

**TYPES OF COMPOSITION WRITING-BASED SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT
ERRORS BY ESL HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS IN THREE
SELECTED SCHOOLS IN BOTHA-BOTHE**

BY

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A

DISSERTATION

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Education, National University of Lesotho for the award of Master of Arts with Education.

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DECLARATION

I, THOBI GJ, student number 201704710, hereby declare that “Types of composition writing-based subject-verb agreement errors by ESL high school learners in three selected schools in Botha-Bothe” is my own original work and sources employed have been acknowledged. The work has not been previously submitted for any academic qualification at any other university.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

The challenge that types of subject-verb agreement errors have on English Second Language (ESL) learners in Lesotho is evident in composition writing. This problem impinges on learners negatively as they are mainly assessed through writing. Learners' inability to apply types of SVA presents a major challenge to ESL teachers in Lesotho in relation to teaching of writing. Despite the efforts that researchers and English practitioners have put in place in assisting ESL learners to guard against such errors, their efforts are in vain as learners' compositions are encumbered with inaccurate and unintelligible sentences. It is against this background that this study sought to explore types of composition writing-based subject-verb agreement errors by ESL high school learners. This investigation is benchmarked by the Second Language Learners' Interlanguage hypothesis.

The inquiry is situated within quali-quantitative case study design where the researcher focused on Grade 11 learners and their teachers of English Language in three selected schools in Botha-Bothe district. In this study, participants were purposively and conveniently selected. Open-ended questionnaires, focus group discussion and document analysis were employed as data generating techniques. The inquirer used open and selective coding coupled with Corder's (1974) model of error analysis to analyse data. Coding and error analysis helped the researcher to classify types of SVA errors into themes which later enabled the investigator to determine the causes of such errors. It was established that learners' types of SVA errors are due to, among others, mother tongue interference and non-English-speaking environments. The inquiry brought to conclusion that ESL learners baffle and grapple with the correct application of types of SVA. It is recommendable that teaching and learning of types of SVA should be intensified.

Key words:

Subject-verb agreement, composition, English as a Second Language, learners, errors

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ABBREVIATIONS

L ₁ :	First language
L ₂ :	Second language
IL:	Interlanguage
TL:	Target language
EFL:	English as first language
EFL:	English as a foreign language
ESL:	English as a second language
DEM:	District Education Manager
SVA:	Subject-verb agreement
NUL:	National University of Lesotho
SLA:	Second language acquisition
SHS:	Senior high school
ECOL:	Examinations Council of Lesotho
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
MOET:	Ministry of Education and Training
BBETA:	Botha-Bothe English Teachers Association
LGCSE:	Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of various sections. The first presents an overview of the background to the study, authenticated by the relevant literature and the related previous studies on subject-verb agreement errors. It features the statement of the problem which triggered this study, the research questions, delimitation of the study and the section which articulates the significance of the study. The chapter also captures methodology, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The organisation of the study winds up the chapter.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Understandings of composition writing and its demands on teachers and learners by different authors seem to be comparable in areas of elaborateness in definition, what it involves and its challenges. Composition writing is conceived of as a form of writing made up of correctly constructed sentences where ideas, opinions or thoughts are put in an organised way so that the reader is able to understand (Aragon, Baires & Rodrigues, 2013; Mphunyane, 2014). Again, Nyamisi (2014) and Simbeye (2016) elaborate on it as a carefully structured piece of written work where accurate grammar is employed with the aim of communicating some ideas clearly. Essentially, the semblance in explanations of composition points to the ability to demonstrate a degree of storytelling, competence in creating an imaginary picture in the mind of the reader as well as explanation of facts. These definitions imply the need for organisational and grammatical competence in composition writing.

Composition writing incorporates various aspects. It involves writing original sentences with clarity as well as giving learners practice and adequate feedback (Dawson & Yon, 2008; Kareem, 2014). According to Bereiter & Scardamalia (2013) and Younes & Albalawi (2015), composition only flows if it holds contents which differentiate it from other pieces of writing including arrangement of words, paragraph organisation, language use and mechanics. In the same line of thought, Aragon, Baires & Rodrigues (2013), Bereiter & Scardamalia (2013) and Kareem (2014) elucidate that essay writing requires an ability to manipulate words, and explore supporting ideas with the intention to produce grammatically correct sentences. Composition writing seems to be multifaceted based on the claims put forward by the scholars with regard to what it involves. Among other things it embraces which might be relevant to this study is

the fact that essay writing accentuates grammatical correctness which needs immediate attention. Hence the need to conduct an investigation which scrutinizes such.

Documented scholarship indicates challenges that essay writing presents to learners. To exemplify, Aragon, Baires & Rodrigues (2013), Oyedele & Chikwachure (2016) and Amoakhohene (2017) prove that composition writing is a difficult encounter to both learners of English as a first language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). However, ESL learners are more disadvantaged for they have to know grammatical rules and apply them in second language (Mohdy, 2003; Al Dow, 2016). Such challenges as per Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal (2016), Ponmani & Melaka (2016) and Daffern, Mackenzie & Hemmings (2017) arise due to, among others, incompetence in topic sentence, idea expansion, coherence, and syntax as well as subject-verb agreement (SVA). The aforementioned postulations of composition writing challenges could all amount to grammatical accuracy. If cited scholarship has indicated that composition writing is associated with difficulties of grammar such as SVA, it could mean that speaking and writing grammatically correct English is still a challenge which needs to be researched into.

Subject-verb agreement is understood by different authors to mean consonance between subjects and verbs which have to agree in both number and person (Stapa & Izahar, 2010; Strauss, 2014; Basnet, 2017; Johansson, 2018). Though SVA seems easy definitively, scholarship has indicated challenges linked to this aspect in composition writing. To prove documented claim, Pham (2015) and Nndwamato (2017) assert that SVA violation is an aspect that baffles learners; as a result, they struggle in writing. In addition, Tafida & Okunade (2016) concur and highlight that the problem of agreement among ESL speakers is becoming obvious while some people seem to consider it less important in writing. Because of the tendency to ignore this aspect, it becomes difficult to acquire despite the fact that learners have been acquainted with SVA at an early stage (Ponmani & Melaka, 2016; Basnet, 2017). In essence, the concept of SVA and its challenges as elaborated above imply that a research appraised understanding and knowledge about such issues is needed. This places an emphasis on the fact that SVA in composition writing needs to be investigated with urgency.

Subject-verb agreement has, like other writing requisites, been subjected to research. In this instance, composition writing that focuses on grammatical challenge is not an exception. In Europe, Turkey is an example of a country in which Tasci & Atac (2018) conducted a descriptive qualitative design study on grammatical errors of ESL Turkish adult learners in

writing. The findings pointed to students' linguistics knowledge deficiency in preposition, articles and verbs. The inquirer concluded that students' first language (Turkish) affects the production of their target language. In Spain, Agustín Llach, Fontecha & Espinosa (2005) carried a mixed-method inquiry on differences in lexical errors of Spanish and German learners in composition. The findings indicated that German learners produced more errors than their Spanish counterparts and it was concluded that mother tongue was ascribed to learners' proficiency.

In the same continent, Vaurula (2012) undertook a mixed design study on SVA in writing of Finland. The investigation revealed that there were problems of verb 'be' with personal pronouns such as 'they is'. The common finding from the aforementioned studies was grammatical challenge that learners faced which includes SVA. The difficulties that learners seem to have in applying SVA in writing suggest the need to undertake a study which uncovers the cause of such errors in essay writing.

In Asia, grammatical aspect inside composition writing has been inquired into. In Vietnam for example, Dan, Duc & Chau (2017) pioneered a qualitative research where common mistakes in paragraph writing by first year students were investigated. The revelations of the study pointed out that word formation and word choice mistakes were the most frequent whilst the least mistakes were SVA. The investigator concluded that the students had problems in sentence structures. Still in Asia, Pablo & Lasaten (2018) piloted a descriptive-qualitative study on writing difficulties of academic essays by senior high school (SHS) learners in Philippines. The discoveries of the research pointed to difficulties that learners have in academic essays, which include: vocabulary, language use and poor sentence structure. The researcher concluded that SHS students have difficulties in all areas of essay writing.

Subject-verb agreement too, as one of grammatical features in the context of essay writing, has received interest from the researchers in Asia. For instance, in India, Ponmani & Melaka (2016) conducted a qualitative research on an analysis of concord errors in learners' writing. The findings of the study pointed to misuse of SVA by students and the intralingual errors as the main cause of SVA errors. The inquirer concluded that SVA errors are more noticeable in writing as students had problem in agreement of person and number. The common finding from the cited studies from Asia is that if not taken care of, SVA can compromise the intended meaning. These discoveries relate to the proposed study as they imply that there be essential

move to explore the challenges that ESL learners have regarding types of composition writing-based SVA errors.

In different parts of Africa, grammatical challenges in essay writing have also been subjected to research. In East Africa Kenya, Nyasimi's (2014) results indicated that major challenges students face in essay writing are first language interference, limited vocabulary and incorrect use of grammar. The researcher concluded that teaching and learning methods that are used influence the learning of writing. In Central Africa Cameroon, Sokeng (2014) piloted a quantitative inquiry on grammatical errors of learners in the University of Yaounde 1. The researcher discovered that students' essays were marred by tense, articles, auxiliaries and SVA errors. The investigator concluded that learners' errors were results of intralingual and interlingual reasons.

West Africa is no exception in investigating SVA in composition writing. In Ghana, Tawakalitu (2018) conducted a study on wrong usage of concord among learners. The inquiry employed a mixed methods design and the findings pointed to learners having difficulty in applying concord. The researcher concluded that an intervention discussion is important in assisting learners to overcome concord challenges. The findings from the preceding studies highlight that SVA still poses a challenge despite the effort that researchers have taken by investigating into such. The implication is that SVA in Lesotho should receive extensive inquiry into as there seems to be dearth of research which features such grammatical component in essay writing.

Researchers in Southern African Development Community (SADC) region have looked into grammatical items in composition writing. For instance, in Zambia, Simbeye (2016) carried out a descriptive survey design study on error analysis of grade 12 learners in expository composition. The investigator discovered that grade 12 learners' errors were in word order, preposition, articles, spelling and SVA. It is worth mentioning that concord errors were recorded with the highest percentage. It was concluded that learners were not taught the basic writing skills needed for essay writing. Again, in Namibia, Mungungu (2010) researched on error analysis on the writing of Namibians. The inquirer discovered tense, article, preposition and spelling errors in students' writing. From the findings, the researcher concluded that though errors are considered to be a sign of inadequacy in language, they can be used to improve teaching.

In South Africa, Nndwamato (2017) discovered that grade 12 learners had a problem in applying concord. The researcher concluded that learners had problems in language usage in

general but particularly concord. The recommendations from the conclusion highlighted that teaching of concord should be strengthened. Generally, it seems as though SVA affects Africa much as it affects other parts of the world. Therefore, a study which investigates into such aspects in the context of Lesotho is essential.

Lesotho, the context where the study was undertaken, is not left out in the on-going investigation into the grammatical aspect inside composition writing. However, there seems to be scarcity of research on grammar in essay writing. The only studies that the researcher is aware of are that of Mphunyane (2014), Tlali (2018) and Letsoela (2019). Tlali (2018) carried out an inquiry on the causes of poor argumentative essay writing at Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE). The researcher discovered that students' failure was not only a result of inability to argue convincingly but also inaccurate language. It was concluded that students have a challenge of creating a solid argument. The researcher recommended that learners should be given a chance to observe people defending their arguments.

Letsoela (2019) investigated causes of improper tense shifts in composition writing. The findings pointed to language and linguistic competence deficit. It was concluded that learners' errors were a result of intra-lingual and inter-lingual transfer. In the same vein, Mphunyane (2014) conducted a critical self-study on pedagogies of teaching SVA in continuous writing. The findings of the investigation signify that challenges students have in SVA are due to interference of learners' interlanguage. The researcher concluded that SVA is not an easy rule to teach since it applies in various situations. The recommendation urged teachers to reflect on how their students learn the rules of second language (L₂) including the rule of writing SVA.

Synthesis of the preceding cited scholarship reveals a number of issues that remain unanswered. Such concerns are reflected by the discoveries of the investigations by Mphunyane (2014), Ponmani & Melaka (2016), Tlali (2018) and Letsoela (2019) who reveal implications for further research. Therefore, the following issues are yet to be subjected to further research for:

- Seemingly, there is scarcity of research on SVA in Lesotho;
- Research on SVA in Lesotho was limited to critical self-study;
- Previous studies seem to rely on SVA without looking into types of SVA errors.

Deducing from the above gaps, it is reasonable to assume that such niches particularise the need for more research which will add knowledge to classroom action research by Mphunyane

(2014). As it is, it still remains difficult to spell out what knowledge is likely to be generated by the study which focuses on more than one school. The present inquiry is aiming at helping ESL teachers to understand types of composition writing-based SVA errors through qualitative methodology which involves a large pool of data. Up next is the research problem.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem is a clear statement about an area of concern that exists in scholarly literature or existing practice that points to a need for research (Bryman, 2016). It thus makes academic sense to indicate that, the problem of this inquiry stems from the concerns about unanswered questions from documented scholarship on ESL learners' grammatical components inside composition as stated in (Section 1.1). Such grammatical aspect is types of SVA. Literature on writing discloses that ESL learners have difficulty of writing semantically and linguistically correct sentences. Ponmani & Melaka (2016) argue that sentences that consist of surface errors may affect the reader's mind. Tafida & Okunade (2016) for instance, highlight that where SVA errors are apparent, the reader might not be abreast with the intended meaning. The postulations suggest that writing requisitely might be compromised if learners are not capable of applying SVA accurately.

Grammatical aspect which is worrisome to ESL is SVA, particularly its types. For instance, the revelations by Stapa & Izahar (2010) and Ponmani & Melaka (2016) point to learners' difficulty in employing types of SVA. It is further explicated by Stapa & Izahar that ESL learners tend to avoid the sub-rules of SVA. Avoiding such rules makes it clear that learners have not internalised SVA. If learners are not cognisant with types of SVA, it could mean that effective communication in both spoken and written texts such as composition writing would be hampered (Radin & Fong, 2014). The assertion probes questions such as: What types of SVA errors do learners commit in essay writing? What are the probable sources of such errors?

Dearth of research pertaining to SVA in composition writing triggered the researcher's interest to embark on this study. It was indicated in the background (Section 1.1) that Lesotho seemingly experiences scarcity of inquiry into SVA. Scholarship points out that lack of research appraised knowledge and understanding would mean no knowledge would be contributed by the researchers and practitioners (Mills, 2011; Di Stefano, Pisano, Gino & Staats, 2014). Mills in particular elucidates that research is fundamental as it provides teachers with new knowledge in the hope of bringing about change in the academic performance of

learners. It can therefore be understood that in the absence of such knowledge, teaching and learning of grammar in English, particularly types of SVA, would be in jeopardy.

The research problem for this study also originates from the researcher's personal experience as an ESL practitioner for a couple of years. Further, Di Stefano et al. (2014) argue that professional experience matters in research writing for it reflects knowledge gained on encountering situations in life. The inquirer's experience has revealed that ESL learners are challenged to write grammatically correct sentences. This was evident in multiple subjects such as English Language, Literature in English and Sesotho that have been monitored by the investigator. Learners failed to employ SVA appropriately. As the revelations of the previous studies on SVA in essay writing have indicated, my learners' challenges are not different. To this end, the inquirer's experience is that, learners' tendency to seemingly have ignored the rule of SVA in L₁ has been a worrisome aspect to different scholars. This concern is noted in a study undertaken by Basnet (2017) in Sweden on SVA on L₂ learners. In Swedish, grammatical rule is not regarded as important; as a result, Swedish learners tend to ignore SVA in English.

It appears that my learners in L₁ are no exception. They ignore SVA rule in spoken Sesotho and this is reflected in their writing as well. One of the examples of such utterances is "*Khomo tsa hae li ngata*" which is translated as 'his cow are many'. The head noun "*khomo*" which means cow is in singular form but the possessive concord "*li ngata*" which means are many, is in plural. There is no proper agreement between subject and verb. Basnet (2017) resonates that overlooking SVA in speaking will make it harder to acquire a new grammatical structure than building on already known ones. This assertion infers that ignoring SVA in spoken language in L₁ too will have negative impact on written texts such as in composition in L₂.

