures. These rules and practices can be structured into



a formal order or structure to present ideas and ensure that the author's citations in the literature follow ideas (Bizzell, 1992; Cantor, 1993; Orr, 1995). Academic writing differs from personal writing in that it investigates the fundamental theories and causes that influence daily processes and practices, as well as possible explanations for these phenomena (Radloff, 1994; Zamel & Spack, 1998). Academic writing has a distinct "*tone*" and adheres to strict punctuation, grammar, and spelling rules.

Butler (2011) claims that academic writing is the kind of writing needed in a college or university. It is distinct from other forms of writing, such as business, literary, personal, and journalistic writing. Its distinct audience, tone, and purpose can be used to partially explain its differences. A specific audience, such as professors or instructors, is considered when writing an academic piece. The tone and writing style are taken into consideration in academic writing (Ivani, 2004). It is discovered through the use of words, grammatical structures, and even sentence length. A piece of writing's tone can be serious, humorous, personal, or impersonal. Academic writing is formal and solemn.

Finally, the organizational structure of a piece of writing is determined by its purpose. It means that each type of writing has its own structure or organization in terms of purpose. Academic writing is thought to be impersonal. While the author's point of view may be stated, arguments are developed using evidence from books and experiments (Butler, 2011). Academic writing frequently employs the passive voice, uncontracted verb forms, subordination rather than deference, impersonal language, and formal language. Academic writing is classified into four types based on its purpose: descriptive, expository, narrative, argumentative, and persuasive. Descriptive writing provides a detailed and vivid account of something or an event. Expository writing's goal is to explain or interpret something. Narrative writing provides an account, telling of or detailing something. To persuade the reader to consider the author's ideas, persuasive writing employs persuasive or rational arguments.



## 2.9. READING PROFICIENCY

One of the four language skills that are taught in the English language learning process is reading, along with listening, speaking, and writing. However, reading is thought to be the most crucial ability of all. Different people have different ideas about what reading is. Reading, according to McCradien & Walcutt (1969), is the process of learning words by transforming written symbols into spoken language. However, this goal does not differentiate between talking and reading because we receive information in the same way from spoken language.

The definition of reading given by Harris (1982) on the other hand is "*the meaningful interpretation of meaning from printed verbal symbols, which also includes sensing, perceiving, achieving meaning, learning, and responding in a variety of ways*". Reading is essential to our society's success according to (Hwang *et al.* (2017); it is valued and necessary for social and educational advancement. Reading also enhances general proficiency and provides access to crucial information at work and school (Komiyama, 2009). Because reading is useful not only in the world of education but also in social and professional life, it can be inferred that people's daily lives and reading activities are inextricably linked.

We must read in order to improve our language abilities. Reading is helpful for learning a language, claims (Harmer, 2007). The more students who comprehend what they read, the more proficient they will be. People must therefore understand what they read when they read. When people read, it serves no purpose if they do not comprehend what they are reading. When learning to read, students must understand the text in order to learn the information. Reading would be useless without comprehension, according to Oberholzer (2005: 5), so explaining what we are reading is far more important to us than learning the mechanics of reading. At each stage of the language learning process, students should be able to read with comprehension as their main goal.

Reading, according to Connors-Tadros (2014), is a set of interconnected skills that must work together during the reading process in order to comprehend the meaning from a variety of texts. Reading, in other words, refers to the abilities required to comprehend and communicate effectively. Reading is an active and complex process that involves comprehending written texts, developing and interpreting meaning, and applying meaning to the type of text, purpose, and situation. Connors-Tadros (2014) defined reading as the process of extracting meaning from written texts. It requires the coordination of many interconnected sources of information because

it is a complex skill. University students should actively interact with prior knowledge, the information the text suggests, and the context of the reading situation to construct meanings. In order for university students to become proficient readers, they must develop three interconnected sets of skills: language and communication, reading mechanics, and content knowledge.

These interpretations hold that reading is an effort made by students or readers to understand, grasp, translate, and interpret the written form in order to acquire or transmit meaning and information from a text. As a result, reading involves more than just looking at words represented by symbols; it also entails understanding the text's content and learning from it (Boakye, 2015).

Reading is only incidentally visually stimulating because the reader adds more details than what is written on the page. This statement implies that we must infer information and draw conclusions from a given product, like a book. We read, but we also promptly forgot everything we read. Expecting to learn more by merely listening and looking is unrealistic because textbooks contain almost all available knowledge. Additionally, it is simpler for students because we can learn from an expert's work and book without having to personally meet with them.

As stated above, the researcher has come to the conclusion that reading involves deriving meaning from what we have written and gathering knowledge from what we have read. Reading creates a connection between the author and the reader because the author explains her claim and her knowledge, and the reader accepts the meaning and information. Reading involves more than just memorizing what you read; it also involves understanding what the author is trying to say (Boakye, 2015). In the world of education, reading comprehension is becoming more and more crucial. Reading can give students access to information that lectures in lecture halls cannot.

Furthermore, nearly half of all items on university exams are related to reading comprehension (Burger, 2017). Students should receive training to hone their reading abilities as a result. Reading is good for language learning because it's necessary for a career, for school, or just for fun, claims (Harmer, 2007). It's crucial to have reading and comprehension abilities in everyday life. Only through reading can people acquire the speed and proficiency needed for practical purposes after they graduate from school, claim Hudson, Lane & Pullen (2005). In our literate society, it is challenging to think of any skilled occupation that does not require the ability to read. In other words, students must become proficient readers because they will need them in their remaining academic years and throughout their future careers, especially first-year university students.

Longer texts are extremely challenging to understand, according to Snow (2002), because the slowness and difficulty of word recognition interfere with the process of meaning construction. Understanding the meaning of a longer text is necessary for comprehension. Reading comprehension involves making sense of what is being read. The text is comprehended by an engaged reader. Despite the complexity of comprehension, reading researchers have created strategies for instructing students to read actively (Burger, 2017). According to Snow (2002), comprehension refers to the development of students' reading abilities. Understanding requires the connecting of two or more pieces of information. Those details can come from long-term memory (prior knowledge) in reading comprehension, but at least one must be from the text. The ideas can be as basic to quite complex. Comprehension refers to the ability to actively listen to, read, and understand language.

To understand text, one's decoding abilities must enable reading fluency (reading that is as easy and expressive as speaking), which enables a reader to use their cognitive energy to find comparisons, pose queries, predict outcomes, and use other comprehension techniques used by strong readers. The *"bridge"* between decoding and comprehension is thus sometimes referred to as fluency. Knowledge of vocabulary and background information are crucial components of comprehension, in addition to fluency and the effective use of comprehension strategies. A reading comprehension text therefore requires the ability to decode. Reading is done to understand. If a reader can read the words but does not comprehend what they are reading, they are not reading.

According to Block (2004), comprehension is a process whereby readers interact with text to construct meaning using a combination of information from the text, prior knowledge and experience, and the reader's position in relation to the text. Additionally, comprehension is essential for all interpretations and meanings because without it, readers will not be able to decipher the meaning of the text. Simply trying to glean meaning from the text will not lead to understanding. The reader creates a variety of textual representations while reading that are necessary for comprehension. Texts can be difficult or easy depending on the text's inherent characteristics, how well they match the reader's abilities and knowledge, and how they interact with the text.

But since knowledge is significant, it follows that comprehension requires the reader to have the necessary knowledge to interact with the text's content. If a reader has trouble understanding a text,

it is because they do not have the right knowledge. More than just word recognition and understanding are required for reading comprehension. Making sense of what you read and relating it to what you already know, also referred to as prior knowledge, and are necessary for true comprehension. It also entails keeping in mind what you have read. In other words, comprehension includes reading while thinking. Understanding words, making a connection to the text's main idea, and remembering the context are all necessary for comprehension.

Reading is done to improve comprehension, which includes learning new information and watching ideas develop as one reads. Reading comprehension is the process by which readers make sense of text by interacting with it while taking into account prior knowledge, prior experiences, information in the text, and the reader's position in relation to the text. This suggests that readers search for the construct's meaning in the passages of the text where they found information.

Woolley (2011) asserts that comprehension is a difficult task requiring multiple processing levels. The ability to deal with new vocabulary found in the text is one of the most basic components of comprehension. Word-level tasks that readers struggle with take up cognitive resources that could be used for deeper levels of textual analysis. To predict the meaning of new words, context cues are not sufficient. The process of reading is intricate and interactive. Construction of meaning through the dynamic interaction of the reader's prior knowledge, the knowledge implied by the written language, and the context of the reading situation. The key to creating effective, appropriate comprehension strategies, according to Brown (2002), is reading comprehension. In other words, comprehension is the capacity to comprehend and understand information, which enables students to respond to questions about descriptive reading.

Numerous studies have revealed that many students have trouble understanding what they read (Nel *et al.*, 2015; Ngwenya, 2010; Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005; Torgeson & Hudson, 2006). Because effective academic performance depends on the ability to read, educators must help students get past these challenges and master the necessary reading skills. Many classrooms have employed a variety of strategies to improve students' reading ability, such as the explicit teaching of cognitive and metacognitive techniques (Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Koda, 2005; Pressley, 2006).

These studies focused on methods for learning and teaching, including attempting to isolate key ideas, expanding vocabulary, summarizing, drawing conclusions, attempting to use prior knowledge, and analyzing texts. These mental approaches are both necessary and worthwhile.



According to Taylor & Yu (2009), a number of school-age students have low reading proficiency as a result of their low socioeconomic status. Due to a lack of reading materials or resources, exposure to texts, and readers, these students' levels of affective reading were reduced. Because of this, many tertiary students have weak reading skills and low levels of affective reading (Boakye, *et al.*, 2014; Torgeson, 2006). The development of reading proficiency depends on the affective component of reading because it affects students' willingness to read frequently and, consequently, their level of engagement with their reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Additionally, the reader's motivation affects how well-planned strategies for meaning extraction are used by him or her (Anderson, 1999; Guthrie, 2008; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014; Guthrie *et al.*, 2004).

The English language proficiency of students has been particularly impacted by some developments in Australia. There is a growing perception in higher education that the language and literacy skills of students from both English-speaking backgrounds (ESB) and non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) are deteriorating a situation that, some argue, has forced lecturers to tone down their course materials and spend time addressing English language problems that many regard as outside the scope of their expertise and locus of responsibility (Abelson, 2005). This calls into question the quality and depth of the knowledge base and English language competency with which these students exit their programs of study, and thus their employability and readiness to enter an Australian workforce where employers increasingly expect strong language and communication skills, as well as technical competence in their discipline areas (Birrell & Healey, 2008; Burch, 2008).

According to Murray (2010), students who do not have the English proficiency needed to succeed in college may struggle with anxiety, frustration, demotivation, and a lack of ability to participate in the learning process. Professional courses with work placements can be particularly difficult, leading to high levels of student stress and even expulsion if students are unable to meet the communicative demands involved. Examples include education, pharmacy, and nursing (Abelson, 2005). Those who do not struggle with language proficiency can and do become frustrated when they observe how other students' advancement is hindered by those who, in their opinion, should not be enrolled in degree programs if they lack the language proficiency necessary to keep up and cope (Birrell & Healey, 2008; Burch, 2008).

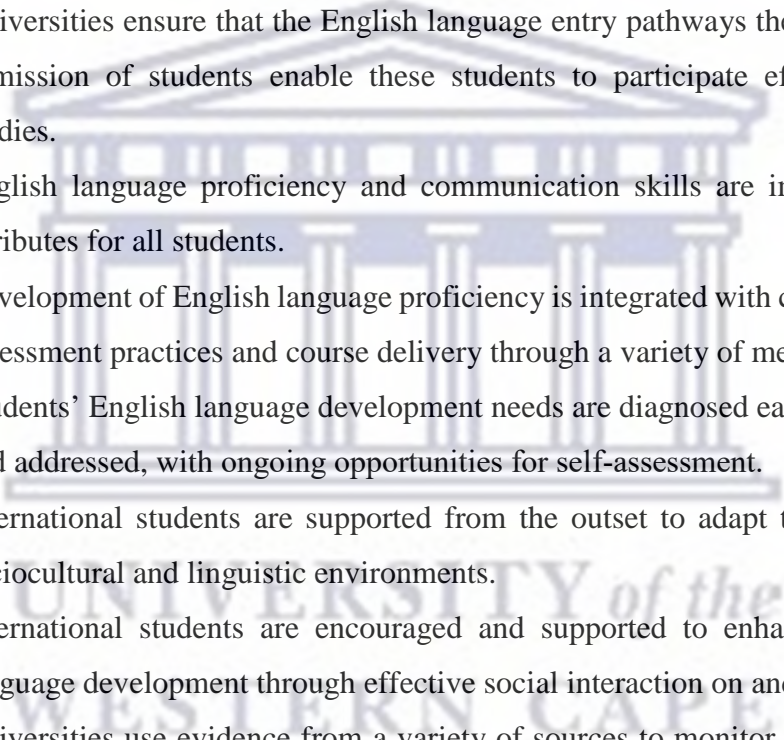
Such responses only serve to further marginalize these already-vulnerable people by placing them in a deficit frame, lowering their sense of confidence, self-esteem, and right to be there, and denying them the type of input and interaction that is essential to their educational and linguistic development (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014; Guthrie *et al.*, 2004). Universities have a moral responsibility to make sure they accept applicants who meet their requirements but have varying levels of English proficiency. All of these students should receive the support they need to complete their coursework successfully and realize their full academic potential (Birrell & Healey, 2008; Burch, 2008).

In response to Australian universities reassessing how they address the English language needs of their students from non-English speaking backgrounds, Murray (2010) conceptualizes the English language needs of first-year university students. This is partly a response to the ten "*Good Practice Principles*" that form the core of a government-commissioned document published in 2009 and intended to ensure that standards of good practice in English language provision are established and upheld across the industry. Their paper argues that a definition of "*proficiency*" is necessary for any effort to uphold these principles and implement coherent, pertinent, and strict provisions.

Early in 2009, universities received a document from the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) titled *Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities* (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2009). It was the outcome of a project started by a steering committee convened by AUQA to raise the standard of English language instruction at universities by creating a sector-wide monitoring and evaluation system. The project steering committee expects universities to consider the principles in the same way they would other good practice guidelines, according to the document.

As part of AUQA quality audits, universities can anticipate being questioned about how they have applied the principles, just as they are likely to be questioned about how they have used a number of other external reference documents for the university sector (Australia's Quality Agency for Universities, 2009: 2).

The following are the good practice guidelines for English language proficiency for foreign students attending Australian universities:

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- (i) Universities are responsible for ensuring that their students are sufficiently competent in the English language to participate effectively in their university studies.
  - (ii) Resourcing for English language development is adequate to meet students' needs throughout their studies.
  - (iii) Students have responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their study at university and are advised of these responsibilities prior to enrolment.
  - (iv) Universities ensure that the English language entry pathways they approve for the admission of students enable these students to participate effectively in their studies.
  - (v) English language proficiency and communication skills are important graduate attributes for all students.
  - (vi) Development of English language proficiency is integrated with curriculum design, assessment practices and course delivery through a variety of methods.
  - (vii) Students' English language development needs are diagnosed early in their studies and addressed, with ongoing opportunities for self-assessment.
  - (viii) International students are supported from the outset to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environments.
  - (ix) International students are encouraged and supported to enhance their English language development through effective social interaction on and off campus.
  - (x) Universities use evidence from a variety of sources to monitor and improve their English language development activities

In order to achieve this, a distinction between proficiency, academic literacy, and professional communication skills is proposed. The implications of this distinction are then discussed in relation to (a) meeting the language needs of both native speakers and non-native speakers, as well as (b) post-enrollment language assessment of newly enrolled students with the aim of identifying those at risk. Casta & Cachuela (2017) conduct a study on the English proficiency of first-year college students: A case study of Colegio del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus Theresa International College in

Thailand to determine the English proficiency of first-year college students as a whole and when classified by gender and programme.

The study made use of the entrance exam for incoming first-year students, which was given by the guidance staff. Reading comprehension and grammar were both tested. The Mann Whitney U test was used to determine whether there were any significant differences between first-year college students' levels of English proficiency.

Overall, the study's findings showed that first-year college students had good English language skills. When broken down by program and gender, the English proficiency of BSHM and BSSW students is also excellent. On the other hand, the Mann-Whitney U test showed that, although there was no significant difference in first-year students' English proficiency when classified by sex, there was a significant difference when classified by program.

Boakye (2017) looks into the efficacy of a reading intervention for first-year university students. The aim of the study was to investigate whether increasing students' affective levels and strategy use could enhance their reading proficiency through an integrated cognitive and affective approach. Both the control and intervention classes received a questionnaire survey both before and after the intervention. The first-year class of 195 students was split into two groups: high risk and low risk. The Y-tests were used to analyze the data. The results of the independent and paired t-tests showed a significant increase in students' levels of affective reading and use of appropriate reading strategies. The majority of the effect sizes, according to Cohen *et al.* (2007), ranged from moderate to large. According to additional research, students' levels of affective reading and comprehension increase when the integrated approach is used. The paper makes the case for an integrated strategy for reading development in order to maximize students' improvement in reading proficiency.



## 2.10. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The term "*communication*" has been defined on various levels. Facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values can all be effectively transmitted through communication, which is a dynamic interactive process. People actively and deliberately participate in communication to develop the knowledge and understanding needed for efficient group functioning; it is not passive or unintentional. It is vibrant because it entails a variety of forces and activities that interact with one another over time. The term "*process*" signifies that communication occurs as a sequential manner or series of steps. A 'process' can also pertain to a state of flux and change. People's communication relationships are constantly evolving.

An exchange of meaning and comprehension is another definition of communication. Communication is centered on meaning, and the transmission of meaning is the main objective of communication. The sender sends out message cues, which the recipient perceives, interprets, and responds to as necessary. Communication cannot be considered complete until the receiver has correctly decoded and understood the message sent by the sender.

Additionally, a message is only considered effective when the recipient understands it in the same way that it was intended. One of the most crucial skills for a global citizen in the twenty-first century is communication (Chung *et al.*, 2014). "*The deliberate process of two or more individuals expressing, receiving, and understanding messages containing factual information, feelings, ideas, and needs through common symbols,*" according to Sikiti (1998: 1), is what communication is. Communication, in its broadest sense, is the exchange of information from one person to another, whether that information is conveyed orally or through nonverbal cues. Many times, communication is verbal, taking place between two or more people using a specific language, with feedback on the message received.

In addition, communication involves the sharing of concepts, knowledge, and viewpoints with the intention of achieving a particular objective. Information can also be exchanged using signs and symbols. Another definition of communication is the simultaneous giving and receiving of meaning through similar meanings (Seiler & Beall, 2005). When a speaker or writer transmits a message or information via a stream to the receiver (listener or reader), followed by input from the receiver, communication is said to have begun. Therefore, information must be given, received, and then evaluated in order for communication to take place.

In addition, communication involves the sharing of thoughts, details, and viewpoints with a clear objective in mind. Information can also be exchanged using signs and symbols. The simultaneous sharing and giving of meaning through symbolic interactions is another definition of communication (Seiler & Beall, 2005). When a message or piece of information is transmitted through a channel from the speaker or writer to the receiver (listener or reader), communication has officially begun. As a result, information exchange includes the information provider, the information received, and any responses from the recipient.

There are two different kinds of communication abilities: verbal and nonverbal. According to Fielding & Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), communication is deemed effective when the message is shared and understood by others. Oral and written language both fall under verbal communication. Oral communication is the process of conveying ideas and information orally from one person or group to another. Oral communication can be formal or informal (Fielding & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Conversations over the phone, in-person interactions, and group discussions in a classroom are all examples of informal communication. Formal communication includes things like presentations in lectures and commencement speeches. For students to think and learn, they need to have strong oral communication skills. Talk is a tool that students use to investigate and understand ideas and concepts, recognize and resolve issues, organize their experiences and perspectives, and express and clarify their ideas, feelings, and opinions. For social interaction to occur in the workplace, at school, and in the community, listening and speaking are required (Fielding & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Numerous opportunities must be provided for students to hear and speak about a variety of subjects, including subject matter, personal interests, and current events. Students must be able to listen in order to understand and respond appropriately to a wide range of subjects for a variety of purposes, which makes oral communication skills crucial. Students should have the necessary speaking abilities and techniques to interact with a range of audiences for a variety of purposes (Chung *et al.*, 2014).

Nonverbal cues use signs and symbols. So, nonverbal communication occurs when neither spoken nor written words are used. Nonverbal cues include nonverbal eye contact, nonverbal facial expressions, body position, and nonverbal gestures. Because it helps to control the flow of

communication and conveys interest in others, eye contact is a crucial form of interpersonal communication. In order to increase the speaker's credibility, make eye contact with the audience. By expressing interest, concern, warmth, and credibility through eye contact, people can communicate more effectively. Some cultures discourage making eye contact. An older person should not be looked at or made eye contact with by a young person (Chung *et al.*, 2014).

Facial expressions play a significant role in communication, claim Fielding & Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014). The idea that the face is a reflection of the mind is also widely accepted. The face can convey emotions or feelings like intrigue, irritation, confusion, and unease. Gestures are a dynamic and animated teaching method that engages students, adds interest to the lesson material, promotes learning, and even offers a little entertainment. Educators who speak without making eye contact may come off as stiff, uninteresting, and boring. Head nods show students that you are listening while also conveying encouragement. Movements involving the head, arms, legs, and hands are all examples of gestures. Gestures are intentional movements made with purpose to convey a particular message. The use of gestures, along with facial expressions and eye contact, vary across cultures.

Body language is another well-known example of nonverbal communication, according to (Chung *et al.*, 2014). Body language has the power to communicate meaning and a message. Body language can be divided into two categories: movements that are made unconsciously and movements that are made with intention. Instead of focusing on the lecturer when they are bored, students may look around the room or move around the classroom frequently. On the other hand, a student who is paying attention will lean forward to show interest in the lecturer. Nonverbal cues like eye contact and facial expressions help express the inner meaning of messages in face-to-face conversations and interviews, which is why nonverbal communication is crucial. For instance, a student's facial expressions can convey attitude, tenacity, and level of understanding.

Students need effective communication skills to succeed in their studies. They equip students with the information or skills they need to effectively communicate (Sikiti, 1998). Additionally, communication skills are crucial, so it's crucial to teach students the right language skills so they can succeed in their studies (Connors-Tadros, 2014). The skills cover a broad spectrum of competencies. Both written and verbal communication skills are needed. Examples of written skills include taking notes, outlining, subject-verb agreement (concord), spelling, and writing effective

paragraphs and essays. On the other hand, oral skills include those related to writing, reading (skimming, scanning, and close reading), and listening. Students would greatly benefit from studying communication skills not only in terms of academic performance, but also in the job market.

The idea of communication skills is technical, so for students to understand it they must have certain attitudes (Asemanyi, 2015). Asemanyi (2015) asserts that students hardly ever speak English to one another. Effective speaking, writing, and reading emerge from communication skills, which are the cornerstone of language learning in general (Tortor, 2006; as cited by Asemanyi, 2015). The fact that communication skills are integrated is one way to distinguish them (Asemanyi, 2015: 2). Before making job offers, many employers evaluate a candidate's proficiency in a variety of communication skills, claims Asemanyi (2015). The four researchers emphasized that companies want to enhance their brand image through effective communication as a matter of course. The objective is to present a positive self-image. They hold the widely-held belief that speaking fluent English is evidence of competence, which is shared by people all over the world. A wide range of "*excellent skills*," such as intonation, the use of idiomatic expressions, and many others, go into the performance and competence of speakers. This means that regardless of a person's level of professional competence, it is their use of effective communication techniques that emphasizes this (Asemanyi, 2015).

The relationship between language ability and the use of communication skills has been one of the main research areas among the factors influencing communication skills. Some claim that learners who are less proficient are more likely to have communication issues and as a result, use a wider range of communication skills (Chen, 1990; Hua *et al.*, 2012; Kaivanpanah *et al.*, 2012; Nakatani, 2010). Contradictory findings from earlier research studies, on the other hand, have been obtained. Paribakht (1986) compares intermediate and advanced English language learners in Canada's Communication Strategies. Concept-identification exercises that required oral communication with interlocutors who were native speakers were given to participants. According to the study, there were no differences between intermediate and advanced students in the types of communication skills they chose and used.

In Chen's (1990) study in the Chinese context, students with varying levels of English language proficiency were asked to converse with native speakers about two concrete and two abstract ideas



while following a similar research process. Low competent students used repetitions and knowledge-based communication techniques more frequently while high proficient students used noticeably more communication skills (CSs), particularly linguistic-based CSs (such as estimate, antonym, synonym, and equivocation).

In a quantitative study carried out at a Thai university, Chuanchaisit & Prapphal (2009) report on differences between high and low proficient learners. According to Chuanchaisit & Prapphal (2009), high proficient learners took risks by employing strategies like social-affective, fluency oriented, help seeking, and circumlocution, whereas low proficient students more frequently used risk-aversion strategies (like time gaining). However, proficiency level was not discovered to be a factor influencing the use of CS in Ting & Phan's (2008) study: the use of strategies by high and low proficient students did not differ in a simulated oral interaction task in which they were asked to discuss a social issue.

The use of strategies by high school students at various proficiency levels in the Turkish context was examined by Gümüş (2007), and no appreciable differences between high- and low-proficient students were discovered. These conflicting results show that it is unclear whether language ability affects communication abilities. To fully understand the connection between proficiency level and communication skills, more research is necessary. The main objective of the current study is to identify the differences in English language proficiency and communication abilities among Khomasdal Campus education students at various proficiency levels.

## **2.11. ORAL COMMUNICATION**

Oral communication simply means communication by mouth. In this communication, one must converse with others either directly (face to face) or via telephone and video calls. Students at universities are expected to give speeches, give presentations, and discuss various topics with other students or lecturers, as well as role-playing, simulations, information gaps, brainstorming, storytelling, and reporting.

Speaking may appear to be a simple form of communication, but it requires the ability to transform thoughts into a meaningful language (Brown, 2007). Oral communication is an interactive process in which one receives the message from the speaker, processes it, and then responds appropriately.

Frans (2016) concurs with Kayi (2006) that teaching speaking and oral communication skills to students is essential for enabling them to express themselves clearly and appropriately in a variety of social and cultural contexts. To help second language students become fluent in English, lecturers should assign activities that improve their oral communication skills. Lecturers should use an interactive teaching style.

English lecturers' methods of teaching should include communicative language teaching and collaborative learning. Lecturers should act as facilitators of learning, allowing students to contribute more by doing more talking, resulting in collaborative learning. To encourage students to converse with others, activities based on real-life situations or situations to which they can relate should be assigned (in their context). Students are given the chance to interact with others and as a result, their oral communication abilities improve.

## **2.12. VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Since Hymes (1972) recommended communicative competence, which focuses on learners' ability to use the language effectively in communication, there have been significant advancements in the conceptualization of language. This perspective is widened by Canale & Swain (1980), who add "*strategic competence*" as a component of communicative competence (Kaivanpanah & Yamouty, 2009). More research has been done in various contexts to examine how proficiency, gender, personality traits, cultural considerations, and strategy training affect the use of communication strategies (Lam, 2006, Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009; Chen, 1990). The results of proficiency studies are important because they show how improving English proficiency affects students' ability to get past communication obstacles.

Despite the empirical propensity to study this issue, it is still unclear how language ability and communication use are related (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007). There have been many studies on this subject, including Chuanchaisit & Prapphal (2009), Gümüş (2007), Asemanyi (2015), and Chuanchaisit & Prapphal (2009), but many of these studies do not state the form of communication (verbal or nonverbal) that was used. This study, however, specifically examines how various facets of verbal communication and English proficiency impact the communication abilities of education students at the Khomasdal campus.

Ultimately, a review of the direct correlations between the two variables offers insight into the connection between communication and academic performance as well as whether students' English proficiency affects their communication abilities. For this study, the two categories of communication skills—oral/verbal and written—were selected. In most cases, oral communication cannot be planned in a structured environment and can take many different forms, including casual conversations that happen on the spot (Rahman, 2010).

Oral communication is frequently used in a variety of coursework, including meetings, group discussions, and presentations in class, all of which are crucial to achieving good academic performance. Through effective communication, students can shape their ideas, concepts, and initiatives as well as learn to acquire the necessary skills. Students' verbal communication skills can aid in the development of their presentation abilities. Effective communicators can interact with others in a variety of academic settings that demand both personal and academic performance.

Forsman & Johnson (1996) claim that when students first enter a classroom, even if they can comprehend what the lecturer is saying, they are still self-conscious about their speaking abilities due to their poor communication skills. Accordingly, this study's research premise is that students' communication skills are influenced by their English proficiency, and that those with higher levels of English proficiency are therefore more likely to have stronger communication abilities.

Forsman & Johnson (1996) claim that because they have poor communication skills, students are initially afraid of speaking, even when they understand what the lecturer is saying. Therefore, this study's hypothesis is that students' communication skills are influenced by their level of English proficiency and that those with higher levels of English proficiency are more likely to be better communicators.

### **2.13. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Neumann *et al.* (2019) make a thorough effort to investigate the connections between the academic performance of international students and their language skills, academic self-concept, and other factors related to academic success. The study was conducted at a Canadian English-medium university and focused on first-year international students enrolled in undergraduate business programs. The participant students' grades in degree program courses, annual GPA, and EPT

scores were all gathered (including sub scores). Two required first-year business course instructors were questioned about the academic and language standards in their courses as well as the characteristics of successful students in order to learn more about first-year business course success. The course grades, GPA, EPT scores, and ASC scores of both students were used to calculate correlations. The instructor interviews were examined using a content analysis process. All data sources were used to triangulate the results, which show that language proficiency, ASC, and other variables affect academic achievement during the first year of a business program.

Students also completed a scale measuring their academic self-concept. In order to learn more about first-year business course success, instructors from two required courses were questioned about the academic and language requirements in their courses as well as the profile of successful students. There were calculated correlations between the students' course grades, GPA, EPT scores, and ASC scores.

Through the process of content analysis, the instructor interviews were examined. The results, which demonstrate that language proficiency, ASC, and other factors influence academic success during the first year of a business program, were triangulated using all available data sources.

English proficiency is important for students who complete their education in English-medium institutions, especially those whose first language is not English, according to a number of empirical studies (Li *et al.*, 2010). In addition to English proficiency, some cross-cultural and culturally specific issues have been noted as limiting students' potential for academic success (e.g., academic culture shock related to lecture style, and interactions between students and lecturers) (Li *et al.*, 2010).

According to Trice (2007), a language barrier between international students and native students and faculty members was one of the main causes. These studies suggest that through its influence on other sociocultural and psychological variables, English proficiency is directly related to the academic performance of international students.

Ihmeideh *et al.* (2010) and Cleland *et al.* (2014) both look at the communication abilities of college students. The two studies' findings indicate that students can learn to communicate and develop communication skills in a supportive environment. University students must therefore be given the opportunity to communicate in order to be better prepared for the job market once they have



completed their studies. Communication becomes more effective when the recipient of the message is aware of and uses the necessary techniques.

Communication also has a greater impact when social, spiritual, and physical factors are taken into account. He or she should participate in any activities that broaden and thoroughly improve communication skills as a university student getting ready to start their chosen profession so that communication skills can be fully developed. Students who want to succeed in the workplace must work to enhance their communication abilities (Ihmeideh *et al.* 2010).

Although there are many different kinds of communication skills, oral and written communication skills are the most prevalent. Communication is a nonverbal skill that includes giving feedback, presenting ideas verbally and in writing, giving presentations, and negotiating to achieve a goal and win support/agreement, according to Idris (2010) and Penbek *et al.* (2012) as cited by Iksan, Zakaria, Meerah, Osman, Lian, Mahmud & Krish, (2012). University students must develop communication skills in a variety of cultural contexts in today's globalized world (Penbek *et al.*, 2012). University students should be exposed to activities that can aid in the development of their communication skills beginning in their first year, according to a proposal by Harlak *et al.* (2008) universities must therefore offer a lot more activities to aid students in honing their communication skills to meet the challenges of a globalized world.

Asemanyi (2015) identifies the causes of students' subpar academic performance and suggests improvements for the communication skills course's teaching and learning at the University of Education in Winneba, Ghana. The research also aimed to produce suggestions and ideas for enhancing the teaching and learning of communication skills courses. The researcher of this study used interviews, observation, and documents to collect data in order to address the questions that this research aims to address. Both lecturers for the Communication Skills course and all second-year university students participated in the study.

The main conclusions of their study were that, despite their best efforts to convey positive attitudes toward the course, students have negative perceptions of it. Once more, some of the first-year students admitted have weak linguistic backgrounds, which is reflected in their communicative competence, and as a result, they perform poorly. The teaching and learning process is hampered by additional problems like large class sizes and a lack of contemporary lecture halls and facilities. The study also showed that there are currently not enough lecturers teaching the course.

Numerous ways exist for English proficiency and communication abilities to enhance academic performance. In most cases, oral communication cannot be planned in a structured environment and can take many different forms, including casual conversations that happen on the spot (Rahman, 2010). Oral communication is frequently used in a variety of coursework, including meetings, group discussions, and presentations in class, all of which are crucial to achieving good academic performance. Through effective communication, students can shape their ideas, concepts, and initiatives as well as learn to acquire the necessary skills. Students' verbal communication skills can aid in the development of their presentation abilities. A student with strong communication skills will be able to engage in a variety of coursework that calls for personal and academic performance.

By examining the various aspects of how oral communication influences the academic performance of a group of transfer students at the tertiary stage in Sunway University's American Degree Transfer Program, Mahmud (2014) gains insight into the relationships between students' oral communication proficiency and their overall academic performance. The relationship between communication and academic behavior can be better understood by looking at the direct correlations between the two factors. It is unclear whether oral communication among students affects their academic performance.

Instead of assessing actual oral communication skills, the students who took part in the perception-type survey had their oral communication proficiency assessed. The results of data analysis on the signified affirmative responses from the students regarding the study show that developing oral communication skills is essential for ensuring that students perform well in school. There were three sections to the questionnaire, and 83 people completed it. 42 females and 41 males, ranging in age from 16 to over 20, made up the 46 Malaysian and 37 foreign respondents.

The Sunway University American Degree Transfer Program students are the target audience for this alignment. None of the respondents to this survey have a CGPA between 0 and 1, and the majority (52%) have a CGPA between 3.0 and 4.0. It has been determined that excellent academic performance requires more than just mental aptitude, so extracurricular participation is necessary to ensure a well-rounded student (Patel, 2010).

An interaction-based study in the context of Turkish EFL was conducted by Uztosun & Erten (2014) to examine the effect of English proficiency on the use of communication strategies. An

interaction-based methodology was used, in which 17 pairs with varying levels of proficiency were asked to negotiate on two short films and stimulated-recall interviews were conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test results revealed that participants employ specific strategies such as "*use of fillers*", "*self-repair*" and "*self-repetition*". Although proficiency level was not found to be a factor influencing learners' strategy choice, there were significant differences in three strategies: '*message reduction*', '*topic avoidance*', and '*mime*'. These findings enable the generation of implications for issues to consider in class design.

#### **2.14. PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ACTUAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Perceived oral communication skills are the acknowledged abilities that a person is assumed to use or possess in their regular interactions with other people. The 'actual' oral communication skills are the outcomes of numerous assessments and investigations into people's communication abilities (Ramirez, 2010). Whether a student feels confident in their ability to interact verbally or finds it difficult to communicate with others, perceived communication skills are said to be a component of their self-esteem. This self-confidence will affect how they communicate, which will compromise the effort they put in to perform well in their studies because communication skills are required in class discussions and presentations. A self-fulfilling prophecy happens when people's perceptions affect their behavior (Adler *et al.*, 2001).

On the other hand, how well someone actually communicates depends on their ratings and comparisons with others. How well and how completely interaction goals are met serves as a gauge of actual communication competence (Lane, 2020). Students who are good at interpersonal communication perform better in class than their peers. As a result, it is challenging to conduct research on this type of measurement because students are unable to accurately assess their own competence. Comparatively, perceived communication skills are more likely to have an impact on a student's academic performance than actual communication skills, which are more difficult to change after being learned and are permanent. For instance, a student who feels confident in their oral communication will be outgoing and engaging in conversations and presentations (Mahmud, 2014). He or she would assume and forecast that every interaction they would have would be amicable. However, a student who is adept at oral communication naturally might not be aware of

it, leading to misunderstandings or issues during interactions (Mahmud, 2014). Because of this, perceived oral communication is a factor that influences academic performance independently.

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Bangkok's first-year students' English learning strategies and proficiency were examined by Kunasaraphan in 2015. Six direct and indirect English language learning strategies were investigated to see if first-year students at Suan Sunandha University's International College used them. Direct strategies include memory, cognition, and compensation, whereas indirect strategies include metacognition, affect, and social behavior (Oxford, 1990).

Direct strategies consist of the following (Oxford, 1990):

- (i) Memory strategies
- (ii) Cognitive strategies
- (iii) Compensation strategies

Memory strategies are the methods by which students remember language in order to store and retrieve new information. It is worth noting the following:

- (i) Making mental connections (grouping, associating/elaborating, inserting new words into context)
- (ii) Using images and sounds (using imagery, semantics mapping, using keywords, and representing sounds in memory)
- (iii) Through review (structure reviewing)
- (iv) Taking action (using physical response or sensation, using mechanical techniques)

Cognitive strategies refer to how students think about their education and grasp and perform new language through various methods such as repetition, analyzing, and summarizing. The following are some examples:

- (i) Practising (repeating, formally going to practice with sounds, and writing systems, acknowledging and using formulas and patterns, recombining, practising naturalistically) (repeating, formally practising with sounds, and writing systems,



- recognising and using formulas and patterns, recombining, practising naturalistically)
- (ii) Receiving and sending (quickly grasping the concept, utilizing resources for receiving and sending messages)
  - (iii) Analyzing and reasoning (deductive reasoning, expression analysis, contrast analysis, translating, transferring)
  - (iv) Creating input and output structure (taking notes, summarising, highlighting)

Compensation strategies enable students to make up for their limited knowledge and overcome limitations in target language skills. The following two can be noted:

- (i) Guessing intelligently (using linguistics clues, using other clues)
- (ii) Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing (switching to the mother tongue, getting help, using mime or gesture, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words, using a circumlocution or synonym)

Indirect strategies also include the following categories (Oxford, 1990):

- (i) Metacognitive strategies
- (ii) Affective strategies
- (iii) Social strategies

Metacognitive strategies are the methods by which students manage their learning, establish their cognition, plan their progress and evaluate their progress. It is worth noting the following:

- (i) Putting your learning first (overviewing and linking with already known material)
- (ii) Planning and organizing your learning (finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, planning for a language task, seeking practice opportunities)

- (iii) Evaluating your knowledge (self-monitoring, self-evaluating)

Affective strategies are concerned with students' emotions, emotional reactions, and anxiety. The following items can be mentioned:

- (i) Reducing anxiety (through progressive relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, music, and laughter)
- (ii) Encouraging yourself (by making positive statements, taking calculated risks, and rewarding yourself)
- (iii) Taking your emotional pulse (listening to your body, using a checklist, writing a language learning diary, discussing your feelings with someone else)

Societal strategies entails learning through interaction with others. It is also worth noting the following:

- (i) Posing inquiries (asking for clarification or verification, asking for correction)
- (ii) Cooperation with others (collaboration with peers, collaboration with experienced users)
- (iii) Empathizing with others (gaining cultural understanding and becoming aware of the thoughts and feelings of others)

The purpose of the study was to examine whether students' use of six direct and indirect English learning strategies varied depending on their level of English proficiency. Two sections made up the questionnaire that served as the research tool. General participant information was provided in the first section, and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning was covered in the second (SILL). To analyze the data, they employed one-way ANOVA and descriptive statistics (F-test). The results of the analysis showed that first-year students typically use six direct and indirect English learning strategies, with variations in strategy use among students with different levels of English proficiency.