The empirical evidence coupled with the researcher's professional experience has indicated challenges that SVA continues to pose to ESL learners. The essence of the highlighted gaps points to SVA as an issue that needs to be addressed with urgency as literature has indicated that if teaching and learning are not mindful of types of SVA, effective communication would not be accomplished. That is why the intention of the inquiry, among others, was to explore types of composition writing-based SVA errors by ESL high school learners in three selected schools. Below are research questions which illuminate the purpose of study.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A research question is central in writing a research. According to Cox (2012) and Maree (2016), all components of investigation are connected by research questions. Maree in particular

advances that research question situates the researcher in his study. In this section, research questions are categorised into two sections, the main research question and subsidiary research questions which the study sought to answer.

1.3.1 Main research question

The main research question is the statement of purpose that forms a question (Maree, 2016). Based on the assertion of the author, it is therefore worth noting to indicate that the main research question for this inquiry is:

- What subject-verb agreement errors characterise written composition of senior high school learners in secondary schools?

1.3.1.1 Subsidiary research questions

Subsidiary research questions are specific questions which emanate from the main research question (Maree, 2016).

- 1.3.1.1 What types of subject-verb agreement errors characterise composition writing of ESL senior secondary school learners in Lesotho?
- 1.3.1.2 What are the probable sources of such types of errors?
- 1.3.1.3 What are the pedagogical implications of the identified types of SVA errors in composition writing?

1.4 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Delimitations refer to the characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study (Simon, 2011). The author further enlightens that common delimitations include setting in which the study would take place and the participants. In this respect, the given postulation implies that the scope of the study is in researcher's control. For the purpose of this study, delimitation is arranged demographically where geographical area, participants and focus of the study would be dealt with.

The study was confined to three high schools in Botha-Bothe district. The schools were chosen because they were found at the proximity of the researcher. This derives from MacMillan & Schumacher (2014) who position that time factor, financial constraints and accessibility of place are important factors to consider when choosing research site. The accessibility of schools minimised the researcher's expenses as the study is self-sponsored. The inquiry centred on Grade 11 learners and their teachers of English language in three selected schools. Such learners were found appropriate as the researcher assumed that at Grade 11, learners were

conversant with the aspect that was being inquired. Likewise, their teachers were directly involved in the teaching of SVA and they were presumed to be information rich. Having noted from both international and local empirical literature that grammar is a phenomenon that needs dire consideration particularly SVA, the inquiry therefore focused on types of composition writing-based SVA errors by ESL high school learners in three selected schools. Significance of the study is articulated in the subsequent subsection.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Significance of the study is about the value that the findings of the study add into the body of knowledge. According to Regoniel (2015), significance of the study outlines the knowledge the inquiry seeks to contribute and who will benefit from it. Hence, the following beneficiaries are hoped to benefit from the findings of the study: the researcher, English language practitioners, learners, Botha-Bothe English Teachers' Association (BBETA) as well as the schools where data would be collected.

Although the inquiry is not action research oriented, it is anticipated to contribute to the researcher's personal professional practice in the teaching of grammar of English particularly SVA. Stressing the same view is Mills (2011) who argues that research does not only improve practitioners' abilities but it also provides them with new knowledge and understanding. In consonance, Hine (2013) claims that research offers the investigator an opportunity to use various techniques with the hope of bringing about change in academic performance of learners. To this end, the acquired knowledge and variation of learning strategies evenly would aid the researcher to approach the teaching of grammar and composition in a different manner.

The findings from the study are intended to benefit the students who would have access to the study. Since the inquiry focused on types of SVA errors, personal learning practice of students would be enhanced as Owu-Ewie & Williams (2017) expound that errors are indispensable for they provide evidence of learner's knowledge of L₂. Besides, the discoveries of this investigation are intended to boost learners' abilities in grammatical competency, accuracy and their abilities in essay writing. Subsequently, they would communicate effectively in English and other subjects. Ability to demonstrate communication proficiency in both spoken and written text would enable learners to improve academically. Additionally, the investigation is hoped to equip learners with skills to overcome SVA difficulties. In the same vein, Mungungu (2010) affirms that many learners have a habit of committing the same kinds of errors during

a certain stage of language learning. This suggests that teachers would take initiative to highlight and remind learners of such errors who in turn would make effort to avoid such errors.

English language practitioners are expected to benefit from the spin-offs of the study as the inquiry would not be pertinent to the researcher only. Further, Hine (2013) establishes that research offers a teacher diverse pedagogies with the intention to come with an approach which brings a change to the learner. This infers that teachers of English where data would be collected are expected to have experienced more or less similar challenges in handling SVA. They are hoped to benefit from the study because they would be actively involved. That would expose educators to methods and skills essential to the teaching of SVA in composition writing. Consequently, teachers would understand learners' perceptions of SVA perhaps they would be in a position to offer assistance to learners accordingly. Appropriate resources would be put into practice and emphasis in areas that need to be dealt with to minimise SVA errors in composition writing.

Lastly, the BBETA is anticipated to benefit as the findings of the investigation will be shared during workshops for English language teachers. The prospect was that the inquiry would aid and inspire English practitioners to improve their perception and teaching of types of SVA in composition writing. It was my anticipation that the study would also form a foundation for further research. The forthcoming paragraphs elaborate aspects of methodology.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The section centres on methodological facets of the study which include the research paradigm and design. It also outlines the participants of the study, the selection procedure, and data collection techniques as well as data analysis. According to Sileyew (2019), research methodology is the path through which researchers formulate their problem, objectives and presentation of results from data. Sileyew further explicates that methodology is determined by the nature of the research question and the subject being investigated. The contents discussed under this section are fully expounded on in Chapter three.

1.6.1 Research paradigm

The study was situated within Interpretivists paradigm. Hammersley (2013) avers that in this paradigm, human beings interpret their world and finally act based on such interpretation. Further, Hammersley clarifies that Interpretivists adapt a relative ontology in which a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations. This paradigm is deemed suitable for it affords

the researcher a deeper understanding of the research issue and its complexity in its unique context (Creswell, 2015).

1.6.2 Research design

The research design that is employed in this investigation is quali-quantitative design of a case study type. It is predominantly qualitative with a thin strand of quantitative. In a case study, one or more groups are investigated (Maree, 2016). This design was found pertinent for this investigation for it enabled the researcher to explore the challenges that ESL learners have pertaining types of SVA in essay writing as well as quantifying such errors for the purposes of validity. Moreover, a case study would allow the investigator to triangulate data from the three high schools with the aim of consolidating the research findings (Maree, 2016).

1.6.3 Participants and selection criteria

1.6.3.1 Participants

Persons taking part in a study are referred to as participants (Maree, 2016). Grade 11 ESL learners of three selected high schools in Botha-Bothe and their teachers formed participants of the study.

1.6.3.2 Selection criteria for participants

The study employed convenient and purposive selection in choosing three high schools. Such schools were chosen because they were convenient and accessible to the researcher (Maree, 2016). Purposive selection was found suitable for the study to select learners. Selection of participants was made on the knowledge of phenomenon as the researcher assumed that at Grade 11, learners are acquainted with the aspect of SVA. Echoing similar sentiments are Strydom & Delport (2012) who assert that in purposive selection, participants are chosen because they are information rich and inform an understanding of the research problem. Similarly, teachers of English language have the experience of the phenomenon as they are directly involved in the teaching of SVA.

1.7 DATA GENERATING TECHNIQUES

The study employed different data generating techniques. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011), data collection techniques are the instruments used to collect data. For the purpose of this investigation, open-ended questionnaires, document review and focus group discussions were used to collect quali-quantitative data and how each technique was employed would be expanded in Chapter three.

1.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is understood by different authors to mean making sense of collected data by organising or identifying data into categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Bryman, 2016). Since this is a quali-quantitative study, data was interpreted descriptively. To authenticate the findings, Corder's (1974) model of error analysis was adopted. The model helped the researcher not only to analyse but also to quantify and specify learners' errors for the purposes of authenticity and validity. How the preceding model was applied in this study would explicitly be explicated in Chapter three. In addition to Corder's model, data was analysed by describing patterns from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2015). In this perspective, the researcher adopted both open and selective coding.

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness is considered of paramount importance in qualitative inquiries since it is associated with transparency. Kumar (2005) defines trustworthiness as the feature that addresses issues of reliability. In the same vein, Amankwaa (2016) indicates that in order for a study to be considered worthy, the researcher should reflect credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. All the stated components are expounded on in Chapter three in terms of their standards and how they were applied in this study.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Fundamental to research writing is adhering to ethics. The notion of ethics in social research refers to the researchers' ability to carry out their studies in a way that demonstrates confidentiality, respect for the participants, trust and above all maintaining their privacy and anonymity (Bryman, 2016). How each ethical standard was executed would be elaborated in Chapter three.

1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation consists of five chapters.

Chapter One

The chapter serves to provide orientation to the context of the study by highlighting understandings of composition writing and grammatical aspects inside it. The background to the study outlines the statement of the problem and research questions, followed by the section on delimitation of the study where the purpose, geographical location and participants' delimitation are explicitly indicated. The last section articulates the significance of the study, brief methodology, believability of the findings and ethical standards.

Chapter Two

The chapter features the review of related literature. It covers the operationalisation of the keywords. It further elaborates on the theoretical framework as the current study is premised within Second Language Learner's Interlanguage hypothesis. Research questions premised literature review and literature on key terms are also included in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter captures on the summative perspective of the reviewed literature and the brief summary of the chapter.

Chapter Three

This chapter discusses the research methodology that the study employed. It is divided into subsections which include research paradigm, research design, participants and selection criteria, data generating techniques and procedures as well as data analysis. Trustworthiness of the findings of the study as well as ethical considerations form part of this chapter.

Chapter Four

The chapter presents the findings, interpretation and conclusion.

Chapter Five

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study and such findings are reported in relation to the research questions and the reviewed literature. Recommendations for further studies, suggestions for further research and limitation are also included. The last unit this chapter captures is on self-reflections.

1.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In a nutshell, the chapter commenced by outlining the understanding of composition writing, relevant literature and the related previous studies on SVA errors are clearly enunciated. The chapter further presented the research problem for this study, substantiated not only by the empirical evidence but by the researcher's professional experience as well. This section was followed by the research questions where main and subsidiary research questions are explicitly stated. The chapter addressed the delimitation of the study which is presented demographically. The chapter further provided a section where the significance of the study is clearly articulated, specifying how different entities would benefit from the spin-offs of the study. Those include the researcher, the learners and English language practitioners. Lastly, brief methodology, the believability of the findings of the study and ethical considerations are also featured in this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Literature review is a crucial aspect in research writing. It surveys documented scholarship and other sources related to the research area (USC Library Guides, 2017). It is further spotlighted in the USC Library Guides that literature review enables the researcher to explore the theory and critically evaluate the previous work on the related topic. Consonantly, Efron & Ravid (2019) and Xiauo & Watson (2019) posit that the researcher reviews literature to identify gaps in knowledge and pitfalls. Central to the authors' affirmation is the fact that unnecessary duplication will be avoided since literature review reflects what has already been covered. Literature review in this section is apportioned into four sections. The first section covers operationalisation of key terms of the study. The second section features theoretical framework that benchmarks the investigation. This is followed by literature on key concepts. The last unit captures the research questions premised in literature review. Finally, the summative perspectives and the implication of the reviewed literature are highlighted.

2.1 OPERATIONALISATION OF KEY TERMS OF THE STUDY

Fundamental to research writing is operationalising of key terms as it dictates how one will interpret the key concepts that guide the study. This inquiry is guided by the following concepts: Composition writing, subject, verb, subject-verb agreement, error, English as a second language (ESL) and learners.

(a) Composition writing

In this study, composition writing refers to the ability to demonstrate a degree of storytelling, competence in creating an imaginary picture in the mind of the reader, arguing convincingly and explanation of facts. It is a form of narration, description, informative and argumentative (Ong'ondo, 2001).

(b) Subject

For the purpose of this investigation, subject is understood as something or the person who executes an action in a sentence. Boahemaa (2014) conceives of subject as the primary participant in the clause of which something is predicated.

(c) Verb

A verb is a word that expresses action. Woods (2010) considers a verb to be the heart of the sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject. In this inquiry, a verb is perceived as a word that designates the role of subject in a sentence.

(d) Subject-verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement is understood by different authors to mean a consonance between subjects and verbs (Strauss, 2014; Basnet, 2017; Johansson, 2018). Subject-verb agreement is conceptualised as a proper balance between subjects and verbs in both number and person.

(e) Error

Error is a systematic gap in learner's lack of understanding of the target language (Mezrag, 2013). In this research, an error is identified as what amounts to learner's inability to use the learnt language correctly owing to failure to understand the form.

(f) English as a second language

The notion of English as a second language (ESL) as per Gunderson (2009) denotes the study of English by non-native speaker because they are living in a country where such language is spoken. For the purpose of this inquiry, ESL conveys the idea that learners are studying English as a foreign language (EFL) because it is used as a medium of instruction in schools.

(g) Learners

The term refers to persons enrolled in an educational system with the intention to receive formal education (Rasmussen, Northrup & Colson, 2017). For the purpose of this investigation, learners and students refer to one thing but for consistency purposes, learners would be used throughout the study.

2.2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

The theoretical underpinnings refer to the central view that advances with the intention not only to explain but to inform the study as well (Swanson, 2013). Further, Swanson upholds that theoretical framework is the structure which supports a theory of a research study where facts and tested hypothesis are acknowledged. It can be inferred from the author's affirmation that theory serves as the lens to the inquiry. Again, it guides on literature, research methodology and data analysis. Theory is also the glue to the researcher's thesis. Therefore, theoretical

framework which benchmarks this inquiry is Second Language Learner's Interlanguage hypothesis. The next section looks into such hypothesis.

2.3 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNER'S INTERLANGUAGE HYPOTHESIS

Second Language (L₂) Learner's Interlanguage (IL) was pioneered by Selinker (1972) to build on the previous work of Corder (Selinker, 1972). Old as the hypothesis might seem, it has evolved considerably over years but its guiding principles remained the same. Both novice and renowned researchers are making reference to Selinker's hypothesis. Such a hypothesis is most applicable in my study for its alignment with learners' errors, which the study sought to investigate.

Scholars advance several and complementary definitions of IL. Some conceive of it as a system that learners build up for themselves which is different from their first language and second language (Khansir, 2015). Others elaborate on IL as language between first language and target language (TL) with the intention to master the target language (Selinker, 1972; Ellis, 2008). Additionally, Nemser (1971) submits that interlanguage is an approximate system. On a similar note, Gass & Selinker (2008) define it as separation of L₂ learners' system that has intermediate status between L₁ and TL hence the word "*inter*". The term refers to interim grammars constructed by second language learners on their way to achieving proficiency in the TL (Owu-Ewie & Williams, 2017). The assertions by the authors spell uncertainty on my part as an ESL teacher as to whether there is indeed a possibility of learners to commit errors in the process of acquiring L₂.

There are eight principles that guide Second Language Learner's Interlanguage (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009). However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher singled out three relevant principles which are:

1. A learner's language is permeable (because it is incomplete and unstable, it is easily penetrated by linguistic forms derived both externally from input and internally through such processes as overgeneralisation).

In this study, the above principle would enable the researcher to find out from learners' essays if the learning or acquisition of L₂ is indeed open to influence from both the outside and the inside.

2. A learner's language is transitional. The learner restructures his or her interlanguage grammar over time. This development involves the learner passing through a series of stages.

This premise drove this inquiry such that from the learners' documents, the investigator would realise if learners change their grammar from time to time. This would be noticed from the learners' errors if they are adding or deleting rules of SVA in their essays.

3. A learner's interlanguage is the product of general learning strategies. One such strategy is L₁ transfer but other strategies are intralingual (For instance, strategies such as overgeneralisation and simplification (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009, p. 54-55).

This principle, among others, would enable the investigator to identify different kinds of SVA errors that learners commit. Recognising such errors might reflect the learning strategies that learners employ in the acquisition of L₂ and that could probe for pedagogical implications.

Second Language Learner's IL is not regarded as a process in second language acquisition (SLA) like error analysis (Selinker, 1972). It is neither the structure of L₁ nor the system of L₂, but rather, an independent linguistic arrangement. According to Selinker (1972), interlanguage originates from the point where L₂ learners convey their prior knowledge in the language they are trying to learn. Further, the author considers L₂ learner's IL to be a transitional process between L₁ and L₂ and is evident in learner's language. In consensus, Corder (1981, p.17) cogitates L₂ learner's IL as "a dialect whose rules share characteristics of two social dialects of languages, whether these languages themselves share rules or not." The notion of interlanguage according to the author has been summarised diagrammatically in Figure 1 below. Language A represents the learner's L₁.

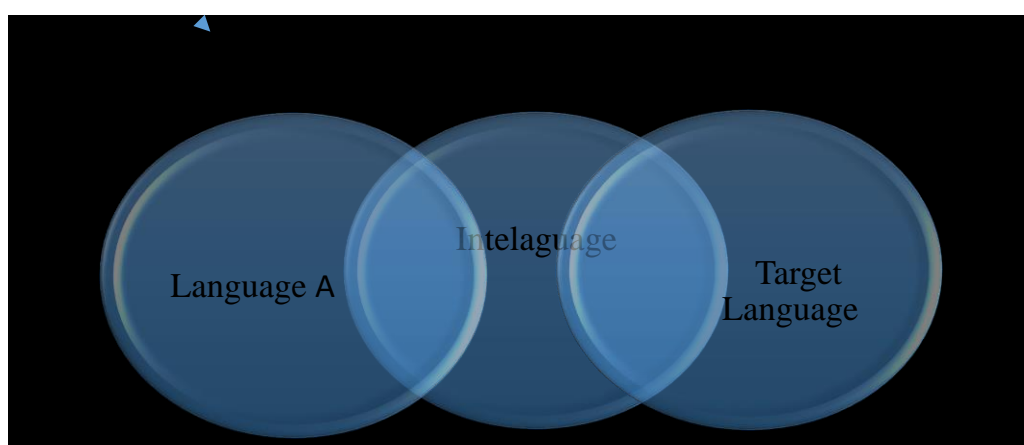


Figure 1 Interlanguage notion (Adapted from Corder, 1981)

In addition, there are five processes central to second language learning that interlanguage centres on as per Selinker (1972). Such processes are stated and expounded as follows:

1. Language transfer is the result of transfer from the learner's first language. Learners construct their own language system. It is believed that learners try to produce the L₂ based on what is right in their L₁. Selinker (1972) does not regard language transfer as an error, but rather a process where learners must undergo in the learning of second language.
2. Transfer of training where some elements of the interlanguage may result from the specific features of the training used to teach learners the second language in order to create some components of interlanguage.
3. In strategies of second language learning, some rules in the learners' interlanguage may result from the application of language learning strategies as a tendency the learner employs to reduce the target language to a simpler system.
4. Strategies of second language learning are techniques used by learners where they focus on fluency rather than accuracy in an attempt to communicate with native speakers of the target language. Such approaches might include, among others, paraphrasing and code switching as a means of simplifying the TL rules.
5. Overgeneralisation involves learners' inclination to overgeneralise some rules and features of the target language. For instance, extending the "ed" morpheme for forming past tenses to verbs to which it does not apply is an indication that overgeneralisation has been employed by the learner.

The L₂ learner's IL processes highlighted above imply the need for a study to inquire into difficulties those ESL learners might come across in essay writing by reflecting the extent to which interlanguage for my learners has impact on types of SVA. The processes appeal to critical analysis of learners' sentences in different composition genres to detect areas that may perhaps have motivated learners' inappropriate use of types of SVA in composition writing. Below is the section on literature on key concepts.

2.4 LITERATURE ON KEY CONCEPTS

This section aims at exploring literature around concepts that ground this study which include subject-verb agreement, subject, verb, composition writing and English as a second language. Such concepts are elaborated on the subsequent paragraphs.

2.4.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

A sentence is a group of words that contains a finite verb (Hendry et al., 2011). According to Hendry et al., a verb together with a subject makes complete sense. Instrumental component of grammar found in sentence which enhances effective communication is SVA. In producing grammatically correct piece of writing, learners or writers have to adhere to SVA rules (Radin & Fong, 2014).

Authors appear to have advanced several and generally complementary definitions of subject-verb agreement. Strauss (2014) for instance conceives of SVA as the consonance between subjects and verbs while Oribabor (2013) condenses it as a concord. Others elaborate on it as a grammatical item where subject and verb agree in both number and person and such rule applies most in simple present tense (Basnet, 2017; Johansson, 2018). Additionally, Almnaseer & Lafta (2016) term agreement in syntax as a general term used to describe a condition in which grammatical features of a noun phrase determines the morphological shape of a word that is syntactically related to noun phrase.

In essence, the congruence in the abovementioned explanations of SVA makes it reasonable to indicate that verbs can be changed depending on the subjects. SVA in this study is understood to mean the proper balance between subjects and verbs in both number and person. In order to understand the concept of SVA, it is notable to break such aspect into two components which are subject and verb. The next subsection looks into such.

2.4.2 Subject

Subject and predicate are components of a sentence. These two stated mechanisms according to Estling-Vannestål (2007), are of utmost importance in a sentence. As defined by Strauss (2014), a sentence is a combination of words that gives a complete thought. Strauss further highlights that a well-constructed sentence comprises three parts which are itemised as subject, predicate and object. According to Strauss (2014), the subject is sometimes called the naming part. Remarkable to the author's contention is the fact that subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence before the predicate and it shows who or what performs the action. The subject refers to the primary participant in the clause of which something is predicated Boahemaa (2014). Evidenced by Estling-Vannestål (2007) and Hendry et al. (2011), a subject is the main word in a sentence and it is always noun, pronoun, clause or phrase. According to Johansson (2012, p. 6-7)

The subject controls the verb/predicate, which has to have the same grammatical person and number features as the subject, the third person singular demands –s or –es on the verb (s/he plays, sings, cooks), while the first and second person singular and all plurals demand no –s or –es to the verb (I/we/you/they play, sing,

Embedded in the preceding quotation is the fact that subjects and verbs have different ways of matching. The postulation by Johansson (2012) relates to this study as the investigation sought to detect the manner in which subjects employed by learners in essay writing tally with verbs based on number, person and gender. Section 2.4.3 explains verb.

2.4.3 Verb

Alluding to the above paragraph (Section 2.4.2) are subject and predicate which are components of a sentence, the present subsection focuses on predicate. The predicate is a group of words containing verb and it tells more about what subject does (Estling-Vannestål, 2007). According to Lutrin & Pincus (2019), predicate expands on the subject and always begins with the verb. A verb is defined as a word that expresses action or state of being (Nndwamato, 2017). The author further reverberates Estling-Vannestål (2007) words that a verb is a crucial part in every sentence for it describes the role of a subject in the sentence.

In this respect, Woods (2010) considers the verb to be the heart of the sentence and it has to take the same grammatical form as its controller, the subject while Boahemaa (2014) views a verb as the motor of a sentence. In addition to the functions of a verb as stated by the cited authors, Nndwamato (2017) posits that a verb acts as the grammatical predicator in clauses and it is influenced by the subject to determine which form of present tense to use. To exemplify, third person singular adds *s/es* to the verb whereas first, second person singular and plurals do not demand *s/es* to verb. The assertions by the scholars indicate that verb is the central element in sentence construction.

Moreover, SVA tends to baffle learners more especially when the information falls between the subject and verb (Sparks, 2007). For example, “The set of instructions (need, needs) to be revised.” It is not easy to determine the correct verb in the given example. Some learners might believe that it is correct to say instructions **need**, and set **needs**. However, “instructions” cannot serve as a subject for it is in prepositional phrase. Al-Dubib (2013) is in accord with Sparks (2006) and adds that prepositional phrase will never be a subject and such phrase cannot agree with the verb. The authors further tabulate examples of such prepositions: *at, from, in, of, on,* and *with*.

It is important to look into subject and verb as they are fundamental concepts in this study. Considering them would mean the necessity to reflect how capable Grade 11 learners are in handling the rules of SVA. Although SVA seems easy definitively, it is considered to be one aspect which is difficult for learners in spite of their early acquaintance with SVA rules (Ponmani & Melaka, 2016; Basnet, 2017). It is in this regard that Vahdatinejad (2008) cautions language educators to be mindful in explaining the concept of singular and plural in nouns by directly indicating the differences between such as in this example “The boy sings” and “The boys sing.” Learners’ failure to grasp the rule of concord calls for the researcher to engage in an inquiry with the purpose of having better understanding of types of SVA errors in essay writing and their implications for improvement of writing.

ESL learners tend not to employ some types of SVA in writing. On a similar note, Izahar & Mustafa (2010) and Radin & Fong (2014) argue that learners tend not to use complex sub-rules of SVA and they find SVA of indefinite subjects challenging. These difficulties as perceived by O’Grady (2006) are evident since learners struggle because teachers seem to focus only on SVA rule where present tense verb is determined by a verb employed in sentence. The above perception indicates that learners are still having difficulties in grasping SVA. Furthermore, Strauss (2014) elaborates on many subject-verb agreement rules that learners need to understand to avoid errors. Such rules are expounded below:

Rules of subject-verb agreement as proposed by Strauss (2014, p. 9-12)

- a) A subject will come before a phrase beginning with *of*

For example, a bouquet of yellow roses **beautifies the room.**

In the above given example, the subject is *a bouquet* which is in singular and it matches the singular verb *beautifies*

- b) Two singular subjects connected by *or, either...or, neither...nor* require a singular.

For instance, **my aunt** or **my uncle** is requiring arriving by train.

Neither **Juan** nor **Carmen** was available.

Either **Kiana** or **Casey** is helping with stage decorations.

- c) The verb in *or, either...or, neither...nor* agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Example:

Neither the plates nor the serving **bowl** goes on that shelves.

Either the serving bowl or the **plates** go on that shelf.

This rule can be impediment. For instance, if *I* is one of two (more) subjects, it could lead to this odd sentence.

Awkward: Neither she, my friends, nor I am going to the festival.

It is better to reword such grammatically correct sentence but awkward sentence

New sentence: Neither she, I, nor my friends were going to the festival.

- d) General verb uses a plural verb with two or more when they are connected by *and*.

Example: A **car** and a **bike are** my means of transportation.

But note these exceptions:

Breaking and entering was against the law.

The bed and breakfast was charming.

In the last two examples, *breaking and entering* and *bed and breakfast* denote that they are compound nouns.

- e) Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by words such as *along, with, as well as, besides*.

Such words are not part of the subject. They should be ignored and use singular verb when the subject is singular.

Example: **The politician**, along with the newsmen, **was expected** shortly.

- f) Words that indicate portions; percent, a lot, majority, some, all etc. given earlier is reversed, and we are guided by the noun after *of*. If the noun after *of* is singular, use singular verb. If it is plural, use plural verb.

Example:

Fifty percent of **the pie has** disappeared.

Fifty percent of the **pies have** disappeared

A third of the **people were** employed.

A third of the **city was** unemployed.

- g) In sentences beginning with *here* and *there*, the true subject follows the verb.

Example:

There are four hurdles to jump.

Here is high hurdle to jump.

- h) Use singular with distance, periods of time, sums of money when considered as a unit.

Example:

Three miles **was** too far to walk.

Five years **was** a maximum sentence for that offence.

Ten dollars **was** a high price to pay.

- i) Some of collective nouns, such as *family, couple, staff, and audience* may either take singular or plural form depending on their use in sentence.

Example: **The staff** is in a meeting.

Staff is acting as a unit.

The couple disagree about disciplining their child.

The couple refers to people who are acting as individuals.

- j) The word *were* replaces *was* in sentences that are contrary to fact.

Example: If Joe **were** here, you' do be sorry.

Joe is singular subject because the sentence demonstrates the subjective mood, which is used to express things that are hypothetical, wishful, imaginary or factually contradictory. The subjective mood pairs singular subject with what we usually think as plural.

Example: She requested that **he raise** her hand.

It is not he *raises* in the sentence, a request being expressed, so the subjective mood is correct

The preceding assertions bring to conclusion that ESL learners commit grammatical errors in writing which include, among others, mismatch of subjects with their verbs thus, impeding learners' effective communication. Failure to use language with a level of accuracy that transfers meaning in production and comprehension calls for a need to scrutinise types of SVA

errors and the degree to which learners commit such errors in different genres of essay writing. The forthcoming paragraph looks into composition writing.

2.4.4 Composition Writing

Composition writing involves jotting down information together. According to Ong'ondo (2001), essay writing is the ability to narrate, describe, argue and explain. Essay writing as understood by Aragon, Baires & Rodrigues (2013) and Simbeye (2016) involves communicating information clearly with accurate grammar such that the reader is able to understand. Additionally, Mphunyane (2014) terms such as continuous writing which is made up of correctly constructed sentences. Again, Tlali (2018) elaborates that composition is a form of creative writing. Conclusion from the advances by the authors pertaining to composition writing is that in order for learners' compositions to be comprehensive, grammatically correct sentences where types of SVA are employed should be intensified.

There are four types of composition writing. Literature shows categories of composition which are narrative, descriptive, argumentative and informative (Nyamisi, 2014; Mutiriki, 2016 and LGCSE English Language (0175) Syllabus, 2018). LGCSE English (0175) syllabus furthers that learners are to choose from the above essay titles in writing a composition comprising 350-500 words. To start with narrative, the word narrates means to tell (Slatter, 2006). A narrative essay is a composition that involves story telling either real, personal or imaginary as one might be involved in (Mutiriki, 2016). It is further indicated that events under narrative writing are arranged logically and chronologically in order to amuse or entertain the reader. It is in this case that the writer's feelings, thoughts and actions will be clearly indicated.

Narrative essay has some components. According to Anantri (2016, p.26), "narrative has six elements which are: *who, where, when, which, what* and *how* of the event." Such questions have to show who was involved? What happened? When did that happen? Where? How did that happen? The author further advances that the point of view from which the story is narrated is also crucial in such type of writing since it influences its effect on the audience. More so, Mutiriki (2016) harmonises that narrative has its own style which include tone, diction, voice and types of sentences.

Descriptive composition is a genre of essay that requires the learner to describe something or someone (Slatter, 2006). This type of composition requires the writer to produce a picture of someone or something described such that the reader mentally sees what it looks like (Mutiriki, 2016). Further, Mutiriki enlightens that in descriptive writing, it is advisable to give details that

appeal to human senses. For instance, what can be seen, smelled, heard, touched or felt (Slatter, 2006; Mutiriki, 2016). LGCSE English (0175) syllabus (2018) seems to be in consensus with Mutiriki (2016) on the notion that descriptive words such as adjectives, adverbs and figures of speech need to be applied evenly since they create effect.

Another type of composition writing is informative. Informative composition expresses information and explains ideas (Simbeye, 2014). The author also terms it exposition or informational writing. For Mutiriki (2016), informative composition applies to any form of writing whose intention is to present factual data for explanation, information or education purposes such that information is made relevant, sufficient and interesting. As endorsed in Simbeye (2014), expository composition may include features of narration, description and argumentation. However, the objective of informative writing is to convey information about an issue. As so, Simbeye points out that such kind of writing gives or explains how to accomplish something. Like, Hubbard (2012) states the virtue of expository writing as being that of providing the reader with the deeper insights into a subject because ideas under this piece of writing are presented sequentially to enable the reader to follow the explanation easily. Importantly, this type of essay requires a learner to be well informed about the topic.

Argumentative writing is an integral part of composition genres. This form of writing is also termed discursive writing (Slatter, 2006). Further, Mutiriki (2016) and Tlali (2018) define it as a piece of writing that challenges or perhaps changes the readers' mind with the purpose of persuading them to agree on the writer's point of view. Significantly, Mutiriki in particular highlights that fundamental to discursive essay are structure, position statement, supplying arguments, opinion signals and points of view. In addition, Slatter (2006) maintains that use of rhetorical questions, emotive language, strong transitional expression and grammatically constructed sentences yield better argumentative composition whereas Tlali (2018) upholds that discursive writing enhances learners' reasoning capacity. In the view of the specified description of different genres of essay writing, it makes academic sense to indicate that types of SVA are central to sentence structure for without types of SVA, the written text such as composition writing could not make sense.