Scholars who have researched communication skills among university students include Ihmeideh *et al.* (2010) and Cleland *et al.* (2005). They discovered that providing students with positive communication contexts allows them to learn how to communicate and thus have better communication skills. The emphasis is on giving or providing as many opportunities as possible to university students for them to communicate clearly, perform well in their academic activities, have good interpersonal skills, and be prepared for the job market. Communication is considered effective when the recipient understands and practices the skills. Furthermore, communication can be meaningful only if the physical, spiritual, and social aspects are considered during the communication process.

Iksan *et al.* (2012) conducted research focusing on communication skills such as oral skills, written skills and social skills among university students. According to their findings, university students have developed good communication skills. Their research was conducted on third- and fourth-year university students.

## **2.15. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter reviewed the available literature on language planning and policy, with a focus on the African context, Namibian language policy, and UNAM's Department of Language Development Syllabi. The chapter also includes literature on communication skills, language proficiency, and four language skills. The literature on academic performance and language proficiency is also examined in this chapter's final section. The theoretical frameworks that guide the current study are discussed in the chapter that follows.

## **Chapter 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1. PRELIMINARIES**

This chapter's goal is to explain the theoretical frameworks that form the basis this research. A theoretical framework, according to Imenda (2014), is the theory that a researcher prefers to direct his or her research. A theoretical framework is thus the application of a theory, or a set of principles originating from the same theory, to clarify an event or provide insight on a given phenomenon or research problem.

Henning *et al.* (2004) assert that the role of the theoretical framework is to enable you to theorize your research. Theories enable you to be explicit about your assumptions and the interconnectedness of issues related to the work. They act as lenses through which you view the world as a researcher. For example, a psychologist, anthropologist, and linguist will have different views of the world. The previous authors also state those language learning theories are positioned in three paradigms, namely, the behavioral, innate, and interactive learning theory. This study focuses on the English language proficiency and communication skills of undergraduate university students. Learning is a social activity and therefore it requires interactive participation by those involved.

Based on the above, the theories underpinning the current study will be the interactionist theory and the paradigm of social constructivism. Firstly, the interactionist theory will be explained, followed by the paradigm of social constructivism. Then the theoretical contributions of the two theories mentioned above will be discussed, and lastly the concluding remarks of the chapter.

### **3.2. INTERACTIONIST THEORY**

George Herbert Meade is widely regarded as the father of interactionist perspective theory, which holds that individuals and societies function in ways that are reflective of interactions with other people and symbols. Interactions, actions, and reactions that take place face-to-face, rather than historical movements, shape everyone. These conversations also influence whether some actions are perceived as negative or positive (Bruner, 1983). Students' daily activities include an infinite number of interactions such as conversations, deliberations, disagreements, and disputes.



The foundation for 'interactionists' theory of language learning was laid by psychologist and social constructivist Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1978), interactions with friends, family, coworkers, teachers, and classmates help shape one's insights and beliefs (Bates, 2016:16). In the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which Vygotsky proposed in 1978, students actively participate in the development of new languages through socially mediated interaction. Bruner (1960, 1967, & 1983) paved the way for a model of linguistic development based on Vygotsky's social-development theory within the context of child-adult conversation (Schunk, 2008).

Vygotsky (1978) also proposed that children acquire knowledge when they collaborate to resolve an issue. The elderly communicating with the youngster is initially responsible for guiding the youngster, but the young person gains the ability to resolve issues by himself. This is particularly true when it comes to language, as the toddler ultimately starts learning to respond in turn once the adult initiates a dialogue with them. From bubbling to baby talk to longer, more detailed sentences, the child advances. No matter their age, adults and children alike learn best when they make their own discoveries, according to (Bruner, 1983). He thinks that when students learn something independently, they will remember it better. A toddler and an older person can communicate even though the child is unable to speak, according to (Bruner, 1983). Interaction between the two, such as play and nonverbal communication, aids in the development of linguistic structure long before the child can speak.

Students are essentially babies when it comes to studying English as a second language. They can only communicate with the teacher nonverbally. As a result, it is the teacher's duty to act in the infant-adult interaction as the adult. He or she is responsible for directing all exchanges at first, but as the student gains proficiency in the language and can hold a conversation, some control over the interaction can be given up and the students can take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own language acquisition (Bruner, 1983).

In addition, if students are motivated to explore with the language and are taught that making mistakes is acceptable, they would be capable of figuring out how to coin or join words and expressions to create coherent thoughts and conversations on their own. According to social interactionists such as Gopnik (2017) and Moerk (1983 & 1994), conversation with adults is essential in the teaching of language to youngsters (Moerk, 1983). However, some researchers, including Schieffelin & Ochs (1986), assert that middle-class parent-child interactions in America

and Europe are frequently overrepresented in the empirical data upon which theories of social interactionism are based. Schieffelin & Ochs (1986), among other academics, claim that the parent-child interaction in middle-class American and European families is frequently overrepresented in the experimental observations that form the basis of the social interaction theory interactionism.

Many children around the world are not spoken to in the same way that children in educated Western families are; instead, they develop into adults who are fully competent language users, according to anthropological studies of other human cultures and low-educated Western families. In their analyses, many academics now take this into account (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003). Additionally, social interactionists dispute Chomsky's (1965) assertion that the language that adults use when speaking to children is full of errors and discontinuities (Moerk, 1994). The fact that mistakes made by children can be corrected and received negative feedback is another nativist argument that interactionists contest. In a meta-analysis of 40 studies, Moerk (1994) found strong proof that corrections do have an effect. Corrections are both numerous and dependent on the child's mistakes.

This theory indicates that students gain language proficiency and communicative competence by collaboration and communication. These can be promoted by using authentic materials in learning and teaching. This means that students should be encouraged to learn alongside and from one another, as well as learn from the lecturer. Students must regard each other as resources and regard the classroom as a learning centre where they learn cooperatively and independently (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003).

Humans, according to the Interactionist theorists, make up the world. Human beings are the only species on the planet that can speak and have a brain that can do a multiple of things at once. We must express our feelings or ideas. These concepts are the foundation of our existence. Communication is essential for the existence of society and plays a prominent role in the operation of various professional organizations. We need to express ourselves in all situations. When we look around us in any situation, we see people engaged in a variety of activities. They engage in various discussions, meetings, conversations, presentations and conferencing (Gallaway & Richard, 1994).

Mukwete (2014) educators/lecturers who employ the Interactionist Theory as their fundamental premise in language instruction will attempt to somehow get their learners to engage in

collaborative group work in which they can use their social skills as a cornerstone to successful language learning, because these educators are aware that the often the learners interact with the language, the more likely they are to learn the language efficiently and successfully. Learning and development are inextricably linked through social interaction (Shabani, 2016). Thus, "mediation and social interaction" are crucial for both learning and instruction. The "social constructivist paradigm" must be used when instructing students (Mukwete, 2014). The teacher/lecturer would most likely administer a diagnostic test prior to the start of the language class to team students who have similar linguistic proficiency so that their attempts at interaction is feasible and impactful (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003). Students may be expected to write a short paper or blog post describing in detail their progress in language learning as a form of intrapersonal communication. Interactionists, after all, believe that language learning is most effective when it is practiced and used, preferably in both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication (Mukwete, 2014).

Fromkin *et al.* (2003:3) rightfully state that when people come together, there is talking involved. This means, humans communicate in order to interact with one another. It is one of the crucial conditions for social interaction. Human interaction is fundamentally communicative, so social integration cannot occur without communication. It pervades all social and professional relationships and plays a significant role in our lives. It is the reciprocal stimulation and response between individuals that allows for social and professional integration. In principle, constructivist practice fosters analytical reasoning and produces enthusiastic and self-directed learners. The study's primary aim and research objectives lead me to comfortably contextualize this investigation within a constructivist philosophy or theory and an interactionist theoretical framework. As a result, the current study investigates the actuality of a specific social and cultural context.

A second language learner varies from a child learning the first in terms of learner characteristics and the contexts in which first and second language usually happen (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). First, the characteristics of second language learners, especially their age, are usually older than those of first language learners. Moreover, second language learners have indeed acquired at least one language, and their first language knowledge could be beneficial because they already understand how language works. This awareness, on the other hand, may impede second language learning by inciting students to make incorrect assumptions about how a second language and its system vary from the first, a phenomenon known as interlanguage. Second-language learners

also have cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness, which will aid them in problem solving when participating in conversations in a second language.

The second distinction is that the setting, particularly the circumstances under which second language instruction takes place, can impact the pace of second language learning progress (Ismail & Yusof, 2016). If second language students are exposed to caring and loving and non-threatening surroundings, they are much more likely to be successful. Rashid (2011), reveals that in Malaysian secondary schools, less proficient young adults managed to learn English better only when the instructor used children's books because the elevated vocabulary and complexities of the sentences did demoralize them. If second language learning takes place in the classroom, some first language speakers modify their vocabulary/choice of words to cater second language pupils by using 'Foreigner Talk' or 'Teacher Talk' (similar to 'Baby Talk' mostly used by family members when speaking to toddlers learning the first language). These outside influences can help older children and adults develop acquiring a second language skills.

Language maturation, according to interactionists, is the outcome of a complex interaction between both the distinctive individual capacities and the context of second language learners. Masrizal (2014) and Rashid (2016) emphasize the significance of dialogic alteration for second language learners in order to make input understandable, fostering and supporting second language learning. He claims that no second language learning takes place unless native speakers modify their behavior to support second language students gain knowledge in the target language. However, there is no compelling proof that understandable input impacts second language learning (Davies & Elder, 2004).

Interactionist researchers consider social interaction to be a process that occurs in a social context (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). According to this theory, students acquire language proficiency and communicative competence through integration and communication. Using authentic materials in teaching and learning can help to promote these. Collaborative learning and peer interaction are significant. This means that students should be encouraged to learn alongside and from others, as well as from lecturers. Students must regard one another as sources and the classroom as a learning centre where they can learn cooperatively and independently.



### 3.3. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

The first theme is based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as the distance between actual developmental levels determined by independent problem solving and prospective developmental stage determined by problem solving with the guidance of parents or in collaboration with more advanced peers.

According to the definition of ZPD, Vygotsky (1978) asserts that language acquisition and learning occur through interactions with people who are particularly more competent than others, such as educators or friends who are more fluent in the language. The second theme is founded on Vygotsky's (1981) semiotic mediation notion, which claims that language, counting structures, notation methods, linear algebra mathematical concepts, artistic works, composing, ploys, graphs, charts, and robotic illustrations, among other things are all beneficial in fostering personal and social operating and interacting with the society and the individual. According to Vygotsky's semiotic mediation, information is acquired by means of socially defined or constructed 'psychological tools,' i.e., mutual conversations among individual people (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Turuk (2008), asserts that the “*social-cultural approach*” to learning and teaching was developed by a Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. His theories had an impact on the areas of education and educational psychology in general. As reported by Turuk (2008), Vygotsky asserts that knowledge is facilitated, and thus learning highly depends on mediation (Shabani, 2016). The "socialcultural approach," a different tenet, holds that social interaction is crucial for growth and learning (Shabani, 2016). When it comes to learning and teaching, it is essential that learners are educated through the application because "mediation" and "social contact" are so important (Mukwete, 2014).

The "social constructivist paradigm" is a model and educational philosophy that asserts that all knowledge is created by students and that knowledge is socially constructed rather than passively acquired (Richards & Schmidt, 2002:11; Vygotsky, 1978). According to this concept, new is formed through interpersonal interaction with others and considers the culture of the learner, practices, beliefs, historic, geopolitical, interpersonal, and other elements of the classroom context (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

However, it is extremely crucial to underscore that because of its diversity, 'constructivism' must be handled with caution (Mutekwe *et al.*, 2013). According to Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess (2012), constructivism is a pedagogical theory for some people, a theory of knowledge for others, and a theory of learning for others. It is crucial to keep in mind that the current study examines "the social constructivism paradigm" from the standpoint of teaching and learning.

The "social constructivist paradigm" is additionally based on three important ideologies. Learners initially construct new interpretations by attempting to draw from prior knowledge (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). This implies that they bring previous knowledge gained from prior observation to learning situations (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). The new or modified information they produce from new learning situations is influenced by prior knowledge (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012).

Second, education is a shared responsibility (Amineh & Asl, 2015). This suggests that external factors can influence or bring about educational change, which does not occur solely within an individual (Amineh & Asl, 2015). According to Amineh & Asl, social constructivists contend that participation in societal activities in her settings, such as interacting and cooperating with other members of the society, results in effective education (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Third, effective learning requires the assistance of much more sophisticated language users who can support learning in using the language that they are yet to learned (Crystal, 2013).

Being actively involved in learning is necessary since it is a productive process as opposed to simply absorbing information without contributing, says (Kim, 2005). As a result, because they actively construct knowledge rather than passively receiving it from teachers, students play a crucial role in the "constructivism classroom" (Taber 2006: Mukwete *et al.*, 2013). To put it another way, teachers are merely facilitators and engines for the educational process, whereas students independently create or develop the foundation of their knowledge (Shi, 2013). Learners must collaborate with the real world of their communities in social, cultural, and linguistic settings in order to accomplish this (knowledge construction) (Mukwete *et al.*, 2013). Students must be given in-class assignments that call for dialogue and the sharing of ideas (Shi, 2013). However, there should be an exchange of ideas between students and educators as well. According to Amineh & Asl (2015), social constructivism emphasizes the learner's social interactions with knowledgeable members of society. Students who are unsure of their answers will limit their

participation in class if they are encouraged to answer questions rather than ask them (Applefield *et al.*, 2001).

Students also tend to follow the social rules that the teacher establishes rather than actually creating their own social rules and holding themselves accountable for adhering to them unless they are motivated to answer questions rather than ask them (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, if students are asked to respond to questions rather than ask them, they are more likely to follow the social rules that the teacher has established rather than creating their own social rules and taking responsibility for having to follow them (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). According to Adams (2006), social constructivism does not entirely eliminate the need for teachers; rather, it directs teacher efforts toward creating a secure environment in which social mediation and student knowledge construction are of utmost importance. Undoubtedly, for "social constructivist classrooms" to produce the desired results, teachers must support and encourage their students' efforts to learn and acquire new knowledge and skills (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). Shi (2013) contends that although students create their own knowledge, teachers can be helpful collaborators and catalysts for the process. Teachers are certainly intermediaries who work with students and give them opportunities and incentives to learn and understand (Adams, 2006).

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective on learning is associated with social constructionism, which is deeply embedded in Interactionist theory. According to Rashid *et al.* (2016), constructionism is the most commonly used epistemological position in recent language learning research. The two themes proposed by Wertsch (1991) are useful for discussing sociocultural theory because they represent a sociocultural approach's 'assumption' that action is arbitrated and cannot be detached from the milieu in which it is carried out. Individual development, including higher mental functioning, stems from social sources, according to the first theme, and human action is conditioned by tools and signs on both the social and individual levels, according to the second. Constructivism is the result of combining various theories into one. It combines behaviorist and cognitive principles. According to the constructivist perspective, learning is a process of creating meaning; it is how individuals interpret their environment (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999).

Constructivism is widely promoted, according to Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess (2012), as a way to examine children's understanding levels and show how those levels can rise to higher-level

thinking. Constructivism therefore refers to the way that people learn and think. Constructivism explains how information can be taught effectively and how students can make sense of it. Constructivism explains how information can be taught effectively and how students can make sense of it.

Teachers should take into account what their students already know and let them apply what they have learned while keeping Constructivism as an educational theory in mind. Vygotsky's (1886–1934) theories about language, thought, and the mediating role of society have the most bearing on constructivism. Anti-realist Vygotsky thinks that culture and community play a role in the process of knowledge acquisition and that it is influenced by other people.

According to the educational theory known as constructivism, teachers should first take into account their students' knowledge before allowing them to apply it (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). In other words, Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess (2012) portray constructivism as one of the dominant theoretical stances in education. Constructivism is not always understood the same way by different people; some see it as a theory of learning, while others see it as a theory of knowledge, and still others as a theory of pedagogy. Hoover (1996) suggests a set of universal principles that can be operationalized for constructivist perspectives due to the complexity and diversity of these perspectives. Hoover (1996) identifies two key concepts that encompass the straightforward notion of constructed knowledge. The first hypothesis is that students add new understandings to their prior knowledge. In other words, learners' prior knowledge shapes their perception of new information.

The second concept is that learning is a process that is not passive. Contrarily, learning is an active process in which students negotiate their understanding in light of the material they come across in a brand-new learning environment. If what students experience conflicts with what they already know, their previous understanding may need to be adjusted. As a result, students must participate actively in this process and cannot be passive. Fosnot (1989) defined constructivism using the following four guiding principles:

- (i) learning is dependent on what people already know,
- (ii) new ideas emerge as people adapt and change their old ideas,
- (iii) learning entails inventing new ideas rather than mechanically accumulating a set of facts, and



- (iv) meaningful learning occurs through rethinking old ideas and arriving at new conclusions about new ideas that contradict old ideas.

Children learn best by developing new concepts and schemas based on their prior and current knowledge, according to Bruner's constructivist educational philosophy. Emphasis is placed on learning as an active process. This construction's cognitive processes are significantly influenced by the use of rewards and penalties, students' motivation to learn the material, and cultural and social aspects of their lives. Constructivist educational models try to adapt educational institutions and curriculum to each sociocultural diverse set of pupils by taking these factors into consideration. Additionally, they create programs and educate teachers on how to help kids to learn concepts on their own by drawing on existing knowledge to accept and absorb information (Mos, 2003). Constructivism's central tenet is that new ideas and concepts are constructed by learners by interpreting them in light of prior knowledge. New concepts are given meaning by others, and this is an instance of learning (Hein, 1991). As opposed to merely being exposed to new information, this suggests that learning is a process in which pupils' study, code, decode, and comprehend new concepts and ideas.

To create and hone their schemas, students select and modify information, create "hypotheses," and rely on cognitive processes (Schuh, 2003; Mos, 2003). When analyzed, Bruner emphasizes that humans perceive their environment by comparing and contrasting various items and experiences. Students make comparisons between new and existing concepts and take note of similarities and differences. The kinds of information a person will acquire and the cognitive processes they employ to create and apply schemas are significantly influenced by their sociocultural history and current circumstances (Schuh, 2003).

### **3.4. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

As was mentioned in the introduction, the combined theoretical frameworks for this study is comprised of the interactionist theory and the social constructivist paradigm. Given how closely related the two theories are, I chose to use them. Social interaction, according to interactionist researchers, is a process that occurs in a social setting (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007). One person does not acquire knowledge alone (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Because of this, students must engage in social

activities like cooperation and interaction for learning to be meaningful (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The current study examines the social constructivist paradigm in three key areas, in addition to the three fundamental ideologies already mentioned. In particular, learner roles, instructor roles, and the learning environment.

The environment in the classroom should be conducive to learning in a way that encourages and strengthens student relationships. To begin with, in a social constructivist classroom, "the atmosphere is democratic" in social activities like interaction and collaboration (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Students are undoubtedly encouraged by this to participate actively in their education. Second, communication—which is not just speech and written language but all forms of it—is the sole method of meaning transmission in the social constructivist classroom (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). According to constructivism, if the physical and social environment is not favorable to learning, students are prevented from forming relationships with one another (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). As was previously stated, the classroom should actually be viewed as a community of discourse engaged in activity, reflection, and conversation. The learning environment must also provide plenty of opportunities for contact (Applefield *et al.*, 2001).

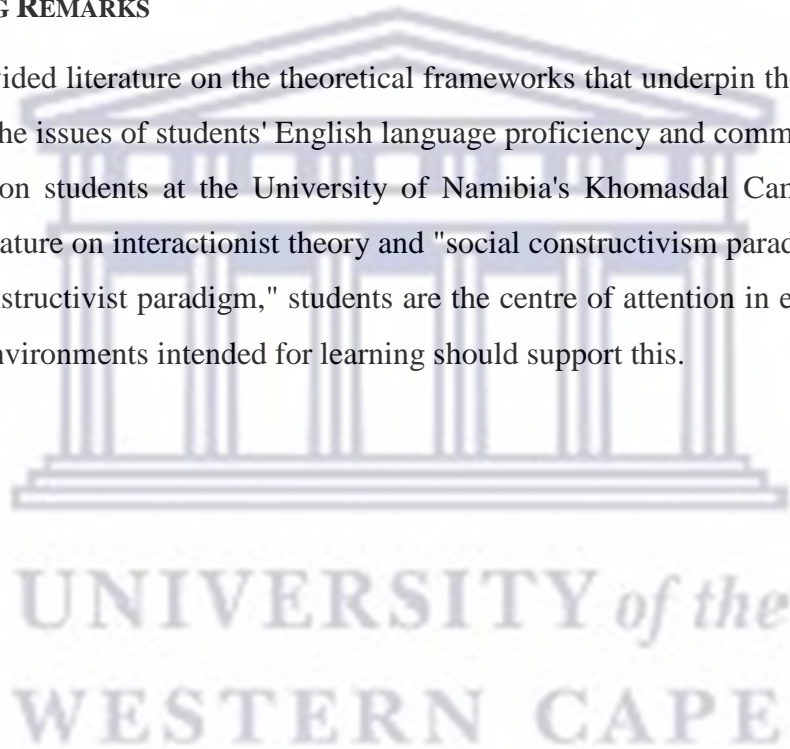
Furthermore, constructivism emphasizes relationships among students, and it is the responsibility of teachers to promote these interactions by creating challenging, student-relevant problem-solving initiatives (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). Students can also learn when they struggle to apply what they already know to a more complex and expansive reality (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). Learning doesn't take place in a vacuum, according to the "social constructivism paradigm," and is best mediated by socially supportive networks (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). As a result, it is the instructor's responsibility to make sure that students receive real assignments that encourage reflective learning (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). These exercises should be created so that students can demonstrate their knowledge while also having the chance to address topics that are pertinent to their interests and culture (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). Amineh & Asl (2015) emphasize the significance of "teachers taking into consideration the learners' background and culture during the learning process," which is not surprising given the circumstances. It could be argued that knowing the learners' backgrounds would be helpful.

In conclusion, the constructivism paradigm maintains that learning is an active process and that knowledge is largely dependent on the interaction between the subject and the object (Gravett &

Petersen, 2009). According to Vygotsky, knowledge and thought are created through social interaction with family, friends, teachers, and peers (Bates, 2016). The constructivism paradigm develops students' critical thinking skills as well as their motivation and independence. The researcher is at ease situating this investigation within the constructivist epistemology and interactionist theoretical perspective as a result of the study's objectives and research questions. The reality of a particular social and cultural context was examined in this study.

### **3.5. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter provided literature on the theoretical frameworks that underpin the current study. In order to address the issues of students' English language proficiency and communication skills of first-year education students at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus, this chapter reviewed the literature on interactionist theory and "social constructivism paradigms." According to the "social constructivist paradigm," students are the centre of attention in every aspect of the classroom, and environments intended for learning should support this.



## **Chapter 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. PRELIMINARIES**

The methodology section, according to Imenda (2014), includes a description of the research participants, data collection instruments, design, and procedure, though the specific method used in your study will affect the format and content. This chapter discusses the methodology used in the present study. First, the presented research design sets the stage for further discussion. The population group and sampling methods for the qualitative sections of the study are then explained. The chapter then focuses on the various data collection procedures and tools, for example, interviews, classroom observation, questionnaires, and document analysis. A discussion of the research methods and data analysis is provided, followed by a discussion of validity and reliability issues. Finally, ethical issues pertinent to the current study are discussed.

### **4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Suter (2012), asserts that the philosophical assumptions of qualitative inquiry guide all complex designs and data analysis methods in qualitative research: To comprehend a complex phenomenon, one must consider the various "reality" experiences of the respondents and "the anonymous source" viewpoints. Natural settings are preferred for investigating how participants make their own sense of events or situations.

The most typical sources of qualitative data are interviews, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002), all of which cannot be easily "squeezed" by statistical analysis software. People's personal experiences, events, or circumstances are commonly described as "thick" (Denzin, 1989), which implies that emphasis is placed on rich detail, insightful historical and social environments and experiences, and the significance of emotional content in an effort to open up the mouth of whoever or whatever is being studied. The goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover new themes, trends, concepts, perspectives, and understandings (Patton, 2002). In qualitative studies, an analytic framework, which is a network of structurally related and categorization, is regularly used to fully comprehend an underlying structure; that is, a series of events or constructs and how they relate. In education, constructivism is a viewpoint that favors the social construction of real world described above, and it falls squarely under the philosophical position known as interpretivist. This



orientation places a premium on comprehending a whole phenomenon through the eyes of those who experience it and make logical sense of it (create its meaning and interpret it personally) (Suter, 2012).

Only qualitative methods would be useful in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena; however, the generalizability of the findings may be limited. A site or location is an important location in qualitative research design. At the research site or location, qualitative research studies are conducted. This is done because qualitative researchers typically make personal contact with participants through lengthy discussions such as interviews or observations (Creswell, 2012). The research site refers to the location where data is collected. Data for this research study were collected at the University of Namibia Khomasdal Campus, Department of Language Development. Four key informants, two lecturers, and twenty students were interviewed, observed, and their written work was analyzed for the study. The Department of Language Development is a well-equipped and credible language department that provides a wide variety of English language courses, as well as courses in local and foreign languages. That is, it provides full-time and part-time academic English courses, as well as some other language courses that concentrate on one or two of the four language skills.

This approach is more than just gathering qualitative data from interviews or gathering multiple forms of qualitative evidence, such as interviews and observations. Qualitative design analyses of these various types of data aid in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Fetters *et al.*, 2013). The primary goals of qualitative data collection are to identify constructs, themes, and their relationships in participants' reactions to a phenomenon. The English Language Proficiency and Communication Skills of the first-year Education Students at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus were examined in this study. As an overall strategy, the qualitative approach was used, with numerous kinds of tools including survey questions, interviews, class observation, and documentary analysis used to gather data. Suter's (2012) fundamental characteristics of qualitative research are summarized in Table 2. It shows clearly why the researcher used the qualitative design to guide this study. Table 2 shows a summary of the qualitative approach to inquiry guide data collection and analysis.

<b>Qualitative Research</b>
Generates understanding from patterns
Applies ideas across contexts
Focuses on interpreting and understanding the social construction of meaning in a natural setting
Attends to an accurate description of the process via words, texts, etc., and observations
Appreciates complexity and multiple realities
Conducts analysis that seeks insight and metaphor
Faces conceptual complexity
Conducts analysis along with data collection
Favours fieldwork
Relies on researchers who have become skilled at observing, recording, and coding (researcher as instrument)
Generates a report of findings that includes expressive language and a personal voice
Allows designs to emerge during the study
Offers multiple sources of evidence (triangulation)
Often studies single cases or small groups that build arguments for the study's confirmability
Uses text as data
Favours interviews, observations, and documents
Performs data analysis in a creative, iterative, nonlinear, holistic fashion
Uses trustworthy, credible, coherent data

**Table 2:** *Qualitative Approach to Inquiry Guide Data Collection and Analysis*

### 4.3. SAMPLING

The method or the procedure of selecting individuals from a larger population is referred to as sampling. According to Fron & Ravid (2013), the sample should include participants who have relevant experience with the study's topic and the ability to contribute to the researcher's understanding. The researcher must first determine which participants are appropriate for the research topic (Coombes, 2001: 34).

Purposeful and convenient sampling methods were used for this study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to use his or her discretion when selecting participants based on traits, whereas convenience sampling relies on volunteer sampling. The researcher selects participants who are easily accessible (Burton *et al.*, 2008: 46). Purposive sampling selects participants who are relevant to the study's objectives.

Four lecturers from the main campus Department of Language Development were chosen as purposefully key informants for this study. These lecturers were chosen with the understanding that they would teach English Communication Skills or English for General Communication. English Communication Skills course is taught by 14 lecturers at the Department of Language Development throughout the academic year. By the time data were collected, it was expected that at least four lecturers would be teaching the English Communication Skills and English for General Communication courses.

The lecturers were also carefully considering that they would be teaching the students such abilities. The inclusion of lecturers was intended to obtain firsthand information on how students' language proficiency affects teaching and learning, as seen in some other studies (Andrade, 2009; Khosravi, 2012; Cekiso *et al.*, 2015). The information received from lecturers included their perspectives and experiences on a variety of topics related to students' communication proficiency, teaching English to first-year students from various English proficiency backgrounds, and, in particular, their students' writing challenges when writing longer pieces in English, such as essays, letters, and reports.

Twenty first-year students from the UNAM Khomasdal Campus's Faculty of Education were chosen to participate in the current study. The specific condition for a student to be selected was that they had completed the English Communication Skills course; alternatively, they have done any other English courses as a prerequisite for giving them admission to university because they had previously received a C symbol in English. Each student who took part in this study was required to write one essay or other longer pieces of writing. This was made up of 20 pieces of writing (essays) that served as a source of data to analyze in order to determine the problems and challenges students are faced with when writing in English. These 20 pieces of writing supplemented the students' oral responses during class observations and questionnaire responses, which they also produced. Participants were chosen on a purely voluntary basis.

#### 4.4. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS

The data was gathered using a variety of methods and instruments. Five sets of data were collected for the current study, i.e.:

- (i) Selected documents which are course outlines and study guides
- (ii) The students' written works
- (iii) Qualitative data gathered through unstructured interviews
- (iv) Qualitative data gathered through classroom observations
- (v) Qualitative data gathered through a questionnaire

##### 4.4.1. Interviews

Gay *et al.* (2009) assert that an interview is a deliberate conversation in which the researcher obtains data from another. There are three common interview formats in qualitative research, namely,

- (i) Informal(casual/unstructured) conversational interview,
- (ii) the general interview guide approach, and
- (iii) the standardized open-ended interview (Gail *et al.*, 2003).

Before conducting all the interviews with each participant, the researcher explained the purpose of the interviews and the way the interviews' findings would be utilized. Furthermore, the researcher addressed ethical concerns, emphasizing that participation in the interview was voluntary and that respondents' views and insights would be used solely for academic purposes and would not be disclosed to a third party. Furthermore, after explaining all the essential points about the interviews, she encouraged the participants to pose a questions or ask for clarity if there is anything was unclear. Then she questioned them if they were still willing to be interviewed. She assured the participants of their privacy and anonymity pertaining any data they divulged during the interviews. She then asked them to complete a bibliographic records information sheet and sign a written informed consent.



Individual interviews were conducted with six participants in this study, including four key informants and two lecturers from the Khomasdal Campus. The researchers conducted separate interviews with the key informants and lecturers individually. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to obtain candid responses in a one-on-one setting. To reduce bias, the phrasing and sequence of these open-ended questions were predetermined. As a result, the format of the interviews is best described as unstructured. The questions were left open-ended to allow participants to freely express their thoughts and experiences. This was relevant to this study because it allowed the researcher to investigate the study's main and sub-questions, as well as probe for more clarity on specific issues when necessary.

The interview guide was divided into three sections. The first set of questions focused on the causes of undergraduate students' poor English proficiency and communication skills. These were used as opening questions to understand the participants' frame of reference for the concept of English language proficiency and communication skills, both of which were heavily used in the interview guide. A few other questions were asked about their general communication skills experiences. The second set of questions focused on the consequences of undergraduate students' poor English proficiency and communication skills. These questions addressed all the study's research questions. Finally, the third set of questions focused on the participants' perceptions of undergraduate students' English proficiency and communication skills.

Data recording is extremely advantageous because it allows for both close analysis and analysis afterwards in the research process Ipinge (2013). As a result, in the current study, data were recorded using the researcher's cellphone voice recorder. This cellphone was placed between the researcher and the participant on a table. A recording device is frequently regarded as an essential item of equipment for any qualitative researcher, write Fraenkel *et al.* (2012). Simply because recording interviews ensures that the conversation is accurately recorded (Creswell, 2012) and allows for later transcription of conversations (Creswell, 2012). As a result, after recording all the interviews that were supposed to be conducted, all the conversations were transcribed.

As Maree (2014) suggested, the researcher devised a strategy in which she identified individual participants with numbers such as Key informant 1 or Lecturer 2. This made typing transcriptions easier, and also allowed her to conduct a more thorough data analysis. Finally, as Maree (2014) suggests, transcribed interviews were written question after question to capture how each

respondent had to say in response to each question. The audio tape enabled her to listen to the audio tape multiple times to transcribe and evaluate the information gathered from the interview. It also enabled her to go back and review interviews at any time to clarify what was said during data collection. When she finished typing the transcriptions, she emailed them to the appropriate participant to review and see if she had correctly captured the interview. After the participants have completed the verification, they return them to her.

#### **4.4.2. Classroom Observation**

According to Creswell (2012), observation is among the most effective instruments for collecting data in qualitative research. It is explained as the keep a record of 'respondents', 'artifacts', 'events' behaviour tendencies without essentially enquiring or interacting alongside them (Maree, 2014). Airasian *et al.* (2009) add that the emphasis throughout observation is on grasping the natural setting as it is lived by respondents without modifying or attempting to manipulate it. This theoretical understanding of the concept of observation as a research instrument was thoroughly applied in the current research.

Observation, as a qualitative data collection technique, enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maree, 2014). When the researcher used an observation checklist to observe first-year students in their English Communication class, she was able to collect primary data. Certain questions can only be answered through observation because it is the most appropriate and efficient method of data collection. There are two kinds of observations: Participative observations and non-participative observations. In participant observation, the observer becomes a part of and participant in the situation being observed. (Coombes 2001: 40; Yin, 2009: 111). In other words, the researcher observes and collects data on the activities, people, and physical attributes of the settings.

In contrast, the researcher only observes actions and interactions during non-participant observation. According to Coombes (2001: 40) and Swartz *et al.* (2008: 28), the participant does not participate in what is happening but simply records it. In non-participant observation, the researcher's role is to sit and observe without interacting with the observed participants.

The researcher intended to visit four classes, two per course, and to use the class observation checklist items (appendix). English for General Communication and English Communication and Study Skills were the subjects of these classes. Two classes for English for General Communication were observed. Each lesson lasted 55 minutes and the visit was done once a week (for two weeks). The English Communication and Study Skills classes were not observed because the course is now entirely online and more of a self-study experience.

In 2018, the English Communication and Study Skills course was converted to online learning. This made it difficult to assess students' actual communication skills, English proficiency, and written proficiency. The researcher was unable to observe students participating (speaking) in the lesson, as well as students doing the actual writing themselves, as opposed to being online, where they must use computers to correct spelling and some grammatical errors. Although there were no classes to observe, the lecturers in this course were gracious enough to allow the researcher to log on online and observe what happened there.

The researcher used non-participant observation for this study. She observed the students as they participated in the English for General Communication lectures on two different occasions, as well as how they used verbal and nonverbal communication skills. This method, also known as unstructured observations, is used when the researcher has a clear idea of the purpose of the research and is willing to spend enough time on the field (Burton *et al.*, 2008: 98). Further, the researcher took field notes with the permission of the lecturers and students to describe the participants, the setting, and the participants' activities or behavior patterns (Merriam, 2009: 151). She proceeded to collect data after obtaining permission from UNAM's Director of Centre for Research Services for Ethical Clearance. This authorization also included permission to observe English communication classes. She explained to the lecturer in charge of English for General Communication why she needed to observe his class before proceeding to observe the lessons.

Similarly, she informed him that permitting her to observe his class was entirely voluntary and that he had the right to say “no” to the observations for any reason. Again, the researcher assured the lecturer under observation that the data derived from the lecture observation would be used solely for academic purposes and that his identity would be kept anonymous. After explaining everything to the lecturer, she asked him to sign a consent form and then they agreed on a time for her to visit

his class. This was accomplished with the help of both his and her timetable, as she was still working full-time and had not taken any time off.

Furthermore, there was only one group or class for English for General Communication, and the researcher was only introduced by the lecturer once, on the first day of observation. It was no longer necessary the second time. She was sitting in the back of the lecture hall, where she could see all the students and all the learning and teaching activities that were taking place. She kept an “observational protocol” in which she documented all of the different facets and other significant apparent issues that she recognized during the lesson presentations.

She jotted down valuable facts and information and everything she thought was noteworthy as soon as she noticed it to avoid forgetting. She managed to remain inconspicuous, passive, and amiable during the class observation, as Cresswell (2012) recommends. This was done by the researcher because she did not want to have any influence on the exact activities of the class she was observing. It is also worth noting that she thanked both the lecturer and the students for the opportunity to observe the lesson in the class she observed.

As mentioned previously, there were two planned class observations for English Communication and Study Skills. However, this did not happen as planned. The researcher was informed that the English Communication and Study Skills course was entirely online, with no classes taking place. The enrolled students log on to the system to complete the assigned activities, and the lecturers log on to complete the marking or assessment. Apart from leaving comments, there is no interaction between the lecturer and the students. Only two classes were observed.

#### **4.4.3. Document Analysis**

Qualitative researchers look at a variety of records or documents, such as archival documents, journals, maps, videotapes, audiotapes, and artefacts. Many of these data sources occur naturally in educational settings and must be located within the research settings by the researcher (Gay *et al.*, 2009). Researchers can gather information from a wide range of written records. The investigators in this case do not really create new information from ground - up, but rather use available documentation as datasets. Bertram & Christiansen (2017) mention, such records can be analyzed using the 'document analysis' technique.



Similarly, Wellington (2015) argues that Document Analysis is defined as the methods and techniques for evaluating and comprehending whatever sort of document related to the investigation of a given area. To put it another way, Document Analysis is an organized method for examining or assessing records, both written and digital, in order to derive interpretation, gain an understanding, and establish empirical evidence (Bowen, 2009). As a result, in the ongoing study, Document Analysis was used to review the English for General Communication and English Communication and Study Skills syllabi, as well as the students' written essays, to supplement data from key informants and lecturers' interviews, classroom observations, etc.