In the context of this study, composition writing is understood as ability to demonstrate a degree of storytelling, competence in creating an imaginary picture in the mind of the reader, arguing convincingly as well as explanation of facts using precise and accurate language. Accurate language incorporates among others, types of SVA. In the same line of thought, the

writing assessment objective as endorsed in the LGCSE English (0175) syllabus (2018) points out that learners are to communicate creatively, employing vocabulary, linguistic devices and sentence structure. The tabulated features of grammar which embrace types of SVA imply a necessity to adopt a study which could look into grammatical errors that ESL learners commit and their pedagogical implications. To conclude, it is necessary to establish the relevance of L₂ learner's IL hypothesis as it is adopted as theoretical framework for the present study. This was done with the intention to find types of SVA errors, their sources and their pedagogical implication. English as a second language is clarified in the upcoming subsection.

2.4.5 English As A Second Language (ESL)

The notion of ESL denotes the study of English language by non-native speakers because they are living in a country where such language is spoken (Gunderson, 2009). According to Jones (2014), ESL learners are normally faced with challenges in the use of foreign language. Alfaqiri (2018) reiterates Jones' words that writing in English as opposed to reading, listening or speaking poses a big challenge for non-native English speakers. For instance, the discoveries of the inquiry conducted by Hinkel (2004) point to the differences between native and non-native speaker in usage of verbs where majority of L₂ speakers encountered more difficulty than L₁ speakers. The confirmation by the authors implies that ESL learners have a difficulty in composition writing, as a result, they commit errors. Therefore, types of composition writing-based SVA errors should be investigated. Section 2.5 explicates literature on research questions.

2.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS-PREMISED LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews literature related to the research questions. It explores the types of SVA errors that characterise composition writing of high school ESL learners, probable sources of such errors and the pedagogical implications of types of SVA errors. Up next are types of SVA.

2.5.1 Types of SVA that characterise composition writing of high school ESL learners.

Subject-verb agreement errors are classified into five types as per Ponmani & Melaka (2016). The authors enumerated such types of SVA errors as follows: subject-verb agreement of person, subject-verb agreement of number, subject-verb agreement of indefinite subject, subject-verb agreement with coordinated subject and subject-verb agreement of notional agreement and proximity. These types of SVA are expounded on below.

The first one is SVA of notional agreement. Johansson (2018) affirms that notional agreement focuses on the notion of what the noun means rather than the strict grammatical form of the noun. Additionally, notional agreement according to Tawakalitu (2018) is based on the speaker's perception since collective nouns may take singular or plural verb depending on the perception of the speaker. The author further denotes that the general rule of notional concord is that a plural verb is used if the thought is of the individuals in a group rather than the group as a singular entity and vice versa. For instance, words such as *band*, *team*, *club* and *group* can either take singular or plural form depending on the context in which they are used (Johansson, 2018; Tawakalitu, 2018). Additionally, Johansson (2018) asserts that notional agreement errors are common in British English than in American English and such errors arise due to learners' failure to determine whether a word is a collective noun or not.

Another type is proximity. Proximity refers to the agreement between the verb and its subject based not on 'notion' but on the fact that there is a nominal group which is immediately close to the verb (Azasu, 2014). Concord of proximity does not, however, agree with the real subject in the sentence or the clause, it agrees with the closest noun and the numerous of that specific noun (Crystal, 2004). To exemplify, two singular nouns joined by 'either...or, neither...nor, take a singular verb; and if the subjects are plural, then the verbs should be plural too. However, proximity agreement sometimes is in preference to agreement with the headword of the subject (Quirk & Greenbaum, 2000). For instance, *no one except his own children agree* with him. It is because of this cited example that authors such as Leech & Svartvik (2002, p. 275) term "this principle *attraction* because the last noun attracts a certain form in the verb and seemingly violates the grammatical agreement rule."

SVA of a person forms a list of types of SVA errors. According to Quirk & Greenbaum (2000), SVA of a person is found in present tense and past tense. The authors exemplify that "*I am tired*", "*You are tired*", "*She is tired*" are categorised as 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person singular respectively. However, in past tense, only the verb 'be' has distinctions of person. For instance, "*I was tired*", "*He was tired*" and "*You were tired*". In addition, Boahemaa (2014, p.32) highlights that "the subject-verb agreement of person, the modal auxiliaries have only one form as in I/We/You/He/She will come to school. Another example is subject-verb agreement of number. This type of agreement indicates that a singular noun is accompanied by a singular verb; while a plural noun goes together with a plural verb (Kirkpatrick, 2013). The example is, *Pupils do not play regularly at lunch*. Though SVA of person and number seem to

be easy, the discoveries of Stapa & Izahar (2010) point to majority of learners having a challenge of applying SVA of number and person.

SVA with coordinated subjects would also be looked at. It is also known as SVA of the compound subjects (Quirk & Greenbaum, 2000; Leech & Svartvik, 2002). Furthermore, the authors expound that the coordinated subject has more subjects joined together by *and*, *or*, *nor*. Central to the authors' assertion is the fact that there are rules that should be applied in coordinated subject. One of such rules states that when a subject consists of two or more nouns or noun phrases coordinated by *and*, the verb is typically in the plural form (Leech & Svartvik, 2002). To exemplify, *Thapelo and Tsie are my students*. Looking at the given example, coordination is taken to be the reduction of two clauses. Similarly, Leech & Svartvik observe that another rule derives from coordinated noun phrases or nouns referring to the same person or thing, a singular verb is used. For instance, *His companion and a co-worker has organised a party for him*.

The cited examples of types of SVA indicate that if not well addressed, learners are likely to commit errors of this kind in composition writing. It is crucial to take initiative to establish what motivates learners to commit SVA errors in composition writing. Section 2.5.1 looks into such.

2.5.2 What are the probable sources of types of SVA errors that learners commit in composition writing?

Several causes or sources of errors have been introduced and documented by previous scholars. Sources of errors can be traced back to scholars like Brown (2000). According to Brown (2000), errors are categorised as inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors. Brown defines inter-lingual errors as transfer errors, which result from a learners' first language because they are not yet familiar with the target language thus, they use previous experience to learn it. In the same vein, Al-Dubib (2013) reiterates Brown's (2000) words that inter-lingual errors result from features such as grammatical or lexical errors. Sanal (2008) is of the view that inter-lingual errors are committed by learners in the target language because of the influence of their mother tongues.

On the contrary, intra-lingual error is another source which is also known as negative transfer of items within the target language (Brown, 2000). As noted by Sanal (2008), intralingual errors are blunders that learners commit when they lack knowledge of the rules of the target language. Again, Mungungu (2010) expands that intra-lingual errors result from

overgeneralisation where learners tend to follow new rules that they have learnt, and develop a hypothesis that does not tally with the first language or target language. For instance, “*I goed to school*” (Brown, 2000). The given example implies that the learner has applied a new structure that does not correspond to TL by generalising all verbs into regular verbs.

Added to the two sources of errors is Brown’s (2000) language learning strategies. Language learning strategies denote strategies used by learners in dealing with the target language (Brown, 2000). Further, Brown advances that overgeneralisation and transfer of rules from the mother tongue are two instances of L₂ language learning. For example, a learner may produce such a simplified utterance as “me water” to indicate his need for water (Brown, 2000). Another one is communication strategies. In the same way, Ellis (2008, p. 503) argues that communication strategies are “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared”. Such communication strategies include among others, avoidance and paraphrase (Brown, 2000).

Non-English-speaking environment is classified as another source of error. According to Baker (2006), learners use basic interpersonal language instead of using decontextualized academic language. As a result, they use informal language which includes contracted forms because they are not mindful of the context in which such language can be used. It can be assumed that learners’ difficulty is due to little exposure. The similar perception is echoed by Guo (2011) that ESL learners are immersed in their L₁ environment and that offers little exposure to English materials; consequently, chances of using English in real setting are few. The preceding sources of errors suggest that data would be analysed in relation to such sources to discover if there is significant relationship between my learners’ sources of errors and that stated by empirical literature.

Studies were conducted by various researchers to establish what prompts learners’ compositions to be full of SVA errors. Can teaching methods also attribute to such challenges? Nonetheless, it still remains indefinite as how teaching and learning should be applied such that learners grasp types of SVA in composition writing, hence, the next section.

2.5.3 What are the pedagogical implications of the identified types of SVA errors?

The analysis of learners’ errors has been one of the first methods used by researchers to investigate L₂ learning. Seong-Chul (2003) upholds that once the nature of the error is known, appropriate remedial steps should be taken. Such pedagogical implications include among others, motivation, teaching grammar using both deductive and inductive approaches (UB,

2010; Valerio, 2012; Anani, 2017). The above pedagogical measures are hoped to improve learners' capabilities in types of SVA in composition writing. In the subsequent paragraphs, such measures are elaborated.

Motivation enables learners to improve. According to Valerio (2012), motivation is a process whereby goal directed activity is instigated and sustained. Further, Valerio advises teachers that it is a must to implement different motivational techniques which can have influence on learners' participation and assertiveness. The author's assertion suggests that motivation plays a fundamental role not only in the learning process but also in the development of a learner, thus, a teacher is responsible for that. Resonating similar perception is Anani (2017) that a teacher is an important factor who should create a positive attitude towards the learning of L₂ grammar among his learners. Again, the author adds that employing various activities and methods such as audio-visual aids, role-play, and real-life situations to make his lesson an interesting and rewarding experience can help.

There are two types of motivation. Enumerated by Valerio (2012) and Anani (2017), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are categories of motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its own sake, for personal interest or enjoyment whereas extrinsic motivation comes from outside the person (Valerio, 2012). Example of extrinsic motivation can be incentives. Scott (2010) cautions teachers not to extrinsically motivate learners as it might denote that it is an ability not an effort that is rewarded, rather, extrinsic motivation should only be used to enhance intrinsic motivation. If applied correctly, motivation can be self-sustaining and produce behaviour change (Anani, 2017). Further, the author adds that reinforcement which refers to the act of encouraging something to happen continuously, enhances one to work. It could mean that learners learn to speak and write types of SVA better because they are praised and rewarded for their appropriate use of the language. Additionally, intrinsic motivation is not only linked to the improved results but to increased interest in learning as well (Valerio, 2012). However, motivation has shortcomings too. Efforts of intrinsic motivation can take time to affect the behaviour (Anani, 2017). Again, learners might also lose their motivation once rewards are no longer given. In the upcoming paragraph, other pedagogical implications are discussed.

Literature points to merits of teaching of SVA both deductively and inductively. According to UB (2012), deductive approach is a top-down theory where presentation and explanation of grammar rules take precedence over teaching. Further, UB highlights that the language is

taught from the whole part. For Benitez-Corea, Gonzalez-Torres, Ochoa-Cueva & Vargas-Saritima (2019), deductive approach is termed rule-driven approach. Important to the assertions is the fact that deductive approach is top-down, this implies that the teacher gives the learners a new concept and learners will practice thereafter as a result of having an idea. Correspondingly, teachers in Singapore have noted that learners use correct grammar faster as a result of deductive teaching followed by drilling and error correction (Chambers & Yunus, 2017). The weakness of deductive approach is that grammar is taught in isolation (Benitez-Corea et al., 2019). Example of teacher-centred approaches include lecture method. According to Atanga, Abgor & Ayangwo (2015), lecture method is an approach where the teacher transmits information to learners, monopolizes control and gives little opportunity to learners. It is realistic based on the above affirmations to assume that teacher-centred approaches like deductive teaching may restrict some learners' acquisition of SVA rules as the teacher dominates and learners are passive. Elaborated in the subsequent paragraph is inductive approach.

Inductive is another approach. According to Anani (2017), inductive approach is the process where learners discover grammar rules for themselves by examining the examples. Additionally, UB (2012) posits that under inductive approach, it is possible to teach grammar rules in context. Deducing from the above postulations, it can be inferred that learners are given samples which include the TL and learners will finally work on such example to discover the rules for themselves. In line with this is Anani's (2017) avowal on inductive approach which is bottom up theory accepting the view that language learners tend to focus on parts rather than whole and learners find rules for themselves. Mphunyane (2014) terms this approach learner-centred because learners explore more than the teacher explains. Examples of learner-centred approaches are discovery learning, cooperative learning and team work and all these are explained in the following paragraphs.

- a) Discovery learning is a hands-on-approach where learners participate actively in the learning process instead of depending on teachers (Brown, 2006). Again, Brown accentuates that learners interact with their environment by exploring and manipulating objects. There is a lot of discussion in discovery learning class. This approach is anticipated to improve learners' performance in types of SVA as learners have a chance to explore more (Brown, 2006). Echoing similar view is Anani (2017) that learners explore more than the teacher explains. Although noise level might be higher, it is apparent that the level of engagement is higher too (Brown, 2006). On the ground of

the above, it could be understood that discovery learning enhances learners' flexibility and creativity as learners are not restricted. Besides, the method is more exploratory than explanatory. This would mean learners' chances of acquiring SVA rules may be higher because learners discover for themselves. The next section elaborates on cooperative learning.

- b) Cooperative learning refers to educational approach which aims at organising classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. According to Mphunyane (2014), cooperation learning is an instructional method where learners form small groups and learn from others. The above explanations imply that this approach is learner-centred in nature and it enhances effective communication amongst learners. Virtue of this approach includes that of promoting critical and problem solving skills (Brown, 2006; Mphunyane, 2014). It can be understood that through learners' cooperation in their groups, SVA would be dealt with at length and different types of SVA errors could be remedied. In the following subsection, team work is explicated.
- c) Team work is the cooperative effort of people for a common end. According to Southern Cross University (SCU) (2013), team work involves working collaboratively together as team for a common goal or purpose. SCU adds that the benefits of team work include that of fostering collaboration as well as competition. Again, it brings together people with differing expertise and different perspectives. In line with this is Mphunyane's (2014) confirmation that that team work affords learners opportunity to share ideas which would result in mastering of types of SVA. Correspondingly, team work develops learners' active participation as learners have a chance to play different roles (SCU, 2013). Given the above assertions, it is the researcher's feeling that if team work can be enforced in English grammar class, types of SVA errors may be minimised as a result of teachers' collaboration in planning and team teaching.

What can be deduced from the preceding postulations is that teaching and learning of types of SVA in composition writing could be effective if teachers are mindful of strategies which could enhance students' understanding of such concepts. This inquiry is yet to establish among others, what pedagogical implications do types of SVA errors call for in the teaching and learning. The next section is on summative perspectives of the reviewed literature.

2.6 SUMMATIVE PERSPECTIVES OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

The study focused on scrutinising SVA errors committed by ESL learners. The main objective was to discover types of SVA errors that characterise written composition of ESL learners. The inquiry is benchmarked by the L₂ learner's IL hypothesis whose proponent is Selinker (1972) as explicated in Section 2.3. The stated hypothesis enabled the researcher to determine if there is indeed a significant relationship between L₂ learner's IL and types of SVA errors.

Furthermore, the framework which was employed allowed the researcher to understand the challenges that SVA errors pose to ESL learners. Though the focus of the inquiry was on identifying types of SVA in different genres of composition writing, it was also intended to discover the sources of such errors as well as pedagogical implications of such errors for teachers. Having an idea about types and sources of errors would enable the researcher to realise that although errors sometimes obstruct communication as stated by Oribabor (2013), they facilitate L₂ learning and aid teachers in identifying and classifying learners' errors and helping them construct corrective measures.

The reviewed literature elaborated on the concepts that form the title of the study. Such notions are subject-verb agreement, subject, verb, errors, composition writing and English as a second language. Based on the above, Babajide (2010) asserts that in order for a sentence to be correct and meaningful, its constituents must be in agreement. This means that types of SVA are central aspects in grammar that take a lead in expressing the ideas with clarity.

Another key word that coins the title of the study is subject. To this end, a subject as perceived by Strauss (2014) usually comes before the predicate and it shows who or what performs the action while a verb is considered to be the heart of the sentence (Woods, 2010). In this regard, without a subject and verb, a sentence is incomplete and meaningless. Therefore, essay writing is meant to determine whether ESL learners have internalised types of SVA. Since the investigation focused on analysing learners' errors in writing, it would mean that the researcher would have to give learners different types of composition so as to detect which genre would be poorly performed and be full of types of SVA errors.

Ultimately, literature is reviewed in terms of research questions. Framed on research questions, literature is reviewed as thus: types of SVA, sources of errors and pedagogical implications of types of SVA errors in the teaching and learning. The section also annexes discussion on four genres of composition writing: narrative, descriptive, informative and discursive. It is reasonable to conclude that essay writing and types of SVA errors are inseparable for learners

are expected to write grammatically correct sentences and develop such sentences into paragraphs. Up next is a summary of the chapter.

2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter focused on the review of literature related to the study and its implication not only for personal professional development but also for enhancing learners' proficiency in types of SVA in composition writing. The next chapter sketches the methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter centres on methodological facets of the study which feature the research paradigm, the research design, and participants of the study, selection procedure and data generating techniques. This chapter explains how data was accumulated and the procedures enacted to achieve the objectives of the study. Trustworthiness of the findings of the study and ethical considerations are also components of this chapter. Research paradigm is unpacked below.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study is situated within interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm is based on the notion that human beings interpret their world and finally act based on such interpretation while the world does not (Hammersley, 2013). Hammersley further explicates that interpretivists adapt a relativist ontology in which a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations rather than a truth that can be determined by a process of measurement. Again, the interpretivist paradigm affords the researcher a deeper understanding of the research issue and its complexity in its unique context as an alternative to generalise the base of understanding for the whole population (Creswell, 2015). In addition, Hammersley (2013) accentuates that interpretivist researchers have to understand the different ways of perceiving the world through various contexts and cultures since multiple interpretations are developed among human relationships. The inquiry would be underpinned by interpretivist paradigm for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the interpretivist investigator under this paradigm does not only describe objects, human or events but deeply understand them in social context as well (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Furthermore, since the researchers are capable of carrying research in a natural setting through methodologies such as case studies, interpretivism provides more authentic information which relates to the topic under investigation. Interpretive individuals are also responsible for constructing their own understanding of the world experiences and this enables them to understand people's actions by interpreting them (Maree, 2016). Employing this paradigm would enable the researcher to understand and interpret the challenges that types of SVA have on learners' writing. Also, the paradigm would hopefully allow me to establish the role of the learners and their teachers' experiential background in relation to SVA in composition writing.

Besides, this paradigm acknowledges the experience that participants bring to the inquiry. Up next is research design.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is explained as a way of collecting and analysing data (Bryman, 2016). This inquiry is a predominantly qualitative design of a case study type with a thin strand of quantitative where learners' SVA errors were quantified. A qualitative research methodology relies mainly on the use of words rather than figures to interpret and understand the research issue in their natural setting (McMillian & Schumacher, 2014; Maree, 2016). Contrary to that, Maree (2016) posits that quantitative design relies on statistical form of data. Notably, this study adopted two approaches hence it is termed quali-quantitative study. According to Maree (2016) and Creswell & Clark (2018), quali-quantitative research encompasses one qualitative and quantitative strand intended to extract the strengths and reduce the limitations in both approaches in a single study. It can be assumed from the authors' assertion that employing quali-quantitative approach was intended to validate the findings of the inquiry for quantitative strand reinforced what has dominantly been presented as qualitative findings. In the same vein, Cameroon & Sankaran (2015) submit that quali-quantitative approaches complement each other.

In this study, SVA is a phenomenon and the purpose of the study was to analyse learners' types of SVA from their scripts qualitatively. Again, the lesser quantitative element of the study enabled the researcher to quantify and specify such errors for the purposes of authenticity and validity. The fact that most of the data originated from analysis of learners' composition enabled the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of types of SVA. Quali-quantitative study employs data collection techniques such as documents, interviews and records (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Since the phenomenon is studied in its natural setting, it is understood that knowledge is generated through various practices as well (Maree, 2016). The implication is that the chosen design for this study can employ different approaches and the study in question adopted a quali-quantitative design of a case study type. Case study is highlighted in Subsection 3.2.1.

3.2.1 Case study

Case studies use quali-quantitative approach. The inquiry employed a quali-quantitative design of multiple case studies for a number of settings were analysed. A case study as understood by various authors mean a "bounded" system in which the researcher defines each case using

multiple sources of evidence (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Maree, 2016). On the ground of the given description, a qualitative descriptive case study with a thin strand of quantitative was found pertinent for this investigation. The reason being, in a case study, an event is studied in-depth for a defined period of time therefore, helping the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Bryman, 2016).

The case which was under study was Grade 11 learners from three selected schools in Botha-Bothe district. The researcher analysed a number of settings as echoed by Maree (2016) that case studies investigate one or more groups. It is therefore appropriate to employ such design with the intention to analyse types and sources of SVA errors, concentrating on the situation that exists in three different schools in their natural settings. Because a number of participants selected is small and purposively selected in case study, it allowed the inquirer to understand the participants and phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014). The reason being, a small number of people rather than large numbers was used (Bryman, 2016) hence the entity under the investigation is studied thoroughly in case study. One of the virtues of case study among others includes enabling the researcher to triangulate data collected. Selection criteria of participants follow.

3.3 PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR SELECTION CRITERIA

3.3.1 Participants

Persons taking part in a study are referred to as participants (Maree, 2016). Such people were selected in order to form a required number for this inquiry. Creswell (2014) describes selection as a small number consisting of information-rich individuals required for a study. Creswell's avowal affirms the researcher's choice of participants in this study. To this end, Grade 11 learners and their teachers of English language in three selected Botha-Bothe high schools formed the selection of the study. How participants were selected is articulated in the next subsection.

3.3.2 Selection criteria for participants

A selection refers to a subset of a population selected to partake in a study (Bryman, 2016). It is further endorsed in Creswell (2015) that such participants are selected with the intention to help the inquirer to understand the research problem. In this regard, Marshall & Rossman (2010) uphold that when the focus of the study is particular participants, the researcher should present a strategy for selecting the participants. Therefore, the researcher adopted convenient

selection to select three high schools in Botha-Bothe district. The schools were chosen because of their accessibility to the researcher. As defined by Maree (2016), convenient selection is made in situations where population elements are selected based on the fact that they are easily and conveniently available.

Open-ended questionnaires were given to 20 learners per school. To justify the choice of these participants, the cited entities have the characteristics that investigator is interested in. For instance, such participants as Grade 11 learners are assumed to be conversant in the aspect that was inquired into which is types of SVA. Equally, their teachers of English Language are unswervingly involved in the teaching of types of SVA in essay writing and their teaching experience of a phenomenon as a challenge paved the inquirer's way to address research questions at ease. Stressing the same view are Leedy & Ormord (2015) who caution qualitative researchers to select participants who are not only willing to partake in a study but who also possess experience of the phenomenon under investigation. The next sections unpack how schools, learners and teachers were selected.

3.3.3 Schools

Three schools were conveniently selected. As indicated above (Section 3.3.2) that when choosing a research site, the researcher has to consider different factors. Thus, such schools were chosen due to their convenience to the researcher for easy accessibility of data. In line with this are MacMillan & Schumacher (2014) who affirm that research site is chosen on the basis of its vicinity to the inquirer. The chosen sites minimised the expenses for the inquiry is self-sponsored. Maree (2016) advises researchers to take into consideration among others, costs and time frame when choosing site.

3.3.4 Learners

Grade 11 learners formed the participants of this investigation. They were purposively selected because they have completed primary and secondary education. As a result, it makes academic sense to presume that they are acquainted with the aspect that would be researched into. According to Strydom & Delport (2012), MacMillan & Schumacher (2014) and Maree (2016), purposive selection enables the inquirer to search for small information-rich informants which will inform the understanding of the research problem in a study from larger participants. The authors' assertions confirm the researcher's choice of participants for the investigator discovered, understood and gained insight into challenges that learners have in types of SVA thereby, addressing research questions directly.

Grade 11 learners are directly involved in the learning of types of SVA in composition writing. Besides, learners in that grade have sufficient time as they are not affected by state examinations; therefore, data collection was easy. Random selection was used to select learners' documents for marking. 30 scripts were randomly selected from 60 scripts. Random selection refers to an approach where each person has an equal chance of being chosen (Brink, Van der Walt & Rensburg, 2006). This selection is pertinent for it affords all learners equal likelihood of being selected for the inquiry.

3.3.5 Teachers of English Language

Eight Grade 11 teachers of English Language were selected to participate in an open-ended questionnaire session. They were purposively selected for they were presumed to have a rich experience-appraised understanding in the teaching of SVA. This was done in connection to MacMillan & Schumacher (2014) and Creswell (2015) who posit that participants in a study must be information-rich to generate the required data. These teachers are unwaveringly involved in the teaching of SVA in essay writing. It is assumed that such teachers have the required knowledge pertaining SVA. The researcher got their perceptions from the open-ended questionnaires. Such teachers would eventually proceed to focus group discussions. Since the study has to be carried out within an allocated time, the chosen participants are deemed rational as the inquirer had sufficient time to conduct focus group discussions with them and transcribe their data. It is further indicated that the smaller the selection of the study, the greater the chances of generalisation of the inquiry's findings (Maree, 2016). Data generating techniques are detailed in the forthcoming paragraph.

3.4 DATA GENERATING TECHNIQUES

The study employed different methods of data collection. Data generating techniques are the instruments used to collect data (Maree, 2007). In consensus, Cohen et al., (2011) complement Maree's (2007) proclaims that such tools are meant to gather data which will eventually be analysed and interpreted. Different approaches for data collection according to Cohen et al. (2011) include among others, observational methods, participatory observation, document review and interview. The rationale behind using various tools was to get in-depth data relating to the phenomenon under investigation (Maree, 2016). As viewed by Cameroon & Sankaran (2015), a variety of data collection instruments ensure triangulation and that amounts to what Maree (2016) terms crystallisation; a strategy used to compare findings of studies with one another. The virtue of triangulation is that it yields reliability in research (Cohen et al., 2011).

For the purpose of the study, open-ended questionnaires, focus group discussions and document analysis were adopted. Elaboration on document analysis follows.

3.4.1 Document analysis

Document analysis involves documents interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). For Neuman (2006, p.323), document analysis “complements other sets of data that has already been obtained with the intention to get a clear picture of the study in question”. The author further indicates that documents that may be subjected to analysis; these include: policies, acts and written essays. For the purpose of the investigation, learners’ essays were looked into, focussing on types of subject-verb agreement errors that learners have committed so as to adhere to error analysis theory. This data collection technique was used with the intention to validate and corroborate students’ responses with information from the questionnaires and focus group discussion. In line with this, Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004) argue that documents are used as a method of data collection along with other methods. The motive behind this technique is that it would enable the researcher to authenticate the views raised by teachers and students. Up next is open-ended questionnaire.

3.4.2 Open-ended questionnaire

A questionnaire is “a set of questions on a form which is completed in respect of a research project” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 196). In consonance, Johnson & Christensen (2014) view a questionnaire as a data collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a study to obtain information about thoughts, feelings and perceptions on a subject under investigation. Open-ended questionnaire was deemed appropriate for the study because it boosts the reliability of the inquiry as the researcher does not have chance to influence the respondents’ responses (Cohen et. al, 2011). Further, the authors aver that open-ended questionnaire enables the participants with opportunities to express themselves freely. Another reason for choosing open-ended questionnaire is that it offers a greater degree of anonymity. Open-ended questionnaires were given to eight Grade 11 teachers of English Language in three selected schools for this study. The section that follows is on focus discussion where participants came together with the intention to expound more information with regard to their responses from the questionnaires.

3.4.3 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion is a form of interview where multiple participants gather at the same time to discuss a certain topic. According to Nyamba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee (2018), focus group discussion is an approach used by a selected group of individuals to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific topic. Accordingly, the authors clarify that this method serves to solicit participants' attitudes, perceptions and experiences in the course of interaction with certain people. One of the rules that have to be set for focus group discussion is confidentiality so that participants may feel free to express their views (Nyamba et al., 2018). The group incorporated 4 Grade 11 teachers of English Language from three selected schools. The discussion was on probable sources of composition writing-based SVA errors by Grade 11 learners and pedagogical implications where teachers had to air their experiences and perceptions in relation to such topic. Such discussion was recorded and later transcribed. The next section indicates how data was analysed.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis refers to making sense of the collected data (Bryman, 2016). Since this study is quali-quantitative in nature, data was analysed descriptively and the thin strand of quantitative enabled the researcher to quantify types of SVA errors that require specificity for the purposes of authenticity. As defined by MacMillan & Schumacher (2014), qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising or identifying data into categories whereas quantitative data uses statistics (Maree, 2016). According to Creswell (2015), the quality of employing more than one paradigm in analysis is that of maximising the accuracy of data.

Data was analysed descriptively and it involved learners' scripts where the researcher analysed their written essays. Again, open-ended questionnaires with teachers were used and the focus group discussions with teachers which was later transcribed was included. Types of SVA errors from learners' essays were analysed quantitatively. Such errors were classified into codes and themes which categorise them (Creswell, 2015). In this regard, the investigator employed two approaches to coding which are open coding and selective coding to analyse data. According to Creswell (2015), researchers code similar actions or events together under open coding while selective coding involves delimiting data into themes that closely relate. The researcher therefore adopted selective coding to classify themes indicating types of SVA errors that ESL learners commit in essay writing. Such themes drew from the research questions.

In the process of identifying and classifying learners' types of SVA errors, Corder's (1974) model was employed. The two concepts (coding and Corder's model) complemented each other for they enabled the researcher to identify, classify and explain types of SVA errors as proposed by Corder's (1974) model. This model is deemed appropriate as it corresponds with what was done to students' essays. Such model comprises four stages which are:

1. Identification of errors
2. Classifications of errors
3. Explanation of errors
4. Evaluation of errors

Stage 1. Identification of errors

It is important to consider the purpose of the study such that the researcher would collect the relevant data. After data collection, errors were identified. This was done by choosing sentences which ascribed to SVA errors. Below is the second stage.

Stage 2. Classification of errors.

This is the second stage of data analysis. The researcher classified errors into their types as proposed by Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005). Types of SVA were classified according to:

- Errors of omission
- Errors of addition
- Errors of misinformation
- Errors of misordering (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005)

This step enabled the researcher to classify errors according to their types, hence answering the research question one. Explanation of errors follows.

Stage 3. Explanation of errors

In this stage, why errors occurred would be explained. The explanation also centred on the sources of such errors. The last stage is on evaluation.

Stage 4. Evaluation of errors.

Errors were evaluated. Evaluation involves weighing errors to determine which errors are more serious and should get more attention. Trustworthiness of study is enunciated below.

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness is of paramount importance in research since it is associated with transparency and believability of the findings of the study. Amankwaa (2016) defines trustworthiness as the feature that addresses issues of reliability. Further, Amankwaa indicates that in order for a study to be considered worthy, the researcher should reflect credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, reliability and validity. For the purpose of this study, these aspects of trustworthiness are expounded below.

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the researcher's confidence about the investigation's findings Connelly (2016) while Maree (2007) views it as a practice of discussing themes with the colleagues to see if they make sense. The researcher adopted triangulation which is termed crystallisation in Maree (2016). Triangulation involves employing multiple sources of data with the intention to compare the findings (Maree, 2016). For Creswell (2015), a virtue of triangulation is that it breeds credibility. On the basis of the authors' assertions, the researcher used member checking to ensure credibility. Member checking involves returning results to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Koelsch, 2013). This assertion is in line with Devault's (2019) affirmation that member checks ensures that participants check through the data in order to verify their statements and fill the gaps of their earlier interviews.

3.6.2 Conformability

Conformability is the degree of neutrality in the research findings (Polit & Beck, 2014). Such neutrality can be found when the results of the study are confirmed by the similar study (Kumar, 2011). To guarantee how conformability of the study was achieved, the researcher ensured that the findings of the study were crystallised by the empirical evidence. In addition, the inquirer provided detailed steps followed in methodology so as to enable the reader to determine conformability as well as indicating the emerging themes from data (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016).

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability relates to reliability and consistency of research findings. Defined by Polit & Beck (2014) and Moon et al. (2016), dependability refers to the degree to which research procedures are documented with the intention to allow the outside researcher to obtain the same results if the study is repeated. In an attempt to guarantee dependability, the researcher clearly indicated the steps and processes he underwent in collecting raw data so as to allow

investigators to find consistent results should they wish to replicate or repeat the inquiry. Different sources of data were also reported.

3.6.4 Transferability

One standard that ensures trustworthiness in research is transferability. Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study can be transferred, generalised or have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (Moon et al., 2016). In a similar line of conception, CSU Writing Guides (2020) holds that transferability is relevant to studies such as ethnographic and case studies. CSU Writing Guides opines that the more the researcher has explicitly explicated data generating techniques, the easier it is for the researchers to follow. Deducing from the above postulations, upcoming scholars would be in a position to decide whether there are similarities such that findings could be applied to different context.