#### **4.4.4. Questionnaire**

According to Airasian *et al.* (2009), a questionnaire is a written accumulation of self-report questions that must be answered by a predetermined group of research respondents. The questionnaire, as an important research instrument and data collection tool, serves primarily as a measurement tool, and it (the questionnaire) is one of the primary methods of data collection used in qualitative surveys (Denscobe, 2007). A questionnaire, on the contrary, can be utilized to boost data gathered through qualitative methods like "observational data" and "interviews" (Wellington, 2015). In the current study, the survey was used as both a tool and a method of data collection in this manner.

Furthermore, as Schutt & Check (2012) state, it is crucial to remember that the study objectives should serve as the primary foundations for deciding what to incorporate and completely remove, as well as what to highlight or treat in a briefly manner. It is thus understood in the present study that a questionnaire should be perceived as a whole, with each section and question serving a defined objective pertaining to the study's goal, and each section complementing the others. (Schutt & Check, 2012). As a result, all the questions on the questionnaire that the researcher employed in this current study are related to the study's objectives as well as the study's questions. However, she must, however, emphasize that not all of the research questions and objectives were strongly associated to the questions on the questionnaire used to collect data from the students.

A questionnaire may also include closed-ended, open-ended, or both types of questions (Maree, 2014). In the current study, the researcher used open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Open-

ended questions are those that do not limit participants to a one- or two-word response, (Maree, 2014). Instead, they have multiple potential responses and frequently leave room for further investigation by the researcher. Open-ended questions allow study participants to include more information, providing you, the researcher, with more useful, contextual feedback (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). Open-ended questions enable one to better comprehend the respondent's actual sentiments and viewpoints on the study issue.

Open-ended survey questions are free-form survey questions that allow respondents to respond in an open-text format, allowing them to answer with their full knowledge, feeling, and understanding. This means that the answer to this question is not limited to a single option. Unlike a closed-ended question, which limits survey responses to the options provided, an open-ended question allows you to delve deep into the respondent's responses, gaining valuable information about the subject at hand (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). The answers to these questions can be used to gather detailed and descriptive information about a subject. This is the primary reason for using open-ended questions in this study.

Data in qualitative studies is overloaded, and open-ended questions can sometimes generate a large amount of data that takes a long time to analyze while transcribing interviews takes time and money. Aside from these obstacles, the researcher was able to balance her time between work and research. She was able to analyze both open-ended and interview questions and develop criteria that made this study effective. The qualitative approach was chosen because it emphasized the type of evidence about what people say and do that allowed the researcher to interpret, make sense of, and comprehend what she had observed (Jackson 2012: 86). The qualitative method was also chosen to assist me in conceptualizing the research project, collecting and analyzing data, and documenting findings.

The volume of data in qualitative studies is overwhelming, and open-ended questions may produce a lot of data that requires a lot of time to analyze while interview transcription costs time and money. Despite these challenges, the researcher managed to split her time equally between employment and research. She was skilled at analyzing open-ended and interview questions and creating standards that helped this study be successful. The qualitative method was chosen because it placed a strong emphasis on the types of data about what people say and do that helped the researcher to understand, analyze, and make sense of what she had experienced (Jackson 2012:

86). The qualitative approach was also chosen to help me conceptualize the study, gather and analyze data, and record findings.

To cover a large sample, the researcher used a questionnaire that students filled in individually. The questionnaire covered the level of English proficiency of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus, the effectiveness of the communication skills course, and the challenges faced by UNAM undergraduate students in terms of English language proficiency.

The current study's questionnaire was distributed to all English for General Communication students present during the first-class observation. I must emphasize that these are the same students I observed earlier in this chapter. I thus observed their English for General Communication lesson first and then administered the questionnaire. As part of ethical considerations, the researcher explained the purpose of the questionnaire as well as the ethical issues involved. According to Creswell & Creswell (2014), it is essential to safeguard the privacy of the participants in the study.

I gave them a consent form to sign after they agreed to complete the questionnaire. According to the consent form, one guaranteed the participants' specified rights, and by having to sign the form, they consented to take part in the research and were assured that their privacy would be guarded (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). Finally, after the participants signed the consent forms. She did not want to put them under undue strain, which could result in them finishing the questionnaire in a rush and producing incorrect data, therefore a period of time was agreed upon for them to finish the questionnaire. She gathered the questionnaire from the respondents during her second and final class observation because the questionnaire was a little lengthier and everyone committed to finish it within seven days.

#### **4.5. RESEARCH METHODS**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of research participants' individual experiences with their teaching methods while teaching an English communication course. The emphasis is on communication and English proficiency. A qualitative research process involves seriously considering people's life experiences as the essence of what is real to them. A qualitative

study, according to Yates *et al.* (2012), is a phenomenographic approach that investigates variations in people's experiences of their world. As a result, the researcher investigated their English proficiency and communication skills in their natural setting. According to Creswell (2012), a qualitative study is a type of educational study where the researcher rely heavily on participant standpoints. Qualitative studies are detailed depictions of specific lecturers' and students' practices in a university setting.

Qualitative research can shed light on the interrelationships between various aspects of lecturer practice and student learning. This study makes use of qualitative research methods. According to Merriam (2009), the comprehension of meaning that individuals have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their environment and their perspectives in it, is the focus of qualitative research. Naturalistic/interpretive research has managed to earn scientific respect for its capacity to clarify personal meanings, describe human experiences, reveal rich and detailed "stories," accomplish understanding, develop theories about changing processes, demonstrate variations as well as trends and themes, and safeguard historical, cultural, and contextual conditions.

According to Sandelowki (1991), qualitative research reports are visually appealing and intellectually stimulating accounts that engage your imagination, your sense of style and workmanship, provide valuable knowledge, and touch your heart. In essence, the researcher builds a complicated, comprehensive picture, analyzes language, and reports in-depth informant opinion and carries out the research in a natural environment (Cresswell, 2012). To understand human perceptions, much qualitative research employs the constructivist perspective. It is based on multiple types of data, including in-depth oral interviews, observations, and survey questionnaire responses, and focuses on real-life context understanding, multilevel perspectives, and cultural influences. It then integrates and analyses these data in order to maximize the strengths and balance the weaknesses of each data type. This study is a qualitative study that sought to investigate first-year students' English proficiency and communication skills.



## **4.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

The use of a qualitative research method is required for this study. To achieve some degree of generalizability, qualitative methods must first be used to discover the constructs and their relationships (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The researcher transcribed the interview data by listening to the audiotape and typing directly on the word processor. She also took detailed notes on how this information could be interpreted. After finishing the transcription, she double-checked it by reading it aloud while listening to the audiotape. She employed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to break down audiotape transcriptions into units of meaning. The themes were created by categorizing transcribed data according to meaning. Following data collection, unstructured interview data were transcribed into data coding and analyzed using thematic and content analysis. Data from observations were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Questionnaire data were used for Phase 2. Finally, findings from phases one and two are integrated to gain a better understanding of the two phenomena, which are English language proficiency and communication skills. The data were coded, and a data set was created. The findings are useful in comprehending the students' English proficiency and communication abilities. The findings are to be used to create a model that characterizes first-year students' English proficiency and communication skills.

## **4.7. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

### **4.7.1. Validity**

Airasian *et.al* (2009) asserts, a range of strategies and approaches can be used when conducting research to improve the veracity and comprehension of one's research findings. This process is referred to as "data validation" (Maree, 2014). Data validation in the current study was carried by using "triangulation." In order to get a more complete image of the topic under study, many approaches, data collection techniques, and information sources are used in this process. (Airasian *et al.*, 2009). As a result, the researcher acquired information from numerous people, as mentioned by (Airasian *et al.*, 2009:377). Lecturers and students served as the informants. The researcher acquired qualitative data to make sure the current study was reliable, solid, and contributed to understanding of the topic under inquiry.

Additionally, the researcher employed a range of data collection strategies, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. The strength of one approach might make up for the weakness of another, hence it is advisable to use a variety of data collection techniques (Airasian *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, in order to prevent any potential biases, the researcher had to review the marked work online after the students' written samples had been initially marked by their professors. She also watched two lessons to check the accuracy of the data from classroom observations, coming to the right and agreeable findings as a result.

The degree to which a tool measures what it is supposed to measure and, as a result, allows for appropriate score interpretation is referred to as validity. The primary goal of validity is to test for a purpose, and the measurement tools must aid in achieving that goal (Gay *et al.*, 2009). According to McNiff (2016: 22), the researcher, peers, academics, and the public should validate the research findings. The researcher evaluates the validity of his or her own research by describing how it demonstrates the realization of the values that inspired the search that he or she is making public. The researcher or peer must pass judgment on the originality of the mind that the researcher is making public (McNiff 2016: 22). In this study, the researcher validated her work by soliciting feedback from peers and academics. This study's findings were published in several journal articles. This may also help with the validation process for the planned research.

#### **4.7.2. Reliability**

Dependability or trustworthiness are synonyms for reliability. In other words, reliability refers to how consistently a test measures whatever it is measuring (Gay *et al.*, 2009). It tells us more about the consistency of the results and the appropriateness of the test. They are both critical in determining the suitability of a test or measuring instrument. A valid test is always reliable, but a reliable test is not always valid. Validity and reliability are critical in qualitative research (Gay *et al.*, 2009). Because this was a mixed-method study, the researcher used a variety of methods, including classroom observations, interviews, and documentary analysis. In this way, she was able to triangulate data collected through various methods.

#### **4.8. RESEARCH ETHICS**

It is impossible to conduct research anywhere without adhering to basic research ethics principles. Research ethics are simply the dos and don'ts of conducting research. Clough & Nutbrown (2012: 250) argue that the researcher should seek ethical approval from the awarding institution as the first step in the ethical process.

Before requesting permission to conduct the research at the University of Namibia, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape (UWC). She also sought permission from Khomasdal Campus lecturers and students to conduct my research in their classes and to examine their written work. When gathering data, it was ensured that the normal university program was not disrupted or harmed the participants in any way. Each participant was informed about the study and was required to sign an informed consent form. The participants were not coerced into taking part in the study, but it was entirely voluntary. The information was kept private, and no names were revealed. When audio recording the interview, permission was requested. Pseudonyms were used to conceal the participants' identities. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time, and no children were involved because the participants were only adults and young adults.

#### **4.9. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The main objective of this chapter was to list and describe all the methods and technicalities employed in this investigation. It is important to stress that the current study employed a "qualitative method research technique" in order to gather qualitative data and better comprehend the phenomenon being studied. These qualitative data were compiled and examined. The data gathering techniques required to compile data from diverse sources were also covered in this chapter. These comprise, among other things, questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. This chapter included comprehensive explanations of the devices used to gather data, in addition to data collecting procedures. In the final section, important "research technique" components, such as data validation and study ethics, were provided and clarified. The next chapter covers data presentation and analysis.

## **Chapter 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **5.1. PRELIMINARIES**

The current chapter first presents the data gathered for this research and the data analysis subsequently. Data for this research study comprises the following:

- (i) the course outlines
- (ii) the study guides
- (iii) the students' written works, and
- (iv) the results of the research instruments.

### **5.2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS: ENGLISH COMMUNICATION COURSES**

English for General Communication and English Communication and Study Skills syllabi from the Department of Language Development are centered on the four major language abilities, namely:

- (i) reading
- (ii) writing
- (iii) speaking, and
- (iv) listening.

This section is analyzing the English for General Communication and English Communication and Study Skills syllabi that cover all four language skills. It is for the reason, as stated in earlier chapters, the study is focused on the English proficiency and communication skills of first-year students at UNAM's Khomasdal Campus.

The theoretical underpinnings of the document analysis procedure in this study are based on Bowen (2009)'s definition. According to Bowen (2009), a systematic method for analyzing or evaluating both electronic and printed documents is known as document analysis. Bowen (2009) adds that 'document analysis can be used as the primary method of data collection for a particular paper or as supplementary information. All the above-mentioned documents needed to be analyzed in order to gain insights into how they were crafted and the specific intellectual basis that underpins



their contents, and the document analysis was done in order to complement information gathered using other research instruments, for example, classroom observations, lecturers' interviews and students' questionnaires. Therefore, in this section, the following documents were analyzed:

- (i) English for General Communication syllabus and study guide
- (ii) English Communication Study Skills syllabus and study guide

A syllabus is described by Hutchinson & Waters (2005) as a document that details what will (or should be) taught and includes what a successful student will comprehend by the end of the course; in other words, it documents the grounds for success (Hutchinson & Waters, 2005). Rahimpour (2010) concurs with Hutchinson & Waters (2005) that the selection and evaluation of a given subject's material are more important considerations when creating a syllabus. A syllabus is therefore a necessary document in the teaching and learning process (Hutchinson & Waters, 2005).

The course outlines and study guides indicated that the content contain mainly basic English components including word classes, composing and analyze compositions, paragraphs analysis, vocabulary building, reading, and talking (presentations), resulting in a strong benchmark of English to also be studied, however they lack more oral activities and enough time frame that can improve their English proficiency and communication skills, this limited time frame is for English Communication and Study Skills.

Syllabi and study materials for both courses appear to have all the knowledge students require to acquire and master English as a Second Language. The syllabi cover all fundamental English skills, including vocabulary development, report writing, summaries, and essay writing, and reading comprehension. This ensures that students learn the language to a high quality. The courses do not include formal core activities like debate.

### **5.2.1. English for General Communication Syllabus**

For students who obtained D or E symbols in English at the NSSC Ordinary Level, English for General Communication is a year-long program, as was previously described in Chapter 4. Students who are enrolled in diploma programs as well as those who meet the prerequisites to enroll in degree programs but have a D in English should be able to meet their language demands

in this course. It acts as a primer for the university, where learning and teaching methods are different from those used in secondary education. With an emphasis on grammar rules and the four language abilities of hearing, reading, speaking, and writing, this study concentrates on study skills, learner training, text analysis, and reflective practice.

Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to correctly interpret language in print, compose various writing tasks and activities, participate, and argue a point of view in classroom activities, interpret and infer information listened to in the classroom, and apply basic referencing skills after completing the module. One lecturer summarizes it as follows: *"This is a fundamental course for students who did not perform well in English." It is intended for diploma students and is not a degree programme. This course is intended for students who did not meet the minimum entry requirements for their degree. It is intended for students who received a D or E in English. It is a year-long course, so students will participate in a variety of activities and become acquainted with the material by the end of the year."*

The course outline and study guide content focus on vocabulary, they are beneficial to students' English proficiency. This course's outline incorporates writing and speaking skills as communication skills. The study guide includes several activities that focus on communication skills such as speaking and writing. The organization of grammar lessons focuses on the functions of the various parts of speech as well as how they are employed in English. Every ability level can participate in an activity. The grammar units include a variety of activities in addition to reading and provide a detailed explanation of the components of speech. Students must demonstrate their understanding of grammar as well as their writing and speaking abilities. Writing and speaking skills are interwoven. The expectation for students is that they will demonstrate their understanding of what they learned in the communication skills lecture (speaking and writing skills.) Word pronunciation can aid pupils in developing their English language skills. In addition, students must collaborate in groups to research a subject and present their findings to the class.

As a result, students' writing and verbal communication abilities advance. The institution ought to be endorsed for its communicative method of teaching English. Chomsky (1965)'s ideas of linguistic competence and performance are extended in Hymes (1966)' concept of communicative competence. In order to be competent to use language in a particular cultural social situation, Hymes (1966) contends that linguistic or grammatical proficiency alone is insufficient. As a result,

language training needs to consider the context in which language must be utilized. He continued by saying that due to communicative competency, a typical child's acquisition of sentence knowledge is not just grammatical but also appropriate (Hymes, 1972). It is crucial to remember that teaching communicative language is strongly related to a number of activities, including pair and group work, open or cued dialogues, role playing, etc. These are referred to as communicative activities, and lecturers created them so that students might utilize the language they had already acquired in a variety of contexts.

### **5.2.2. English Communication and Study Skills Syllabus**

Students who got a C or higher in Grade 12 are eligible to take this semester-long course. It can be finished by students either in the first or second semester. The course aims to cover all four language skills, introduce students to a variety of academic genres, give them the tools they need to produce a variety of texts that fit their discourse communities, and give them the confidence to keep learning in order to advance their academic literacy, according to the course outline (learning to learn). *"English Communication and Study Skills is similar to English for General Communication." There are only a few differences. English Communication and Study Skills is designed for students who have met the university's admission requirements. However, the course itself is brief. Some students will not have mastered all the skills by the end of the semester. However, despite its brief duration, another course, English for Academic Purposes, is required."*

When the course is completed, students should be able to analyze multiple genres, including showing comprehension of various genres, utilizing a dictionary for vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation, using varied and suitable oral and written communication skills to fulfill the demands of various audiences and discourse communities, composing grammatically correct sentences, connecting them together to build meaningful and cohesive paragraphs, planning and structuring, and more.

The study guide is divided into nine units. The course evaluation focuses on two important/vital communication skills: Speaking and Writing. Before students are assessed in either of these two components, what is expected of them, or the assessment criteria are thoroughly explained to them. The rubric was included in their study guides. If students are provided with rubrics ahead of time

and are well aware of what is expected of them prior to an assessment, it motivates them to work hard and ask for clarification where they do not understand. Rubrics can both teach and evaluate (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Stiggins 2001). Rubrics have the potential to help students understand the assessment process when used as part of a student-centred approach targets for their learning and the quality standards for a specific assignment, as well as make trustworthy judgments about their own work that can inform revision and improvement. Therefore, providing students with rubrics well in advance could improve students' performance in English courses as well as their overall university performance.

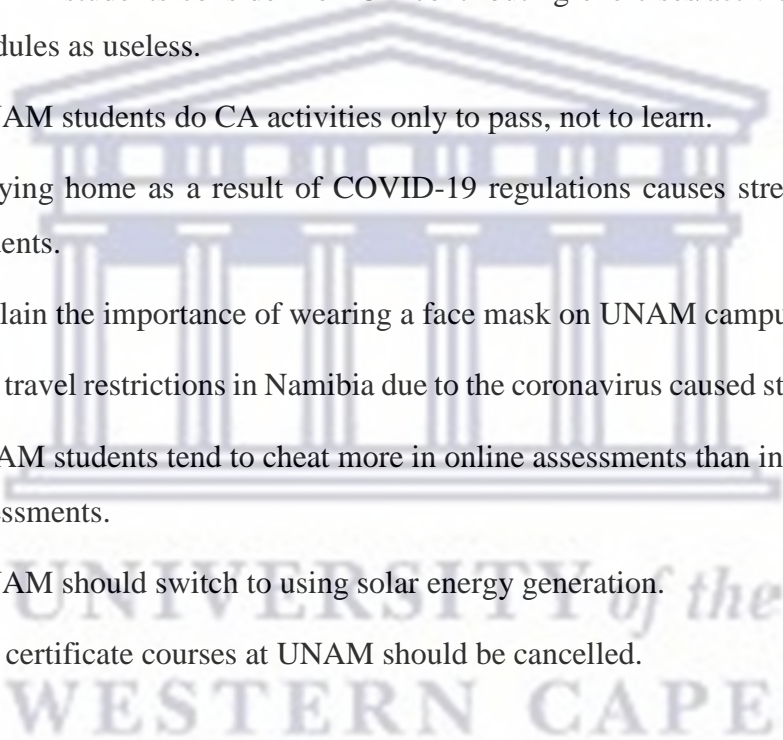
The main consideration when assessing a document's meaning is whether it is clear and understandable (Wellington, 2015). This includes assessing the clarity and precision of the language used in the paper (Denscombe, 2007). The literal and deeper meanings of the words, phrases, and explanations in a document can all be taken into consideration when deciphering its "meaning," according to Punch (2011). As a result, it is worthwhile to consider whether there are interpretations that involve reading between the lines or what is left unsaid when analyzing a document's meaning (Denscombe, 2007). Study guides and course outlines for English communication are typically prepared in simple, unambiguous language that aids the reader's comprehension. According to Mwanza (2016), a syllabus for any academic subject needs to be clear, brief, and cohesive.

### **5.3. STUDENTS' WRITTEN WORKS**

Students' written work from English Communication and Study Skills and English for General Communication courses were examined to determine or confirm whether students lacked language proficiency in writing. In an online course, English Communication and Study Skills, students were only expected to write one longer piece of writing, an academic essay for 30 marks. They were given 15 different topics from which to choose one and write an explanatory, argumentative, or comparison/contrast academic essay. The following are the topics:

- (i) Online education is just as good as learning in the classroom.
- (ii) Namibia should be categorised as a low-income country.



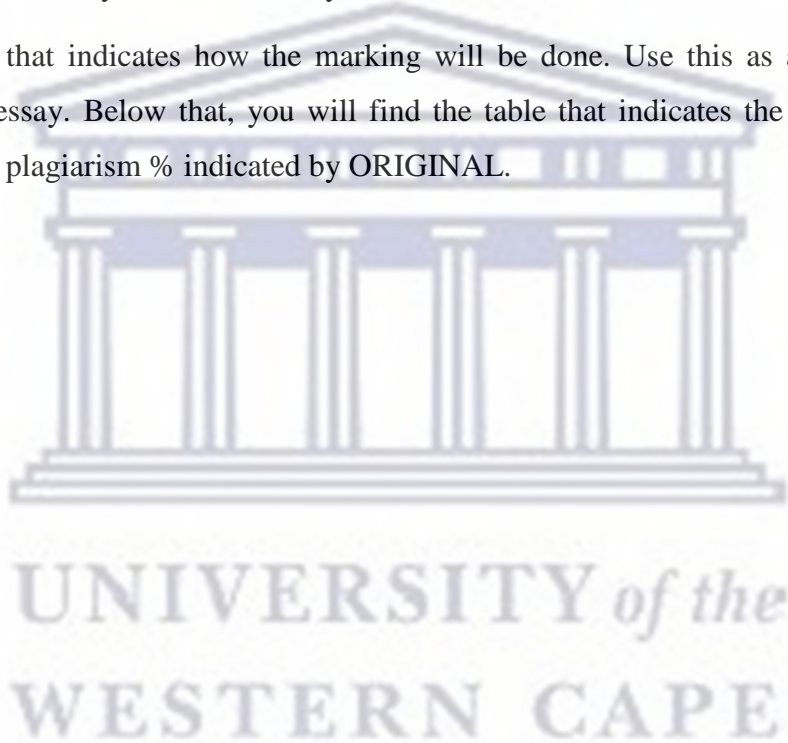
- 
- (iii) NSFAP beneficiaries should honour their financial contracts after they have completed their studies.
  - (iv) Namibia has an effective legal system.
  - (v) How can the issue of teenage pregnancy be addressed in Namibia?
  - (vi) All Namibians should get vaccinated against COVID-19.
  - (vii) Namibian scientists can contribute to the economic development of Namibia.
  - (viii) UNAM students consider non-CA contributing exercises/activities in their online Modules as useless.
  - (ix) UNAM students do CA activities only to pass, not to learn.
  - (x) Staying home as a result of COVID-19 regulations causes stress among UNAM students.
  - (xi) Explain the importance of wearing a face mask on UNAM campuses.
  - (xii) The travel restrictions in Namibia due to the coronavirus caused stronger family ties.
  - (xiii) UNAM students tend to cheat more in online assessments than in hard copy/printed assessments.
  - (xiv) UNAM should switch to using solar energy generation.
  - (xv) The certificate courses at UNAM should be cancelled.

The following were the essay requirements:

- (i) Length: 300- 350 words
- (ii) Use APA referencing, in-text referencing as well as a reference list.
- (iii) Use at least three sources.
- (iv) Should be peer edited.
- (v) Use editing checklist.
- (vi) Essay should be typed.

Students were also advised to use their own information/ideas while also including supporting ideas from other academic sources, to use in-text citations, and to include a reference list to show that they used ideas from other sources. Use at least two sources and properly reference them as explained in Units 5 and 7 and write a five-paragraph essay. Each paragraph should contain 4 to 7 sentences. Use the Rubric criteria to guide them in understanding what is expected of them and how their essays will be evaluated and graded. This is the rubric for grading English essays for Communication and Study Skills. The essay is worth 30 marks.

Below is a table that indicates how the marking will be done. Use this as a checklist before submitting your essay. Below that, you will find the table that indicates the number of marks subtracted for the plagiarism % indicated by ORIGINAL.



<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Marks</b>	<b>Abb.</b>	<b>Description</b>
Referencing	6	R	No corresponding in-text citation: <b>No marks!</b> Correct in-text citation (3) Reference list (3)
Academic register	4	A	Formality (1); Tentativeness (1); Accuracy (1); Objectivity (1).
Content	10	C	Introduction: general statement (1); background information (1); thesis statement (1); Body paragraphs: meaningful topic sentences (2); logical arguments/ statements, supporting sentences which illustrate own insight (2); effective use of sources to support or justify (1); Conclusion: summarizing sentence (rephrasing of thesis statement) (1); summarizing main points of essay (1).
Coherence	5	C	Introduction (1); Conclusion (1); Linking words (1) General flow of essay (2)
Language and vocabulary	5	L	Punctuation (1); spelling (1); sentence structure and word order (1); tenses (1); subject-verb agreement (1).
Total marks	<b>30</b>		

**Table 3: Essays Marking Rubric**

The table below indicates the number of marks subtracted based on the original similarity rate. That means the original app compares your essay with other essays and sources and indicates the level of similarity (plagiarism).

ORIGINAL PERCENTAGE	MARKS SUBTRACTED
21-30%	-1
31-40%	-2
41-50%	-3
51-60%	-4
61-70%	-5
71-80%	-6
81-90%	-7
91-100%	-8

**Table 4:** *Original Similarity Table*

English for General Communication students were required to read an article about Academic Preparation Bridging the Gap: Academic Preparation and Postsecondary Success of First-Generation Students by Warburton *et al.* (2001). They were then required to write a three paragraphs essay of about 250-300 words on the topic: A discussion on factors associated with students' academic performance, and persistence at university.

In order to assess students' written communication skills, the researcher used 'thematic content analysis' and 'error analysis' on their written work. The written communication skills were then used to identify students' writing problems and possible causes of written communication skills. Some of the errors and mistakes made by students are as follows: Inappropriate use of tenses, incorrect subject-verb agreement, spelling errors, a lack or incorrect use of punctuation mark, title not well formulated with comment focus, or in other words rewording of the titles, poor thesis statement or not clearly stated, the introduction did not address how the essay will be organized, poor sentences and paragraphs- too long paragraphs that lack cohesion and coherence, starting sentences or paragraphs with conjunctions of co-ordination such as but, because etc., not using the academic or formal language, and poor in-text references and reference list.

The researcher has extensive experience assessing the work of English language learners. She previously taught English. She is therefore aware of the mistakes and errors that some students commit. One of the conclusions drawn from this study's analysis of students' written work is that



most of them struggle to employ tenses like the present and past continuous tense appropriately, as well as the past and present perfect and past and present perfect continuous, present simple and past simple tense. Heydari & Bagheri (2012) claim that this is a widespread issue for English learners everywhere, brought on by mother language impact, a lack of exposure to English, and other factors.

### **5.3.1 Sources of Errors in Students' Written Work**

Many Namibian students are finding it difficult to write lengthy pieces of writing, such essays, as a result of the current LiEP. The Namibian LiEP states that pupils start learning English in fourth grade (Ipinge, 2013). According to Wolfaardt (2002: 70), many students in Namibian schools do not satisfy the minimal requirements of language competency standards in English when they are introduced to fourth-grade courses that are more difficult linguistically and cognitively.

### **5.3.2. The Use of Incorrect Wording/Homophones**

The writings of the students showed that they selected the wrong terms. It can be explained by a lack of resources, a lack of English at home, and a lack of appropriate reading materials, as well as a lack of exposure to the English language. For instance, students substituted the word 'where' for 'were.' Additionally, they switched back and forth between the words 'they' and 'their.' Students also mispronounced the word 'careers' as 'cereers.' Additionally, they referred to it as 'cheated' rather than 'cheating.' In the English language, there are a lot of homophones (Krishnamurthy *et al.*, 2011). These are words that sound the same but spell and mean entirely different things (Krishnamurthy *et al.*, 2011). Due to the identical pronunciations of the words, the pupils were unable to write the correct ones.

### **5.3.3. Lack of Grammar Accuracy/Subject/Verb Agreement**

Correct grammar is expected to be a given in the academic environment. However, it seems that students' writing is frequently rife with grammatical mistakes. A lecturer explaining subject-verb agreement was seen as the data was being collected during class observation. According to English

grammar rules, a writer must use the verb that is conjugated to match singular nouns when using a singular noun. A conjugated verb must be used in place of a plural noun whenever one is used by the author. Despite having been instructed to link the subject with the proper form of the verb before composing longer works of writing, the majority of students who produced the essay did not or were unable to do so. For example, some students wrote, *“Teenage pregnancy is when a women under 20 gets pregnant”* instead of writing *“Teenage pregnancy is when women under 20 years old get pregnant”*. Similarly, many students wrote *“Students has various reasons for cheating it may not be with the aim of break the rules, but ” because they’ve been overwhelmed in their course works and they want to make sure their grades are not jeopardized”*, instead of *“Students have various reasons for cheating; it may not be to break the rules, but ”because they've been overwhelmed in their course works and they want to ensure their grades are not jeopardized,”*.

As stated by Farooq *et al.* (2012), the traditional method of teaching grammar by teachers and students' lack of experience are the causes of all grammar-related issues or difficulties that students encounter when writing. Grammar errors appear to be the product of utterly insufficient learning and teaching, claims (Msanjila, 2005). This is undesirable since essays written by students should be crystal clear, succinct, and easy to read (Barry *et al.*, 2014). According to the written work of the students, a weak English background is to blame for the issue of erroneous tenses. One could contend that these pupils need more exposure to English as a result. In order to employ tenses effectively when writing essays, they must also be taught communicatively. Observations made in the classroom showed that standard, out-of-context grammar instruction did not help pupils use language more effectively. It is suggested that professors explain this concept to students in order to help them resolve subject-verb agreement problems in their writing. In addition, lecturers should make sure that students have ample opportunity to practice subject-verb agreement and receive lots of exercises so that they are aware of the appropriate verb to employ when referring to singular and plural nouns. In general, subject-verb agreement can be improved through better lecturer instruction and more student practice.

According to Farooq *et al.* (2012), a writer must employ a verb that is conjugated to match singular nouns when using a single noun. A conjugated verb must be used in place of a plural noun whenever one is used in writing. Students wrote *“we was spending time together as a family”*

instead of *"we were spending time together as a family."* Similarly, many students wrote *"we was scared of getting Covid"* instead of *"we were scared of getting Covid."*

Furthermore, Farooq *et al.* (2012) think that the source of all, if not most, grammar-related issues that students encountered when writing was due to teachers' traditional methods of learning and teaching grammar and students' lack of experience. Grammar errors, according to Msanjila (2005), appear to be the result of absolutely poor learning and teaching.

#### **5.3.4. Lack of Coherence and Cohesion in Paragraphs**

Students failed to accurately or successfully connect their paragraphs to build a logical whole. The paragraphs also missing *"unit."* This shows that there are not any proper connectors or linking words connecting the phrases within the paragraphs. According to Hall (1988) in Fareed (2016: 81), a good ESL writer must produce texts that are cohesive, logical, well organized, and neat. Students often struggle with cohesiveness and coherence, which is problematic because unorganized information is challenging to read and comprehend. Though it is reasonable that students' work lacks coherence and cohesion, it is extremely difficult to write coherently in a second language (Ahmed, 2010), especially considering the intricate nature of English logical connectors.

Coherence and cohesiveness are typically achieved in academic writing through the deliberate use of connecting devices that emphasize the flow of ideas and indicate the writer's intentions on the precise links between such ideas. Contrary to cohesiveness, coherence relates to how the text is organized overall into a recognizable order (e.g., text development from the introduction to the conclusion). Yang *et al.* (2011) used the term *"predictive scaffolding"* to refer to particular techniques utilized to produce a predictable text structure. While conceding that academic readers are likely familiar with the textual patterns of academic writings and hence find it simpler to grasp works organized in this way, proficient academic writers use such tactics to lead readers through a text.

The majority of students were told to write five paragraphs, even though they are generally aware that a lengthy piece of writing needs at least three. According to Lecturer 1, *"Writing is riddled with misspellings and a lack of coherence. They must be forced to read when it comes to reading."*

*They are not eager to read on their own, and this course encourages extensive reading in order to improve their vocabulary, reading skills, and comprehension of various types of texts. We have included listening modules in all our courses to teach students that when they come to university, they must listen to their lecturers. They must listen in order to take notes, and they will be graded based on what they learn during lectures. It is difficult to tell if they are listening well or not. That is what they do every time in a lecture. When one person speaks, the other must listen."*

However, their paragraphs do not flow or are not sufficiently linked to form a coherent whole. Furthermore, there is no coherence between sentences and paragraphs. Some students used incorrect linking words, while others did not use any at all. Furthermore, some sentences were overly long and, to some extent, meaningless.

According to the written work of the students, some of them had difficulty writing introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. This may be because their lecturers did not teach them this part of essay writing or because they decided to write freely. This is unacceptable since effective essays must have concise introductions and conclusions (Bary *et al.*, 2014:11). The correct essay format must be taught to students. Effective instruction can address the issue of not knowing how to construct an essay correctly, claims (Msanjila, 2005).

Because of this, it is thought that lecturers should always make sure they have instructed their students on how to create introductions, bodies, and conclusions for different sorts of writing. Some pupils even neglected to create paragraphs in their texts. This type of writing is challenging to read, especially in larger passages, as it gives the sensation that one concept never ends. In addition to the structural problem of not providing a clear introduction or conclusion in their writing, students may show a lack of comprehension of the purpose of these texts' many components. Despite the fact that one student included a conclusion, it was merely a verbatim rehash of the essay's body paragraphs. There is a variety of material on students' difficulties in a collegiate academic setting to write effectively (Bizell, 1992; Cntor, 1993; Orr, 1995; Radloff, 1994; Zamel & Spack, 1998).

Many studies start out by noting how academic writing dominates tertiary education (and reading the writings of others). The most obvious justification for this emphasis on academic writing is the fact that student writing is the primary method of assessment in higher education. Thus, it is



required of students that their written communications demonstrate their proficiency in a particular subject of study in a clear and succinct manner (Butler, 2011).

Lipinge (2018) argues that even if this was not a part of their instruction, students should be taught how to compose texts that make sense to readers through content structure (Nandago & Kambonde, 2017). Additionally, it is important to teach students how to join sentences together within paragraphs and how to join paragraphs together within a single piece of writing. Finally, it is important to motivate students to read as often as they can. Reading gives students the chance to understand how various authors structure their works, which may aid them in developing the coherence and cohesion of their own writing. Some pupils have trouble with English because they misread the question or lack the necessary vocabulary to understand what it was asking. They consequently misread queries and submit inaccurate answers.

### **5.3.5. Incorrect Use of Tone and Register**

When writing ESL essays, students must employ the appropriate tone and register (Barry *et al.*, 2014). This suggests that students should use suitable language and style when writing and should keep the intended audience in mind. Students should ensure that a formal and academic tone is used when writing an essay, for instance (Barry *et al.*, 2014:12). The essay analysis for the present study, however, showed that some students did not employ the proper tone and register. Students substitute words like, instead of "*this essay discusses,*" students use phrases such as "*I am going to talk about*", and "*instead of*" "*first and foremost*".

All of these colloquial expressions are superfluous in academic writing because the register and tone of an essay should be formal and academic, and students are writing to academics. As Brown (2000) points out, you would use a different vocabulary in a casual conversation with a friend than you would, for instance, in a job interview with a potential employer. There are several words that students use that are considered colloquialisms, and slang is typically not allowed in academic work. There are several words that students use that are considered colloquialisms, and slang is typically not allowed in academic work. One should consider what functional purpose formal academic writing provides, besides conveying a sense of seriousness and that academics are involved in what they may view to be highly significant subjects. This is in addition to the potential

for misconceptions caused by the usage of colloquialisms. The tone of academic writing, such as essays, should be formal.

### **5.3.6. Conciseness and Precision**

Directness and accuracy should be prioritized in academic writing. The usage of ambiguous or unclear vocabulary terms like "*thing*" and "*something*" is frequently insufficiently precise in academic writing. Verbosity and repetition can bog down academic arguments and are not meant to be superficial aspects of academic writing. It is important to note that this convention runs opposite to the usual avoidance of first-person pronouns and contractions, as these structures are frequently replaced by lengthier sequences of words or letters. It is expected that students would write clearly and simply.

### **5.3.7. Lack of Appropriate Use of Evidence**

In academic writing, the proper use of evidence demonstrates specific rules for how the concepts and words of authorities (other sources) are acknowledged. Although varied referencing styles are employed around the globe, academic writing (in a western setting) shares the premise that one should explicitly acknowledge the ideas of others in their own academic work.

### **5.3.8. Use of Contractions**

While verb contractions such as (*it's*) and negative contractions (*it isn't*) are primarily used in conversation (spoken language). Biber *et al.* (1999:1128-1132) note that some contraction use can also be found in written registers like fiction and news (in their direct reporting of spoken discourse). According to their corpus analysis results, contracted forms are nearly never used in academic prose. It is fascinating to notice that students still do similar mistakes even after significant exposure to the tertiary academic setting. The incidence of this inaccuracy may be explained by variations in how this convention is used across various writing settings and disciplines.

**Let's talk** – Let us talk

**It's-** It is

**Can't** – can not

### **5.3.9. Lack of/Incorrect Use of Punctuation Marks and Spelling Problems**

There are numerous general punctuation problems in the texts. While failure to use full stops at the end of sentences may be a common mistake made by students, failure to utilize commas properly frequently disturbs the reading process, necessitating a second reading or complicating understanding. Additionally, there are too many/not enough spaces between the punctuation and the remainder of the sentence/new sentence. A comma is omitted in the latter example.

etc.

For example, some students do not do their work on time.

Writing samples from students' written work reveals that they struggle with 'misspelling' of words and the use of 'punctuation' marks. *Some students came in with difficulties such as writing sentences without punctuation marks, although they are coming from high school. The message, however, is clear,* Informant 2. According to the research results from this study, when writing essays in ESL, students have trouble spelling a lot of words correctly and also make mistakes with sentence punctuation. It is possible that their general inability to speak English is what's causing this issue. One may claim that correctly writing words and punctuating sentences is crucial when it comes to essay writing because a piece of writing will not have a clear meaning if it has numerous spelling errors and poor sentence punctuation.

Barry *et al.* (2014) assert that it is not necessary for the students' spelling to be accurate throughout the entire essay. On the other hand, simple and frequent terms should be spelled correctly. Students must therefore compose essays with fewer spelling problems and make sure that their sentences are punctuated correctly in order to earn good marks on essay writing tasks. Spelling mistakes are unacceptable in academic settings since they typically reflect students' casual attitude toward their studies.