3.6.5 Reliability

Fundamental to research writing is considering reliability. Literature points out that reliability amounts to a degree to which the research findings are consistent with previous one and such consistency should be achieved under the same conditions. (Bryman, 2016). Data collection instruments contribute to reliability of the study according to MacMillan & Schumacher (2014) who argue that the more instruments and observations are reliable, the more consistent and dependable the results will be. It is in this perspective that multiple data generating techniques were expected to guarantee reliability of the research findings.

3.6.6 Validity

Validity in research refers to the extent to which the instruments of the study measure what they are supposed to measure (Maree, 2016). The confirmation by the author may suggest that validity is concerned with the accuracy of the findings. In order to satisfy issues of validity, the researcher ensured that data collection instruments used were valid and data collected was accurate. Below are ethical issues.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The notion of ethics in social research refers to the researchers' ability to carry out their studies in a way that demonstrates confidentiality, respect for the participants, trust and above all maintaining their privacy and anonymity (Bryman, 2016). The implication put forward by the author is that the researcher is mandated to operate within the moral standards. Ethical issues that the inquirers have to execute in their studies as indicated by Bryman (2016) would be explained in the subsequent paragraphs as well as the ways of executing such ethical standards.

Confidentiality is one of such standards. Regarding confidentiality, the participants were assured that their responses would be treated with confidentiality. The code of ethics taken into consideration was in line with Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole (2013) who forewarn the researchers that sensitive or personal information from participants should be protected. The researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the study, and they were guaranteed that the information given would only be accessible to the researcher and the supervisors. Furthermore, such information would not affect participants in any way. Additionally, the inquirer assured voluntary participation and withdrawal of the participants from the study should they decide to.

Informed consent is another ethical standard that is research-bound. According to King (2010), informed consent requires the researcher to provide the relevant information to participants with regard to what the investigation entails. In order to adhere to informed consent, the inquirer sought permission from the Faculty of Education at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), the consent from District Office Manager (DEM) of Botha-Bothe education office to undertake the study in such district. The principals of the schools where data was collected were contacted beforehand. (See list of appendices for letters to DEM and the principals). In addition, I informed the principals, teachers and learners about the nature of my study and the extent of their involvement.

Another ethical principle that the investigator had to observe is participants' anonymity. It is of significance to ensure the participants that they would remain anonymous. I guaranteed the anonymity of participants. This was done in connection to Cohen et al. (2011) who point out that the core of anonymity is that information given by the participants should in no way disclose their identity. To counteract this, the researcher did not use participants' names but adopted pseudonyms for participating learners and teachers.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter covered research methods and data generating techniques and procedures. The chapter further enunciated on the framework for analysing data. Trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations are also the features of this section. The next section presents Chapter four on data presentation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter captured on the aspects of methodology and data generating techniques employed in this inquiry. The data collection strategies were document analysis, open-ended questionnaires and focus group discussions. The reason for adoption of multiple tools was to satisfy the believability of the findings of the study (Maree, 2016). The discoveries of the investigation are therefore reported by research question. Data was classified for thematisation as indicated in Section 3.5 of this report. The process enabled the researcher to apply open and selective coding to show types of SVA errors that learners commit in essay writing, sources of such errors as well as the pedagogical implications of the identified SVA errors in composition writing.

4.1 TYPES OF SVA ERRORS LEARNERS COMMIT IN COMPOSITION WRITING

Data generated towards answering the question on types of SVA errors was through learners' compositions and open-ended questionnaires for teachers.

4.1.1 Findings from learners' compositions

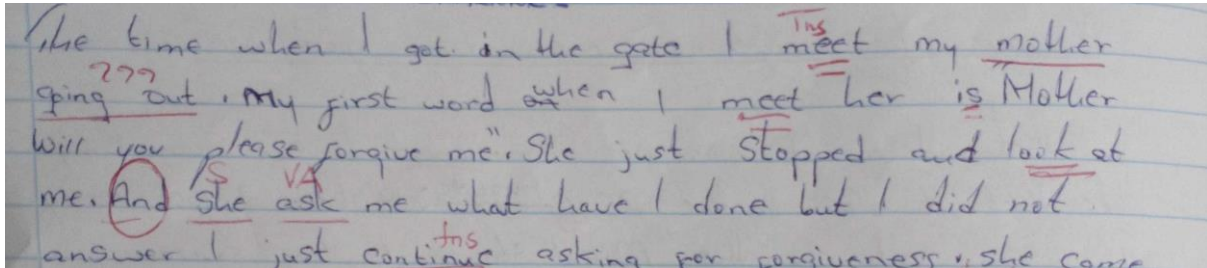
Learners were given LGCSE composition writing test adopted from the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) English Language (0175) Paper 1 of question paper (2014). They were expected to choose one topic from five given topics to write an essay of between 2-2½ pages. The test was written under supervision to ensure that learners were not copying. The findings from the marked learners' compositions were discussed in relation to two research questions as indicated below:

- What are types of SVA errors that characterise learners' written composition?
- What are the probable sources of such errors in essay writing?

The discoveries were coded through Corder's (1974) model of error analysis as acknowledged in Section 3.5. Coding coupled with error analysis model helped the researcher to identify, classify, explain and evaluate types of SVA errors that learners committed in essay writing. The findings from the first research question that appear from majority of learners' composition were thematised as subject-verb agreement of a person and subject-verb agreement of number and were presented and discussed below.

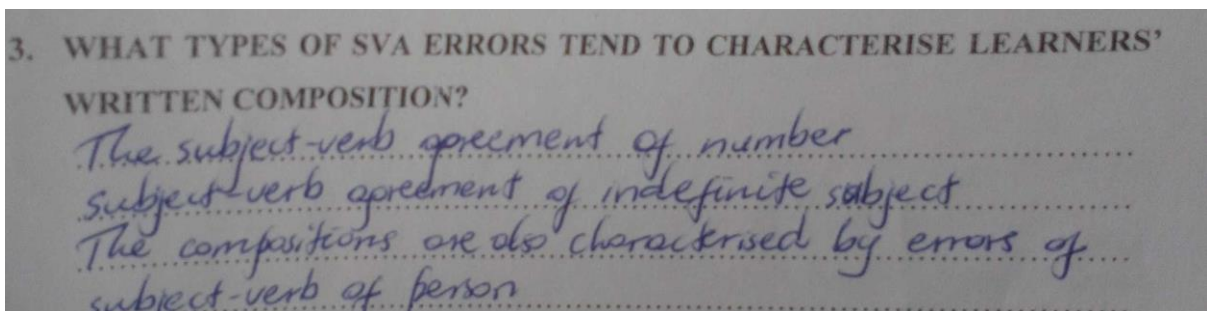
4.1.1.1 Subject-verb agreement of a person

Errors identified pointed to learners' tendency to violate the SVA rule of person. Findings from the test revealed that learners have a challenge attributed to SVA of a person in composition writing. Substantiating this were SVA errors drawn from the written text of learner A which included the following:



Learner A

The above excerpt includes SVA error of person. For instance, "And she ask me what have I done" in sentence 4 from the above passage is an example of a sentence where SVA rule has been contravened. In the given example, plural verb has been incorrectly used with singular pronoun. The insights from the finding is that learners' challenge is inaccurate application of SVA of person. This confirms Stapa & Izahar (2010) and Ponmani & Melaka (2016) that ESL learners have difficulty in applying SVA in writing (Section 1.2). This finding is also consistent with teachers' responses from the questionnaire as shown in the extract from teacher Y attached below:



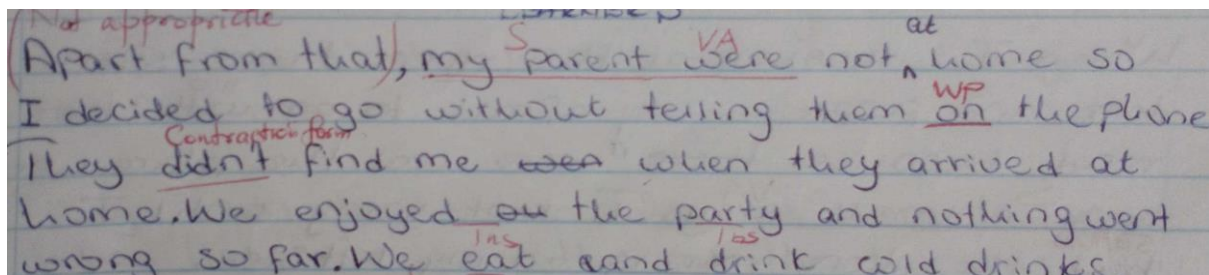
Teacher Y

The finding from 5 out of 8 teachers and learners' test in relation to SVA errors of person contradicts Quirk & Greenbaum's (2000) contention that in SVA of a person, the verb changes according to the person and number of the subject (Section 2.5.1). The contradiction brought by the finding and literature denotes learners' inadequacy in the application of SVA in writing. It is reasonable for teachers to consider that some Grade 11 learners do not conform to SVA rules for 14 out of 30 selected learners committed SVA error of person. This spells the need

for teachers to incorporate a number of teaching activities intended to empower learners' knowledge on types of SVA. In the next subsection, another SVA related challenge is articulated.

4.1.1.2 Subject-verb agreement of number

Subject-verb agreement of number is reported in this subsection. From the learners' essays, it surfaced that application of SVA of number is a challenge in their writing. An insert below is a sample of learner C who could not employ SVA of number well.



Learner C

Learner C is confronted with difficulty of SVA of number. For instance, “*My parent were not at home*” instead of “*My parents were not at home.*” The finding is contrary to Kirkpatrick’s (2013) assertion on SVA of number (Section 2.5.1) which specifies that a singular noun is accompanied by a singular verb whereas a plural noun goes together with a plural verb. Learners’ inability to observe the rule as indicated by Kirkpatrick may suggest that they have not internalised SVA rules for out of 30 selected learners, 17 encountered the problem illustrated above. This finding is in line with error analysis (Corder, 1974) that inaccurate use of concord is classified as grammatical error. It is assumed that mismatch of subjects and auxiliary verbs in writing constitute errors which call for a need for teachers to teach SVA comprehensively. Below are teachers’ responses on types of SVA errors through questionnaires.

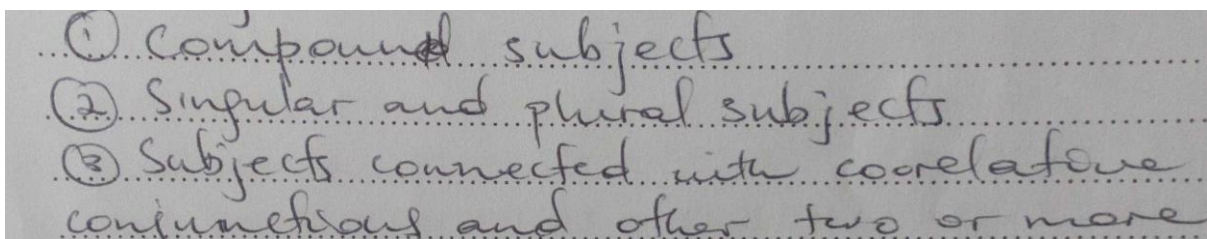
4.1.2. Findings on the teachers’ open-ended questionnaires

Teachers individually answered open-ended questionnaires. They were supposed to give types of SVA errors that characterise Grade 11 learners’ written composition. Inability to deal with compound subjects, indefinite subjects and subject-verb agreement of person appeared in most responses as indicated in the subsequent paragraphs. The findings were therefore presented, analysed and interpreted.

Findings tabulated under first research question on types of SVA errors characterising written composition were thematised as learners' inability to employ compound, indefinite subjects and SVA of a person. Entailed in the forthcoming subsection are compound subjects.

4.1.2.1 Inability to employ compound subjects

The learners' inability to use compound subjects surfaced as one type of SVA error in essay writing. This was confirmed by 4 teachers that learners' compositions revealed their failure to apply the said subjects. Teachers highlighted that this incompetency is apparent where learners are expected to deal with subjects joined by correlative conjunctions. Supporting their claim is the excerpt below:



Teacher X

This finding from teacher X and the other 3 teachers contradicts Leech & Svartvik's (2002) position as acknowledged (Section 2.5.1) that coordinated subject has more subjects joined by *and*, *or*, and *nor*. The contradiction in relation to Leech & Svartvik (2002) and the finding points to teachers' claims having a commonality with learners' scripts for all 30 selected learners did not use SVA with compound subjects in their essays. Since the finding from the teachers refutes literature, it can be assumed that teachers do not stress on different types of SVA in their teaching or learners did not grasp the concept. This would mean that without proper teaching and application of SVA with compound subjects, communicated meaning might not be understood. Up next are indefinite subjects as another type of error.

4.1.2.2 Indefinite subjects

Indefinite subjects are pronouns or subjects which do not refer to specific person or thing. It also emerged from 4 teachers' questionnaires that the said subjects continue to pose challenge to learners as shown by the inserts below:

WHAT TYPES OF SVA ERRORS TEND TO CHARACTERISE LEARNERS' WRITTEN COMPOSITION?

The subject-verb agreement of number
subject-verb agreement of indefinite subject

Teacher Y

Pronouns including personal, indefinite and
quantitative confuse many lesson students

Teacher Z

The study revealed that learners are incompetent in relation to SVA of indefinite subjects. The finding from teacher Y was strengthened by teacher Z's response that indefinite pronouns confuse learners. The similar conception is documented in Stapa & Izahar's (2010) study that learners find SVA of indefinite subjects challenging (Section 2.4.3). The finding coupled with Stapa & Izahar's assertion confirms what the researcher noticed. All 30 selected essays had no use of indefinite subject.

Given the above, it is equitable to draw conclusion that while teachers indicated that learners struggle with the SVA of indefinite subjects, this did not appear in the essay written by 30 learner participants. Another SVA related challenge is detailed in the following subsection.

4.1.2.3 SVA of a person

The frequent occurrence of SVA errors of a person appeared from 6 out of 8 selected teachers that learners are challenged to use SVA of person.

3. WHAT TYPES OF SVA ERRORS TEND TO CHARACTERISE LEARNERS' WRITTEN COMPOSITION?

SVA of number and person especially with
noun type (collective nouns, invariable noun ending

Teacher Z

Teacher Y

This was evidenced by teachers that learners do not know when to add “s” to the verb; they even add “s” to the 1st pronoun. For instance, teachers Y and Z indicated that learners are inclined to write, “*I speaks English.*” In the given example, there is no agreement between subject and verb. The similar confirmation was evident in 12 learners’ essays. For instance, from the insert below, learner C has committed error of SVA of a person in sentence 2.

Learner C

This finding confirms Stapa & Izahar’s (2010) revelations that majority of learners commit SVA of person and number (Section 2.5.1). Similarly, out of 30 selected learners, 12 learners committed SVA of person errors. It can be concluded that challenges that learners have pertaining the use of SVA of a person may negatively affect their compositions for communicated meaning would be in jeopardy. As a result, teaching of SVA must be revised with the intention to minimise such errors. Below is a brief summary of SVA errors by composition genre.

4.1.2.4 Summary of types of SVA errors by composition genre

The analysis has revealed 33 SVA related errors among which SVA errors of person were recorded with a number of 14 in narrative composition and SVA of number with 15 errors in the same genre. Again, 2 SVA errors of number were identified from informative essay and 2 SVA of number with 2 errors in descriptive essay. No SVA error related challenge was identified in argumentative composition. Given the above explanation, it can be concluded that most learners chose narrative topic over other composition genres and that is where SVA errors of number and person are more prevalent. The next subsection is on summative perspective.

4.1.3 Summative perspective

The findings on the types of SVA in relation to research question one seem to have some commonality. Strengthening this is the recurrence of responses in both teachers’ questionnaires, focus group discussions and learners’ test as the above extracts revealed. Based on the numbers given above pertaining SVA errors, it is therefore reasonable to conclude that

SVA of person, number and indefinite subjects were identified as the main findings under the first research question. The forthcoming section gives the sources of types of SVA errors.

4.2 SOURCES OF TYPES OF SVA ERRORS IN COMPOSITION WRITING

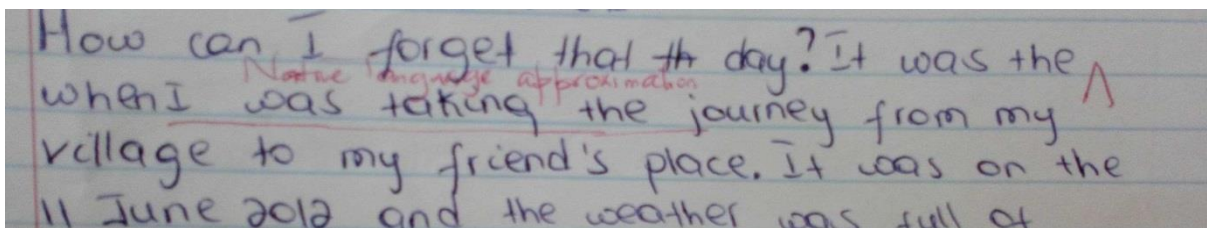
This section focuses on the probable sources of types of SVA errors in essay writing. Similarly, data generated towards answering the question on sources of such errors was engendered through learners' compositions, open-ended questionnaires for teachers and focus group discussions with teachers.

4.2.1 Findings from the learners' compositions

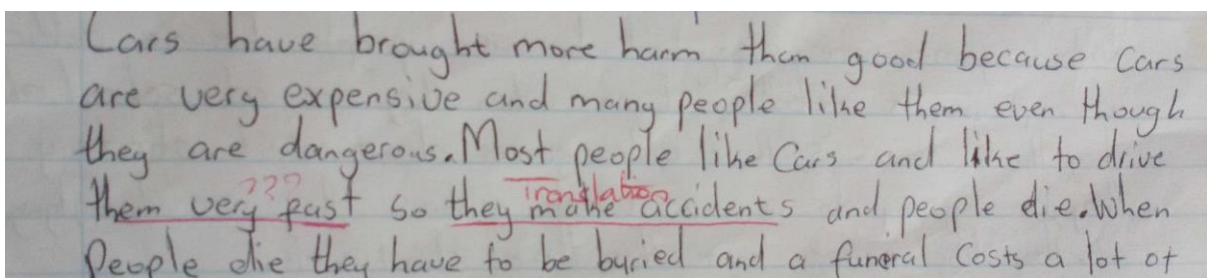
In order to determine the causes of types of SVA errors in learners' essays, learners had to be engaged in a written activity. To this end, learners were given a test which was intended to aid the researcher to locate such errors and decide on their causes. The emerging sources of errors were thematised as native language approximation/mother tongue interference, poor language proficiency and English-speaking environment. Up next is native language approximation.

4.2.1.1. Native language approximation/ mother tongue interference

Failure to write grammatically correct sentences emerged as one of the causes of types of SVA errors in composition writing. The recurring challenge of mother tongue interference was noticeable in learners' essays. Here under are the examples which reveal native language approximation from learners D and E:



Learner D

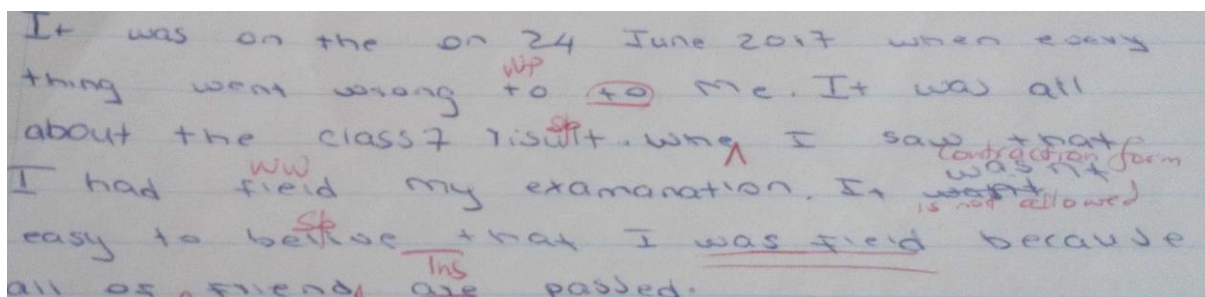


Learner E

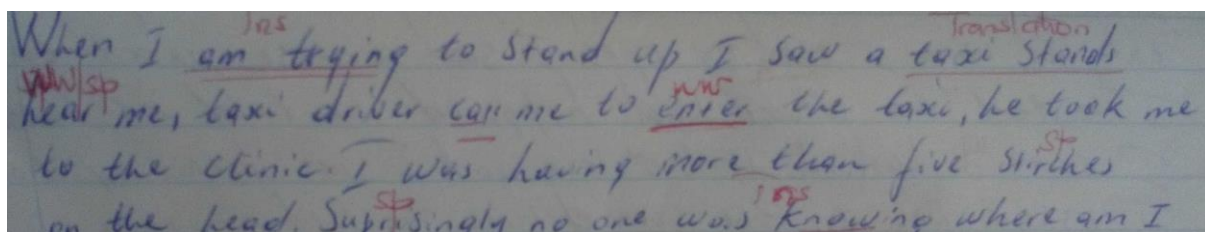
The above excerpts include translated sentences. For instance, “...*when taking the journey*...” instead of “...*when I had the journey*...” Again, “...*they make accidents* and people die” instead of “...*they cause accidents* and people die”. These examples confirm that learners erroneously translated from native language, which in their case, is Sesotho. Additionally, translated sentences were apparent from the scripts of 12 out of 30 selected learners. Such tendency to translate impacts negatively on written texts in English. The finding is compatible with that of Sanal (2008) who advances that interlingual errors are committed by learners in the target language because of the influence of their mother tongues (Section 2.5.2), which Selinker (1972) terms language transfer under IL hypothesis (Section 2.3). Based on the aforementioned finding on native language approximation, it is rational to assume that employing L₁ in composition writing which is expected to be answered in L₂ leads to errors in essay writing. Following this subsection, another source of errors is expounded.

4.2.1.2 Poor language proficiency

Failure to use language with a level of accuracy that transfers meaning in production and comprehension appeared to be one of the causes of types of SVA errors among Grade 11 learners in composition writing. This emerged from the written text that learners produced. All 30 selected learners demonstrated poor level of accuracy as a grammatical error was spotted from every script. Such shortcomings included errors in tense, spelling, punctuation and omission of words. Manifestation of these stated errors is attached below:



Learner B



Learner I

The interpretation from the preceding texts reveals different kinds of grammatical errors which learners committed and they are reflected in the tables below:

Table 1 for Learner B

Error	Abbreviation	What it stands for
...when everything wrong <i>to</i> me.	WP	Wrong preposition
...class 7 <i>risult</i> , ... <i>to belive</i>	Sp	Spelling
I had <i>field</i> my examination, I <i>was field</i>	WW	Wrong word
...all ^ my friend^	^	Omission
... <i>my friend are</i>	SVA & Tns	Subject-verb agreement and tense

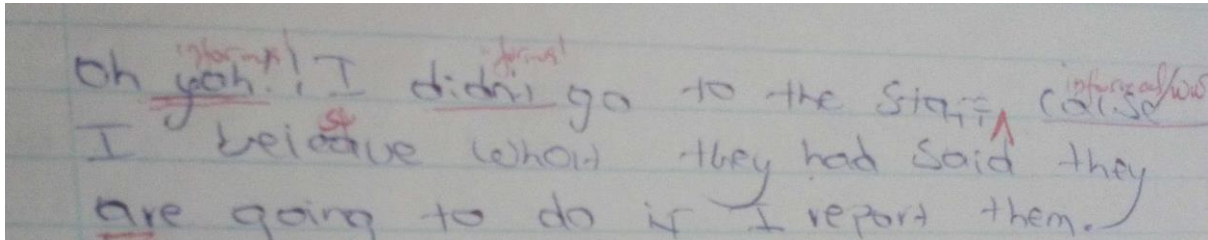
Table 2 for Learner I

Error	Abbreviation	What it stands for
<i>When I am trying</i>	Tns	Tense
<i>Stirches, suprisingly</i>	Sp	Spelling
Taxi <i>stands</i>		Translation
Taxi <i>driver call</i> me	SVA	Subject-verb agreement
When <i>I am trying</i> <i>was knowing</i>	Tns	Tense

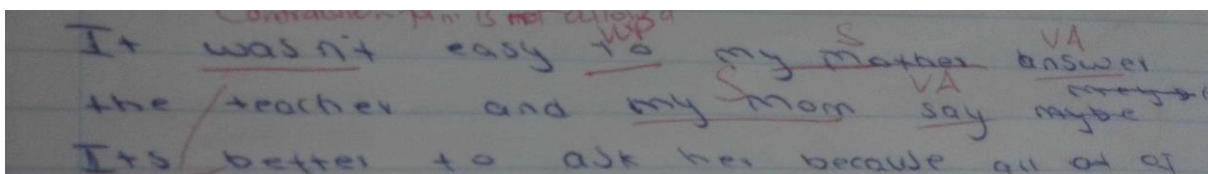
The study revealed prepositional, spelling, tense, contraction form, wrong word, omission, SVA and tense errors as per the tables above. For instance, “*risult*” instead of “*result*” and “*field*” instead of “*failed*” from Table 1. These are considered to be spelling errors and wrong word choice according to Corder’s (1974) model of error analysis. Again, wrong tense as in “.... no one *was knowing*” instead of “...no one *knew*” and translation in “*Taxi stands...*” instead of “*taxi stops...*” as per learner I from Table 2. Echoing similar errors are Vethamaiccam & Ganapathy (2017) who emphasise that meaning errors like wrong word choice and errors in preposition make it hard to interpret the author’s intention. These errors are contrary to LGCSE English (0175) syllabus (2018) as detailed in Section 2.4.4 which reflects that learners must communicate creatively, using language appropriately. The contradiction brought by learners’ errors and LGCSE English (0175) syllabus (2018) suggests the need to deal with learners’ errors with urgency. Deducing from the above, the finding points to poor language proficiency as a source of error which may distort the intended meaning. Another source is detailed in the following subsection.

4.2.1.3 Non-English-speaking environment

It emerged from learners' test essays that they were using basic interpersonal language instead of using decontextualized academic language (Baker, 2006) and such informal language matters in creative writing at LGCSE. This was perceived from the paragraphs attached below:

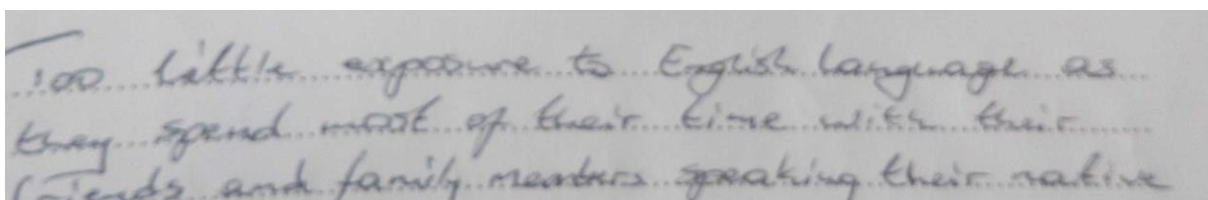


Learner H



Learner B

From the above extract, it can be inferred that non-English-speaking environment is another cause of errors. Similarly, this is confirmed by Guo (2011) that ESL learners are immersed in their L₁ environment. Apparently, that offers little exposure to English materials; consequently, chances of using English in real setting are few. It appears that the frequent errors may be a result of lack of oral practice in environments outside school. This has been noticed from 21 Grade 11 learners who were inclined to use informal language which incorporates contractions and spoken form of English. The finding from learner H in sentence 1 reveals “*Oh yah! I did n't go to....cause.*” and in sentence 3 of the second passage contracted forms as in “*It was n't...*” instead of “*It was not...*” by learner B. The finding confirms teachers' responses from open-ended questionnaire that non-English-speaking environment contributes to errors. Teacher R verifies that learners spend time speaking Sesotho.



Teacher R

The above finding also controverts LGCSE English syllabus (2018) whose aim is to strive for learners' effective communication using Standard English (Section 2.4.4). It appears learners use this kind of language because they are not cognisant of the context in which contraction

forms can be employed. It is the inquirer's opinion that some learners commit errors due to little exposure to English as Shella & Ravikumar (2016) posit that the more exposed learners are to the target language is the more fluent learners get. The discovery calls for adoption of teaching strategies such as discovery learning for Hanafi (2016) and Anani (2017) aver that discovery learning allows learners to find rules for themselves so as to improve their skills. This might aid learners to understand and learn the rules of Standard English. Below are findings from teachers' open-ended questionnaires.

4.2.2. Findings on the teachers' open-ended questionnaires

Teachers were requested to share the probable sources of types of SVA errors in composition writing. The emergent causes/sources were thematised into mother tongue interference, negative speaking habits, tendency to forget and ignore the rules of SVA, lack of grammar foundation at lower grades and non-English-speaking environment. These findings were presented, analysed and interpreted in the subsequent sections.

4.2.2.1 Mother tongue interference

Mother tongue interference surfaced from the teachers' responses. Interference refers to influence of native language on the acquisition of TL (Mother tongue, 2015). Due to difference between Sesotho and English, problems arise particularly when writing. The finding pointed out that learners commit errors as a result of mother tongue interference. This was justified by 7 out of 8 teachers that learners' native language is set in their minds; as a result, they grapple between languages (native and target language) when drafting essay as shown below.

Teacher X

The finding was strengthened by learners' essays (Section 4.2.1.1) where translation errors were noticeable from 12 learners' scripts. Supporting this is Learner E below.

Learner E

Due to influence of Sesotho, "...*they make accidents*" instead of "...*they cause accidents*" was discovered. This finding corresponds with Selinker's (1972) stance on L₂ learners IL hypothesis which submits that under language transfer, learners construct their own language system trying to produce the L₂ on what is right in their L₁ (Section 2.3). The discovery in this

inquiry is also consistent with the principle of IL hypothesis that a learner's IL is permeable because it is easily penetrated by linguistic forms derived from both external and internal processes (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009). Such tendency may influence learners to break grammatical rules. This discovery implies that if learners are inclined to translate L₂ from L₁, types of SVA errors in essay writing are likely to occur as grammatical rules of such languages differ. This is justified by Mphunyane (2014) that interference of learners' IL proved to be a cause of SVA errors (Section 1.1).

On the basis of the foregoing finding, it seemed reasonable to look into learners' mother tongue interference in terms of L₂ learners IL hypothesis Selinker (1972) and error analysis model Corder (1974) as explained (Section 2.3 and Section 2.5.2). The model according to Sanal (2008) and Mungungu (2010) signifies that errors occur where learners tend to follow new rules that they have learnt yet do not correspond with L₂. Mungungu (2010) further elaborated that learners overgeneralise the rule by extending the "ed" morpheme for forming past tenses to the irregular verbs. In the later subsection, another source of error in essay writing is unpacked.

4.2.2.2 Tendency to forget and ignore the rules of SVA

The subsection presents findings on learners' tendency to forget and ignore the rules of SVA. Errors in composition writing are caused by learners' predisposition to forget the rules of SVA as this response appeared in several questionnaires. This finding is compatible with that of Basnet's (2017) study that in Swedish, grammatical rule is not regarded as important. Consequently, Swedish learners tend to ignore SVA in English (Section 1.2). Ignoring and forgetting SVA rules might affect negatively on written texts such as essay writing.

Tendency to forget and ignore the rules of SVA bespeaks that learners need to be fully equipped with rules of SVA. The finding supports Stapa & Izahar's (2010) study on SVA errors on Malaysian ESL learners. Their investigation revealed that ESL learners tend not to apply the complex sub-rules of SVA. It is assumed that learners' inclination to forget, avoid or ignore the rules makes it clear that learners have not internalised SVA. This spells the need for teaching strategies which could help learners to understand SVA in composition writing. The subsection below explains another source of error.

4.2.2.3 Lack of grammar foundation and English-speaking environment

The evidence from 4 out of 8 teachers' responses pointed out that those Grade 11 learners seemed to lack grammar foundation. Substantiating this was the extract from Teacher Y:

4. WHAT IN YOUR EXPERIENCE ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SVA ERRORS COMMITTED BY STUDENTS IN COMPOSITION/ESSAY WRITING?

Lack of basic grammar foundation at lower grades
Lack of various practice activities to grammar rules.