The results of Ipinge's (2018) study clearly demonstrate that writing English essays presents a number of difficulties for learners in Northern Namibia. Given that English is their second language and that they blatantly lack English skills, this is not surprising (Harris 2011; Ipinge 2018; Wolfaardt 2002). In addition to the learners' subpar English, it is critical to remember that writing is a challenging task to master. Writing is a skill that is neither easy nor natural for many second language authors, claims (Hedge, 2014). This is because a competent ESL writer needs to have a wide vocabulary, a command of mechanics rules, and a writing that is coherent, logical, appropriately organized, engaging, and cleanly arranged. The information above indicates that students carry these issues with them from secondary schools to university institutions.

### **5.3.10. Lack of Expression**

Students struggle to express themselves through their writing. Data from an essay in this chapter as well as additional sentences from the students' written work are used to support this. The teaching and study of English as a second language at this Campus might be enhanced, according to observations made in class.

On this campus, students' written work revealed that they had language barriers. This study, which examined the English language proficiency and communication skills of first-year education students at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus, elicited a set of responses using various instruments described in Chapter 3, which presented the perspectives of the students and lecturers involved. The questionnaire's findings supported those of the interviews. Some students have trouble writing.

### **5.3.11. Poor Reading and Writing Abilities**

The data revealed that students' oral skills are far superior to their written skills. Informant 2 stated that *"Students, in my opinion, have excellent communication skills. They would communicate orally, but writing is a challenge for them. They mostly write from what they read. Their reading and writing abilities are mediocre. I do not want to say it is worse, but we have a major problem with reading and writing among Namibian students."* This informant believes that students' oral



skills are far superior to their written skills. *"When they come to university, their writing skills are generally poor,"* Informant 3 added, *when you give them longer pieces of writing, such as paragraphs, summaries, essays, and emails to lecturers, their writing skills deteriorate dramatically. Obviously, spelling is an issue, but so is the organization of ideas and the overall message they are communicating. Urban students are better at expressing themselves in social situations than their counterparts. Some students only speak English when giving a presentation at university."*

Informant 4 expressed similar sentiments. *"When you interact with students, some of them have difficulties interacting with you, and some of them are vocal in spoken English, but when it comes to writing skills, there are those who were vocal but struggle with writing." Surprisingly, some people have difficulty expressing themselves orally, but when they write, they write well."*

As we come to the end of this part, it is crucial to remember that, in addition to the LiEP, Namibian students struggle with writing because they are not exposed to enough English in their communities because they seldom ever use or hear English being spoken there (Iipinge, 2013). Their communities play no part in promoting the study of English (Adeyami, 2012). As a result, pupils will find it challenging to improve their writing abilities and to write, especially essays.

The data presented reveal that students are faced with some writing and reading challenges. It was also revealed that the Department of Language Development on the Main Campus has Writing and Reading units where lecturers refer students to get writing clarification. Students can go to the Reading unit to read. There are many different reading materials that they can read while waiting for their classes, for example. On specified consultation times, the Writing unit has two assistants. All the students have to do is make a reservation and they will be assisted. However, the Centre lacks a speaking unit where students can learn or improve their public speaking skills.

At the Writing unit, early detection programs are in place. When they do a pre-assessment and see that a student is at risk, especially in writing, they refer them to the Writing unit. However, not all students go because they claim they do not have time.

## **5.4. CLASS OBSERVATION DATA FINDINGS**

The goal of the classroom observations was to accurately depict what takes place in English communication lessons. As a result, the researcher adopted an unstructured observation strategy during the English communication classes to document pertinent observations. From the unstructured observation methods, six themes were then derived. These include the prevalent use of clear grammar explanations, learners' limited English competence, and the traditional method of doing so.

### **5.4.1. English for General Communication**

The researcher needed to make plans with the lecturer in charge of English for General Communication regarding the date and time he would be available. English for General Communication is taught four times a week for 55 minutes. On the first visit, 19 of the 33 students attended the observed lesson. The lecturer was taken aback when the rest of the class failed to show up or arrived late. Those who arrived late were asked to explain why they were late. The topic of the day's lesson was "*the sentence*" a new topic.

On the second visit, 15 of the 33 students attended the lesson. The lecturer started the lesson by asking the students what is meant when someone says he/she does not know how to speak English. "*When their English is broken,*" students explained. "*When the grammar is incorrect.*" The lecturer continued by emphasizing the importance of the subject-verb agreement. He inquired, "Are you the new English teacher?" "Yes, I am". Students laughed at the example given and then informed the lecturer that the subject and verb did not agree. The lecturer then introduced the day's topic, subject/verb agreement, also known as concords.

### **5.4.2. Explicit Grammar Instructions and Lack of Communicative Instruction**

An important takeaway from the classroom observations is that explicit grammar instructions predominate over all else in ESL lessons. The topics of the day were all based on grammar; a sentence, and concords in both of the two lessons observed. During the first lesson visit, the lecturer mentioned that they had finished all of the parts of speech and would begin the new topic on that

day. The lecturer then assigned students classwork containing several words related to a sentence, to have students define those words and explain words how they relate to the topic of the day, *'The sentence.'* These are the words: (i) clause (ii) phrase (iii) subject (iv) object (v) verb (vi) adverbial and (vii) complement.

One by one, students attempted to clarify their understanding of the terminology presented, which sparked a discussion in class. Some students utilized complete phrases, while others did not. The two lessons were interesting in that some students did not participate at all in the debate. The pupils seem to have trouble understanding precise grammar instruction, which causes them to become disinterested in the sessions and decide not to take part in the debate. According to Pica (1994), educators should create a balance between explicit instruction and more communicative, inductive education to ensure that ESL students absorb the material efficiently.

However, these results demonstrate that some lecturers at this university give insufficient consideration to communicative language training. It can be concluded that lecturers resort to explicit grammar instructions because their students are unable to cope with communicative instructions because their English proficiency is inadequate. The lecturers may also be reverting to explicit grammar instructions because their teachers' training did not adequately prepare them to use communicative and interactive teaching methods. Because what students learn in class does not reflect everyday language use, this situation may have a negative impact on their learning. For example, focusing more on how to form different tenses will not help students successfully use them (tenses) in context. Some students on this campus may be unable to use tenses correctly because they are not taught communicatively, as previously stated.

#### **5.4.3. Incorrect Method of Providing Oral Responses**

In the first lesson observed, most student responses are shouted out in a single word or each student shouts an answer. Students mainly shouted out the answers. The students' grammar skills could not be evaluated because they frequently screamed one- or two-word responses. Another issue in this session was that, despite the lecturer's urging that they speak loudly, students spoke quietly. The lecturer made a lot of effort to involve everyone in the lesson. There is no effective control over how responses are articulated.

#### 5.4.4. English Proficiency of the Lecturer and Students

The lecturer had an excellent command of the English language. Throughout the lesson, he was clear, loud enough, and made jokes. As a result, the atmosphere was very welcoming. While the students were doing their classwork, the researcher moved around the classroom to see how they were answering the questions for the activity. Discussions are part of oral communication. Students were given a chance to respond. Some students used full sentences. Mispronunciation of a few words was also heard. It should be noted that both the lecturer and the students participated in the class discussion. The lecturer avoided a situation in which only a few students responded. As a result, he informed them that he wished to hear from everyone in the class.

The speaking skills of most of the students are better, although some students' are influenced by their mother tongue, we have different mother tongue influences, for example, Otjiherero students cannot pronounce chair, they say "share", boy=mboy, Oshiwambo students have /r/ and /l/, instead of saying 'pleasure' they say 'pressure' Afrikaans speakers have /f/ and /th/ instead of saying with they say wifi etc. Their speaking is influenced by their mother tongue, but it is better than their writing. Students spoke with zeal, but for some students, their accents and pronunciation were influenced by their mother tongues. For example, 'I am stunding' instead of 'I am studying', 'pleasure instead of pressure and vice-versa. Their grammar was adequate. It is impossible to say that all students were proficiency in English because some students did not participate. Participants struggled with subject/verb agreement, saying "he have" rather than "he has." Another feature of the lecturer that the researcher noticed is that he allows students to provide their own definitions, examples, or questions before providing his own. Aside from that, he taught students how to get the right answers. The lecturer finished by summarizing and emphasizing the main points. He also asked if the students had any questions about the topic of the day. This is strongly advised.

During the last visit, the researcher asked the lecturer if there was no prescribed study guide for the course because all the students did not have them in the lessons. The lecturer stated that the study guide is available online, Moodle, so students should download it from there. Some students had excellent English proficiency skills. When students were providing explanations/definitions, examples of their sentences, and asking questions, a few made grammatical errors. Some students' pronunciations were influenced by their mother tongues.



## **5.5. ENGLISH COMMUNICATION AND STUDY SKILLS**

### **A scarcity of opportunities to speak**

Students were not given opportunities to communicate in the targeted language, particularly in the online English Communication and Study Skills course. For example, they were not given activities or meaningful tasks that encouraged oral communication (such as discussion, brainstorming, and reporting). As a result, no observations were made in this course. It is a concern that students require more practical work to work to improve their English proficiency.

## **5.6. INTERVIEW DATA FINDINGS**

As previously stated in Chapter 1, As previously stated in Chapter 1, the researcher sought to determine how the levels of English proficiency affects the communication skills of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education and Human Sciences at the university of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus. In this study, lecturers' experiences and perceptions of their students' English language proficiency are important. During the interviews, the study inquired about the strategies that lecturers could use to improve students' English proficiency, finally, which strategies lecturers could use to improve students' communication skills.

### **5.6.1. Lack of Solid English Foundation**

According to the lecturers, the main issue with students' English proficiency is a lack of a solid English foundation. One of the lecturers stated that *“We have poor reading culture back at school level. So, we cannot expect students to come perform miracles at the university. First students need to start loving reading. They were not instilled the love of reading at their schools. I know there are libraries at schools and so forth, maybe the teachers are not doing enough also. Number one cause of poor English proficiency is poor culture of reading among Namibian students. Students do not read. They do not even love reading.”* The love of reading or the culture of reading must be promoted or instilled in our students so that when they arrive at university, they can read but do not enjoy reading. Another lecturer in agreement asserts, *“With reading, they need to be forced to*

*read. They are not eager to read on their own and in this course is where we encourage extensive reading, to improve their vocabulary, reading skills and improve comprehension of different types of texts.* The only way to get them to master and be proficient in reading is to instil a love of reading in them at an early age. *"One of the causes could be a lack of preparation from the schools they attended." If they received poor instructions from their previous school, it may have contributed to their poor communication skills when they arrived at (here) UNAM,"* one lecturer elaborated. According to the Namibian LiEP, children start learning English in grade 4 (Iiping, 2013). Many Namibian learners, according to Wolfaardt (2002:70), fall short of the required levels of English language competency when they are exposed to fourth-grade courses that are not any more difficult in terms of linguistic and cognitive demands. It can be the fact that learners are not native English speakers.

*"They speak different languages and they are coming from different backgrounds, so students face double barriers, the first barrier is to learn the language, which is English and the second barrier is to learn in English"* he added again. Students have to master the language itself first and then learn through it. It could be that when they are going to learn through it and learn the language, it could cause poor communication skills especially speaking and writing. Their teachers or lecturers went through the same thing. *"English is not our mother tongue, so we (teachers and lecturers) could still be teaching them and struggle with the language here and there ourselves,"* stated one respondent.

According to Wolfaardt (2002), children should be performing at an intermediate level when they start the junior secondary part of their education. The majority of children have never truly achieved the language ability in English that their age and school level expect because of issues that started in primary school. Learners continue to fall short of their required competency in the language, (Wolfaardt, 2002), According to Töttemeyer (2018), three years of school instruction focused solely on mother tongues is just too little time, and it results in learners who are unable to read and write effectively in both their native language and English.

English was not taught to their students in a sufficient manner during their secondary school and probably even primary school years, according to lecturers. Hanse-Himarwa (2016) estimates that Namibia had 24660 teachers in 2012, and 1208 of them lacked teaching training, and that 3000 of

them were underqualified. The majority of unqualified and underqualified teachers work in the junior primary phase, according to (Hanse-Himarwa, 2016).

Hanse-Himarwa (2015) laments that if the government does not prioritize basic education and early childhood development, Namibians will have no alternative means of preparing for effective performance. Poor students' English backgrounds are likely to be one of the main contributors to their difficulties with English writing, as lecturers mentioned throughout the interview. Because the Namibian LiEP permits students to switch to English before mastering their mother tongue, they would lack a strong foundation in English (Totemeyer, 2010).

### **5.6.2. Lack of Exposure to the English Language**

Lack of exposure to the English language, such as a lack of access to English reading materials and if you come to UNAM, you will most likely struggle with reading or understanding the English-language content. *“Sometimes students come from areas where English is not widely used in everyday communication, so you only use it in formal settings, such as going to the doctor. “It could also be where you are coming from, as you do not write frequently and writing is not part of your culture. Perhaps your learning/teaching strategies do not expose you to many writing opportunities”* one of the lecturers explained.

Writing is not a skill that can be learned overnight, it requires practice. *“Reading materials are not a significant factor. In comparison to mother tongue materials, we have an abundance of reading materials in English at the university and school levels. They may not be grade and age-appropriate, particularly in Namibia, where English is not our first language. Examples in books may be boring to students or inappropriate in their context. In comparison to mother tongue materials, we have an abundance of reading materials in English at the university and school levels. They may not be grade and age-appropriate, particularly in Namibia, where English is not our first language. Examples in books may be boring to students or inappropriate in their context. For example, if students/learners read about other students going on a boat excursion, they may be reluctant to read and follow,”* one respondent asserted. *“There are plenty of materials, but we need to think of new ways to make them appealing to learners and students,”* she emphasised.

In Northern Namibia, English is not widely spoken (Harris 2011; Ipinge, 2013). The students rarely use English in school because the vast majority of them, as well as their teachers, speak the same mother tongue, making it difficult for them to communicate in a language they do not understand well (English). Ipinge (2018) claims that some schools' libraries are inoperative and deficient in reading materials. As a result of the limited use of English by learners in both their communities and at school, as well as the dearth of pertinent reading materials, they do not speak English well.

### **5.6.3. Incorrect Use of Tenses**

The lecturers claim that students have challenges using tenses effectively when producing larger pieces of writing, such as essays, and that this causes their writing to have ambiguous meanings. This is bad, because clear, concise and also simple to read essays are demanded of students (Barry *et al.*, 2014). The lecturers contend that this issue stems from a weak English foundation. These students need additional exposure to English. In-depth reading and a range of extended writing assignments are required of students. In order to employ tenses effectively when writing larger pieces, they must also be taught in a conversational manner. Effects of Ideology and Policy on the Teaching of English as a Second Language: The Case of Oshiwambo-speaking Students Namibian students were studied by Ipinge (2018). He found that teachers typically teach grammar (including tenses) devoid of context, which is detrimental to students' ability to use linguistic context.

Some students have trouble with the present simple tense and the past simple tense in particular. Heydari & Bagheri (2012) claim that this is a widespread issue for English learners around the globe brought on by the mother tongue's influence and a lack of exposure to English. This study found that some students preferred to use the present simple tense over the past simple tense.

When students wrote, *'The travel restrictions in Namibia due to coronavirus caused stronger family ties'*, which took place in the past, it is evident that they were supposed to use the 'past simple tense,' instead of using the 'past simple tense' the majority of them used the 'present simple tense'. *'The virus circulates relatively slowly and essentially is brought by the movement of people, who are looking to get back to their home'*. They were supposed to write, *'The virus circulated*



*relatively slowly and essentially was brought by the movement of people, who were looking to get back to their home’.*

Traditional grammar instruction, which covers tenses, might play a role. In actuality, lecturers spend more time instructing students on how to compose the various tenses than on how to actually use the tenses. According to Farooq *et al.* (2012), traditional tenses education is unproductive since students learn how to create multiple tenses but do not know how to utilize them in written expressions, therefore this approach is not encouraging and, as a result, is not advised. The lecturers on this campus should instruct students on how to utilize language in authentic communication situations by teaching tenses in this manner.

#### **5.6.4. Lack of Coherent Paragraphs**

Longer pieces of writing should have beginnings and ends that are clear (Barry *et al.*, 2014). Writing captivating paragraphs is a skill that students must have (Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education, 2010). Students need to be taught the proper essay structure as a result. Effective instruction can address the issue of not knowing how to construct an essay correctly, claims (Msanjila, 2005). Iiping (2018) argues that teachers must constantly make sure they have instructed their learners on how to write the openings, bodies, and conclusions of the many styles of writing that are taught in Grade 12.

#### **5.6.5. Misspellings and Misuse of Punctuation**

When asked to compose longer pieces of writing, like the essays analyzed in this study, students struggle to write several words accurately and also fail to appropriately punctuate their sentences, according to the lecturers. *“Their writing is not so good, it needs improvement. Writing is full of spelling errors, coherence,”* one of the respondents stated. This issue could be caused by their lack of English proficiency. *“The students are struggling with writing, misspelling words, not using punctuation marks at all or correctly, and sometimes it is hard to get meanings from their written work/ activities. Their oral communication is much better than their written communication,”* she clarified.

One may argue that using proper grammar and sentence punctuation when writing essays is crucial because if a piece of writing contains several spelling errors and poorly punctuated phrases, the text will lack sense. Barry *et al.* (2014) assert that it is not necessary for students' spelling to be accurate throughout the entire essay. On the other hand, simple and frequent terms must be spelled correctly. Students must avoid spelling mistakes and make sure that their sentences are punctuated correctly in order to compose essays that obtain good marks on essay writing topics.

#### **5.6.6. Poor Reading Culture among our Cultures**

*"Reading culture refers to a context in which people readily and habitually use text in whatever aspects of their lives they find it useful"* (Magara & Batambuze, 2005; Ruterana, 2012:18). In recent years, reading has gotten a lot of attention in Sub-Saharan Africa's educational system. Given the current emphasis on reading achievement as a gauge of learning on a global scale, reading habits and abilities have been highlighted as a predictor of success in formal education. (UNDP 2016, 29–30) Africans have an oral tradition rather than a literary one. *"Our people valued oral communication, but if you do not read, you will not improve your vocabulary. When you read, you gain new vocabulary that you can use when speaking or writing,"* one of the lecturers asserts. A poor reading culture can contribute to poor English proficiency. *"Students are not motivated to read, and it is our responsibility as teachers and lecturers to motivate them. To help them improve their vocabulary and reading abilities"* she added. In societies which have historically given little attention to written forms of communication, a *"reading culture"* will catalyse learning and development. The development of this *"reading culture"* is considered to be a vital step for cultures that are the focus of international development efforts, despite ambiguous definitions of its traits and results (Smars, 2013; Nalusiba, 2010; Mwandayi; 2009).

#### **5.6.7. Poor Reading and Writing Abilities**

The data revealed that students' oral skills are far superior to their written skills. Informant 2 stated, *"Students, in my opinion, have excellent communication skills. They would communicate clearly in oral, but writing is a challenge for them. They mostly write from what they read. Their reading and writing abilities are mediocre. I do not want to say it is worse, but we have a major problem*

*with reading and writing among Namibian students." This informant believes that students' oral skills are far superior to their written skills. "When they come to university, their writing skills are generally poor," Informant 3 added. When you give them longer pieces of writing such as paragraphs, summaries, essays, and emails to lecturers, their writing skills deteriorate dramatically. Obviously, spelling is an issue, but so is the organisation of ideas and the overall message they are communicating. Urban students are better at expressing themselves in social situations than their counterparts. Some students only speak English when giving a presentation at university."*

Informant 4 expressed similar sentiments. *"When you interact with students, some of them have difficulties interacting with you, and some of them are vocal in spoken English, but when it comes to writing skills, there are those who were vocal but struggle with writing." Surprisingly, some people have difficulty expressing themselves orally, but when they write, they write well."*

To sum up this part, it is indeed crucial to remember that, in addition to the LiEP, Namibian students struggle with writing since they are not exposed to enough English in their communities due to the language's rarity (Ipinge, 2013). Their communities are not involved in promoting the learning of English (Adeyemi, 2012). As a result, students will find it challenging to improve their writing abilities especially essays writing.

## **5.7. QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FINDINGS**

As stated in Chapter 4, the researcher planned to distribute 20 questionnaires to students doing English for General Communication. Unfortunately, she only received 16 completed questionnaires. Some students failed to return the questionnaires. As a result, only 16 questionnaires were returned. Despite this, she was able to revisit the observations and interviews, and the data gathered enriched the research.

**Table 6** below shows the symbols obtained in Grade 12 Ordinal level and the number of students who answered Question 11 doing English for General Communication at the Khomasdal Campus.

Symbols	O D	O E	
	6	4	10 Total number of students who answered question 1

**Table 5:** *Symbols Obtained in Grade 12 Ordinary Level and Number of Students*

The number of students who took part in this study and their symbols they obtained in Grade 12 in English is shown in the table below. The letter O stands for the ordinary level. There are two different levels of English exams that students take in Grade 12. The letters D and E also represent the symbols obtained in English at the Ordinary level. Question Only, ten of the sixteen students who received the questionnaire responded to Question One.

The rest most likely did not want to reveal their Grade 12 symbols. None of the students who responded to this question received a symbol higher than C; had this been the case, they will not be taking English for General Communication. According to the Department of Language Development syllabi, English for General Communication is for students who received a D or E. According to these statistics, the majority of students obtained lower grades in Grade 12, which is likely the reason why their English skills at the university level is still subpar.

Two of them improved their English symbol at the Namibian College for Open Learning (NAMCOL). One of them stated that he completed the English Grade 12 online by working on assignments and submitting them, rather than attending classes on some of the weekdays. Issues like completing only assignments can also be a hindrance to learning English. Such students are not exposed to "face-to-face" learning and teaching, which refers to instruction that takes place in a classroom and in which students pay attention to lecturers, take part in class discussions, complete various tasks, and ask questions when they are unclear. A student learning English as a second language who enrolls in a distance education course runs the risk of failing because they will have to complete the work without much help from the lecturer.



### **5.7.1. Intervention for Improving Written Communication Skills**

More writing exercises in class, according to some students, would help them become better writers. Practice makes perfect, they say. More practical work was requested by two students, who suggested that lecturers provide more practical exercises in class, grade their work, and give comments on where they made mistakes. One of the students stated, “*They (lecturers) advise us to read a lot in order to improve our writing skills.*” This response demonstrated that students believed they required more hands-on practice to improve their writing abilities, which was supported by evidence from their written work. According to Adeyemi (2012), reading and writing are complementary and have a big impact on one another's development. Without a doubt, students need to read some engaging material to enhance their writing skills and increase their vocabulary (Fareed, 2016). Due to this, ESL teachers should be praised for fostering a love of reading in their students. It is thought that they (ESL teachers) would still need to create specific strategies for dealing with certain teaching issues. For instance, they need to come up with a plan that will help their students use the right tenses when writing essays in order to get good grades on essay questions.

Some students thought the one-year length of the course was sufficient. One student thought four hours a week was not enough and advised they meet at least five times a week to cover more English-related topics. Eight students thought the time allotted was sufficient, while one student claimed that because English was only taught four days a week, the time allotted for the course was sufficient. Students' answers to this question suggest that while they felt the allotted time covered everything they needed to know, they still wanted more writing exercises on longer pieces of writing.

### **5.7.2. Students' Perceptions of the Offered Communication Courses**

The majority of students said they were gaining knowledge on topics they were interested in as well as new information they had not previously studied in the school, but no mention was made of the newly mentioned topics. The majority of students said that the institution offered the level of English they required to interact with their classmates and lecturers from varied linguistic or cultural backgrounds. From this, it may also be inferred that students think English ought to be

used in classes and lectures and with speakers of other languages. They had no choice but to acquire English because, as indicated in the literature, it is the language of teaching in all educational settings in Namibia.

All of the students were interested in learning English vocabulary associated with their area of study, education. They did this because they wanted to become more prepared for the workplace by learning English terms associated with their field of study. The researcher teaches in the UNAM School of Education and is aware that the university's course offerings include an English for Teachers module. The students' worries are valid, and it is likely that they are not familiar with the UNAM curriculum because they are first-year students.

### **5.7.3. More Written Communication vs Less Oral Communication Skills**

Because they are given class exercises following the teaching of a particular topic, all students claimed that they wrote continuously during the lesson. This data is consistent with data received via class observation. Throughout the two visits, students were given a variety of tasks to gauge their comprehension of the day's subject. Five of them admitted to keeping daily journals and writing exercises. The majority of students also claimed to write in English on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, although they did not go into further detail.

All of the pupils admitted that they only wrote one essay this semester. The researcher supports this since, when she wished to evaluate student work, she was only given essays to review. Additionally, the majority of students admitted to sending SMS messages, posting status updates on WhatsApp, and taking notes during lectures. Some claimed to have finished their assignments. Ten students stated that they were required to complete tests and class assignments. The writing in classes includes the basic grammar because the two topics that were covered during class observation visits were sentence formation and concords. One essay per semester is not enough, according to the researcher, who proposes giving students more writing assignments on longer pieces of writing.

#### 5.7.4. Use of Mother Tongue vs English as Medium of Instruction among Students

The majority of pupils claimed to have acquaintances who share their language. Only a small number of individuals claimed to have acquaintances who speak different languages. It may be inferred that while students with friends from other language groups may interact in English, those with friends from their own language group are more likely to speak their native tongue most of the time. The majority of pupils gave positive answers and said they spoke English well. Three students admitted that they did not speak English well.

The majority of students responded positively and stated that they were fluent in English. Three students stated that they were not fluent in English. If students felt fluent, but their written work and class visits contradict this data. This also indicates a lack of understanding of the questions posed to them, indicating a general lack of understanding of English. Some students desired more spelling tests and oral activities. They wanted more time spent on pronunciation, grammar, and spelling. *“We focus more on reading and writing, rather than speaking and listening.”* In order to learn more, students said they would like additional practice time, especially for writing essays and paragraphs. Students desired activities based on previous examination question papers.

Two pupils acknowledged that they lacked confidence when speaking and that they wanted more practice sessions to sharpen their abilities. In order to gain confidence in oral communication, two students said they wished to hone their speaking abilities through mastering word pronunciation. Writing skills were mentioned as being very important by two pupils. They needed to get better, so they practiced a lot. One of the students proposed giving oral communication more time. Writing and reading both foster, enrich, and significantly contribute to one another's development, claims (Adeyemi, 2012). To improve their writing abilities and increase their vocabulary, students should engage in some engaging reading (Fareed, 2016). *“Lecturers should encourage their students to do more reading”*, one key informant mentioned during the interviews.

Despite their general oral communication fluency, two students reported having trouble with spelling, concord, fundamental grammar, essay structure, passive voice, and punctuation. Some students claimed to have basic oral communication abilities, however despite their clear speech, grammatical and pronunciation mistakes persisted. A lack of vocabulary, a lack of speaking confidence in English, interference from mother languages, and a lack of comprehension of fundamental grammar were all mentioned by four pupils. This suggested that there were language

problems that need attention. This information is in line with key informant and lecturer interviews, which revealed that writing—rather than speaking—remains students' main area of struggle. Although the lecturers were aware of the issues, it seemed as though they were not trying to address them because there were so many groups and students for them to distribute additional writing assignments to, mark, and offer comments to. All the students mentioned that their lecturer emphasized reading and writing over speaking and listening. *We must complete classwork whenever we have an English lesson. We are told to go do additional reading on our own, we speak when discussing the topics of the day and giving answers, but we have not yet done a presentation, which will be done at the end of the module.*

#### **5.7.5. Factors Affecting Written Communication**

Students mentioned specific aspects of writing that they found difficult, such as concord, tense usage and sentence structure, paragraph writing, and punctuation marks. Four students stated that they made numerous grammatical errors in their writing, including sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, and, most notably, subject and verb agreement. Two students stated that they do not use proper punctuation marks and cannot write coherently. One student stated that he had difficulty selecting appropriate words for the contexts provided.

#### **5.7.6. Factors Affecting Oral Communication**

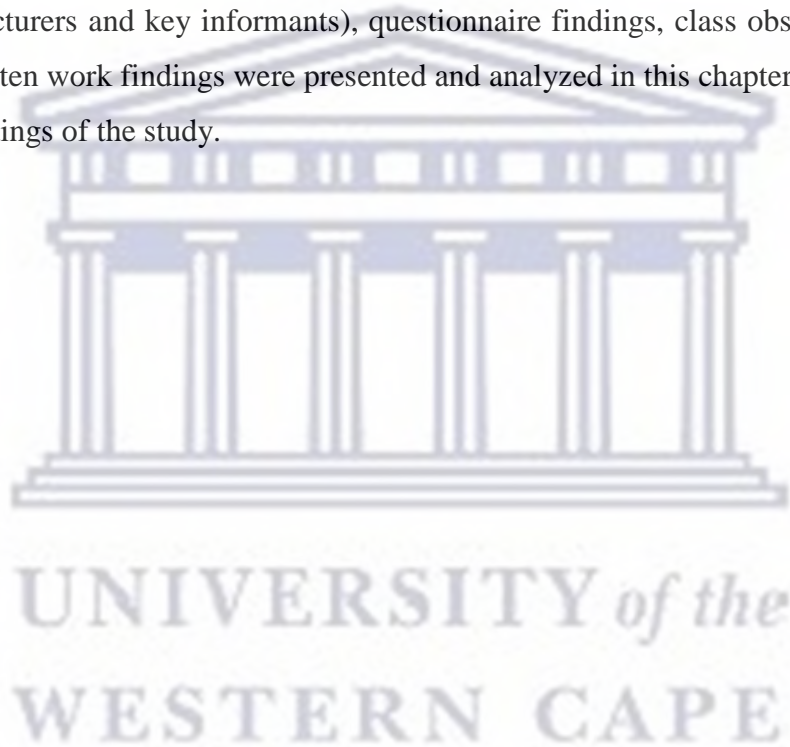
Four students admitted to having trouble speaking with confidence. Two of them said that their vocabulary was extremely limited and that the majority of their pronunciation was impacted by their native tongue. Slang and colloquialism were brought up by one student, but they were not further discussed. Three students chose not to respond to this question. The researcher concluded that students' involvement in lectures may deteriorate if they lack the confidence or the courage to make mistakes in front of their peers. There should be more oral assignments for students than there are currently. Further, the researcher was informed that by the end of the year, students doing English for General Communication Skills are expected to give a presentation related to their area of specialization. The module concludes with an oral presentation. Determining what causes poor communication skills and English proficiency is a complicated matter. You cannot single out one



factor, therefore, numerous factors must be considered. Both students and lecturers are not native English speakers. They come from a non-reading culture. They face two challenges: Learning English and learning in English. Speaking/oral communication was preferred over written communication.

## **5.8. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The findings from the document analysis, namely, course outlines and study guides, interview findings (with lecturers and key informants), questionnaire findings, class observations findings and students' written work findings were presented and analyzed in this chapter. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.



## **Chapter 6: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **6.1. PRELIMINARIES**

The findings and analysis of the questionnaire, interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations on spoken and written communication skills at the UNAM Khomasdal Campus are presented in this chapter. To recap, the main question of the study is: How does the English language proficiency of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus affect their communication skills?

### **6.2. AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY: A REMINDER**

The following two objectives are the main focus of this study:

- (i) To determine the effects of English proficiency on the students' communication skills
- (ii) To determine the efficiency of the communication skills courses of first-year Education students at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia.

The specific objectives are:

- (i) To investigate and determine the causes of poor English language proficiency.
- (ii) To make recommendations with educational perspectives at both school and university levels.

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to address the following research questions:

- (i) What could be the causes of the English language deficiency of these students?
- (ii) What are the challenges encountered by UNAM undergraduate students related to English language proficiency?
- (iii) How do lecturers perceive their students' English language proficiency?
- (iv) Which strategies could be used by lecturers to improve students' proficiency in the English language?

- (v) Which strategies could be used by lecturers to improve students' communication skills?

### 6.3. METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: A SUMMARY

In the previous chapter, the findings from the course descriptions and study guides, interviews with lecturers (key informants), student questionnaires, in-class observations, and student-written work were presented.

Social constructivist and interactionist theories served as the basis for this study. Turuk (2008) cites Vygotsky (1978 & 1981) who postulates that learning necessitates mediation, and that knowledge is mediated (Shabani, 2016). Another tenet of the social-cultural approach is that social interaction is the cornerstone of learning and development (Shabani, 2016). It is crucial that students are taught using *"the social constructivism paradigm"* and that there is interaction between students and lecturers in the classroom because *"mediation"* and *"social interaction"* are central to learning (Mukwete, 2014). According to the *"social constructivism paradigm,"* which was previously mentioned, meaningful learning happens when people participate in social activities like interaction and collaboration (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

As a result, the learning environment in the classroom should be such that it encourages and supports student interactions and collaborations. To begin with, in a social constructivism classroom, *"the environment is democratic"* (Amineh & Asl, 2015: 15). It goes without saying that this motivates students to engage in active learning. Second, communication is not limited to spoken and written language as the only means of expressing messages in the *"social constructivism classroom"* (Applefield *et al.*, 2001). Because they actively create knowledge rather than simply receiving it from teachers, learners play a crucial role in the *"constructivist classroom"* (Taber, 2006; Mukwete *et al.*, 2013).

To put it another way, lecturers are merely helpful facilitators and assistants of the learning process while students primarily construct knowledge on their own (Shi, 2013). According to Mutekwe *et al.* (2013:58), students must interact with the real world cooperatively in social contexts as well as in cultural and linguistic contexts in order to accomplish this (knowledge construction). Shi (2013) argues that as a result, educators must give students in-class assignments that demand interaction

and the sharing of ideas. However, there should be an exchange of ideas between lecturers and students as well.

The data confirms that the English Communication and Study skills syllabus, in particular, lacked specific teaching objectives for oral and written communication. For instance, the syllabus made no mention of how students would be taught to write better, accurate, and understandable sentences. Additionally, there was a dearth of exercises that helped students comprehend sentence structure and refine their ability to construct complex sentences, such as scrambling sentences, combining sentences, and summarizing.

The practice of editing and revising was also lacking, especially for individual essays. As a result, even after a piece of writing was marked, there was no follow-up on how to avoid similar mistakes in the future. Students did not receive verbal feedback from their lecturers because the English Communication Study Skills course is entirely online and there are no or few interactions between them, even though lecturers wrote comments or compiled lists of student errors. They seemed to be continually making the same errors.

The fact that the same course is offered online for self-study is another cause for concern. There is no interaction between lecturers and the students other than when the lecturer leaves comments or notes for the students. The researcher was not able to observe two classes as she had originally planned because there were no in-person lessons in this course. Given the students' English-speaking backgrounds and the gap between secondary and tertiary education, this is concerning. Additionally, it should be mentioned that students receive more written assignments on longer pieces of writing, which can help them develop their writing skills.

The time frame is extremely limited, as was already mentioned, especially for the English Communication and Study Skills course, which is only offered for one semester and it is entirely online for that matter. Informant 1 stated, *"English Communication and Study Skills is available entirely online, and this was the case prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. It is not a reaction to the outbreak; it has been completely online; however, what I have noticed, including other courses that have gone online as a result of COVID-19, is that only some students have the self-motivation to drive their own education. Some students still want someone to watch them and calling them out to do their homework or focus on their studies. You may discover that you have 100 students enrolled in a course but only 30 of them are completing the task. At the end of the day, poor*



*performance occurs not because students did not master what they were taught, but because they did not complete their work.*

There were no speaking exercises in the English Communication and Study Skills study guide where students could work together to discuss and come up with answers. The majority of the work was completed alone, and the course was entirely online. Because English is a second language for the students and because English proficiency among students in Namibia is low, the institution was not resolving the issue; rather, it was making it worse. Speaking skills instruction was not mentioned in the study guide or the delivery method of the course (online). If the department's objective was to help students become more fluent in their chosen language, communicative language teaching techniques should have been employed. For instance, lecturers should have based communicative language teaching of second language learning on realistic scenarios.

According to Amineh & Asl (2015: 14), "*social constructivism emphasizes the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of society.*" A variety of activities that could enhance written and verbal communication skills, particularly in longer pieces of writing and presentation skills, are not included in the course outlines. English for General Communication received an adequate amount of time. The English Communication and Study Skills course, which is entirely online for just one semester, cannot make the same claim. Enrolling in a distance learning course may also be a barrier to learning the English language and developing adequate communication skills. Such students are not exposed to in-person instruction, or instruction that takes place in a classroom, where students listen to lecturers, participate in discussions and activities, complete a variety of tasks, and ask questions when they are unclear.

Students learning English as a second language who enroll in a distance learning course run the risk of failing because they must complete the course material without the help of a lecturer. In a nation like Namibia, where many of our students speak English as a second, third, or even fourth language, this should not be the case. Students come from different schools, and some have been taught by teachers who are not fluent in the language of instruction. These students' English proficiency remains low, and their communication skills, particularly their written communication skills, are subpar. This data corresponds to information obtained from key informant and lecturer interviews, student questionnaires, and students' written work.

When the researcher looked at the written work of the students, she found indications that there were language barriers among them. In the current chapter, which presents the perspectives of the students and lecturers involved in the learning and teaching of English at the tertiary level, this elicited a set of responses using various instruments that are described in more detail below. However, several issues that need more research came to light during the study. For instance, it became obvious that one should look into the institutions' English curricula and conduct an analysis to compare them to the students' language proficiency.

As previously stated in Chapter 4, students' written samples provided data for the current study, and 20 students' essays were chosen at random. The essay question required students to write an academic essay. Due consideration must be given to the most productive approach in teaching academic writing to groups of students in general, and also to large groups of students in particular. Namibian tertiary institutions are undergoing what is known as 'massification' of higher education. This phenomenon, however, is not limited to Namibia. According to Coffin *et al.* (2003: 5), the massification of tertiary education is a global phenomenon. As a result, "*many institutions have larger class sizes, fewer opportunities for small group teaching (such as seminars and tutorials), and little time for lecturers to comment on students' written work*" (Coffin *et al.*, 2003: 5). As a result, it appears inevitable that tertiary institutions will have to deal with an ever-increasing number of students in classes and will have to find creative ways to deal with this issue, particularly for literacy courses, which are supposed to be largely interactive by nature.

One of the more effective methods for improving student writing is individual tutoring because it allows students to receive personalized, practical feedback and allows for the clarification of ambiguities and misunderstandings in a feedback-driven environment. At tertiary institutions all over the world, established writing centers typically place a strong emphasis on individual writing consultation. Most students come to the writing center on their own initiative or because a lecturer has suggested they do so. In order to meet the unique writing requirements of students from various disciplines, writing center staff frequently work in conjunction with departmental staff.

Writing centers are one of the more expensive options, despite being one of the more effective strategies for writing development in recent years. One-on-one consultative writing support at writing centers may be considered an expensive luxury in an era where tertiary institutions are expected to "*do more with less.*" However, if tertiary institutions can afford to set up a writing

center, this idea could be usefully integrated with that of the distinct writing courses offered to students in order to provide these students with additional, specialized assistance. According to Moore *et al.* (1998: 15) state:

The Writing Centre [at the University of Cape Town] was established as one of a range of educational interventions that would address the differing language needs of a diverse student body. It was thus seen as complementary to initiatives like EAP (and others yet to come), recognising that language difficulties (especially as they are apparent in student writing) are not the sole preserve of underprepared students, and that a variety of provisions is needed to cater for a variety of needs.

Importantly, a writing center can offer assistance with academic writing to students who have trouble with a particular aspect of academic writing but are not necessarily seen as being at risk for their level of academic literacy. These students are typically underserved by the formal curriculum at universities in terms of assistance with academic writing. According to Johns (1990: 27), the writing process is seen as a social act that can only take place within and for a particular context and audience. When used to describe the context of tertiary academic writing, this context obviously includes (a) the larger academic community as well as the more specialized disciplinary communities within it, as well as (b) how academic writing has changed within these communities in terms of text appropriateness.

In a social practices approach, students are urged to assume the identity of a member of a particular community, in this case, the tertiary academic discourse community. Students start to "*identify themselves with the values, beliefs, goals, and activities of those who engage in those [literacy] practices*" (Ivanič, 2004: 235). This analysis emphasizes that students have language proficiency deficiencies in writing when taking into account the grammatical errors covered here. However, they do show shortcomings in the use of academic discourse stylistic conventions (such as formality, consistency of referencing), as well as a few ideational aspects of such discourse (e.g. use of appropriate evidence to substantiate claims). Students deal with a range of difficulties when it comes to writing essays in English.

These include, among other things, incorrectly using different tenses, incorrect subject-verb agreement, spelling mistakes, lack of or incorrect use of punctuation marks, incorrectly formulated titles with comment and focus, or in other words, rewording of the titles, poor thesis statement or

not clearly stated, introduction did not address how the essay will be organized, poor sentences and paragraphs- too long paragraphs that lack cohesion and coherence, starting sentences or other weak sentence structures, introduction did not address how the essay will be organized, starting sentences or paragraphs with coordination conjunctions like but, because, and so on, not using academic or formal language, and poor in-text references and reference list.

These findings correspond with Parkerson (2000), who mentions that lecturers frequently lament their students' inability to produce quality academic essays. In higher education, academic literacies are frequently linked to "*genres, genre sets, and registers, and quite often relatively formal register, with subject-specific (disciplinary) linguistic, discursive, and multimodal conventions*" (Duff, 2010). Additionally covered, are analytical skills, database searching, familiarity with referencing and other academic etiquette, formal register, and the capacity to work with a range of academic genres (McWilliams & Allan, 2014).

Educators frequently try to address or improve poor language ability in order to improve this situation, but they fail to realize that while language ability is an important issue, the problem encapsulates a larger phenomenon, namely, that students are frequently unaccustomed to academic modes of thought (Parkerson, 2000). It would be worthwhile to mention how thinking in the academic context (and in particular disciplinary contexts) is realized through academic discourse in a discussion on the nature of academic discourse. Students in secondary school are not sufficiently exposed to writing that focuses on knowledge transformation, claim Grabe & Kaplan (1996). They claim that the situation below still exists. In the majority of academic settings where students learn to write, the higher education system assumes that students will develop their comprehension skills as well as their capacity to transform knowledge. Many students who are learning to write before entering tertiary education have, in fact, had little consistent exposure to writing demands other than retelling (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

These authors continue by asserting that narrative and descriptive texts, which are frequently used for knowledge "*telling*" in conventional tests and examinations, call for little more than the provision of an account of memorized information that the writer already knows. Contrarily, knowledge transformation or processing calls for a difficult cognitive process of fusing various bits of knowledge into a strong, coherent text, which typically entails the writer's problem-solving skills. Expository, persuasive, or argumentative texts are examples of texts that transform



knowledge. Both of the latter two text types must be able to be created by students in tertiary education.

If they are to meet the requirements of tertiary education, they must have adequate control over the cognitive strategies that will allow them to create texts appropriate for specific contexts.

Oral communication skills received no attention from lecturers in the fully online English Communication and Study skills course. There are no speaking activities, the course is online, and there is no face-to-face interaction between students and lecturers. Given the Namibian context, where students are not proficient in the language of instruction, the decision to make this course online is ill-advised. It is believed that English oral communication entails the ability to explain and present ideas in clear English to various types of people using appropriate styles and approaches. They must have sufficient control over the cognitive strategies that will enable them to produce texts that are appropriate for particular contexts if they are to fulfill the requirements of tertiary education.

If speaking skills are not taught practically in class and if the curricula do not specify this, students will lack confidence when speaking in public. Lecturers must encourage students to practice speaking in a variety of settings in order to help them overcome their communication anxieties and develop self-esteem in their speaking abilities. Assignment of tasks and projects should be followed by a request for students to present their findings to the class. In this way, speaking and writing abilities are combined. Students should present or report what they have written to the class when lecturers are teaching writing. For instance, write an essay instead of reading and present a summary of it to the class.

Lecturers ought to give students written assignments and instruct them to report back to the class in a summary form without reading; alternatively, they ought to give them discussions to have in pairs or groups and report back to the class. They ought to be encouraged to speak to the audience rather than reading to the class. That is one way to help students with their speaking skills. You are assisting students in honing both their speaking and writing abilities.

The preceding section discussed Methodological and Theoretical Underpinnings: A Summary. The next section presents and discusses the findings about students and their difficulties with English writing. In reality, the primary focus of this chapter is on the types of issues that students face

when writing essays in English. As a result of the findings presented and discussed in this section, students who are proficient in English essay writing as well as those who struggle with writing essays in English exist. Finally, the findings of the Error Analysis (EA) analysis of learners' written samples to determine major weaknesses and strengths.

#### **6.4. RESEARCH MAIN QUESTION**

The main question of this study is: How does the level of English proficiency affect the communication skills of the undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia?

##### **6.4.1. Effective Communication Is Hampered by a Lack of English Proficiency**

According to the findings, the student's English proficiency is inadequate or intermediate. It is not bad, but it is not excellent because the study revealed that, while their oral communication appears to be far superior to their written communication, most of the students continue to struggle with a variety of issues when it comes to oral communication and face additional challenges with written communication. When you read academic texts, your level of English proficiency will affect how well you understand them.

As a result, if it is inadequate, you will be limited in your ability to comprehend the content in your subject area. Second, if it is restricted in terms of question answering, you may not feel empowered to answer questions orally or in your own words; students may memorize answers and reproduce them exactly as they are, which is known as plagiarism. The students who took part in the study are future teachers. The curriculum is expected to be taught in English by teachers except for the mother tongue. The language of instruction is English from Grade 4. Teachers are supposed to break down content for their students into simple language, so if they have limited or inadequate English proficiency, they will not be able to understand the content and phrase or summarize it, instead of relying on how it is written in textbooks. Teachers who are not proficient will be unable to perform that function because they may not understand or comprehend the content themselves.

As a result, having a lengthy discussion of the subject while attempting to explain different topics to the students will be difficult. That is why code-switching is advantageous; however, this does not imply that people should rely solely on code-switching when they do not know how to explain things/topics in English because learners must also be empowered in the same language in order to answer questions or take exams. Because students will not respond to questions with code-switching. If you force them to rely on that, it becomes a problem for them. Language skills are essential for teachers because they spend the majority of their time breaking down content so that their students can understand it.

#### **6.4.2. Students' Academic Performance Can Suffer as a Result of Poor English Communication Skills**

Inadequate English communication skills can have a negative impact on student performance; for example, students may misinterpret instructions because they are having difficulty reading and understanding what is expected of them. Reading fluency or reading speed is also important. Sometimes it is discovered that the individual will be unable to cover the required amount of materials in a limited amount of time, such as a week.

Another issue is writing skills; for example, when they are going to write, to communicate what they know on paper, especially when doing assignments, they may understand the materials very well, but they fail due to the way they communicated the information. As a result, students may not perform as well as they should in their studies. Students with poor English proficiency and communication skills will find it difficult to please lecturers when completing written or oral assessments. They may fail their courses, fail to graduate, fall behind in their modules, lower their completion rate due to a communication barrier, and fail.

#### **6.4.3. Inadequate English Proficiency and Communication Skills Cause Low Self-esteem**

Low self-esteem will eventually affect students' future careers. When giving a presentation, students with limited English proficiency avoid even speaking during their studies. Eventually, in their career, they try to avoid talking in front of their colleagues. The ramifications are far-reaching and, in some cases, mental in nature. Students may even laugh at one another, resulting in low self-

esteem. For example, if you do not correctly pronounce words, students may change courses, such as switching from Law because it requires a lot of talking. Students are affected by the effects/impacts both during and after their studies, in their chosen careers.

Lecturers teach students at universities; they want them to master these skills and perform well beyond the university level; otherwise, they will perform poorly in the industry and in their careers when they begin working. The university wants them to do more than just get their papers and leave. They also want them to do well in the industry when they go to work. One major effect that should be highlighted is poor workplace performance. Everywhere in the workplace, communication is essential. All professions, including doctors, teachers, nurses, and lawyers, rely on communication. Students' performance will suffer if they do not master this.

### **6.4.3. Inadequate Aspects of Oral Language, Including Coherence Affect Communication Skills**

The findings revealed that the majority of the students' oral language aspects, such as fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation were acceptable. The ability to engage in a conversation in a natural flow with no long pauses or hesitations is defined as fluency. Coherence, or the capacity to engage in conversation by starting it, developing it, and organizing it into a coherent structure, is necessary (Roca-Varela & Palacios, 2013). A person's understanding of words, phrases, and idiomatic expressions is referred to as their vocabulary. Understanding the meanings of idioms, jargon, and colloquialisms in conversation necessitates a comprehensive knowledge of vocabulary (Roca-Varela & Palacios, 2013; Seedhouse *et al.*, 2014).

Grammar includes range and accuracy, which refer to the ability to converse naturally and effectively using complex sentences with subordinate clauses and prepositional phrases, as well as varying sentence structures while minimizing errors and misunderstandings by using the correct tense (Roca-Varela & Palacios, 2013; Seedhouse *et al.*, 2014). The final component of oral language is the ability to speak clearly and understandably using tone, rhythm, intonation, syllable and word stress in sentences (Seedhouse *et al.*, 2014). These factors all contribute to a speaker's accent, which can impede clear oral communication. All of the lecturers agreed that students' speaking abilities are far superior to their written communication abilities.



Furthermore, the study's findings revealed that first-language interference persists even after many years of English learning. According to the literature, mother tongue influences persist, particularly when the structure and pronunciation of the speaker's native language and English differ significantly (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Only about 1% of Namibians speak English as their mother tongue. For the rest of the Namibian people, English is their second, third or even fourth language. Namibia consists of about 30 spoken languages. Mother tongue influences can be a problem if it impairs the student's ability to communicate clearly. For instance, if an accent is too strong, the listener may strain to understand the speaker (Seedhouse *et al.*, 2014), and incorrect emphasis on a word or phrase may change the meaning and inference of the sentence, leading to the previously described situations of error and misunderstanding (Crawford *et al.*, 2017; Hull, 2016).

#### **6.4.4. Limited Speaking Activities Inhibits English Proficiency**

According to the findings of this study, the two English communication courses have fewer speaking activities for assessment purposes. In English for General Communication, there is only one presentation, and English Communication and Study Skills has none because it is entirely online. Creating a learning environment where students are engaging in role-playing scenarios and oral presentations can increase their confidence in speaking, expand their vocabulary, and understanding the appropriate use of colloquialisms (Guhde, 2003; Olson, 2012). Furthermore, some universities have mentorship programs that encourage non-native English speakers to interact with native English speakers, thereby providing models of spoken English that can help non-native speakers refine elements of oral language such as pronunciation and fluency, and thus improve proficiency (Benzie, 2010).

The results suggest that students should take charge of their English learning by investing a lot of time and effort. It is unreasonable to anticipate that a student will master English without putting conscious and unconscious effort into learning the language. Therefore, it is advised that students set English as a priority in their lives and are self-motivators. If they foster a positive learning environment for English, learners can convince themselves that it is simple to learn.

The results also lend credence to the notion that educators should give students more chances to use English in meaningful and productive contexts, such as through debates and more presentation-based activities. Because lecturers give their students little time to participate in class discussions, students seem to have few opportunities to improve their English, especially speaking. The UNAM curriculum should encourage more student conversation since this exposes students to English in useful contexts. Through empirical and well-planned methods, students should also receive assistance in getting over their shyness to speak English.

It is necessary to have a quick tool to track the different aspects of oral language over time in order to comprehend the development of oral skill acquisition throughout an educational program. According to the Cummins (1981) model, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) takes five to seven years to develop. This academic process of learning necessitates critical thinking in socially decontextualized settings; however, research on children is limited. Little is known about CALP for higher education students who must also learn discipline-specific terminology. A tool that can assess and track student oral language proficiency development in a specific field, such as undergraduate education studies, has the potential to assess and track student oral language proficiency development. A tool like this can then track the development of students' oral language skills throughout their studies and identify 'at risk' students who need extra help from on-campus programs.

## **6.5. THE CAUSES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEFICIENCY**

### **6.5.1. The Current Namibian Language Policy**

Many Namibian students are finding it difficult to write lengthy pieces of writing, like essays, as a result of the current LiEP. The Namibian LiEP states that students start learning English in grade four (Ipinge, 2013). According to Wolfaardt (2002: 70), many students in Namibian schools fall short of the required minimum English language proficiency standards when they are exposed to fourth-grade subjects that are more difficult linguistically and cognitively.

By the time students start the Junior Secondary phase of school, when they should be functioning at an intermediate level, Wolfaardt (2002) tends to add that learners typically do not attain the required level of English language proficiency. The majority of students never genuinely achieve

the language proficiency in English that their age and school level demand due to issues that started in primary school, which causes learners to continue falling behind on their required level of language proficiency. Töttemeyer (2018) contends that three years of instruction that is primarily in the student's mother tongue is simply insufficient and will result in students who are unable to read and write effectively in both their native language and English.

Because they are not exposed to sufficient English in their communities, especially students from rural areas who hardly ever use or hear English spoken in their communities, students on this campus struggle to write (Iiping, 2013). Indeed, to varying degrees, their communities support the acquisition of the English language (Adeyemi, 2012). As a result, students will find writing, especially essay writing, challenging and will struggle to improve their writing abilities. Higher education institutions in Namibia continue to be plagued by Namibian LiEP.

### **6.5.2. Mother Tongue Influences**

Students spoke with zeal, but for some, their accents and pronunciation were influenced by their mother tongues. We have different mother tongue influences, for example, Otjiherero speaking students cannot pronounce chair, they say “share”, boy=mboy, again, for example, ‘I am stunding’ instead of I am studying’, Oshiwambo students have /r/ and /l/, instead of saying ‘pleasure’ they say ‘pressure’ and vice versa”. He further continued that, *“Their mother tongues influence their speaking, but it is better than their writing. Their writing is not very good; it could be better.” Afrikaans speakers have /f/ and /th/ instead of saying ‘with’ they say ‘wif’ etc*, Lecturer 1 stated. The speaking is influenced by their mother tongue, but it is better than their writing ‘pleasure instead of pressure and vice versa’.

### **6.5.3. Failure to Connect the Four Language Skills**

All informants and lecturers agreed that all four skills should be integrated into a single lesson. Students will improve their speaking and written communication skills as a result of this. They place a greater emphasis on reading.

Informant 1 stated the following: *"We operate on the basis of the belief and understanding that language skills are related and must be integrated into the lesson." Even if you are teaching one skill as the primary focus, you will most likely integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. As a result, students will read the content material, write about it, discuss or present it, and listen to their lecturers and peers/classmates. The activities are designed so that students can complete tasks while using/integrating all four language skills mentioned above. Another example is when a student is required to write an academic essay and then present it to the class. Students can see the connection between all four language skills this way. This also occurs in real-life situations. People in academia write papers or submit journals and then give a presentation."*

The same Informant 1 continued as follows: *"Most of the activities that we do are a result of reading. We need to promote a lot of reading. Reading to learn is a concept that I like in which students are encouraged to read in order to learn about various topics. If they read, they will be able to speak about what they have read, which will be extremely beneficial to them. We give them topics and tell them to go read about them before coming to do a presentation. You will be able to speak more about a topic once you have read about it. We should simply give them more reading activities and ask them to share what they have read by speaking/presenting it to others. These two abilities complement one another. Speaking is frequently the last activity. We start by giving them something to read, and then they write. For example, we give them an academic essay, they get the topic, they go read about the topic, they write their essays, and then we ask them to present it to the class by summarizing what they wrote about, what the findings were, and what the recommendations were if any."*

Informant 2 went with the following information: *"As I teach writing, I want them to report what they have written by presenting/reporting it to the class. For example, instead of reading, write an essay and report it to the class in summary form. For my part, I would assign them written activities and ask them to report back to the class in a summary form without reading, or I would assign them to discuss in pairs/groups and report back to the class. Instead of reading to us, speak to us. That is one method of improving students' speaking abilities. By doing so, you are assisting students in simultaneously improving their writing and speaking skills.'*

Informant 4 said *"Important are receptive skills. It is impossible to give from an empty cup. What is in you and your mind, in your schemata, in your repertoire, what is stored in your schemata, is*



*the source of your productive writing and speaking skills. Schemata is your foundational knowledge or point of reference. What can you refer to when you speak or write? You will not be able to flow in your speaking or writing if you do not have schemata to refer to. Students must have reference schemata in order to improve. You must immerse yourself. We need to include enough reading in our curriculum and teaching."*

#### **6.5.4. Explicit Grammar Instructions and Lack of Communicative Approach**

An important takeaway from the classroom observations is that explicit grammar instructions predominate over all else in ESL lessons. The topics of the day were all based on grammar; a sentence, and concords in both of the two lessons observed. During the first lesson visit, the lecturer mentioned that they had finished all of the parts of speech and would begin the new topic on that day. The lecturer then assigned students classwork containing several words related to a sentence, to have students define those words and explain how they relate to the topic of the day, 'The sentence.' These are the words: (i) clause (ii) phrase (iii) subject (iv) object (v) verb (vi) adverbial and (vii) compliment.

Students attempted to explain how they understood the terms provided one by one, resulting in a class discussion; some students used full sentences, while others did not. The two lessons were interesting in that some students did not participate at all in the discussion. The students seem to have trouble understanding explicit grammar instructions, which causes them to become disinterested in the lessons and decide not to take part in the discussion. According to Pica (1994), educators should strike a balance between explicit instruction and more communicative, inductive instruction to ensure that ESL students learn the material effectively. However, these results demonstrate that some lecturers on this campus give little consideration to communicative language instruction. One could draw the conclusion that lecturers use explicit grammar instructions because their students' English proficiency prevents them from understanding communicative instructions. The lecturers may also be reverting to explicit grammar instructions because their teachers' training did not adequately prepare them to use communicative and interactive teaching methods. Because what students learn in class does not reflect everyday language use, this situation may have a negative impact on their learning. For example, focusing

more on how to form different tenses will not help students successfully use them (tenses) in context. Some students on this campus may be unable to use tenses correctly because they are not taught communicatively, as previously stated.

#### **6.5.5. Incorrect Method of Providing Oral Responses**

In the first lesson observed, most student responses are shouted out in a single word or each student shouts an answer. Students mainly shouted out the answers. Because they shouted answers that were frequently only one or two words long, it was impossible to judge the students' grammar proficiency. Another issue in this class was that, despite the lecturer's request that they speak loudly, students spoke very quietly. The lecturer made a lot of effort to involve everyone in the material. The way in which responses are expressed cannot be effectively controlled.

Their grammar was adequate. It is impossible to say that all students were proficient in English because some students did not participate. Participants struggled with the subject/verb agreement, saying *he have* rather than *he has*. Another feature of the lecturer that was noticed is that he allows students to provide their own definitions, examples, or questions before providing his own. Aside from that, he taught students how to get the right answers. The lecturer finished by summarizing and emphasizing the main points. He also asked if the students had any questions about the topic of the day. This is strongly advised.

#### **6.5.6. A Scarcity of Opportunities to Speak**

Students were not given opportunities to communicate in the targeted language, particularly in the online English Communication and Study Skills course. For example, they were not given activities or meaningful tasks that encouraged oral communication (such as discussion, brainstorming, and reporting). As a result, no observations were made in this course. It is a concern that students require more practical work to improve their English proficiency. Informant 1 said *"English Communication and Study Skills is available entirely online, and this was the case prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. It is not a reaction to the outbreak; it has been completely online; however, what I have noticed, including other courses that have gone online as a result of COVID-19, is that only some students have the self-motivation to drive their own education. Some students*

*still want someone to watch them and calling them out to do their homework or focus on their studies. You may discover that you have 100 students enrolled in a course but only 30 of them are completing the task. At the end of the day, poor performance occurs not because students did not master what they were taught, but because they did not complete their work.*

In addition to assisting lecturers in reaching their various students, allowing students to express their knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes verbally also gives them the chance to continuously work on their language abilities. This kind of evaluation did not carry much weight with the lecturers. Particularly in the entirely online English Communication and Study Skills course, students were not given more opportunities to communicate in the targeted language. For instance, they did not participate in meaningful tasks and activities that encouraged oral speaking (such as discussion, brainstorming, and reporting). Concerned about this, some students said they needed more hands-on experience to advance their English skills.

The institution was not resolving the issue; rather, it was making it worse because English is a second language for the students and because student English proficiency in Namibia is extremely low. Speaking instruction was not covered in the study guide or the delivery method, which was online. The department should have used communicative language teaching techniques if it wanted to help the students' language abilities. For instance, lecturers ought to have used actual situations to inform their communicative language teaching of second language acquisition. According to Amineh & Asl (2015: 14), "*social constructivism emphasizes the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of society.*" A variety of activities that could enhance written and verbal communication skills, particularly in longer pieces of writing and presentation skills, are not included in the course outlines. English for General Communication received an adequate amount of time. The English for Communication and Study Skills course, which is entirely online for just one semester, cannot make the same claim. Enrolling in a distance learning course may also be a barrier to learning the English language and developing adequate communication skills. Such students are not exposed to "face-to-face" instruction, or instruction that takes place in a classroom, where students listen to lecturers, participate in class discussions, complete various tasks, and ask questions when they are unsure of something.

Because they must complete the work without the help of a lecturer, students who enroll in a distance English course run the risk of failing the course. In a nation like Namibia, where many of

our students speak English as a second, third, or even fourth language, this shouldn't be the case. Students attend various schools, and some have been instructed by teachers who are not native speakers of the language being used. These students' English proficiency remains low, and their communication skills, particularly their written communication skills, are subpar. This data corresponds to information obtained from key informant and lecturer interviews, student questionnaires, and student written work.

### **6.5.7. Lack of Solid English Foundation**

According to the lecturers, the main issue with students' English proficiency is a lack of a solid English foundation. One of the lecturers stated that *“We have poor reading culture back at school level. So, we cannot expect students to come perform miracles at the university. First students need to start loving reading. They were not instilled the love of reading at their schools. I know there are libraries at schools and so forth, maybe the teachers are not doing enough also. Number one cause of poor English proficiency is poor culture of reading among Namibian students. Students do not read. They do not even love reading.”* The love of reading or the culture of reading must be promoted or instilled in our students so that when they arrive at university, they can read but do not enjoy reading. Another lecturer in agreement asserts, *“With reading they need to be forced to read. They are not eager to read on their own and in this course is where we encourage extensive reading, to improve their vocabulary, reading skills and improve comprehension of different types of texts.* The only way to get them to reach mastery/proficiency in reading is to instil a love of reading in them at an early age. *“One of the causes could be a lack of preparation from the schools they attended.”* If they received poor instructions from their previous school, it may have contributed to their poor communication skills when they arrived at (here) UNAM,” one lecturer elaborated.

According to the Namibian LiEP, students start learning English in grade 4 (Ipinge, 2013). Many Namibian students, according to Wolfaardt (2002: 70), fall short of the required levels of English language proficiency when they are exposed to fourth-grade subjects that are more difficult linguistically and cognitively. It can be the fact that students are not first speakers of the English language. *“They speak different languages and they are coming from different backgrounds, so*



*students face double barriers, the first barrier is to learn the language, which is English and the second barrier is to learn in English” he added again. Students have to master the language itself first and then learn through it. It could be that when they are going to learn through it and learn the language, it could cause poor communication skills especially speaking and writing. Their teachers or lecturers went through the same thing. “English is not our mother tongue, so we (teachers and lecturers) could still be teaching them and struggle with the language here and there ourselves,”* stated one respondent.

According to Wolfaardt (2002), students should be performing at an intermediate level when they start the junior secondary phase of their education. The majority of students never truly attain the language proficiency in English that their age and school level require because of problems that started in primary school, according to research (Wolfaardt, 2002: 70). According to Töttemeyer (2018: 11), three years of learning that is primarily based on the mother tongue is simply too little time, leaving students unable to read and write properly in both their native language and English. English was not taught to their students in a sufficient manner during their secondary school and possibly even primary school years, according to lecturers. Informant No. 3 said, *"Five years ago, the Ministry of Education conducted a study on the proficiency of teachers throughout the country." The findings were concerning. I believe that the teachers' English proficiency contributes to the learners' poor performance. Another issue could be the curriculum or English syllabus, and how it is structured. We are constantly changing the curriculum, and it has now been improved. Previously, the curriculum did not place enough emphasis on reading. Not only to pass a test or an exam, but also for pleasure; for example, the number of novels, poems, newspaper articles, and so on is insufficient for me."*

According to Informant 4, *"one of the causes of poor performance is the lack of receptive skills-based activities in the curriculum."* According to Hanse-Himarwa (2016), in 2012, Namibia had about 24 660 teachers, 1208 of whom lacked teacher preparation, and about 3000 were underqualified. The majority of unqualified and underqualified teachers work in the junior primary phase, according to (Hanse-Himarwa, 2016). Hanse-Himarwa (2015) regrets that unless the government prioritizes early childhood development and primary education, Namibia cannot expect the best results. Poor students' English backgrounds are likely to be one of the main contributors to their difficulties with English writing, as lecturers mentioned during the interviews.

Because the Namibian LiEP allows students to switch to English before mastering their mother tongue, students would lack a strong foundation in English (Töttemeyer, 2010).

These findings corroborate the earlier literature that, despite the majority of Namibian classrooms from Grade 4 to Grade 12 using English as their primary language of instruction for nearly three decades, some teachers struggle with the official tongue (Kisting, 2012). It is also taught throughout the curriculum. All subjects are taught and assessed in English, not in students' native languages. The instructional language had failed to provide widespread competence (Kisting, 2012). There is a direct correlation between teachers' poor English skills and students' exam results (Frans, 2016).

The Namibian government administered an English proficiency test through the University of Namibia in 2011. The primary goal was to identify in-service teachers' additional training needs. This test was taken by nearly 23,000 teachers. According to Kisting (2012), only a few teachers passed the test, while the rest were classified as Advanced, Intermediate, or Pre-Intermediate. The findings also revealed that 98% of Namibian teachers are not proficient in basic mathematics (Kisting, 2012). Over 70% of senior secondary school teachers are unable to read and write basic English (Kisting, 2012).

A variety of factors contributed to these shocking results. One of them is that the majority of teachers attended school before English was designated as the official language of instruction. Disadvantaged students who are required to learn in a language that their teachers do not fully understand are further marginalized as a result of their poor communication skills and competency in the language of instruction (Republic of Namibia, 2003). Cummins (2007) emphasises that learners' English proficiency is dependent on the instruction they receive. Learners are more likely to acquire more English proficiency if they receive extensive comprehensible input; however, if they receive limited input, much more work is required.

If English is used as the medium of instruction and the mother tongue is not the official language, Wolfaardt (2001: 243) contends that in order for learners' language to develop sufficiently, it must be taught competently by competent instructors. Oluwole (2008) investigates the role of the mother tongue in second language learning and finds that there are factors that contribute to students' poor English performance, supporting Wolfaardt (2001). These include the use of the teacher's mother

language, subpar teaching techniques, a dearth of textbooks, a lack of linguistic background, and a lack of opportunities for teachers to advance professionally.

Another point regarding students' background is that the students might come from families where English is a second language. They do not practice it and are not expected to communicate in English, so they do not see the need to improve their speaking abilities. It is not necessary for everyday communication. Some students come from rural schools where even the teachers do not feel compelled to communicate in English. Because most of the content may have been translated in class, the environment created may not be conducive to English language learning. According to Kayi (2006), linguists concur that communicative and collaborative learning are the best ways for people to learn a second language. Real-world situations that call for communication serve as the foundation for communicative learning. Students will be able to interact with one another and take part in collaborative learning when this method is applied.

Discussion is a tool that can encourage speaking, according to Kayi (2006); for instance, a discussion can be held to wrap up a lesson that is content-based. With this kind of activity, students learn how to express and defend their opinions politely, even when they disagree with those of others. It also encourages critical thinking and prompt decision-making. Bygate (2009) concurs with Kayi (2006) regarding the best exercises for teaching oral communication. These include pair work/dialogue, group work, discussion, and debate. Question surveys, in which students each receive a different question and survey their peers, a weekly talk show in which three or four students in a class respond to questions from the class on a particular topic, and talk shows. Lecturers are encouraged to encourage students to engage in all of these activities, including asking questions, expressing opinions, seeking clarification, and paraphrasing ideas. Furthermore, according to Bygate (2009), lecturers' methods in the classroom—including observation and discussion, engaging with students during a lesson, grinning, moving around, and maintaining eye contact—can inspire students to use English as a second language.

#### **6.5.8. Lack of Exposure to the English Language**

Lack of exposure to English, such as difficulty accessing English-language reading materials. The fact that English is not widely spoken in Namibia further supports this observation. Even though only 0.8% of the population speaks English, the government chose English as the language of

instruction in schools because it did not want to favor one indigenous language over others, breaking with colonial tradition and bringing the nation together (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2001; Pütz 1995).

If you come to UNAM, you will most likely struggle with reading or understanding the English-language content. *“Sometimes students come from areas where English is not widely used in everyday communication, so you only use it in formal settings, such as going to the doctor. “It could also be where you are coming from, as you do not write frequently and writing is not part of your culture. Perhaps your learning/teaching strategies do not expose you to many writing opportunities”* one of the lecturers explained. Writing is not a skill that cannot be learned overnight, it requires practice. *“Reading materials are not a significant factor. In comparison to mother tongue materials, we have an abundance of reading materials in English at the university and school levels. They may not be grade and age appropriate, particularly in Namibia, where English is not our first language. Examples in books may be boring to students or inappropriate in their context. In comparison to mother tongue materials, we have an abundance of reading materials in English at the university and school levels. They may not be grade and age appropriate, particularly in Namibia, where English is not our first language. Examples in books may be boring to students or inappropriate in their context. For example, if students/learners read about other students going on a boat excursion, they may be reluctant to read and follow,”* one respondent asserted. *“There are plenty of materials, but we need to think of new ways to make them appealing to learners and students,”* she emphasised.

English is not widely spoken in the communities in the Northern Namibia (Harris 2011; Ipinge, 2013). The majority of the students and teachers speak the same mother tongue, making it challenging for them to communicate in a language they do not fully understand. As a result, the students hardly ever use English in class (English). Ipinge (2018) claims that some schools' libraries are inoperative and deficient in reading materials. Given that few people who are learning English speak it in their communities or at their schools and that they don't have access to reading materials on the subject.



### 6.5.9. Poor Reading Culture among our Cultures

In recent years, reading has gotten a lot of attention in Sub-Saharan Africa's educational system. Given the current emphasis on reading achievement as a gauge of learning on a global scale, reading habits and abilities have been identified as a predictor of success in formal education. (UNDP 2016: 29–30). Africans have an oral tradition rather than a literary one. *“Our people valued oral communication, but if you do not read, you will not improve your vocabulary. When you read, you gain new vocabulary that you can use when speaking or writing,”* one of the lecturers asserts. A poor reading culture can contribute to poor English proficiency. *“Students are not motivated to read, and it is our responsibility as teachers and lecturers to motivate them. To help them improve their vocabulary and reading abilities”* she added. Informant 2 added, *“We have a poor reading culture at school.” As a result, we cannot expect students to come to the university and perform miracles. Students must first develop a love of reading. Their schools did not instill a love of reading in them. I know there are libraries in schools and so on, but perhaps teachers aren't doing enough. The primary cause of poor English proficiency among Namibian students is a lack of a reading culture. Students are not reading. They don't even enjoy reading. It has gotten so bad that when we have libraries in schools, we expect students to use them to read, but this is not happening. The students must be empowered. The love of reading or the culture of reading must be promoted or instilled in our students so that when they arrive at university, they can read but do not enjoy reading. The only way to get them to mastery/proficiency in reading is to instill a love of reading in them at an early age.”*

In populations that have historically paid little attention to written forms of communication, a "reading culture" will catalyse learning and development. The development of this "reading culture" is considered to be a necessary step for societies that are the focus of international development efforts, despite ambiguous definitions of its traits and results (Smars, 2013; Nalusiba, 2010; Mwandayi, 2009).

### **6.5.10. Mother-Tongue Preference**

The findings revealed that the majority of ten out of 16, students indicated that they preferred speaking in their native language because it allowed them to express themselves freely. Additionally, when around peers who shared their mother tongue, these students said they preferred speaking in their mother tongue. In order to communicate with their classmates outside of the classroom, four students claimed that they spoke both English and Afrikaans with them. After all, the students' mother tongues varied. The fact that two students' mother tongues differed from those of their friends was brought up. Because of this, they could only communicate with their friends in English. Additionally, these students thought that since English was the official language, they should communicate in it despite coming from different language groups.

The majority of students claimed to communicate in both English and their native languages outside of the classroom. In contrast to students who claimed that they preferred to speak in their native tongue because it allows them to express themselves freely, those who indicated that they spoke English with their peers to improve their English proficiency benefited from this process. By doing so, they missed an opportunity to enhance their English.

This is consistent with Harris' (2011) study, one of Namibia's investigations into LOLT. The goals of Harris' (2011) research were to better understand how those working in the field of education view their native tongue, consider how policymakers view the difficulties associated with mother-tongue education, and look into strategies for promoting the use of mother tongues. Additionally, 167 students from 19 schools, 138 teachers from 20 primary schools, 40 parents, and 38 educators were included in Harris' (2011) study (e.g., regional educational directors, inspectors of education and language policy makers).

Harris' (2011) research revealed that 61% of teachers said their students had English proficiency issues. It is therefore not surprising that a significant portion of learners are baffled by the second language (English) they are being taught. They want to do well in school in general and in English in particular, but because of language barriers, they struggle to comprehend their subjects. It is crucial to emphasize that the students have explicitly stated that they do not understand either the subject matter or their instructors. Consequently, it is not surprising that they seem uninterested and unmotivated (Harris 2011: 58).

In addition, Harris' (2011) research revealed that 83% of students preferred using their native tongue for instruction and 87% of students preferred speaking their native tongue with teachers. Finally, the study discovered that better outcomes are obtained when the native tongue is consistently used. The study came to the conclusion that a thorough review of language policy is necessary to stop learners from failing in the future and to consider how policymakers might view the difficulty of mother tongue learning and promote its increased use to improve educational outcomes (Harris 2011: 7). Additionally, it must be acknowledged that English is not well spoken or used outside of the context of schools, according to the author (Harris, 2011). Despite the fact that the majority of Namibian schools are required to use English as the primary language of instruction. According to Mwindu & Van der Walt (2015), rural communities hardly ever hear or use the language. As a result, it is always a difficult task to introduce English as LOLT to fourth-grade students.

## **6.6. CHALLENGES RELATED TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

### **6.6.1. Lack of Fluency**

Even though the meaning is clear, students' vocabulary is still limited. They do not get a lot of practice speaking in front of other students, which may also be the cause of their "anxiety." More oral activities should be assigned to students in order for them to improve their speaking abilities. Given a large number of students in the lecture and the limited number of lecture hours, this could be a problem. As a result, the two lecturers are under time constraints to complete the course outline. In other words, if lecturers are required to engage in more speaking activities, they are less likely to complete their course outlines as expected by the University. Data gathered from informants (lecturers) on the Main Campus confirmed this by mentioned that some students do not speak or write English fluently. They also stated that some students perform well in writing but struggle in speaking, and vice versa.

*"When you interact with students, some of them have difficulty interacting with you, and some of them are vocal in spoken English, but there are those who were vocal but struggle with writing." Surprisingly, some people have difficulty expressing themselves verbally but write well." "We talk about all four language skills when it comes to communication," said another key informant.*

*Students have excellent communication skills, in my opinion. They communicate clearly orally, but writing is difficult for them. They primarily write based on what they read. Their reading and writing skills are subpar. I don't want to say it is worse, but reading and writing are major issues among Namibian students.*" This key informant believes that students' oral abilities far outweigh their written abilities.

The researcher was informed that the majority of students who completed Grade 12 in urban areas can articulate the English language very well. In other words, their spoken English is good, and some who finished Grade 12 in rural areas tend to write English very well, but their spoken English is not fluent. *"Students from urban areas are fluent in the language but lack academic communication skills." Students in rural schools are less proficient in both social and academic language proficiency."*

English was gradually incorporated into the secondary phase (grades 8–12) as a medium of instruction, but its efficacy was questioned for two main reasons. Initially, secondary phase teachers' English language proficiency was inferior to that of primary phase teachers (Ipinge 2013; Harris 2011). It is important to note that the majority of Namibian educators worked under the previous system before independence, when Afrikaans served as the medium of instruction (Wolfaardt, 2002). Additionally, a lot of teachers, especially those who work in rural areas, do not often come across or use English in their local communities (Wolfaardt, 2002).

The researcher concurs with Lumbu *et al.* (2015) who claim that it was contradictory for Namibia to choose English as the language of instruction because teachers were required to instruct in it even if they were not fully proficient. Due to the fact that *"students who are not taught by teachers who are proficient in English will not have the necessary foundation on which to build their English language skills,"* as stated by Wolfaardt (2002: 10), this had a negative impact on teaching and learning. Without a doubt, learning a language requires role models who are proficient in that language as well as teachers who are knowledgeable about how to teach a second language and who can motivate students to speak that language. Poor English speakers who transferred to universities from high or secondary schools will need a lot of time to get better. Thus, in order to prepare teachers for the abrupt switch to English as the language of instruction, the Namibian government had to put in place a national program (Bradley, 2006).



### 6.6.2. Conciseness and Precision

Directness and accuracy should be prioritized in academic writing. The use of ambiguous or vague lexical items in academic writing, such as "thing" and "something," is typically not precise enough. Verbosity and repetition also bog down academic argumentation and are not meant to be superficial aspects of academic writing. It is important to note that this convention is broken when first-person pronouns and contractions are generally avoided in favor of longer word or letter strings. It is expected that students will write clearly and concisely.

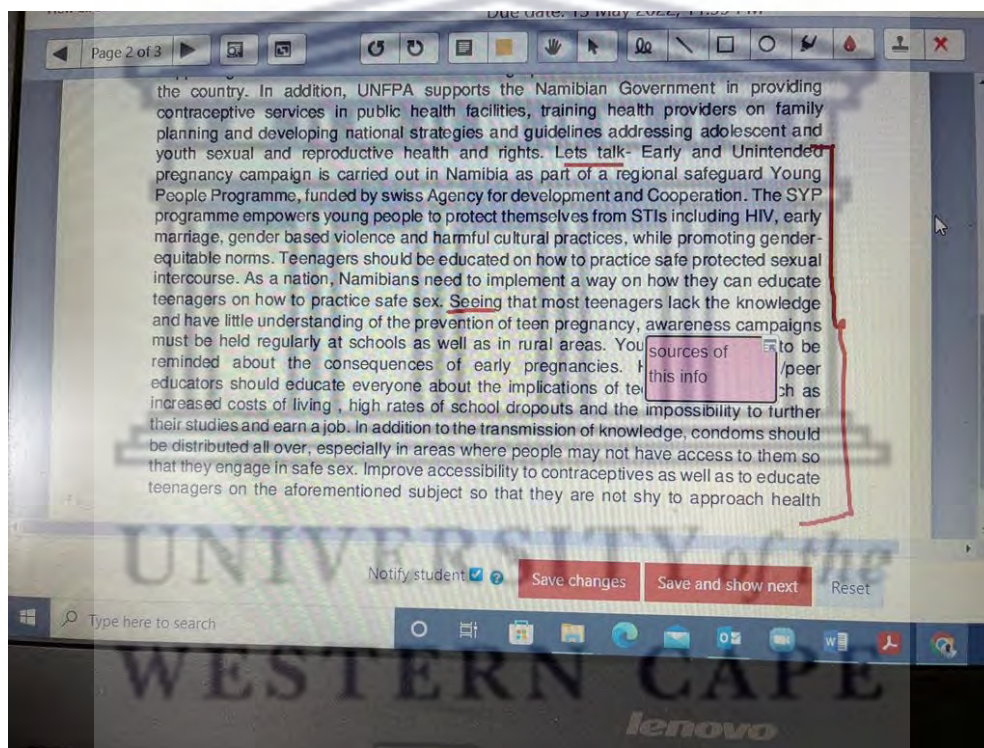


Figure 1: Conciseness and Precision

### 6.6.3 Incorrect Use of Tenses

According to Paran (2012), students need to be taught how to search deeply for the appropriate words to create proper sentences (grammar), use the appropriate words, and use the appropriate spelling. Some students have trouble with the present simple tense and the past simple tense in

particular. Heydari & Bagheri (2012) claim that this is a widespread issue for English learners everywhere, brought on by mother tongue influence and a lack of exposure to English.

This study found that some students used the 'present simple tense' rather than the 'past simple tense.' When students wrote, 'The travel restrictions in Namibia due to coronavirus caused stronger family ties.' which took place in the past, it is evident that they were supposed to use the 'past simple tense', instead of using the 'past simple tense' the majority of them used the 'present simple tense'. 'The virus circulates relatively slowly and essentially is brought by the movement of people, who are looking to get back to their home. They were supposed to write, 'The virus circulated relatively slowly and essentially was brought by the movement of people, who were looking to get back to their home.

The lecturers claim that students have trouble using tenses correctly when writing longer pieces of writing, like essays, and that this causes their writing to have ambiguous meanings. This is undesirable because clear, concise, and easy-to-read essays are expected of students (Barry *et al.*, 2014). The lecturers contend that this issue stems from a weak English foundation. These students need more exposure to English. In-depth reading and a variety of longer writing assignments are required of students. In order to use tenses effectively when writing longer pieces, they must also be taught in a communicative manner. Iiping (2018) conducted a study titled "*Consequences of Ideology and Policy in the English Second Language Classroom: The Case of Oshiwambo-speaking Students in Namibia*". He found that teachers typically teach grammar (including tenses) out of context, which is detrimental to students' ability to use language context.

The majority of these students acknowledged their difficulties with grammar through the questionnaire, while some also acknowledged their difficulties with certain parts of speech. Grammar, pronunciation, spelling, and tenses, particularly perfect tenses, were problems for two students. Traditional grammar instruction, which covers tenses, might play a role. In actuality, teachers spend more time instructing students on how to form the various tenses than on how to actually use the tenses. As Farooq *et al.* (2012) regret, traditional tenses teaching is ineffective because students learn how to construct different tenses but do not know how to use them in written expressions. As a result, this practice is not encouraging and, as a result, is not advised. The professors on this campus should instruct students on how to use language in authentic communicative situations by teaching tenses in this manner.

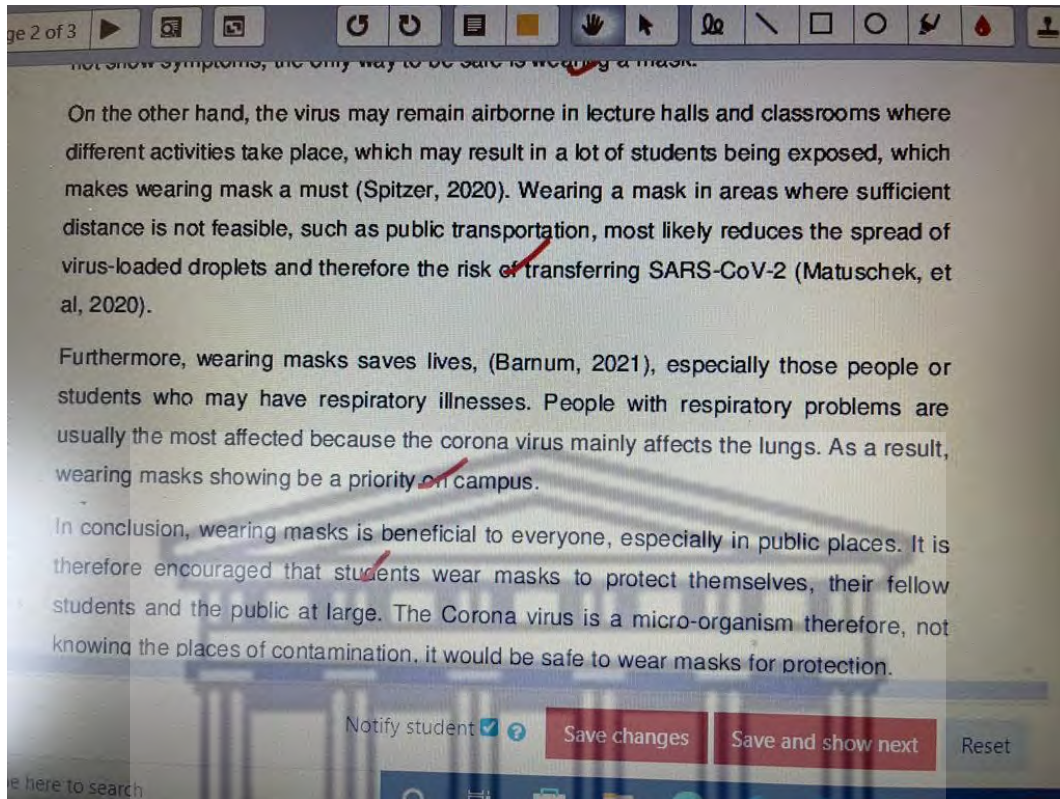
### 6.6.3. Lack of Subject/Verb Agreement

A writer must use the verb that is conjugated to match singular nouns when using a singular noun, according to Farooq *et al.* (2012). A conjugated verb must be used to match a plural noun whenever a writer uses one. The students who wrote the essay did not match the subject with the correct verb form. Several students wrote *"we was spending time together as a family"* instead of *"we were spending time together as a family."* Similarly, many students wrote *"we was scared of getting Covid"* instead of *"we were scared of getting Covid."* Two students expressed concerns about conditional sentences, subject and verb agreement. One student stated that she needed more assistance in constructing conditional sentences, subject and verb agreement. Furthermore, Farooq *et al.* (2012) believe that the traditional style of teaching grammar on the part of educators and a lack of practice on the part of students is the root of all grammar-related problems that students faced when writing. Msanjila (2005: 22) contends that *"grammar errors appear to result from inadequate learning and teaching."*

### 6.6.4. Lack of Coherence and Cohesion in Paragraphs

Students failed to accurately or successfully connect their paragraphs to form a logical whole. The paragraphs are also disjointed. This shows that no effective connectors or linking words were used to connect the sentences within the paragraphs. The texts of an effective ESL writer should be coherent, logical, clearly structured, and properly organized, according to (Hall, 1988) and Fareed, 2016). Students often struggle with a lack of cohesion and coherence, which is problematic because disorganized information is challenging to read and comprehend. Although it is understandable that learners' work lacks coherence and cohesion, it is extremely difficult to write coherently in a second language (Ahmed, 2010), particularly given the complexity of English logical connectors.





**Figure 2:** *Cohesion and Cohesive*

Longer writing should have beginnings and ends that are obvious (Barry *et al.*, 2014). Writing compelling paragraphs is a skill that students must have (Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education 2010). Students need to be taught the proper essay structure as a result. Effective instruction can address the issue of not knowing how to organize an essay well, claims Msanjila (2005). Iiping (2018) argues that teachers must constantly make sure they have instructed their pupils on how to write the openings, bodies, and conclusions of the various types of writing that are taught in Grade 12.

### **6.6.5. Incorrect Use of Tone and Register**

When writing ESL essays, students must use the appropriate tone and register (Barry *et al.*, 2014). This implies that students should use appropriate language and a formal writing style by taking the intended audience into account. Students should ensure that a formal and academic tone is used



when writing an essay, for instance (Barry *et al.*, 2014:12). The essay analysis for the present study, however, showed that some students did not employ the proper tone and register. Students substituted phrases like *"this essay discusses,"* students use phrases such as *"I am going to talk about"*, instead of *'first and foremost'*. In an academic essay, none of these colloquial expressions are necessary because the register and tone of the essay should be formal and academic, and students are writing to academics, as Brown (2000: 260) suggests, *"when you converse informally with a friend, you use language differently than you use in an interview for a job with a prospective employer, for example."*

#### **6.6.6. Misspellings and Misuse of Punctuation**

When asked to write longer pieces of writing, like the essays examined in this study, students struggle to write some words correctly and also fail to punctuate their sentences correctly, according to the lecturers. *"Their writing is not so good, it needs improvement. Writing is full of spelling errors, coherence,"* one of the respondents stated. This issue could be caused by their lack of English proficiency. *"The students are struggling with writing, misspelling words, not using punctuation marks at all or correctly, and sometimes it is hard to get meanings from their written work/ activities. Their oral communication is much better than their written communication,"* she clarified. Five students reported having spelling problems. Three students complained about their paragraphs, misspelled words, and long sentences, while one said he did not know how to use punctuation. One student admitted that she struggled with punctuation. This was also clear in the written works that the students produced; they wrote a paragraph using only commas, conjunctions, and occasionally capital letters in the middle of the sentence. Some of them used a lowercase letter to begin a sentence rather than a capital one. Five of them brought up issues with grammar and spelling. The lecturer's information mentioned the spelling issue, and it was also clear in the students' written assignments.

All of these problems could prevent students from developing their writing abilities and greatly impede their English language proficiency. Based on the answers to this question, it appears that the majority of students struggled with basic English, either in speaking or writing. Informant 2 stated *"The students are having difficulty writing, misspelling words, not using punctuation marks*

*at all or correctly, and it is sometimes difficult to understand the meanings of their written work/activities. Their spoken communication is far superior to their written communication."*

One could argue that correctly writing words and punctuating sentences is crucial when it comes to essay writing because a piece of writing will not have a clear meaning if it contains numerous spelling errors and poor sentence punctuation. Barry *et al.* (2014) assert that it is not necessary for students' spelling to be accurate throughout the entire essay. On the other hand, simple and common words must be spelled correctly. Students must therefore write essays with fewer spelling errors and make sure that their sentences are punctuated correctly in order to receive high marks on essay writing questions. Such problems demand attention, such as the creation of additional classes for these kinds of students. This researcher learned during the key informant interviews that early detection programs are in place, and that the Department of Language Development on the Main Campus has a Writing Unit run by one of their colleagues.

Some key informants claimed that they refer students to the Writing Unit if they conduct a pre-assessment and find that they are at risk, particularly in writing. However, some students refuse to go because they say they do not have enough time. The ten-kilometer distance between the two campuses may discourage students from traveling to the main campus, so this researcher suggests that the Khomasdal Campus establish its own unit. Two students said they had no trouble writing in English and that they had excellent writing abilities. It was also surprising to read some comments in which students claimed that, despite the quality of their writing, they had no issues with their English writing abilities. They hold this view because they are unable to recognize the errors in their written work, which is covered in this chapter under the subheading "Students' written work data," because they are so ignorant of proper English usage.

#### **6.6.7. Use of Contractions**

While verb contractions such as (it's) and negative contractions such as (it isn't) are primarily used in conversation (spoken language), Biber *et al.* (1999: 1128–1132) claim that some contraction use can also be found in written registers like fiction and news (in their direct reporting of spoken discourse). According to their corpus analysis results, contracted forms are almost never used in academic prose. It's interesting to note that students still commit these mistakes even after

extensive exposure to the tertiary academic setting. The occurrence of this error may be explained by variations in how this convention is applied across various writing contexts and disciplines.

Let's talk – Let us talk

It's- It is

Can't – can not

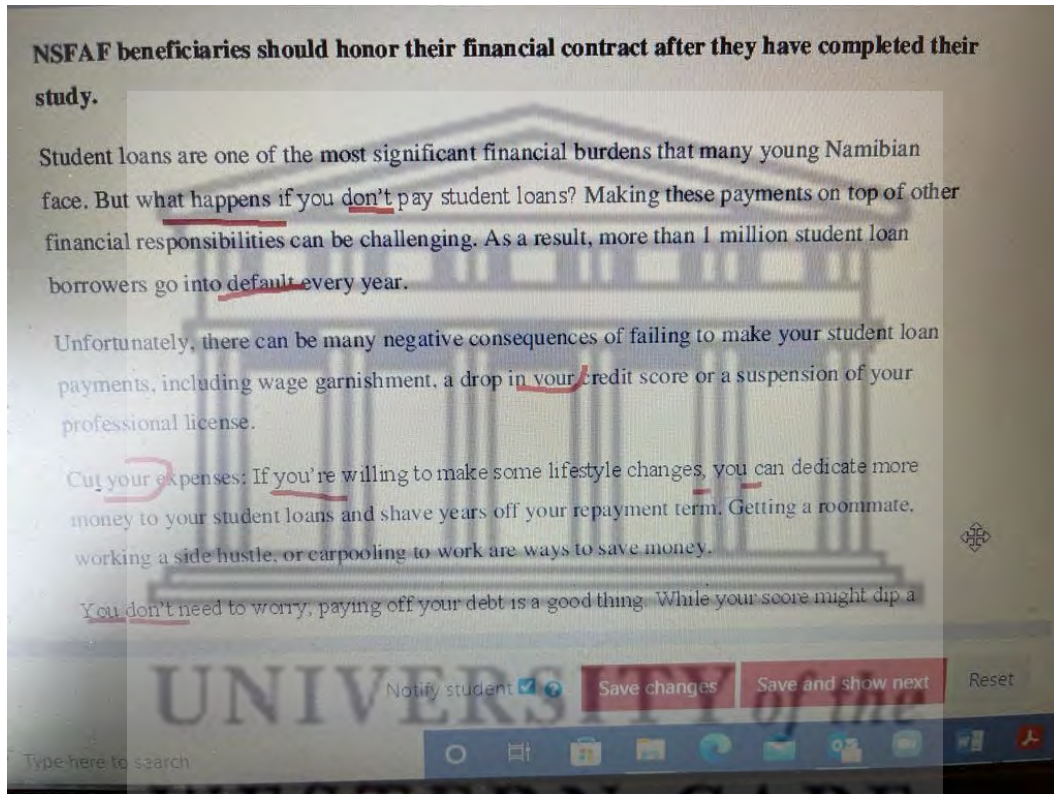
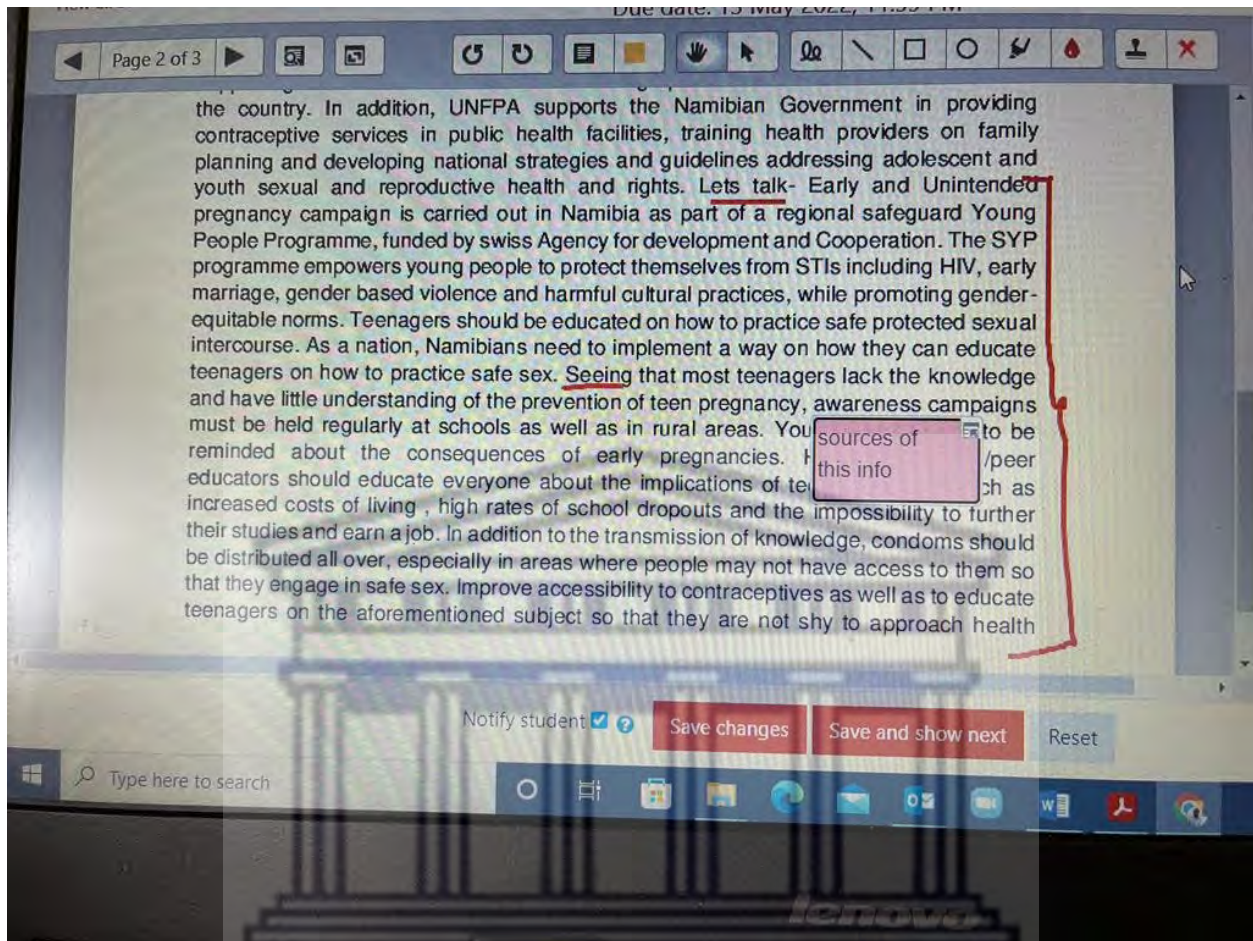


Figure 3: Use of Contractions

### 6.6.8. Paragraphing Problems

Some students even neglected to create paragraphs in their texts. This type of writing is challenging to read, especially in longer texts, as it gives the impression that one idea never ends. Along with the structural problem of not providing a clear introduction or conclusion in their writing, students occasionally show a lack of comprehension of the purpose of these textual elements. Despite the fact that one student included a conclusion, it was merely a verbatim repetition of the essay's body paragraphs.





**Figure 4: Paragraphing Problems**

## **6.7. LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

### **6.7.1. Students have good speaking skills compared to written skills**

Lecturers and other important sources affirm that students are proficient speakers. Although they could express themselves verbally clearly, writing is difficult for them. Their mother tongue influences their speaking, but their writing is better in their mother tongue. Their writing could be better; it is not very good. Both spelling errors and a lack of coherence are prevalent. When it comes to reading, they must be made to read. They are reluctant to read on their own, so extensive reading is encouraged to increase their vocabulary, reading comprehension, and ability to understand a variety of texts. We include listening modules in our courses to teach students that they must pay attention to their professors when they attend university.



### **6.7.2. Students' Challenges in Writing**

It can be challenging to understand the meanings of the students' written work and activities because they frequently misspell words, use punctuation incorrectly or not at all. Their verbal communication is far superior to their written communication. When students first arrive at university, their writing abilities are generally lacking. When you give them longer pieces of writing, such as paragraphs, summaries, essays, and emails to lecturers, their writing skills deteriorate dramatically. Obviously, spelling is an issue, but so is the organization of ideas and the overall message they are communicating.

### **6.7.3. Students' Expression in Social Situations**

When they speak, they do not follow grammar rules, have a limited vocabulary, and struggle to find words to convey the meanings that they want to convey. Even after taking the course, they are still lacking in writing. They do not fulfil the functions of writing a paragraph in terms of sentence structures, introduction, body, and conclusion. They simply write without regard for rules. They appear to have received no instruction regarding how to structure their writing. They still have a lot of work to do in terms of discipline writing. Speaking is preferable because you are not judging their writing formality, etc.

They can communicate ideas, and they can use colloquial language when speaking in an informal setting, but when writing, they must adhere to mechanics conventions. When writing, one wants those techniques to shine through. Speaking is less critical. Although some students arrive at university with limited English proficiency and communication skills, they improve as they progress through their university years. *"Even to narrow it down, their progress is visible in the course itself." For example, students who struggled in the first-semester course English communication and study skills will perform better in English for Academic Purposes because they have a better grasp of communication."*

The majority of students reported that they had no issues and that they had excellent oral communication skills because they think they speak English very well. Six students said they had trouble with mother tongue influence, especially when it came to words with the letters /l/ and /r/.

Another student admitted that she had trouble pronouncing some words. She thought he lacked the self-assurance to read unfamiliar words aloud in class. According to this researcher, when students lack the self-assurance to speak in front of others, it means that they haven't had the chance to practice reading and speaking in class. Speaking skills are either not included in most of the syllabi that the researcher looked at or are the final unit in the syllabi.

## **6.8. LECTURER'S STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**

### **6.8.1. Encouragement and Motivation from Lecturers**

Reading is important because it increases students' vocabulary, allowing them to speak more fluently. Reading and writing complement and make a significant contribution to each other's development, Adeyemi (2012) writes. Without a doubt, students must engage in some quality reading to improve their writing skills and increase their vocabulary (Fareed, 2016). As a result, lecturers should be commended for encouraging their students to read. The researcher thinks that lecturers will still need to come up with specific approaches to deal with particular writing issues. For instance, they need to come up with a plan that will help their students use the right tenses when writing essays in order to get high marks on essay questions.

### **6.8.2. Constant Practice at all Occasions**

Speaking English can help them improve their English skills. Students should be encouraged to avoid always speaking in their mother tongues and interact with people who are not from their tribe or who do not speak the same language as you. They can improve their English proficiency and communication skills by practicing speaking, reading, and writing on their own. This information is consistent with Bygate's (2012) recommendation that students be encouraged to use English outside and inside the classroom. Additionally, it should be emphasized to students to use English as much as possible in all elective and other classes they take. According to Bygate (2012), students will be able to handle almost any English language situation they come across both inside and outside of the classroom if they hear, speak, read, and write "*real English*."

Lecturers can start discussions on various topics and sometimes give each student a chance to speak. Lecturers can keep track of who spoke in previous classes. So that everyone feels

comfortable speaking in front of others, say something based on their experiences rather than necessarily on factual answers. It is simply about allowing students to speak; lecturers can ask them to relate to experiences they know they have had and simply express themselves on that. Students should also do presentations. Even if they are not doing a presentation for a grade, they can practice by going through the structure or stages of a presentation. Lecturers can ask them one by one to demonstrate it in front of the class so that they gain confidence while also practicing art. According to Dunbar *et al.* (2006: 2), the purpose of teaching communication skills for college and university students, like oral communication, is to prepare students to be more effective workers and responsible citizens as well as to help students progress toward graduation with specific skills well-developed. There are several communication skills that students at both the basic and advanced levels must learn, according to (Morreale & Pearson, 2008) and Dunbar *et al.* (2006: 4). For instance, knowing when to speak, speaking clearly and expressively, listening intently, choosing and using the most suitable and effective medium for communication, structuring a message appropriately, determining others' level of receptivity to a message, and providing information while supporting it with examples and illustrations are all examples of communication skills.

### **6.8.3. Instilling Students' Confidence**

Students who make mistakes or errors should not be judged or denigrated by adults. Lecturers should always encourage them by starting with a positive comment about something they are doing well and then moving on to something where they need to improve. For example, you may have done exceptionally well in one area but need to improve in another. It must be done diplomatically, and lecturers must find a good way to correct them; otherwise, students will stop participating. Correcting students' pronunciation of a specific word, spelling, and sentence structure. Giving them incentives or compliments. In this way, lecturers are helping students gain confidence. This is in an agreement with Parkerson (2000: 125) who suggests that it is beneficial to provide students with feedback based on grammar. She also emphasizes the need for students to be aware of both their successes and mistakes, stressing the importance of both.

#### **6.8.4. Lecturers' Balanced Comments and Feedback**

Students must, however, sharpen their ability to identify both their own and other people's errors. Students should be able to learn about academic writing conventions and use this language knowledge to check the appropriateness and accuracy of their own texts through a well-designed course. Of course, there is the issue of whether or not students are proficient enough to possess, utilize, and apply such knowledge. Therefore, the design of the course alone will not guarantee that it will be applied properly after enrollment: each stage of writing instruction requires a lecturer who is aware of the unique needs and learning styles of the students. It should always be the intention to use instruction to affect both learning and acquisition. It is obvious from this that giving useful feedback on students' academic writing requires viewing writing as a process and doing so at the appropriate point in that process.

Therefore, course design alone will not ensure its proper application after enrollment: at each stage of writing instruction, a lecturer who is tuned into the students' specific needs and learning capacities is required. The goal should always be to influence both learning and acquisition through instruction. Furthermore, if written assignments *"are only discussed after they have been fully marked, that is, corrected and assigned a mark, the students tend to simply want to 'put them away'"* (Menck, 2000: 226). It is obvious from this that giving useful feedback on students' academic writing requires viewing writing as a process and doing so at the appropriate point in that process.

#### **6.8.5. Promoting a lot of Reading**

The majority of the activities undertaken by lecturers are the result of reading. They must promote a lot of reading. Concerning reading, there is a concept of giving students topics and telling them to go read about them before coming to do a presentation. You will be able to speak more about a topic once you have read about it. Lecturers should simply give students more reading activities and ask them to share what they have read by speaking/presenting it to others. These two abilities complement one another. Speaking is frequently the last activity. Lecturers can start by giving students something to read, and then they write. For example, lecturers can give students an academic essay, they get the topic, go read about it and write their essays, and then they are asked to present it to the class by summarizing what they wrote about, what the findings were, and what the recommendations were, if any.



## 6.9. LECTURERS' STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### 6.9.1. More Speaking Opportunities in Classrooms

All lecturers concurred that it was their duty to assist students in developing their public speaking confidence. They encouraged students to speak up by asking them to speak about or present on topics related to their fields of study. They mentioned that they encourage or motivate them to speak in class so that the day they present their topics in class will be easier for them.

Informant 1 *"It is my responsibility to instil confidence in my students." I enjoy this more than any other aspect of my teaching career because there is nothing worse than teaching students with low self-esteem. That is why presentation skills are included in the speaking unit. Every student must give a presentation. Nothing is worse than a student who lacks confidence. They will also undermine your self-esteem because you will eventually be unable to grade these students. What I enjoy doing is preparing students for the speaking unit, which is the final unit of the course. We purposefully made it the last unit because you cannot ask students to start speaking in the first unit and grade them. It's not right. Allow them to familiarize themselves with the course first, learning which vocabulary to use in this course, as well as their classmates and lecturer, so that by the end of the semester, they are confident. So, when I introduce the course outline at the beginning of the semester, I inform them that I require active participation from all you. It is for your own benefit. At the end of the day, if you don't participate, you won't get good grades. Because you are not used to participating in discussions during lectures, you will be very shy during your presentation day. However, if you have been an active student who speaks every day and actively participates in lectures and discussions, you will do very well on presentation day. So, as a teacher, I believe it is my responsibility to instill confidence in my students."*

Informant 3 added that *"Definitely, that is my role as a teacher/lecturer is multi-faceted, to mould a person who is well rounded. I am an encourager, motivator. Therefore, I do everything together. Always assessing their emotional needs, because their emotional needs can determine how better they can improve in their English proficiency. In education, they say you need to affective filters. They must not be low and not so high that information that you are teaching them is not even penetrating. For example, if there is anxiety in the class, use humor, use things like cell phone to record the message, you can ask students to do many things. You need to make teaching fun. It*

*must not just be books only. You are an artist as a lecturer. You have to be that artist that will facilitate learning."*

Lecturer 1 expressed similar sentiments to the other lecturers and key informants. *"Yes, that is why we are here as lecturers," he replied. We need to instill confidence in our students, which is why I stated that we should not criticize or look down on them when they make mistakes or errors. We should always encourage them by starting with a positive comment about something they are doing well and then moving on to something they need to work on. For example, you may have done exceptionally well in one area but need to improve in another. It should be done diplomatically, and we should find a good way to correct them, or they will stop participating. Correcting their pronunciation of a specific word, spelling, and sentence structure. Giving them incentives or compliments. That way, you're boosting their self-esteem."*

All the lecturers and key informants agreed that students should read more to improve their communication skills and that they should be given more speaking opportunities to improve their English proficiency. They also mentioned that one of the teaching strategies to use is error-mistake targeting. Informant 1 stated, *"I believe that exposure is very important." You should read more, whether it is for school or for leisure. A language is not like a subject where you are taught something and then just remember it. You must gain reading skills and be given more opportunities to read. One method I employ is to provide students with numerous opportunities to practice all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. I make every effort to include a variety of topics from various disciplines such as science, social sciences, law, education, and so on. This allows students to see how the skills they are learning, will help them in their fields of study as well as in real-life situations. These English courses, with an emphasis on English for General Communication and Study Skills, do not just focus on academic papers; we use learning materials from magazines and newspaper articles to see how language plays a role in negotiating and communicating societal issues and matters."*

According to Lecturer 1, *"by reading more, give them more reading activities that they have to write about and speak/present their written work."* *"Aside from the activities that we do in class, I can only motivate and encourage them to do a lot of reading and writing,"* informant 2 responded. *Reading is important because it increases students' vocabulary, allowing them to speak more fluently. I encourage them to read as many and as diverse materials as they possibly can. Simply read newspapers, magazines, and books from the library. However, most students are unwilling*

*to read because they believe they do not have enough/extra time to read other books or materials because they have so many modules to attend to. They will not succeed. That is all I can do as a lecturer because I am also a busy person with a large number of students, some of whom are postgraduates. So, aside from the activities I provide during lectures, I can only encourage students to read and write. They can practice speaking to each other and other members of the public on campus. Speaking English can help them improve their English skills. Avoid always speaking in your mother tongue and interact with people who are not from your tribe or who do not speak the same language as you. You improve your English proficiency and communication skills by practicing speaking, reading, and writing on your own."*

*"My remedies are error-mistakes targeted," Informant 3 added. I do not always correct students' mistakes right away, but I do make a note of them. Because correcting them right away may be discouraging, I jot them down and deal with them when the time comes. Errors and mistakes made by first-year students in speaking, writing, reading, and listening, for example. That is one of the strategies for ensuring that you are specific in your teaching rather than aiming to complete the syllabus while other things need to be addressed. I do deviate from the syllabus a lot to address pressing issues that keep coming up as a result of what I observed while teaching."*

### **6.9.2. Exposure**

Students should read more, regardless of the activity. A language is not like a subject where they are taught something and then just remember it. They need to practice reading skills, and students should be given more opportunities to read. Giving students numerous chances to practice all four language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—is one tactic. Try to include a variety of topics from various disciplines such as science, social sciences, law, education, and so on. This allows students to see how the skills they are learning, will help them in their fields of study as well as in real-life situations.

Encourage students to read as many and as diverse materials as possible. Reading newspapers, magazines, and borrowing books from the library for the sole purpose of reading. Lecturers may give students writing tasks that include research so that they can read at the same time. They can use input ranging from reading to writing. When it comes to writing, ask them to write an essay in pairs and bring them to class so that each of them can take a yardstick/checklist where

they will measure themselves based on their performances, and they will look at the checklist and what they have written. For instance, the introduction of an essay should contain background information, a thesis statement, a topic sentence, sentences that support it, and a concluding sentence. They assess their own writing after taking a look at that. Instead of just telling students what they should do, lecturers can encourage them to consider their own writing. Have you done what you were supposed to do? The purpose of self-assessment as a crucial skill for any student in higher education is to develop students who really are capable of accurately monitoring and assessing, reflecting on areas of strengths and weaknesses, and where performance could be improved, in order for students to take greater degrees of responsibility for their learning over time and to be able to transfer these skills to a work environment (Starfield, 2000).

### **6.9.3. More Targeted Errors Lessons**

Lessons on specific errors can be taught by lecturers. Make a note of errors made by students rather than always correcting them right away. If you immediately correct them, it might be discouraging. Make a note of them and take care of them later. First-year students' errors and mistakes, such as those in speaking, writing, reading, and listening. That is one method for making sure you are specific in your instruction rather than trying to finish the curriculum while other issues need to be dealt with. In order to address urgent issues that keep coming up as a result of what lecturers observed during their teaching, lecturers should significantly depart from the syllabus.

## **6.10. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings from the document analysis, which included course outlines and study guides, interview findings (with lecturers and key informants), questionnaire findings, class observation findings, and written work findings from students.



## **Chapter 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1. PRELIMINARIES AND SUMMARY**

The previous chapter analyzed and discussed the study's findings. This chapter concludes the study's findings and makes recommendations. Some conclusions were reached, recommendations were made, and improvement plans were developed.

The findings in this chapter about students' English proficiency and oral and written communication skills are based on a study of the literature as well as on research and information gathered through interviews, questionnaires, observations, students' written work and document analysis. The key findings are presented and discussed in relation to the research questions. It is important to note that only the first three research questions are addressed in this section. The final research question is only addressed in the "recommendations" section.

### **7.2. CONCLUSION**

Students who enroll in higher studies with a minimal English proficiency should not be anticipated into becoming proficient in the English language within a limited amount of time. The above challenge is aggravated by the fact that the English courses they have registered in at a university are only three to four months long in a semester and the communication course is entirely online, with no or little face-to-face interaction between the lecturer and the students as well as among the students themselves. Furthermore, the time allocation to some of the English modules has a massive effect on English course learning and teaching in the manner that lecturers are deterred from using excellent teaching approaches since the time allocation is totally inadequate to cater such methodologies; lecturers must not hurry to finish the course material, and the predicament remains intact.

According to Pathan (2013), students frequently experience a wide range of linguistic issues when speaking and listening in English, which clearly hinders and impairs their communication and negatively affects their overall fluency. As a result, acknowledging their communication barrier and figuring out the best methods to address them is extremely crucial in assisting students with oral language development. Pathan (2013) continues by arguing that there is benefit in researching the types of challenges that students experience during verbal communication, in addition to the

proactive measures they may consider taking to address these issues. The knowledge gained can aid in the learning and instruction of fluency and accuracy in the language class.

In addition to helping academic staff connect with their diverse student body, allowing students to verbally express their understanding, abilities, principles, and perceptions gives them ongoing opportunities to improve their language abilities. This kind of evaluation did not carry much weight with the lecturers. Particularly in the entirely online English Communication and Study Skills course, students were not given more opportunities to communicate in the targeted language. For instance, they did not participate in meaningful tasks and activities that encouraged oral speaking (such as discussion, brainstorming, and reporting). Some students expressed concern about this, saying they needed more real-world speaking exercises to sharpen their English.

Data gathered through the questionnaire indicated most students preferred to converse with someone who spoke a similar language as them (mother tongue). Students must not be forced to converse with the other classmates who do not have the same language as them, but if they do not, there will always be discrepancies in and out of the classroom setting simply because they will not practice English speaking skills. During the interviews, key informants and lecturers emphasized the importance of integrating the abilities of relating speaking and writing skills in their classroom instruction so that students can learn from both at the same time. However, the researcher did not observe lecturers creating an environment in which students felt assisted and were not hesitant to make errors and mistakes when speaking. This could be due to the limited number of observation visits and the fact that English Communication Study Skills is entirely online.

Finally, it was discovered that students' speaking abilities were not a major issue, particularly among those who had spoken in class. Sadly, there were no oral presentation lessons in any of the classes that were observed. In their written work, students' inability to construct grammatically sound sentences was clear. Both lecturers and students were concerned about this. According to lecturers, students had difficulty writing grammatically correct sentences. Despite speaking English very well, there was still a ton of writing to be done. Students also acknowledged that improving their written and oral English proficiency required mastering fundamental grammar. It was supported by the students' written essays, which are shown in Chapter 5, as well as by the responses to the questionnaire. Students reported having writing issues ranging from spelling to sentence construction. This was also plainly visible in the written work submitted by the students,

which was examined. Students failed to use proper English to write in accordance with grammar rules.

The students' work that was reviewed lacked organization and coherence, and the majority of the writing seemed unclear. Numerous grammatical errors, including incomplete sentences, misspelled words, incorrect punctuation, and a limited vocabulary visible in written essays. Additionally, students overused complex sentences. One strategy lecturers might use to address particular writing issues is to create visual representations from students' individual writings and use them for self-assessment.

### **7.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

There has been a greater awareness that students attending higher education are more and more underprepared in terms of English language proficiency. Higher education institutions would be reckless if they allowed students to gain access who they know do not have a fair chance of succeeding in their studies and did not provide additional assistance to such students. When one considers the cost of maintaining students at university for several years who then fail to complete their studies, it is financially imprudent. However, the burden on tertiary institutions is increasing as a result of students who are not sufficiently prepared for higher education but demand access to it. As a result, with a growing percentage of unprepared students attending higher education in Namibia, the onus is on institutions of higher learning to provide significant learning support, giving underprepared students a greater likelihood of succeeding in their studies. During this study, students appeared to be unfamiliar with academic writing norms, as well as unable to articulate themselves precisely in English at times.

Lecturers should use spelling dictation exercises, especially those that concentrate on similar-sounding words, to help students who have trouble spelling practice English words. Due to the fact that this study showed that students do not correctly use the various tenses, it is advised that lecturers refrain from teaching grammar the conventional way. This is due to the fact that, in accordance with Farooq *et al.* (2012), all problems with grammar that ESL students encounter are caused by conventional grammar instruction and a dearth of student practice. ESL instructors and lecturers ought to put more of an emphasis on teaching students how to communicate effectively in real-world situations.

Everyone has a responsibility to be aware of how important English is in this nation. It serves as both a teaching tool and an official language. To help students and learners with their English language proficiency, schools and universities must take action.

The following suggestions may help students improve their writing abilities: It might be accomplished by implementing a well-designed writing intervention program that requires students to complete assigned tasks and submit them for marking to lecturers as well as provide students with guidance on mistakes in their written essays and necessitate them to rectify these spelling mistakes in their writing process.

Recognizing students who have a particular insufficiency of language ability and allocating tutors or lecturers to them, as well as creating extra public discussion and trying to speak classes accessible at least once a week, will be relevant for improving students' speaking abilities.

Students must take responsibility for their own learning, expose themselves to the use of English in a variety of contexts, and understand that their ability to write well and understand texts can be negatively impacted by not understanding how language is used in different types of texts.

Intensity of writing. It would be unrealistic to expect low-ability academic writers to produce comparable-quality written texts in contexts with limited period of time for revision. When one deems, for example, the sufficient extra time typically offered for revision and editing in essay-type writing tasks, comparing a text produced in such a sense to a more immediate type of text produced in the context of examination or test writing becomes difficult. When timeframes are stipulated in minutes instead of days or weeks, the urgency of completion has an unavoidable impact on the quality of the finished product. It is therefore strongly advised that lecturers introduce students to the six stages of the writing process in order to give students enough time and opportunities to improve.

The Department of Language Development should create academic discourse from multiple disciplines and then try to identify common characteristics of academic writing that are shared by fields of study and can be used as a basis for creating writing course materials.

Language support initiatives are progressively being interpreted as aiding in the advancement of academic literacy; therefore, an approach that emphasizes the interconnected nature of the



language being used for a particular function in the real setting of tertiary education is strongly suggested.

The primary tasks of Unam's Department of Language Development should include determining the academic literacy levels of new first-year students and trying to offer English academic courses to all those students who are identified by the testing instrument as being at risk in this regard. As a consequence, the Department of Language Development should examine the levels of academic literacy of each new group of first-year students and actively intervene based on the findings of such assessments.

The department also should offer some non-compulsory first-year courses that concentrate on numerous facets of academic literacy (e.g., presentation skills, academic writing, academic reading, academic writing, and legal discourse). An academic writing course that will give them more authority over their studies' writing requirements.

Academic discourse proficiency is essential for students who are compelled to partake in independent reading. Even more importantly, proficient academic writing will be required in the future to share the findings of the research projects that these students will undertake in order to be admitted into the academic researchers. Apart from the points mentioned, the main goal of the department should be to assist university students in acquiring the required level of academic literacy so that they have a greater chance of succeeding in their studies.

The university ought to help students improve their oral communication abilities. Numerous opportunities for listening and speaking about a variety of topics, such as course content, individual interests, and current events, are necessary for students.

English Communication and Study Skills should change from being fully online to face-to-face or blended mode, where students can come in for two hours or one hour per week for face-to-face classes and then work online the rest of the time. It can be believed that the lecturer's effect in class may encourage or compel them to complete their work.

All lecturers should give students the chance to participate in a variety of oral discussions related to the standards in each of the strands, including brainstorming to determine what they already know about a particular topic of the text they are about to read, talking about writing assignment strategies, presenting or defending ideas, debating topics, and providing feedback on peers' work.

The current study reveals that some UNAM lecturers hardly ever instruct students in communicative language. The opposite is true; they spend a lot of time explicitly teaching grammar. Because what they learn in the classroom does not correspond to actual language use, it appears that UNAM students are not learning English effectively. It is advised that ESL teachers and lecturers pay more attention to communicative language instructions in order for students to be able to communicate in the target language (English) and thereby improve their English language competence, even though grammatical competence is necessary for language use (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

Again, several studies on the English proficiency of Namibian students under the Namibian language policy, as well as the teaching of ESL in Namibia, have already been conducted. However, no research has ever been conducted to investigate the English language proficiency and communication skills of Namibian university students. In this regard, the current study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge. First, this study investigated how the level of English proficiency affects the communication skills of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education and Human Sciences, School of Education at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus. Second, the study also uncovered what could be the causes of these students' English language deficiency. This discovery is significant because Harris (2011) discovers that teachers, parents, and educationalists do not fully understand the language problems that students face and frequently attribute poor student performance to a lack of interest and commitment. As a result, this study sheds light on how students' background learning in schools and up to the university level is influenced by Namibia's current English policy.

This study's contribution highlights problem areas in teaching writing and oral skills, providing lecturers at UNAM and other institutions of higher learning with new ideas on how to teach these skills effectively. This applies not only to institutions of higher learning but also to the field of knowledge and the English field in Namibia. It is also in this context that recommendations for intervention programs to help students improve their English speaking and writing skills are made.

It is widely acknowledged that English lecturers play a key role in ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge in writing and speaking skills to face future challenges in writing and speaking. It is hoped that the proposed program will assist lecturers in developing

beneficial environments for teaching and learning English writing and speaking in order to ensure the proficiency required by students in their studies in a demanding and competitive world.

Furthermore, this study adds to the body of knowledge by revealing that students in Namibia continue to struggle with writing for a variety of reasons. Learners are having writing difficulties as a result of English as a medium of instruction, despite the minority people using it in their everyday communication. Further, UNAM students are unwilling to communicate in English outside of the classroom and to increase their reading and writing practice in order to improve their English proficiency and communication skills. Grammar should be taught in a communicative manner rather than in isolation by lecturers. Also, the syllabi or course outlines for communication courses should include more writing activities on longer pieces of writing so that students can improve or practice writing more frequently. Speaking activities such as presentations and debates are encouraged.

Finally, the study will assist UNAM students and learners, as well as students throughout the country, in understanding the causes of their writing problems and beginning to use the specific, realistic, and practical intervention strategies provided by key informants and lecturers to help them reduce or overcome writing problems. Without a doubt, this revelation should assist learners, students, lecturers, educationalists, and other academics in comprehending why students' writing problems are so prevalent at UNAM and the country at large.

#### **7.4. CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE**

There has only been one study on the writing and oral abilities of tertiary students in Namibia, but Frans' (2016) study concentrated on the challenges faced by students trying to learn English as a second language in two Namibian higher education institutions. However, some studies have been conducted on how Namibian student teachers teach writing skills to Ordinary and Higher-level English second language learners in Grades 11 and 12, as well as on the writing errors made by Grade 11 English learners. Since the main finding of this study was that students were not performing well in L2 at secondary schools, it was difficult for them to continue on to pursue further education at colleges and universities. A study on university students' English language proficiency and communication skills (speaking and writing skills) was deemed necessary.

The teaching of ESL in Namibia and the English as a Second Language proficiency of Namibian students have both been the subject of numerous studies. However, no study has ever been done to look into the communication skills and English language proficiency of Namibian university students. The current study significantly adds to the body of knowledge in this area. This study first examined the relationship between undergraduate students' communication abilities and their level of English proficiency in the Faculty of Education and Human Sciences, School of Education at the University of Namibia's Khomasdal Campus.

Second, the research revealed potential reasons for these students' English language deficiencies. This finding is significant because Harris (2011) finds that educators, including teachers, parents, and parents, frequently mistakenly blame students' poor performance on their lack of interest and commitment. This study clarifies how Namibia's current English policy affects students' background learning in schools and through the university level.

The contribution of this study offers insights into problematic areas in oral and written communication, giving lecturers at UNAM and other higher education institutions fresh ideas on how to teach students these skills. This applies to higher education institutions as well as the fields of English and Namibian expertise. Additionally, suggestions for intervention programs to aid students in improving their English speaking and writing abilities are made in this context.

This study also contributes to the body of knowledge by demonstrating that students in Namibia still experience writing difficulties for a variety of reasons. Despite the fact that a minority of people use English as their primary language of communication, learners still struggle with writing because of this.

Additionally, UNAM students are reluctant to use English outside of the classroom and to read and write more frequently in order to advance their language proficiency and communication abilities. Instead of being taught in a vacuum by lecturers, grammar should be taught in a communicative setting. In order to help students, improve or practice writing more frequently, the syllabi or course outlines for communication courses should include more writing exercises on longer pieces of writing. Presentations and debates that involve speaking are encouraged.

Last but not least, the study will help UNAM students and learners, as well as students across the nation, to comprehend the reasons behind their writing issues and start utilizing the precise, practical, and instructive intervention strategies offered by key informants and lecturers to help



them lessen or overcome writing issues. This information should undoubtedly help learners, students, lecturers, educationalists, and other academics to understand why writing issues among students are so common at UNAM and across the nation.

## **7.5. PERSPECTIVES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study found that students who wrote essays frequently ran into writing challenges. The study also identified potential reasons why some people struggle to speak English well. But it seems like these writing problems are commonplace. As a result, it is advised that research be done to look into and identify additional causes of English language learners' writing issues. This study ought to look into the instructional strategies and methods that lecturers might use to instruct students in English essay writing.

The lecturers contend that a lack of English background, which results from subpar English instruction in lower grades and a dearth of English resources, is one of the major factors contributing to students' poor English proficiency. It is therefore recommended that in-depth research be done to examine how ESL is taught in lower grades in order to ascertain whether this is the real cause of the issue or whether other causes require additional research. Additionally, this study suggested effective intervention strategies to help students overcome issues with poor English proficiency and writing communication skills.

This study discovered that assessment, early identification, and the provision of additional learning opportunities designed to improve oral communication skills can all help to improve oral communication skills. An indexing tool is required so that "at risk" undergraduate education students can be identified early and given the proper language supports. This tool could help identify "at risk" students who need on-campus language support as early as the first semester and track students' oral language skill development over the course of their studies.

Such institutional support is essential in the context of widening participation to meet the needs of students. To monitor the development of undergraduate education students' oral communication skills over the course of a course, a longitudinal mixed-method study with qualitative student insights about language support is necessary.

Future research should incorporate more representative sampling due to the current study's sampling flaws. If probability sampling is used and the sample size is increased, the research findings will be more broadly applicable. While this study concentrated on a single faculty at a single campus and institution, comparative studies between institutions and faculties can provide insightful data about students' communication and English language skills.



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## **APPENDICES: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

### **Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

My name is Penehafo Henok, a PhD candidate in language education at the University of the Western Cape. This questionnaire is an instrument to collect data for the study on *INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF FIRST YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THE KHOMASDAL CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA.*

This instrument will collect your opinion towards your ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

Please, answer the following questions, giving any information that you consider important for you. The data you provide us will be used confidentially.

#### **SECTION A:**

Instructions for completing the questionnaire:

After each question you are offered five different options. Choose the option that applies better to your oral performance in the Communication Skills classes.

Taking into account that VOCABULARY is an essential part when talking and interacting orally with others.

1.1 How often are you able to express your ideas clearly?

- a) I always have vocabulary enough to express myself clearly.
- b) I usually have vocabulary enough to express myself clearly.
- c) I sometimes have vocabulary enough to express myself clearly.
- d) I hardly ever have vocabulary enough to express myself clearly.
- e) I never have vocabulary enough to express myself clearly.

1.2 How often do you understand other people's ideas clearly?

- a) I understand all the vocabulary that I encounter.
- b) I understand most of the vocabulary that I encounter.
- c) I understand some of the vocabulary that I encounter.
- d) I understand very little vocabulary that I encounter.
- e) I understand none of the vocabulary that I encounter.

When expressing ideas and thoughts, having a good PRONUNCIATION and INTONATION will give us a better understanding of what we want to communicate.

Based on this,

1.3 How is your pronunciation before starting a conversation in classes?

- a) I always have good pronunciation when talking.
- b) I usually have good pronunciation when talking.
- c) I sometimes have good pronunciation but with little mistakes.
- d) I hardly ever have good pronunciation but with mistakes.
- e) I never have good pronunciation when talking.

1.4 How is your intonation before starting a conversation in classes?

- a) I always have good intonation when talking.
- b) I usually have good intonation when talking.
- c) I sometimes have good intonation but with little mistakes.
- d) I hardly ever have good intonation but with mistakes.
- e) I never have good pronunciation when talking.

INTERACTING and PARTICIPATING in class are two important elements that help the development of oral performance.

Based on this,

1.5 How often do you interact with other classmates?

- a) I always interact in class easily with others.
- b) I usually interact in class with others.
- c) I sometimes interact in class but with some problems.
- d) I hardly interact in class but with some difficulty.
- e) I never interact in class with others.

1.6 How is your participation in class before starting the conversation in class?

- a) I always participate in class easily with others.
- b) I usually participate in class with others.
- c) I sometimes participate in class but with some problems.
- d) I hardly participate in class but with some difficulty.
- e) I never participate in class with others.

A FLUENT person has the ability to converse about fairly abstract ideas, state opinions, understand the language when spoken normally (on TV, radio, film, etc.), can reorganize sentences in order to communicate and figure out the majority of new vocabulary within the context. In other words, fluency refers to the smoothness with which sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together during speech.

Based on this,

1.7 Are you fluent when speaking in English before starting conversation in classes?

- a) I am fluent but with little mistakes.
- b) I am fluent but with some mistakes.
- c) I am fluent but with mistakes.

1.8 Do you feel comfortable speaking the language (English)?

- a) I always feel good and comfortable when speaking in English.
- b) I sometimes feel good when speaking in English.
- c) I never feel good when speaking in English.

1.9 Could you communicate easily your ideas with your partners and friends?

- a) I always communicate my ideas and opinions with ease to others.
- b) I sometimes communicate my ideas and opinions to others.
- c) I never communicate my ideas and opinions with ease to others.

1.9 Are you able to understand the general idea of the language as it is spoken, even if you do not know every single word?

- a) I know most of the words.
- b) I recognize most of the words.
- c) I am not sure about the words.

Thinking in English is an important sign of fluency. Thinking in the language means that a person understands the words without actually translating them into the native language.

According to this:

1.10 To what extent do you use your first language L1 (mother tongue) in order to (mentally) build sentences when you interacted in English?

- a) I have never use the L1 to (mentally) build sentences when speaking in English.
- b) I hardly ever have use the L1 to (mentally) build sentences when speaking in English.
- c) I sometimes have use the L1 to (mentally) build sentences when speaking in English.
- d) I usually have use the L1 to (mentally) build sentences when speaking in English.
- e) I always have use the L1 to (mentally) build sentences when speaking in English.



**SECTION B:**

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

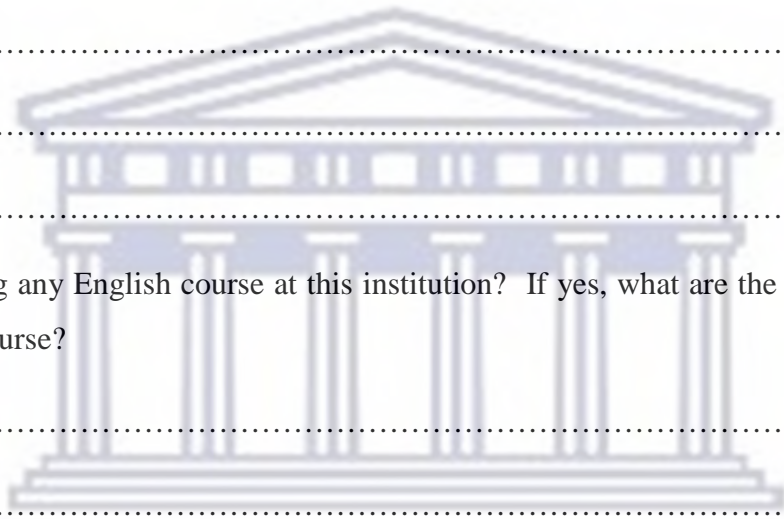
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12. Did you improve your English symbol anywhere (NAMCOL or UNAM Foundation course etc.? if yes, where?

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13. Are you doing any English course at this institution? If yes, what are the challenges do you face in this course?

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

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

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

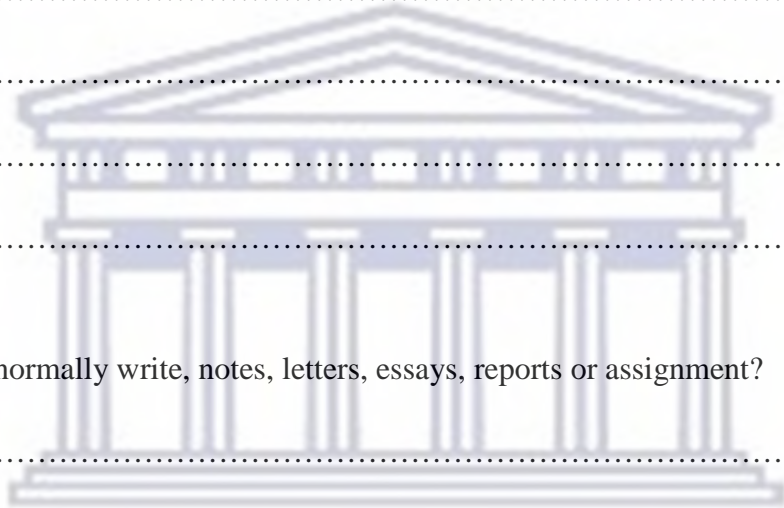
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17. Do you think the time allocated to this course is sufficient to master what you are supposed to learn in English? Please elaborate.

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18. Does the English course(s) at this institution meet your needs to be proficient in English?

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19. Would you like to study the English terminologies that relate to your field of specialization (Education)? Please elaborate.

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

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



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

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22. Are your friends from the same language group as you?

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

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24. Do you think you are fluent in English? Please elaborate.

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

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26. How do you perceive your communication skills as you participate in the English Communication course?



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27. What communication skills does the lecturer provide in the lecture/classroom?

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28. What factors are influencing the participation in oral activities inside the lecture/classroom?

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29. What factors are influencing the participation in the written activities inside the lecture/classroom?

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30. How does the grade influence your participation in an oral activity?

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31. What other factors influence your participation in an oral activity?  
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32. Which topics do you consider more motivating for conversation in classes?  
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33. What aspects of the conversation in class do you value the most?  
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THANK YOU!

## **Appendix 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

This interview is done as an instrument to collect data for the study on *INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF FIRST YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THE KHOMASDAL CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA*.

The following questions will be asked to the participants (lecturers).

1. Which English course/s are you responsible for?
2. What are your duties and responsibilities regarding the position you have mentioned?
3. What is the time frame allocated to the course/s you are responsible for?
4. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?
5. Are you satisfied with students' performance in your course/s? If not, what do you do?
6. How do you determine that the syllabus achieves its objectives?
7. How would you describe the communication skills of students?
8. How would you describe the English proficiency of students?
9. As lecturer, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?
10. Can you briefly describe the students' accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English?
11. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking abilities?  
What strategies do you use to help the students?

**APPENDICES: COURSE OUTLINES AND ACADEMIC ARTICLE**

**Appendix 3: ENGLISH FOR GENERAL COMMUNICATION**



<b>COURSE TITLE:</b>	<b>ENGLISH FOR GENERAL COMMUNICATION</b>
<b>COURSE CODE:</b>	<b>ULEG 2410</b>
<b>NQF LEVEL:</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>NOTIONAL HOURS:</b>	<b>320</b>
<b>CONTACT HOURS:</b>	<b>4 HOURS PER WEEK FOR 28 WEEKS</b>
<b>NQF CREDITS:</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>PRE-REQUISITE:</b>	<b>D IN ENGLISH AT NSSC Ordinary Level</b>
<b>COMPULSORY /ELECTIVE</b>	<b>COMPULSORY</b>
<b>SEMESTER OFFERED:</b>	<b>FIRST AND SECOND (YEAR COURSE)</b>

**Course Aims**

This course aims to:

- Cater for the language needs of the students who are enrolled for diploma programmes and those who meet the requirements to enroll for degree courses but have obtained a D in English.
- Serve as an introduction to university, where styles of teaching and learning differ from those at secondary schools.
- Focus on study skills and learner training
- Introduce students to text analysis and reflective practice



- Place emphasis on grammatical rules and the four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing.

**Exit learning outcomes**

Upon completion of the module students should be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to correctly interpret language in print
- Compose different writing tasks and activities
- Participate and argue point of view in classroom activities
- Interpret and infer information listened to in the classroom
- Apply basic referencing skills

**Listening**

An introduction to the nature of the spoken language; decoding own listening experiences; what listening involves; purpose of listening, characteristics of effective listeners; listening for general and specific information; listening and note-taking. Practical listening exercises.

**Usage**

Use of simple, compound and complex sentences; use of cohesive devices; different tenses; active and passive voice; direct and indirect speech; dictionary work; formal and informal language; discourse communities.

**Reading**

Features of written language; what is involved in the reading process; purposes of reading; text analysis; identifying arguments and evidence used to support them; distinguishing facts from opinions; reading techniques, i.e. skimming and scanning; word-attack skills; vocabulary expansion; introduction to referencing, introduction to text-mapping; decoding own reading experiences using metacognitive knowledge; summarizing; synthesizing and paraphrasing.

**Speaking**

Introduction to the nature of the spoken language; the effects of context and power relations on language; introduction to different spoken genres: conversations, presentations, interviews, group discussions and debates; communication competency and fluency; communication strategies; language functions.

## **Writing**

Comparison of features of spoken and written language; writing with a purpose; introduction to the process-genre approach; writing different kinds of texts for different discourse communities: different types of essays, letters, curriculum vitae, self-reviews; editing and peer-editing, reflections on own writing development and making entries in a portfolio; note-taking and note-making; summarizing; introduction to referencing (application); introduction to learner training.

## **Methods of facilitation of learning:**

The course is facilitated through lectures; seminars; tutorials and oral presentations by students.

### **Assessment Strategies:**

#### **Continuous Assessment (60%)**

1<sup>st</sup> Semester 1 test (reading & writing); 1 prescribed reading task; speaking assessment task.

2<sup>nd</sup> Semester 1 test (reading & writing), 1 essay and 1 speaking assessment task.

#### **Examination (40%)**

1X 3 hrs. examination paper

## **Quality Assurance Arrangements**

The method of evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning of the course consists of Internal moderation of both question papers and moderated scripts; regular student evaluation; workshops on reflections and improvements of teaching strategies; Self-evaluation by lecturers.

## **LEARNING RESOURCES**

Study guide, Internet, core readings will be posted electronically and other methodologies such as chat rooms, blogs, face book, twitter, CD's and hard copies, especially for distance students, and acknowledged experts and professionals in the specific domains may be invited.

## **APPENDICES**

Benchmarking with other universities, external consultant, relevant stakeholders from all faculties and centres of UNACAP and this submission has been submitted to all stakeholders for consultations, suggestions, and changes. Their feedbacks shall be incorporated as far as possible.

**Appendix 4: ENGLISH COMMUNICATION AND STUDY SKILLS**



1. PART A:	2. COURSE SPECIFICATION
Course Title:	<b>ENGLISH COMMUNICATION AND STUDY SKILLS</b>
Course Code:	<b>ULCE 3419</b>
NQF Level	<b>4</b>
NQF Credit	<b>160</b>
Contact Hours	<b>HOURS PER WEEK FOR 14 WEEKS</b>
Notional Hours	<b>16</b>
Pre-requisite	<b>C IN ENGLISH AT NSSC Ordinary Level</b>
Compulsory/Elective	<b>COMPULSORY</b>
Semester Offered	<b>FIRST AND SECOND SEMESTER</b>
<b>COURSE DESCRIPTION:</b>	
<p><b>COURSE AIMS:</b> This course aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover all four language skills</li> <li>• Introduce students to different academic genres.</li> <li>• Empower students with skills necessary to produce various types of texts in accordance with their discourse communities.</li> <li>• Empower students to continue to learn to improve their academic literacy (learning to learn)</li> </ul>	

**Exit learning outcomes**

Upon completion of the module students should be able to:

**Learning Outcomes:** On completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze different genres
2. Demonstrate comprehension of different genres
3. Use a dictionary for vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation
4. Use different and appropriate spoken and written communication skills to meet the needs of various audiences and discourse communities
5. Write grammatically correct sentences, string them together to form meaningful and coherent paragraphs
6. Plan and structure different types of texts to achieve communicative purpose
7. Demonstrate a positive attitude towards continuous learning

**Referencing skills:**

**Speaking:** Characteristics of spoken language; different genres of spoken language: conversations, interviews, speaking in group discussions and oral presentations; introduction to analysis of spoken genres; communication strategies.

**Writing:** Characteristics of the written language; the purpose of writing; crafting a text for a specific audience; the process-genre approach; paragraph organization; writing effective introductory and concluding paragraphs; cohesion and the use of cohesive devices; types of sentences and how to construct effective sentences; punctuation; paraphrasing; summarizing; use of correct grammatical structures and appropriate vocabulary; introduction to argument construction and how to maintain a line of argument; self-editing and peer-editing and lecturer-student conferencing.



**Reading:** The purposes of reading; what reading involves (background knowledge, guessing predicting, etc.); reading techniques and the 3R model; text analysis (identifying the different main components of texts, arguments and stylistic features); introduction to critical reading (identifying and weighing up support for arguments and finding basis for own arguments); stages of reading; selecting and evaluating sources; selecting and synthesizing information; decoding own reading experiences using metacognitive knowledge and monitoring of reading to improve it; vocabulary building and the acquisition of new language structures.

**Listening:** Different purposes for listening: listening for general and specific information; practical exercises on listening and note-taking; barriers to effective listening and how to overcome such barriers.

**Grammar:** Language use: tenses, active and passive voice, direct and reported speech; vocabulary development.

**Methods of Facilitation of learning:** The course is facilitated through the following activities: interactive language learning activities, seminars, tutorials and oral presentations by students; special workshops based on key specific language problems.

**Assessment Strategies:** Continuous assessment(60 %) consists of: 1 test; 1 oral presentation; 1 short academic essay writing; extensive reading (book review); Examination: (40%) 1 x 3 hrs. examination paper)

**Quality Assurance Arrangements:** The method of evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning of the course consists of: internal moderation of both question papers and scripts; regular student evaluation; reflection workshops; self-reflection by lecturers to improve teaching strategies through the use of portfolios; self-directed learning; interactive teaching methods.

**Prescribed Materials:**

**Recommended Materials:** Study guide, Internet, core readings will be posted electronically and other methodologies such chat rooms, blogs, face book, twitter, CDs and hard copies,

especially for distance students, and acknowledged experts and professionals in the specific domains may be invited

**APPENDICES:** Benchmarking with other universities, external consultant, relevant stakeholders from all faculties and Centres of UNAM and this submission has been submitted to all stakeholders for consultations, suggestions, and changes. Their feedbacks shall be incorporated as far as possible.



## **Appendix 5: ACADEMIC ARTICLE OF TEST 1 IN ENGLISH FOR GENERAL COMMUNICATION**

**Warburton, E. C., Bugarin, R., & Nunez, A. M. (2001). Bridging the Gap: Academic Preparation and Postsecondary Success of First-Generation Students. Statistical Analysis Report. Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports.**

This report examines the high school preparation and postsecondary persistence of first-generation students, those students whose parents had no education beyond high school and compares them with students whose parents went to college. Previous research has demonstrated that first-generation students exhibit different college enrollment and persistence behaviors than their counterparts whose parents have more education. Such studies found that first-generation students were less likely than their peers to complete advanced mathematics classes in high school. Even among those qualified for college, first-generation students were less likely to enroll in 4-year institutions (Horn and Nuñez 2000). Independent of other relevant demographic, enrollment, and college involvement factors, first-generation status was also found to be negatively associated with students' persistence and attainment (Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998).

What has not been well understood, however, is the extent to which the academic preparation of first-generation students in high school affects their persistence and attainment in postsecondary education. The purpose of this report is to examine whether first-generation students who were otherwise equally prepared academically were comparable to students whose parents went to college in terms of their grade-point averages (GPAs), number of remedial courses in postsecondary education, and rates of persistence (i.e., whether they were retained at their first institution, had stayed on a persistence track toward the bachelor's degree, 1 or had attained a degree). This analysis focuses on a subset of 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students who started their postsecondary education in 4-year institutions.

The academic rigor of students' high school curriculum was strongly associated with their postsecondary GPA, with the amount of remedial coursework they took, and with their rates of persistence and attainment. As overall high school academic rigor increased, so did students' GPA. Students who did not exceed the requirements of the core New Basics

curriculum had a lower GPA than did those who exceeded them. The rigor of students' high school curriculum was also related to the number of remedial courses they took during their first year of postsecondary education. As the rigor of the secondary curriculum increased, the proportion of students who took one or more remedial courses decreased from 21 percent to 3 percent.

High school academic preparation was also related to students' likelihood of remaining enrolled in postsecondary education. In general, the more rigorous their high school curriculum, the more likely students were to persist (or to attain a degree) at the initial postsecondary institution in which they enrolled. While 62 percent of students who did not exceed the core New Basics requirements were still enrolled or had attained a degree as of spring 1998, 84 percent of students who exceeded the requirements did so. Likewise, the more rigorous the students' high school curriculum, the higher their likelihood of staying on the persistence track to a bachelor's degree: 87 percent of students who took rigorous academic coursework in high school stayed on the persistence track, compared with 62 percent of students who did not take such coursework. Finally, students whose curriculum was rigorous were more likely to still be enrolled and working for a degree than students who did not exceed the core New Basics requirements (93 percent vs. 75 percent).

This study found a relationship between parents' education level and the likelihood that students would undertake a more rigorous high school curriculum and, consequently, enroll, perform well, and persist in 4-year postsecondary institutions. Overall, first-generation status was shown to have a negative association with students' academic preparation and persistence.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this analysis indicate that students who were well prepared for postsecondary education were very likely to persist in 4-year institutions. Students who took rigorous coursework in high school accounted for more than 80 percent of those students who either stayed on the persistence track to a bachelor's degree or were retained



at their initial institution. At the same time, parents' levels of education were found to be associated with rates of students' retention and persistence in college, even when controlling for measures of academic preparedness (such as rigor of secondary curriculum and college entrance examination scores).

These findings hold true even when other related variables are held constant. That is, even after controlling for variables such as academic preparation and postsecondary achievement, parents' education continued to be a significant factor in determining whether students were enrolled at their initial institution 3 years after entering or stayed on the persistence track. Students whose parents attained a bachelor's degree were more likely than first-generation students to remain enrolled at their initial 4-year institution. Likewise, after controlling for related variables, students whose parents attained a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to stay on the persistence track to a bachelor's degree than first-generation students.

At the same time, after holding all other variables constant, students who took rigorous coursework in high school significantly increased their chances of staying on the persistence track to a bachelor's degree. Taken together, these results suggest that, while first-generation status is an important predictor of success in postsecondary education, rigorous preparation in high school substantially narrows the gap in postsecondary outcomes between first-generation students and their peers whose parents graduated from college.

## APPENDICES: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

### Appendix 6: TRANSCRIPTION OF INFORMANT 1 INTERVIEW

*Q1: Which English course are you responsible for?*

I teach English for General Communication, English Communication Study Skills, and English for Academic Purposes and Academic Writing for Post Graduate Students.

*Q2: What is the time frame allocated to the course or courses you are responsible for?*

Both English Communication and Study Skills and English for General Communication are allocated 4 hours per week which is a total of 40 hours per semester.

*Q3: Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?*

I was not involved because I was not part of the institution at that time, but my role came to take place during the review of these courses. For example, (it) (the review) looked at stakeholders' needs. Language Center teaches students to be able to communicate well in their faculties. So the needs assessment was conducted and one of the people that completed the questionnaire was staff members of different faculties who deal with students during and after the time the students are/were doing their English courses at the Language Center. We had to change a number of things that the faculties found fit for students to learn.

[Sub question] *When was the review done?*

The review started in 2021 and it still on going. The curriculum transformation is still in the process. The needs assessment was done already. The syllabus has been submitted and has been approved by Sanet. What needs to be done now is material development. The new curriculum will be implemented in 2023.

*Q4: Are you satisfied with the students' performance in your course/s? If not, what do you do?*

I will say I am not really satisfied. I think I should let you know English Communication and Study skills is offered fully online, and this has been going on before the Covid-19 outbreak. It is not a response to the out-break, it has been fully online, but what I have noticed including other courses that went online due to Covid-19 is that it is only some students who have that self-motivation to drive their own education. Some students still have that mentality of having someone on their watch to say do your work, calling them out to focus on their studies. Sometimes you find that for example, you have 100 students enrolled for a course and only 30 students that are completing the task. At the end of the day, you have poor performance, not necessarily that students did not master what they were taught, but because they did not do their work. So, I can say I am not really satisfied at the moment.

*Q5: If you are not satisfied with their performance, what do you do in that case?*

I have tried a number of things which I think they did not work as well. Some of those things is to contact students directly via Moodle by messaging them directly to inform them that there is an activity they have not done. While, English Communication and Study Skills was full online, last year the lecturers responsible for this course started giving (them) students virtual classes. During the past years, students were only provided with instructions, recorded materials and activities that they have to do on their own. As of last year, lecturers introduced virtual classes. With all those measures in place, I am still not satisfied because there are still few students that make time to log on and attend classes. Something that is not in my power is perhaps these courses can be changed from being fully online to blended mode where the students can come in for two hours or one hour per week for face to face classes and then the rest of the hours they can work online. I think that way the present effect of the lecturer might encourage or force them to do their work.

*Q6: How do you determine that the students have achieved the objectives as stipulated in the syllabus?*

We do that by assessment we ensure that the type of assessments that we use are aligned to the learning objectives that are stipulated in the syllabus. For example, if we have to set an assignment or test, it should be assessing what students are expected to do as stipulated in the syllabus.

*Q7: How do you describe the writing and speaking skills of your students?*

Although I said I am not satisfied I was basing it on numbers. For example, that only a few students who really benefit from this course [English Communication and Study Skills], but if I have to focus on those few who attend/complete the course, these students are improving all the way, their writing is getting better. Some students came in with difficulties such as the use of punctuation marks. Some write sentences without punctuation marks, although they are coming from high school, but you see them improving because there are a lot of writing activities that are provided online. There is a clear line between those who really attend classes and those who do not attend, there is a clear difference. When you meet the same students in the subsequent course, for example English for Academic purposes, the same students are no more struggling at all.

Some of the skills that are taught in the English Communication and Study Skills are somehow overlapping and allow students to lean on when they go for English for Academic Purposes. For Example, they are taught how to reference, when they move on to the next course they tend to show mastery on this aspect. Although, some students come to the university with poor English proficiency and communication skills in their first year, they improve as they are progressing through their university years. “Even to narrow it down their improvement is noticeable in the course itself”. For example, the students that were struggling in the first semester course English communication and Study skills, when you meet them in the English for Academic Purposes, have a better grasp of communication, so they perform better.

*Q8: How would you describe students’ written and oral proficiency in English?*

Sometimes when you interact with students, some of them have difficulties in interacting with you and some of them are vocal in spoken English, but when it comes to writing skills, there are those who were vocal but struggling with writing. Surprisingly, you will find some who were struggling expressing themselves orally, but when they are writing they are writing well.

*Q9: In your opinion, what are the causes of poor English proficiency and communication skills of your students?*

One of the causes could be poor preparation from the schools they are coming from. If there were poor instructions from the school they came from, might contribute to poor communication skills



that they come with (here) UNAM”. Another one could be limited exposure to the English language, maybe you do not have access to the English reading materials. If you come (here) UNAM you likely to have difficulties with reading or with the content that is in English. Sometimes students are coming from areas where English is not really used in everyday communication, therefore you only use it perhaps in the formal environments, e. g going to the doctor. It could be also where you are coming, you do not write a lot, writing is just not part of your culture. Maybe the types of learning /teaching strategies do not expose you to a lot of writing opportunities. Writing is not a skill that you just pick up randomly, it requires practice.

*Q10: What are the effects of poor English proficiency and communication skills among your students?*

Poor English communication skills can have negative effects on students’ performance, for example, the instructions given, the students might not interpret them correctly, because the person has difficulties in reading and understanding what is required from them. It also boils down to someone’s reading fluency or reading speed. Sometimes you find out that the person will not be able to do cover the required amount of materials that they need to be covered within a limited time such as a week. Another issue is the production skill, for example, when they are going to write, to communicate what they know on paper especially when doing assignments, they might understand the materials very well, but they end up failing because of the way they have communicated the information to the reader who is the lecturer, it might mean something else. It has that effect that the students might not perform as they should have done in their studies.

*Q11: As a lecturer, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?*

We operate from the views and understanding that language skills are related and need to be integrated in the lesson. Although, you find yourself teaching one skill as the main focus, you are likely to integrate speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. So, students will read the content material, write about it, discuss or do a presentation about it and also listening from their lecturers and peers/ class mates. Activities are designed in a way that students will be able to perform tasks using/ integrating all the four language skills mentioned above. Another example, a student is required to write an academic essay and after writing, he/she should present it to the class as well.

In that way, students are able to see the connection between all the four language skills. This is also happening in real life situations. In Academia, people write papers or submit journals and later do a presentation. Speaking activities were limited when English Communication and Study Skills course was fully online due to technological challenges, but when virtual classes were introduced, more activities were designed for students' engagement/ participation. For example, students are given a task to go read an article and come report back to the class.

*Q12: Do you see it as your role to help students build confident in their speaking and written abilities?*

Of course, I think I play a huge role in doing that.

*Q13: What remedies or strategies do you have in place to help students improve their English proficiency and communication skills?*

It is my view that exposure is very important. Whether, it is reading activities, you need to read more. A language is not like content subjects where you are taught something, and you just need to remember. You need to experience reading skills, you need to be given more chances to read. One of the ways I use to give multiple opportunities for student explore all the four language skills namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. I try by all means to have a variation of topics from different disciplines such as science, social sciences, law, education and so on. This helps students to see that the skills that they are learning will be useful in their fields of study and in real life situations. These English courses, with the emphasis to English for General Communication and Study Skills do not just focus on the academic papers, we take learning materials from magazines, newspaper articles and see how the language plays a role in negotiating and communicating the issues and matters of the society.

Thank you!

## **Appendix 7: TRANSCRIPTION OF INFORMANT 2 INTERVIEW**

*Q1: Which English course are you responsible for?*

“I teach English Communication and Study Skills and English for Academic Purposes and English for General Communication.

*Q2: What is the time frame allocated to the course/s you are responsible for?*

For English Communication and Study Skills 4 hours per week, total 40 hours per semester.

For English for General communication 4 hours per week, but this one is a year course module.

*Q3: Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?*

Not really, when I joined UNAM I found the syllabus on the ground already, what I was involved it was just the review, when the courses were reviewed. I was part of the review process.

When did the review take place?

We usually review after five years. The last review was last year 2021, because of UNAM restructuring we were forced to review all our courses content. This year, 2022 we are still in the process of reviewing and reconstructing new things/ content. Lecturers divide chapters among themselves that they have to review. They can then boost the chapter for example, by adding new skills or technological skills because we are moving toward the 4<sup>th</sup> industry. “We need engage or put more modern skills because these study guides and course outlines were adopted many years ago.

*Q4: Are you satisfied with the students’ performance in your course(s)? If not, what do you do?*

I am not really satisfied with the students’ performance because English for General Communication is already a basic course and when students come to the university, we want them to adapt to the university level but with a lower level, a university level but they adapt from secondary to tertiary level. So, this course is for students who did not perform well in English. It

is designed for diploma students, it is not a degree course. This course is designed for students who have scored below a degree minimum requirement entry. It is for students who scored a D or E in English. It is a year course so that students will do a lot of activities and familiarize themselves with course by the end of the year. So, I am not really satisfied with their performances. What I do normally is that I allow them to repeat if they fail. There are no other measures that can be taken if they did not make it. So, the best thing is for them to repeat the whole year. By the end of the second year of repeating, they will do well. English Communication and Study Skills is more or less the same with English for General Communication. There are few differences. English Communication and Study Skills is for students who have met the university entry requirements. But the course itself is short. By the end of the semester some students will not have mastered all the skills properly. However, although it is short, there is another course which compulsory which English for Academic Purposes is is. That's why I am saying, I am not really satisfied with English for General Communication and English Communication and Study Skills but because of different reasons mentioned. Another point is that students come to the university with lower symbols and they need much time to improve. For English for General Communication, they are given more time, a year, but the fact that they came with lower symbols makes them to have a long way to go. However, for English Communication and Study Skills, the semester is too short. The students are okay, but while they are about to grasp/master the skills, the semester is over. But it is not really a matter of concern, as there is another course, which is compulsory, English for Academic Purposes. By the end of the last English course, most of the students have really improved.

*Q5. How would you determine that students have achieved the objectives as stipulated in the syllabi?*

I look at this by the way how students demonstrate the skills that we have taught them during assessments. We have classroom assessments, which can be daily exercises, texts, examination itself and many other projects and assignments to do. When they give me clues that they do well or show that they have learnt or acquired the skills of what is being achieved in this task that we give them, then I would say the performance is good or they have actually achieved goals as stipulated in the syllabus.



*Q6. Do you give them more speaking or written activities?*

We balance all the skills equally except for listening activities. Listening is the first unit that we start with so that they pay attention during lectures. They need to listen attentively in all other lectures that they attend at their faculties. We focus more on reading and writing rather than speaking and listening. There is also a speaking unit /part. But we have seen that students struggle more in reading and writing. At this stage we balance both equally, not comparing to other courses, advanced courses that would only focus on reading and writing. We say it is a matter of balance, expect for listening where we do not really do much in listening. I mean what is there to do in listening? Listening is the first unit that we start with in both courses. We teach/ we want them to pay attention in lectures. We teach them the listening skills first, so they listen attentively in all other lectures back at their faculties. Given that, that is chapter one once off skill that we give them so that throughout when we teach, I am not going back to teach them how to listen. We focus more on reading and writing, rather than speaking and listening.

There is also speaking part, but as you can see also in examinations and other assessments, students struggle more in reading and writing than speaking and listening. They come from high schools with good spoken English, fluent, but when it comes to writing is worse. Reading and writing is where we focus most, but as I said it is a balance and it is also depending on what need to be instilled in them. For listening, is not really our focus, it is a once time skill that we teach them, and they carry on. Every day we listen. When we hear people speaking, we listen to them. So, it is not like reading, with reading you need materials and so forth, but listening is automatic. You listen, activate and make sense of what you are hearing. That's why I focus more on reading and writing.

*Q7. How would you describe the writing in oral communication skills of your students in general?*

When it comes to communication, we talk about all the four language skills. I would say students come with good speaking skills. They would communicate clearly orally, but when it comes to writing, it is a problem. They write mostly from reading. Their reading and writing skills are average. I do not want to say it is worse, but we have a very big problem in Namibian students when it comes to reading and writing.

*Q8. In Your opinion, what are the causes of poor English proficiency and communication skills of your students?*

For both courses, let me start with reading. We have poor reading culture back at school level. So, we cannot expect students to come perform miracles at the university. First students need to start loving reading. They were not instilled the love of reading at their schools. I know there are libraries at schools and so forth, maybe the teachers are not doing enough also. Number one cause of poor English proficiency is poor culture of reading among Namibian students. Students do not read. They do not even love reading. I am a product of pre-independence era at a secondary school, but I can tell you that I started school before pre and maybe later after independence, a few years after independence there were no libraries, there was nothing at my school, nobody will tell you to read, but luckily, we had a TV at home. You will see some programmes which encourage children to read and so forth. So, it is a really bad up to this era, when we have libraries at schools, we expect learners to go to the libraries to read, but it is not happening. The learners need to be empowered. The love of reading or the culture of reading need to be promoted or instilled in our learners, so that when they come to the university, they are able to read, but they do not love reading. The only way to get them to the mastering/ proficiency in reading is when the love of reading is instilled in them at any early stage.

When it comes to writing, from secondary school to tertiary level, tables turn because this is a different whole aspect of writing. This is an academic writing that we teach them at the university. We teach them at the level of academic writing. I know the two courses do not say it is an academic writing (English for General Communication and English Study Skills), but I can tell you that the writing pieces that we teach, they are already academic. That excludes the English for Academic Purposes course. The two English courses prepare students for the advanced English level course that is offered by the University which is Academic Writing for Postgraduate. That is the advance English course offered by the University. The writing pieces taught at school are quite different from what they are taught at the university. This can be very challenging to the students. This is a new writing skill to the students, for example summary writing. The summary taught at the university is nothing like the summary at secondary level. So, this is a challenge for students on its own. When students come to the university, we cannot say they know nothing, but it is a whole

new beginning for them, they need to adapt. That adaptation system can also be a major challenge for them to write properly. That's why the students will get there eventually, but not at the time or the pace that we wanted them to be. We eventually expected them to do well by end of their first year. Students need more time in. In our new UNAM structure our courses are somehow extended to cater for those needs.

*Q9. What are the effects of poor English proficiency and communication skills among your students?*

The effects will be poor performance in the industry, in their careers when they start working because we teach students at the university, we want them to master these skills and perform well beyond the university level. It is not only for them to get their papers and go, we want them to perform in the industry when they go work. That's one major effect that I can talk about, that poor performances in the workplace. Everywhere you go in the workplace, communication is a key. Whether you are a doctor, teacher, nurse and lawyer, communication is the key. Failure to master this, will have a negative impact to students in their workplaces.

*Q10. As a lecturer, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?*

As I teach writing, I want them to report what they have written by presenting / reporting it to the class. For example, writing an essay and report it to the class in the summary form, without reading. As for me, I would give them written activities and ask them to report back in a summary form without reading to the class or ask them to discuss in pairs /groups and report back to the class. Do not read to us but speak to us. That's one way of improving students speaking skills. By doing that you are helping students to improve their writing and speaking skills at the same time.

*Q11. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking and writing abilities?*

Yes, it is my role to instill confidence in my students. I even love doing this, then any other thing in my teaching career, because there's nothing worse like teaching students with low self-esteem.

That's why in the speaking unit there is presentation skills. Every student is required to do a presentation. There is nothing worse than students who lack confidence. They will crush your confidence as well, because at one point you will not know how to grade these students. What I like doing, when we prepare the students for the speaking unit, it is the last unit of the whole course. We have made it the last unit deliberately, because you cannot ask students to start speaking in the first unit and grade them. It is not fair. First let them to acquaint themselves with the course, get to know which vocabulary to use in this course, their classmates and their lecturer so that at the end of the semester when they have familiarized themselves with the course, they are confident. So, what I do at the beginning of the semester when I introduce the course outline, I inform them that I need active participation from you all. It is for your own good. At the end of the day, you will not get good marks if you do not participate. During your presentation day, you will stand in front very shy, because you are not used to taking part in discussions during lectures. But if you have been an active student, who speaks every day, who actively participate during lectures discussions, during presentation day you will do very well. So, I think it is my role to instill confidence in students as I teach.

*Q12. What remedies or strategies do you have in place to help students improve their English proficiency and communication skills?*

Apart from the activities that we do in class, I can only motivate and encourage them to do a lot of reading and writing. Reading is important as it improves students' vocabulary, so that they can speak fluently. I encourage them to read many and variety of materials as they can. Read newspapers, magazines and borrow books from the library, just to read. But most of the times students are not eager to read, as they are of the opinion that they do not have enough/extra time to read other books or materials as they have a lot of modules to pay attention to. They will not manage. That is all I can do as a lecturer, as I am also a busy person and I have a lot of students that I teach, some are post graduates. So, apart from activities that I give during lectures, I can only encourage students to read and write. They can practice speaking to each other on campus and other members of the public. By speaking English, it can help them improve their English proficiency. Avoid speaking your mother tongue every time and interact people who are not from



your tribe or speak the same language as you. By practicing speaking, reading and writing on your own, you are improving your English proficiency and communication skills.

Language Centre has a writing unit where lecturers refer students to go and get clarification on writing. We actually have two, the reading and writing units. The students can go there to read. Apart from the library that can be busy, the students can go to the reading unit. There are many are many different reading materials that they can read while for example, waiting for their classes. There are two assistants at the writing unit on given consultation times. All they have to do is just to make a booking and they will get help. However, the Centre does not have a speaking unit for students, where they can learn or improve their speaking skills. What the lecturers do, they give electronic materials such as links for YouTube that they give them. In one of the two mentioned units, we used to have an old tape recorder, students will play and listen to people doing presentations, but because of technology, the tape recorders are not needed anymore. During the pandemic lecturers have recorded themselves to share with their students' good presentation skills that the students are required to master.

Thank you!

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with six columns and a pediment, rendered in a light purple color.

UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## **Appendix 8: TRANSCRIPTION OF INFORMANT 3 INTERVIEW**

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

I teach English for Academic Purposes and English Communication and Study Skills. I teach English for General Communication sometimes at the Namibian Business School.

*Q2. What is the time frame allocated to the course/s you are responsible for?*

Teaching 4 hours a week, per semester.

*Q3. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?*

I was not involved at the initial stages, but I was involved in the review process of the syllabi. The aims of the course and incorporation of critical thinking, use of technology, content and obviously the assessment methods, how you are going to evaluate the proficiency or rather the study skills that the students have acquired. The communication courses improve students' proficiencies, but they are also aimed at improving students' study skills and communication skills, obviously communication proficiency.

*Q4. Are you satisfied with student's performance in your course/s you are responsible for?*

Between 80-90% of our students do pass this module. They do not always pass with flying colours, they do not score 80% or 90%, the pass mark at the university is 50%, that is the university requirement. However, sometimes it results in dissatisfaction on my part as a lecturer teaching English, because a 50% score is not sufficient. What I do on annual basis when I review my teaching and my students' performances, I teach based on the areas of weaknesses that they have displayed. In other words, I try to focus more on the mistakes or errors that they are making, so that I can improve those areas. Namibia has a unique proficiency, some students come from rural based schools and some are from urban areas. My observation is that, urban based schools' students do much better than students who do not have access to the context where the language is used. What I really try to do is targeted teaching not only on specific students to improve certain areas,

but also noting down the mistakes and errors or areas where students are struggling, and I improve those areas. If it is grammar, I focus more on it. Students are struggling with register issues, appropriate tone, vocabulary and pronunciations.

Sometimes we do not necessarily teach pronunciation, but it is something that I constantly refer back to because a single letter in a word can result into different interpretation by the listener. So, pronunciation itself is an issue. The other issue is the flow of presentation of arguments. All those things do play a role. As I said our courses are not of merely designed to improve proficiency but to teach study skills and other skills. The organisation of arguments and skills, or even how your arguments flow for example in the written form, when you are writing an essay, how do you write your paragraphs in a manner that they are logical? All these issues have to do with written communication.

*Q5. How do you determine that the students achieve the objectives as stipulated in the syllabi?*

Obviously through assessments. I assess students through alternative assessments, informal and formal assessments in class. You create opportunities for students to speak and ask questions. For example, when I ask them to give a short presentation based on an essay that, they have written by the end of the course or semester, everyone should have asked a question and depending on that, I make that part of being my assessment strategies. Presentation, listening, examinations, continuous writing, paraphrasing, summarising pieces of writing, are some of the assessments activities that we give to students. These are very important academic skills which are high level of assessment according to Bloom Taxonomy, but the objectives are very clear in the syllabus and therefore they are assessed on that. In all four language skills, but I have added a fifth one, listening, speaking, reading, writing, the 5<sup>th</sup> one, critical thinking because if you are not able to communicate effectively, thinking in that language, that means you have not become proficient yet. It is not the actual words, but maybe the pragmatic and the context that the students must understand.

*Q7. How would you describe your students' writing and oral communication skills?*

When they come to the university, their writing skills are generally poor. When you give them longer pieces of writing such as paragraphs, summary, essay, and email to the lecturer, their writing

skills are very poor. Obviously spelling there is an issue, but also the organization of ideas, the total message they are communicating is poor. Urban students are better at expressing themselves in social contexts, but their counterparts are poor. Some students only speak English when they are at university doing a presentation.

*Q8. What are the causes of poor English proficiency and communication skills of your students?*

Five years ago, a study was conducted by the Ministry of Education about the proficiency of teachers in the whole country. The results were alarming. I do believe that the teachers' proficiency in the English language escalate the poor performance of the learners, the other issue it would be maybe the curriculum or English syllabus, the way it is structured. We keep changing the curriculum, now it has been changed better. In the past, the curriculum did not emphasise sufficient reading. Not only so that you can pass a test or an exam, but also reading for pleasure, for example the number of novels or poems, newspaper articles etc. is not sufficient for me. Reading sufficiently promotes good writing skills. Receptive skills referring to reading and listening, we do not do enough of that in the curriculum. If students do a lot of listening, a lot reading, they will eventually speak and write better.

Another cause of poor performance is the curriculum implementation or lack of receptive skills-based activities. All these things are contributing factors. In this country, you will find students who are not proficient in English nor in their own mother tongues. They are just there in the middle. A weak culture can as well contribute to poor English proficiency. We do not have enough books also that discuss issues related to students' culture. How many books are out there talking about our cultural events like the holy fire? Books that are really context specific is an issue. E.g., I once gave students that were improving their English symbols to write about a fun day, and these students came from rural areas to the city, for improving their English symbols so that they can go to the university. About 50% of those students misunderstood the word fun for funny. This is because a fun day in rural schools where learners walk two hours to go and back to school is non-existent. It is the concepts that are sometimes non-existent in the cultural settings of the students. In other words, we have not made English our own. In urban areas, learners understand a fun day at school; learners will have a fun day whether it is music, face painting etc. Namibia has not made



English our own yet. It is still a language of medium of instruction, but more needs to be done to appropriate the English language to our needs, cultures, to our way of life basically.

*Q9. What are the effects of poor English proficiency and communication skills among your students?*

Low self-esteem, and when that happens it will eventually influence students' future careers. They avoid even talking where they have to do a presentation. The impacts are far reaching more than you can imagine which sometimes are even mental. Students can even laugh at each other, and that can cause low self-esteem. For example, if you do not pronounce words correctly, that might even cause students to change courses, for example, changing from Law because it requires a lot of talking. The effects/impacts affect students during their studies and when they are done with their studies, in their careers of choice.

*Q10. As a lecturer, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing and vice versa?*

Receptive skills are important. You cannot give from an empty cup. The productive skills of writing and speaking are as a result of what is in you and your mind, in your schemata, in your repertoire, what is stored in your schemata. Schemata is your background knowledge or your reference point. What can you refer to as you speak or as you write? You will not flow in your speaking or writing if you have no schemata to refer to. In order to improve, students need to have reference schemata. You have to immerse. People improve easily when they are immersed. If you take a person, and you immersed them in another culture, that person will forget his/her language and start speaking the language of the new culture. We need to populate our curriculum, our teaching with sufficient reading.

*Q11. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking and written abilities?*

Definitely, that is my role as a teacher/lecturer is multi-faceted, to mould a person who is well rounded. I am an encourager, motivator. Therefore, I do everything together. Always assessing their emotional needs, because their emotional needs can determine how better they can improve in their English proficiency. In education they say you need to affective filters. They must not be low and not so high that information that you are teaching them is not even penetrating. For example, if there is anxiety in the class, use humour, use things like cell phone to record the message, you can ask students to do many things. You need to make teaching fun. It must not just be books only. You are an artist as a lecturer. You have to be that artist that will facilitate learning.

*Q12. What are the remedies or strategies do you have in place to help students to improve their English proficiency and communication skills?*

My remedies are error-mistakes targeted. I do not always correct students' mistakes right away, but I jot them down. Because if you correct them right away, it might be discouraging. I jot them down; at an appropriate time, I tackle them. e.g. Errors and mistakes easily made by first year students in speaking, writing, reading and listening. That is one of the strategies to ensure that you are specific in your teaching and not aiming to complete the syllabus while there are other things that need to be tackled. I do divert a lot from syllabus to address pressing issues that keep coming up as results of what I noticed during my teaching.

Thank you!

## **Appendix 9: TRANSCRIPTION OF INFORMANT 4 INTERVIEW**

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

English for Academic Purposes, English Communication and Study Skills.

*Q2. What is the time frame allocated to the course/s you are responsible for?*

Teaching 4 hours a week, per semester.

*Q3. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?*

Yes. You need to be specific on this question. Aims, content, assessment.

*Q4. Are you satisfied with students' performance in your course/s? If not, what do you do?*

About 80% of my students do pass the modules. But I'm not satisfied. I spend more time on topics that are difficult. I analyze errors and teach based on the errors.

*Q5. How do you determine that the syllabus achieves its objectives?*

I assess syllabus aims through oral, speaking, written, listening and critical thinking assessments, i.e., formative and summative assessment as well as alternative assessment strategies that are mostly informal, e.g., participation in discussions or mere completion of tasks.

*Q6. How would you describe the communication skills of students?*

At the beginning of courses, students use wrong registers, and lack appropriate communication etiquette, e.g., email, essay writing, presentations, info. gathering etc. However, as the semester progresses, improvement is noticeable.

*Q7. How would you describe their (students) English proficiency?*

Students from urban centres are proficient in speaking the language but lack academic communication proficiency. Rural school-based students are less proficient in both social and academic language proficiency.

*Q8. In your own opinion, what are the causes of poor English proficiency and communication skills of your students'?*

Less exposure to the contexts where English is used for rural based school students.

Poor proficiency of English teachers across the country.

Irresponsible English syllabi in grades 1-12 to the changing landscape of digital communication.

*Q9. What are the effects of poor English proficiency and communication skills among your students?*

Effects on who? Low self-esteem on the student whose proficiency is poor. Misunderstanding with stakeholders, e.g., student vs lecturer.

*Q10. As lecturer, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing?*

Oral brainstorming of topic can support good essay writing. Extensive speaking activities should precede writing activities. Oral presentation and short research essays on one topic are indispensable.

*Q11. Can you briefly describe the students' accuracy in oral communication and writing skills in English?*

Both modes are characterized by grammatical and language mistakes, not errors. Register errors in both writing and speaking modes. Poor!



*Q12. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking and written abilities?*

Yes.

*Q13. What strategies do you use to help the students improve their English proficiency and communication skills?*

I make a sketch of their weaknesses and target those. I make learning fun, humorous to lower their affective filters. I use videos and interactive ICT tools to keep students interested.

Thank you!



## **Appendix 10: TRANSCRIPTION OF LECTURER 1 INTERVIEW**

*Q1. Which English course or courses are you responsible for?*

I am responsible for two courses. The centre offers three, but I only teach two, English Communication and Study Skills, that is for the students who have scored a C- symbol in English. I am also responsible for English for Academic Purposes for students who have scored a B symbol or a Grade 3 and above. The university also offers English for General Communication Skills, which is done by students who scored a D or E symbol. Those are the courses that, the Language Centre is responsible for.

*Q2. What are the time frames allocated to the courses that you are responsible for?*

They are all level four modules according to the Namibian Qualification Authority. They are all taught 4 hours per week. English for General Communication Skills is taught face to face, and English Communication and Study Skills was recently moved to online and it also 4 hours per week. It is not self-study; students do contact their classes online.

*Q3. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?*

These are old courses. I was not necessarily involved in the planning, but I was involved in the revision. We revise the curriculum every five years, just to update it and teach the most recent information on things. What was considered is the students' communication skills, students written abilities, speaking abilities etc., but we based this on their performance in grade 12. That is why at the beginning I have categorised how they get to enter the University. Those who entered the university with a D in English, they are considered that they need immense attention; they need to be given a lot of teaching around grammar and literature. That's why they do a year course, English for General Communication Skills. Those who entered the university with a C symbol, they are considered to be a little bit above, average, and they do English Communication and Study Skills, which is a semester course. The stakeholders were consulted at the very beginning of implementing the module, where we have to benchmark with other universities and interview some of the students. With the review, we do it based on the students' performances, new trends in the field,

new information that has emerged. For example, English Communication and Study Skills was a full-time module at the beginning, but later on we decided to put it online. Students can do it online and can still pass. We reviewed that English for General Communication Skills should be face to face, students need more attention regarding grammar, literature and all other aspects of language are concerned.

*Q4. Are you satisfied with students' performance in your courses? If not, what do you do?*

Satisfaction is very subjective; I do not know what you are referring to in this case. I would say students are not doing so badly, because they are passing. Their performance is not so bad, it is above average. Speaking skills for most of our students are better, although there are some students' speaking skills that are influenced by their mother tongue, we have different mother tongue influences for example, Otjiherero students cannot pronounce chair, they say "share", boy=mboy, Oshiwambo students have /r/ and /l/, instead of saying 'pleasure' they say 'pressure' Afrikaans speakers have /f/ and /th/ instead of saying with they say wifi etc. The speaking is influenced by their mother tongue, but it is better than their writing. Their writing is not so good, it needs improvement. Writing is full of spelling errors, coherence. With reading they need to be forced to read. They are not eager to read on their own and in this course is where we encourage extensive reading, to improve their vocabulary, reading skills and improve comprehension of different types of texts. We have incorporated listening modules in our courses where we teach them that, when they come to the university, they must listen to their lecturers. They need to listen in order to take notes, and they are going to be assessed based on what they are taught during lectures. Listening is very hard to tell if they are doing well or not. That is what they do every time during or in their lectures. When one is speaking, the other one needs to listen.

*Q5. How do you determine that students have achieved the objectives as stipulated in the syllabus?*

We do this by assessing them. We have different types of assessments, we have an examination at the end of the semester or year, we also have different tests, we give them written tests, and we have presentation skills. We assess them on speaking. They can get topics related to the field of studies, do research on them and come present in the lectures. During presentations we look at

their vocabulary, their pronunciation, and their communication skills. We also have rubrics that we use in giving marks to see if they have met the requirements or they have attained the skills that we have taught them.

*Q6. How would you describe the written and oral communication of your students?*

I have answered this question before, but if you are to compare between oral and writing, oral is better. The students are struggling with writing, misspelling words, not using punctuation marks at all or correctly, and sometimes it is hard to get meanings from their written work/ activities. Their oral communication is much better than their written communication.

*Q8. In your own opinion, what are the causes of poor English proficiency and communication skills of your students?*

These are very complex issues. It can be the fact that students are not first speakers of the English language. They speak different languages and they are coming from different backgrounds, so students face double barriers, the first barrier is to learn the language, which is English and the second barrier is to learn in English. Now they have to master the language itself first and then learning through it. It could be that when they are going to learn through it and learn the language, it could cause poor communication skills especially speaking and writing. Their teachers or lecturers went through the same thing. English is not our mother tongue, so we (teachers and lecturers) could still be teaching them and struggle with the language here and there ourselves.

We have a poor reading culture among our cultures. We are from the oral culture, not reading. Our people respected speaking or oral, but if you are not reading, you are not entirely going to improve your vocabulary. When you read, you get to learn more new vocabularies that you can use in speaking or writing. Those are all factors that may cause poor proficiency in English. Reading materials are not really a contributing factor. We have enough reading materials at the university and school levels in English compared to mother tongues materials. They might not be grade and age appropriate especially in the Namibian context where in English is not our mother tongue. Examples given in the books may be boring for students or not in the context of the student. For example, if students/ learners are reading about other students going for an excursion by boat,



students may not be eager to read and follow. There are enough materials, but we need to find innovative ways to make the materials interesting to the learners and students to read. They are not motivated to read, and it is our duty as teachers and lecturers to motivate them to read. In order for them to improve their vocabulary and reading skills.

*Q9. What are the effects of poor English proficiency and communication skills among your students?*

They will not be able to perform very well in their studies. They will not be able to please the lecturers, when they are asked to write or when they are assessed. They might fail their courses, they might not graduate, they will have modules behind which will affect their completion rate just because of communication barrier, they might fail.

*Q10. As a lecturer, in what ways could you speaking activities in class support the forecast on writing and vice versa?*

Most of the activities that we do is a result of reading. We must encourage a lot of reading. There is a concept that I like, reading to learn, where students are encouraged to read to learn different aspects. If they read, then they will be able to speak about what they have read that can help them a lot. We give them topics to go read about them and come to do presentation after doing research. Once you have read about a certain topic, then you will be able to speak more about it. We should just give them more reading activities and ask them to share by speaking/presenting it to others what they have read. These two skills go hand in hand. Most of the times speaking is the last activity. What we do first is to give them something to read, after reading they write. For example, we give them an academic essay, they get the topic, they go read about the topic and write their essays, and later on ask them to present it to the class by summarising what they have written about, what were the findings, what are the recommendations if there are any.

*Q11. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking and written abilities?*

Yes, that is why we are here as lecturers. We need to build confidence that is why I said we should not criticize our students when they make mistakes and errors or look down on them. We should always encourage them by starting with a good comment of something that are doing well and follow with another comment, where they need improvement. For example, you have done very well in this aspect, but you need to improve in this other aspect. It should be done in a diplomatic way, we should find a good way of correcting them, otherwise they would stop participating. Correcting them how to pronounce a certain word, how to spell, how to make sense of the sentences. Giving them rewards or compliments. That way, you are building their confidence.

*Q12. What remedies or strategies to you have in place to help students build confidence in their speaking and written abilities?*

By reading more, give them more reading activities, which they have to writing about and speaking/ present their written work.

NB: It is a complex matter, to see what really cause poor communication skills and poor English proficiency. You cannot single out one factor; there are a lot of factors that we need to take into account. Students are not native speakers of English as well as their lecturers. They are not from a reading culture. They have double barriers of learning English and learning in English. We favoured speaking / oral communication compared to written communication.

Thank you.

## **Appendix 11: TRANSCRIPTION OF LECTURER 2 INTERVIEW**

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

I teach English for General Communication, English Communication and Study Skills English for Academic Purposes. Each are four hours per week. (Online courses communication and study skills). It is a semester, but there is a continuation to English for Academic Purposes.

*Q3. Were you involved in the planning of the English syllabi and what was considered when planning the syllabi?*

The current running syllabi was already in place when I joined UNAM in 2018. We are busy with a new syllabus. With the current one, the focus is always on the four language skills namely; speaking, listening, reading and writing. We consider the elements of the infra skills information and study skills, as we incorporate those in our courses. I was not part of the current syllabi, but I am involved in the one that is envisaged to start next year 2023, it is part of Unum restructuring.

*Q4. Are you satisfied with student's performance in your course/s you are responsible for?*

Not really, I will focus more on the English for General Communication, because these are the students that I sit with in class. When I joined UNAM, I have been teaching this module. The numbers of students in the class /lecture are too big. The lecturer does not really get to have everybody to practice, because it is easy to hide behind others during group presentation and still get a mark for it. Otherwise, when they go out still, their communication skills, writing skills are not up to the standards that you would love them to write or speak at. It is the same with Communication and Study Skills, because we do assess their writing, but because of the big numbers is done at the very end. You do not really have time for the feedback early to improve students' writing and so on, on an individual basis. I think because of that limitation that comes with big numbers in classes, it makes lecturers to be left wanting to have made a very good impact successfully in terms of writing, speaking and reading skills.

In English Communication and Study Skills we do not give them speaking activities that we have impact on, but we give them activities that they practice on their time without being evaluated/assessed.

*Q5. How do you determine that the students achieve the objectives as stipulated in the syllabi?*

We assess them in various ways. We assess them in essay writing, in language use and reading comprehension, tests that are administered online. For English for General Communication, essay writing, parts of speech, reading comprehension, tests, tenses, reading texts, language use, a prescribed reading. Students are required to read a novel, engage and critique it. Criticising it literally. Its contribution to the Cass mark is minimal and it is superficial. It will not be assessed in the exam. Even if they do not get a good mark, they know other aspects of the course will make up for it. Even if they get a 10/40, they know it will not change that much.

*Q7. How would you describe your students' writing and oral communication skills?*

Not up to standard, because of the grammar. When they speak, they do not apply the grammar rules, limited vocabulary that they struggle for words to convey meanings that they want to convey. In writing, I still find them lacking, even when they have gone through the course. They are lacking in terms of structuring their essays or longer pieces of writings, according to functions e. g functions of an introduction, they do not really fulfil the functions of writing a paragraph in terms of sentences structures, introduction, body and conclusion. They just write without applying rules. It is like they were not taught anything with regards to how they are supposed to structure their writing. They still lack a lot in terms of disciplined writing.

Speaking is better because you do not judge their writing formality and so on. They can communicate ideas, they can use colloquial language when they speak in informal situation and that is acceptable, but in writing it is those mechanics convention that they should follow. In writing, one strictly wants those techniques to come out. Speaking, is less judgmental.

*Q8. What are the causes of poor English proficiency and communication skills of your students?*



I think it is mainly background. Meaning that, they might come from backgrounds where English language input is very limited. They do not practice it and are not expected to communicate in English therefore, they do not really see a need to improve their speaking skills. It is not a requirement of everyday communication. Some students come from rural schools where even teachers do not find it necessary to communicate in English. Most of the content might have translated in class, so that environment that this created may not be conducive for English language.

Secondly, I think that it is incumbent upon everybody that they know the significance that the English language gets in this country. It is an official language, it is a medium of instruction. Schools and universities must do something to improve learners and students' English language. Reading is also another factor that comes into play. First of all, our young people do not read it all. So, if they do not read, there is no way that they are going to pick up new vocabulary, pick up better language structure in terms of grammar. The more you are exposed to correct sentences in what you read, the more you also intend to use the same structures, so I will blame it on reading.

*Q9. What are the effects of poor English proficiency and communication skills among your students?*

Of course, the university teaches in English. To comprehend the content and show your understanding of the content, you have to write in English and communicate verbally in English. So, if your proficiency is low, then it affects how you understand academic texts when you read them. So, if it is poor, then you are limited, you will not be able to grasp the content in your subject area. Secondly, if it is limited with regards to answering of questions, you may not be empowered enough to answer questions, maybe all you do is memorize answers and reproduce them the way they are. Where you have plagiarism detectors and so on, you become a victim. But if you are empowered enough in terms of your knowledge of the language, you are able to paraphrase, to read and understand, put what you have read in your own words, and able to comprehend texts that speak about the subject content that you are taught.

The students that we teach at this campus are going to be teachers, so teachers are supposed to teach the curriculum in English. The medium of instruction is English. They are supposed to break down content for their learners into simple language, therefore instead of relying on how it is

written in textbooks, they supposed to break it down to the level where learners may understand. If teachers are not proficient, they will not be able to fulfil that function because s/he may not understand or comprehend the content him/herself. Therefore, it will be difficult for them to have a lengthy discussing of the subject trying to explain things to the learners. That is why code switching is a good thing, but it does not mean people should just rely on code switching when they do not know how to explain things/topics in English because it is the learners that also need to be empowered in the same language, they are expected to answer questions or exams. Because if you set a question, you will not get an answer with code switching from students. If you make them over relying on that, it becomes a problem for them. Language skills for teachers to be, are very important, because they spend most of their times breaking contents to a level that is consumable to their learners, so language skills are.

*Q10. As a lecturer, in what ways could speaking activities in class support the focus on writing and vice versa?*

When you write about something, I think planning goes into it. When you read, you can actually discuss what you have read and that is discussed or presented in whatever format the lecturer decides in class. Students can read on certain topic and present something about that topic. That same topic can still be converted to a writing activity, e.g. writing an essay on the same topic and vice versa. One may even ask students to write an essay and ask students to present the content to the class. By doing it that way you are improving their reading skills, they need to do research by reading, talk about it and write about it.

*Q11. Do you see it as your role to help students build confidence in their speaking and written abilities?*

Yes, when students come to the university, they hold us in higher regards, so what we do, what we approve or disapprove, it actually means a lot to them so if you can allow yourself as a lecturer to get to the level where you understand where the students are coming from, you understand their limitations and show that you are able to help them through the journey, the more confident they become. Once you are confident, you can do a lot. Motivation from the lecturer's side, is very

important. We have cultures from where we come from, secondary even up to university level where you thought it is a laughing matter when someone fail to read or cannot express themselves in a certain way. That's what we need to discourage because all we need is that these people should be supported to a certain level and if they are supported, they need to see signs of wanting support from their lecturers, not to despise them, but you show them that you accept them where they are, and willing to work on the journey with them.

*Q12. What are the remedies or strategies do you have in place to help students to improve their English proficiency and communication skills?*

What I do in my classes is that I open up discussions on various topics and sometimes I give my students, each one of them a chance to speak. Sometimes I keep record of who has spoken in the previous class. So I do that so that everyone can feel confident of speaking in front of others, say something on the answers based on their experiences and not necessarily on the factual answers. Sometimes it is just about them to get to speak, you ask them to relate to experiences that you know they had and ask them just to express themselves on that.

On writing tasks, you give them tasks that they can incorporate research, so that they can read at the same time. They can use input from reading to writing. This semester, I have a smaller group of students so when it comes to writing, I will ask them to write an essay in pairs, I will bring these essays to class, so that each one of them will take a yard stick/checklist where we will measure ourselves from our performances, we will look at the checklist and what they have written. For example, when writing an essay, in the introduction there should be background, a thesis, topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. Therefore, we look at that and evaluate our own writing. This is what we do, have you done it? By doing so, we help students to reflect on their own writing instead of just telling them what they are supposed to do it. They also have presentations even before they do a presentation for their marks, we still do practice perhaps by taking them through the structure or stages of presentation. You ask them one by one to kind of demonstrate it in front of the class so that they pick up confidence, but at the same time they are practicing an art.

Thank you!

## APPENDICES: ETHICAL CLEARANCE ET REQUEST

### Appendix 12: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



4 August 2021

Ms P Henok  
Language Education  
Faculty of Education

HSSREC Reference Number: HS21/5/50

**Project Title:** Investigating the English Language proficiency and communication skills of First year education students at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia

**Approval Period:** 30 July 2021 – 30 July 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

*The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.*

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Jasias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape

Director: Research Development  
University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X 17  
Bellville 7535  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 21 959 4111  
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.



## Appendix 13: REQUEST TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA ETHICS COMMITTEE



P O BOX 98659  
Pelican Square  
Windhoek  
Cell: 0811485262  
phenok@unam.na

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA RESEARCH AND ETHICAL COMMITTEE (UREC)

Windhoek

Dear Mister/Madam Chairperson of UREC

**Re: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UNAM KHOMASDAL CAMPUS**

I am writing this letter to request permission to conduct a research at your institution. I am currently enrolled in the PhD in Language Education degree programme at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). My topic is *"Investigating the English Language Proficiency and Communication Skills of First Year Students at the Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia."*

The study is targeting the first-year students at the Campus, but data will be collected from selected 20 students and 4 lecturers as participants. The methods of data collection will be questionnaires, interviews and observation. I would like to assure you good office that no classes will be interrupted during data collection process. Let me also assure you that information/ data collected will be held in stickiest confidentiality and ethics. Data will only be used for research purposes.

I also wish to ensure that during the data collection process all physical distance and preventive measures will be maintained according to the COVID-19 rules set by the Namibian government and health authorities.

I intent to start as soon as all ethical issues are cleared. I would be happy to answer any question or concern that you have in whatever means.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Penehafo Henok'.

Penehafo Henok (Ms)

## Appendix 14: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA



### CENTRE FOR RESEARCH SERVICES

Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research Innovation and Development

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA, Private Bag, 13301 Windhoek, Namibia

340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park, Office D090 ☎ +264-61-2064624 ✉ [kmbulu@unam.na](mailto:kmbulu@unam.na) Fax+264-61-206 4624

Date: 03 December 2021

Dear Ms Penehafo Henok

#### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT KHOMASDAL CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (UNAM)**

Your application to conduct research at UNAM entitled “**Investigating the English Language Proficiency and Communication Skills of first year Education students at Khomasdal Campus of the University of Namibia**” was considered based on ethical approval from your institution. Hence, permission is hereby granted with the following conditions:

1. During the course of your research activities at UNAM, you will observe the required procedures, norms and ethical conduct in accordance with the relevant Research Policies and Guidelines. If unsure, please consult *the Centre for Research Services* at UNAM for guidance. Any deviations and amendments to the original documents submitted (i.e. methodology, interview guide, consent forms, etc.) must be submitted again for approval, before the research activities can commence.
2. The results of the findings will be shared with the PVC: Research, Innovation and Development, and the Centre for Research Services, before they are disseminated or published in the public domain.
3. Upon completion, a copy of the Research Report must be lodged with the UNAM Library for our records.
4. Proper, full acknowledgements of the University of Namibia and all participants /respondents shall be done in the Research Report and any subsequent publications arising from this research.
5. Although permission is granted, provision of information is to the consent of respondents and hence not mandatory.

If you are agreeable to the above conditions, please sign and date a copy of this letter and return it the Centre for Research Services (Email: [nkanime@unam.na](mailto:nkanime@unam.na)). If you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the Centre for Research Services.

Wishing you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely

Prof Nelago Indongo  
Director: Centre for Research Services

**I accept and agree to all the conditions**

*Penehafo Henok*

*Penehafo*

*03.12.2021*

Full Name and Surname

Signature

Date