Teacher Y

This is reflected by kind of grammatical errors that learners commit as in the following passage where learner G contravened different grammatical rules; omission, spelling and SVA respectively.

I was suppose to go to school but I decided to be absent for that day, fortunetely my mum taught me to go to school and to forgot about that things because they

Learner G

The finding is contrary to Ponmani & Melaka's (2016) view that although learners are acquainted with concept of SVA at early stage, it still poses a challenge to them (Section 2.4.3). The postulation by the authors confirms that English grammar particularly SVA is introduced at lower grades. Additionally, teachers indicated that non-English speaking environment is another cause that hampers learners' performance in essay writing. In support of practice is Ericsson (2006) who states that skilled musicians are known to have practised to reach the expert level, and practice in learning is no exception. It is against this assertion that if lack of grammar foundation at lower grades and lack of an English speaking environment are categorised as causes of errors in essay writing, it could be assumed that wrong usage of language mechanics and little exposure to English might impede learners' effective communication in continuous writing. It, therefore, makes academic sense to conclude that if learners are not conversant with types of SVA, they are likely to perform poorly in different genres of composition. In the next sub-section, negative speaking habits are explicated.

4.2.2.4 Negative speaking habits

Failure to speak correctly appeared from teachers' responses as one of the causes of SVA errors in essay writing. This emerged from 4 teachers and attached below is the example of a response extracted from Teacher X:

4. WHAT IN YOUR EXPERIENCE ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SVA ERRORS COMMITTED BY STUDENTS IN COMPOSITION/ESSAY WRITING?

The mother-tongue influence
Wrong / Negative speaking habits

Teacher X

The responses pertaining to negative speaking skills are congruent with what my professional experience has revealed (Section 1.2). Being a teacher of English Language and Sesotho, has made me realise that inability to speak Sesotho correctly can impinge on English language. On the same line of thought is Jafarova's (2017) assertion that learners have a tendency of omitting L₂ grammatical patterns under the influence of native language. For instance, my learners used to utter "*Khomo tsa hae li ngata*" which is translated as '*his cow are many*'. The head noun "*khomo*" which means cow is in singular form but the possessive concord "*li ngata*" which means are many, is in plural. In the above utterance, there is no agreement. It is assumed that avoiding SVA in spoken language in L₁ too will have a negative impact on written texts such as in composition in L₂. This resonates with Basnet's (2017) view that overlooking SVA in speaking might make it harder to acquire a new grammatical structure than building on already known ones (Section 1.2).

The foregoing finding portrays learners' negative speaking habits as one of contributing factors to learners' sources of SVA errors in composition writing. The learners' challenge could be the result of teaching and learning strategies. This discovery corresponds with Brown's (2000) assertion that a learner may produce a simplified utterance due to learning strategies (Section 2.5.2). It is reasonable to conclude that inability to speak English correctly coupled with learning strategies that do not enhance speaking skills might affect communication skills, particularly writing. The next section is on the findings from teachers' focus group discussions.

4.2.3 Findings from teachers' focus group discussions

Teachers were briefed prior to the focus group discussion session about the purpose of the study. They were requested to state the potential causes of types of SVA errors in composition writing. From teachers' discussion, it was indicated that native language approximation and lack of English-speaking environment appeared to be the major causes of types of SVA errors in essay writing. These emerging themes were then analysed and interpreted in the following paragraphs.

4.2.3.1 Native language approximation

In their focus group discussion, teachers re-emphasised the issue of mother tongue interference or first language approximation as one of the causes of types of SVA errors among Grade 11 learners in Botha-Bothe. Below are some of the teachers' utterances:

- Teacher K: *“Clash between English and Sesotho is the major cause of SVA errors as learners have tendency to speak English in Sesotho.”*
- Teacher L: *“In my school Sesotho teachers are complaining that Sesotho is not recognised like English, hence poor performance. They encourage students to speak Sesotho and I think that's where translation emanates from.”*

In the above utterance from teachers' focus group discussion, it appeared that first language (Sesotho) has influence on English language. In favour of this are Hibbert and Walt's (2014) view that languages may be closely related but each language is independent; therefore, using L₁ in the context of L₂ leads to translation. The similar cause also appeared from learners' essays and teachers' questionnaires. From their discussion, teachers further indicated that learners fail to write grammatically correct sentences. Such deficiency is shown in written texts such as directed and creative writing where grammatical errors are evident. This finding supports Ponmani & Melaka's (2016) observation that mistaken sentences make it difficult for the reader to understand the intended meaning (Section 1.2). It is the inquirer's feeling based on the findings that incorporating Sesotho in composition writing which is expected to be answered in English leads to incomprehensible essays. Another source of error is explained below.

4.2.3.2 Non-English-speaking environment

Non-English-speaking environment was raised as another cause of SVA errors in continuous writing among Grade 11 learners. In their focus group discussion, teachers emphasised that learners' errors derive from little exposure to English for learners seem to communicate in Sesotho at home. In support of this is Guo (2011) who purports that learners who are immersed in L₁ environment have little exposure to English hence their chances of using TL in real setting are few. Underneath are some of the teachers' utterances:

- Teacher L: *“Learners speak Sesotho in their families. They don't listen and speak English with their parents and this makes it difficult to acquire basics of English.”*
- Teacher M: *“As a result of little exposure, learners struggle with regular and irregular verbs and they end up applying the same rules to all verbs.”*

The utterances portray how learners' lack of English-speaking environment can influence occurrences of SVA errors in essay writing. This is reinforced by teachers' responses from

questionnaires that learners' essays are full of grammatical errors which include addition, omission and overgeneralisation as shown by teachers Z and R in the following excerpts:

Handwritten text on lined paper. The first line reads "Overgeneralisation of English language grammar rules." The second line reads "Translation of Sesotho words into English".

Teacher Z

Handwritten text on lined paper. The text reads: ". Besides... inappropriate omission and addition, which are a bit common with majority, there are those which are very serious as they tend to...".

Teacher R

The similar cause was identified from learners' compositions where learner F has omitted "ed" next to "stay" and learner B has committed error of addition "We were wrote the test". Helping verb "were" was not necessary. Below are examples of such errors:

Handwritten text on lined paper. The text reads: "the way I was scared I just stay there about 10 minutes before getting in the gate because I think I was...".

Learner F

Handwritten text on lined paper. The text reads: "and my mom was happy, but she told me that when were wrote the test I managed to passed well but when".

Learner B

The finding for the above errors coheres with Selinker's (1972) process central to IL which states that learners are inclined to overgeneralising some rules and features of target language (Section 2.3). It can be assumed that the frequent errors that learners commit may be a result of lack of oral practice in environments outside school, lack of reading culture and continuous practice of essay writing. Up next is summative perspective which winds up the subsection on research question two.

4.2.4 Summative perspective

On the ground of given evidence in relation to the findings of the second research question, there seems to be similarities in the recurrence of responses from both teachers and learners

from different data collection tools. Mother tongue interference and English-speaking environments are the main findings. In addition, lack of grammar foundation from lower grades was also among the main findings under second research question. The next subsection introduces pedagogical implications of the identified types of errors.

4.3 THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF IDENTIFIED TYPES OF SVA ERRORS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN COMPOSITION WRITING

This section reports the findings that are meant to boost teaching and learning of types of SVA in essay writing as indicated in the third research question in Section 1.3.1. With the intention to address research question three, data was generated through open-ended questionnaires and focus group discussions with teachers. A report of findings follows in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.3.1 Findings on the teachers' open-ended questionnaires

Teachers were expected to answer open-ended questionnaires individually. They were required to show what pedagogical implications of identified types of SVA errors call for in the teaching and learning. The emergent theme is pedagogical implication. The recurring issues under such theme were: motivation, the enforcement of group discussion/cooperative learning, discovery methods and direct teaching followed by drilling exercises. These findings were analysed, presented and interpreted in the successive sections.

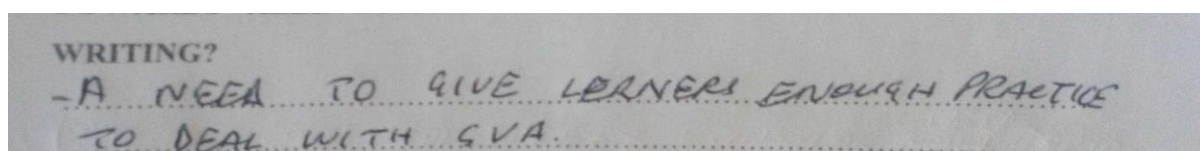
4.3.1.1 Motivation

Motivation is one of the issues that ought to be looked into according to the responses from teachers' questionnaires. 60% of teachers raised a need for motivation. According to Valerio (2012), motivation is a process whereby goal directed activity is instigated and sustained (Section 2.5.3). Further, the author enumerates two types of motivation as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It was discovered that learners should be given writing activities which would encourage them to practise English particularly types of SVA in composition writing. Such activities include developing paragraphs, directed writing and creative writing. Learners who demonstrate adherence to the rules of SVA should be motivated. Echoing similar idea is Valerio (2012) that motivation has considerable influence on learners' performance. This finding matches the assertion by Anani (2017) that reinforcement which refers to the act of encouraging something to happen continuously, encourages learners to learn and write better (Section 2.5.3). It is, therefore, justifiable to conclude that motivation guarantees learners' improved performance. Thus, a teacher has to create a conducive environment for his learners

and intrinsically motivate them by setting goals for learners to encourage the desired behaviour. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its own sake, for personal interest or enjoyment (Valerio, 2012). Again, extrinsic motivation which comes from outside the individual and can be in the form of incentives can be used. Indicated in Section 2.5.3, Scott (2010) cautions teachers that extrinsic motivation should only be used to enhance intrinsic motivation. Valerio (2012) links intrinsic motivation not only to the improved results but to increased interest in learning as well (Section 2.5.3).

4.3.1.2 Direct teaching followed by drilling exercises

The inquiry further identified from 40% of the teachers' responses that intensive teaching must be enforced where direct teaching of the rules of SVA should be followed by a lot of practice. Substantiating this is the excerpt below from Teacher U:



Teacher U

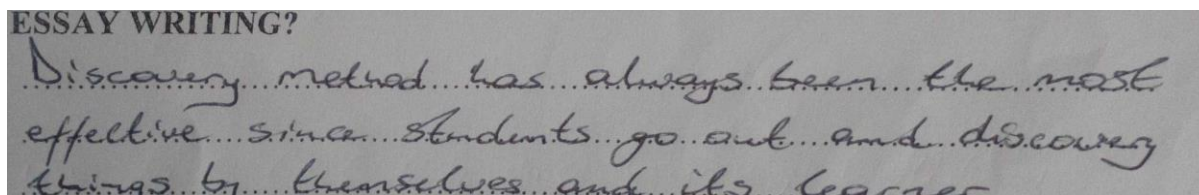
The finding is compatible with that of Mphunyane (2014) and Chambers & Yunus's (2017) studies that learners are able to use correct grammar faster as a result of deductive teaching. Chambers & Yunus (2017) indicate that the said method refers to direct teaching and presentation of rules when the lesson starts. Further, this approach brings positive results if it is followed by drilling and error correction as indicated in Section 2.5.3. It can be assumed that integrating deductive or direct teaching with drilling exercises would increase learners' possibility of understanding the application of types of SVA in composition writing. However, drilling is criticised for not being effective in the teaching of abstract concepts and it limits learners' creativity (Yuwanda, 2017). Again, Yuwanda states that drilling promotes memorizing and learning is not about memorizing, but knowing. To counteract this, teachers need to handle drilling carefully to avoid negative effects it might have on learners.

In addition, coupled with deductive approach, inductive approach which is defined as the process where learners discover grammar rules for themselves by examining the examples is hoped to bring desired outcomes (Anani, 2017). Pedagogical measures pertaining to direct teaching imply the need for teachers to be fully prepared to integrate deductive approach with inductive approaches such as discovery method. Also, teachers must be prepared to overcome the weakness that might be brought by drilling. This might help educators to identify the

weakness of learners with regard to types of SVA, perhaps offering necessary assistance to such learners. Below is discovery method.

4.3.1.3. Discovery learning

50% of teachers' responses indicated that learners have to explore more than the teacher explains as illustrated by teacher S below:



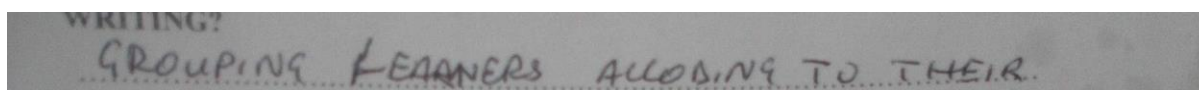
ESSAY WRITING?
Discovery method has always been the most effective since students go out and discover things by themselves and its learner

Teacher S

The above finding implies that discovery learning maximises learners' chances of mastering types of SVA in essay writing for the current curriculum advocates for learner-centredness. According to Brown (2006), discovery learning is a hands-on approach where learners participate actively in the learning process instead of depending on teachers (Section 2.5.3). This approach is anticipated to improve learners' performance in SVA since the method encourages learners to explore and manipulate objects. Therefore, the finding from teacher S corresponds with Anani's (2017) postulation that discovery learning accepts the view that language learners tend to focus on parts rather than the whole. This could mean that learners have to find rules for themselves (Section 2.5.3). The finding could imply the need for shifting from approaches where teachers dominate the class like in deductive approach to a strategy where teaching seems to be more exploratory than explanatory as such technique would guarantee learners' expertise in the types of SVA in composition writing. Enforcement of cooperative learning which refers to educational approach aiming at organising classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences is unpacked below.

4.3.1.4 Cooperative learning needs to be enforced

40% of teachers' questionnaires also revealed a need to enforce group discussion or cooperative learning since this technique motivates learners to communicate amongst themselves. Such cooperation would enable learners to acquire knowledge of the rules of types of SVA as well as applying them correctly in composition writing.



WRITING?
GROUPING LEARNERS ACCORDING TO THEIR

Teacher U

Cooperative learning recurred from teachers' focus group discussions. This finding is congruent with Mphunyane (2014) that cooperative learning promotes team work which in turn enhances learning competences (Section 2.5.3). The similar pedagogical implication was echoed by teachers in their focus group discussions. Confirmation of this was utterance by Teacher N:

- Teacher N: *Students too must work in pairs or groups to learn SVA as that might help them understand better.*"

It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that if group discussion or cooperative learning could be enforced in an English grammar class as Mphunyane (2014) has noted, effective teaching and learning which improves the learners' functional knowledge and the acquisition of types of SVA in essay writing would be at ease since learners would share what they know among themselves. Though this approach is criticised for being time consuming, it can yield positive results if the supervision is tightened by teachers thereby, allowing all learners to contribute their ideas.

All pedagogical implications highlighted above are anticipated to enhance learners' knowledge of types of SVA as well as helping learners' guard against such errors. Teachers believe that if the above teaching approaches are enforced, teaching of grammar in English Language particularly types of SVA will be at ease.

4.3.2 Findings from teachers' focus group discussions

In their discussion, teachers were expected to give pedagogical implications of the identified types of SVA errors in composition writing. Most of them indicated that as a measure of enhancing better understanding of types of SVA, learners should be allowed to discover the rules of SVA for themselves and team work needs to be put into practice. The emergent theme as indicated in Section 4.3.1 was thematised as pedagogical implication. The recurring issues drawing from such theme were discovery learning and team work.

4.3.2.1 Discovery learning

Teachers re-emphasised the need to allow learners discover the rules of SVA by themselves. They further indicated that involving learners would help them to understand better and allowing them to discover might help them to remember such rules easily. The following utterances were extracted from teachers' focus group discussions:

- Teacher Z: *"Learners enjoy most when they are not restricted, allow them and give them tasks which will enable them to learn SVA on their own."*

- Teacher T: *“That’s true, it will not be easy to forget rules that learners have discovered for themselves. And this approach reduces dependency.”*
- Teacher R: *“Finding rules for themselves would mean minimising SVA errors”*

The above utterances suggest that discovery learning could alleviate types of SVA errors in essay writing. Discovery learning promotes independency among learners. This finding supports Anani’s (2017) perception on discovery learning (Section 2.5.3) that learners explore more than the teacher explains. It can be assumed that if teachers can employ discovery learning evenly, independent learning among learners may be enhanced, consequently improving learners’ performance in all subjects and grammar in English language. Hanafi (2016) confirms that discovery learning emphasises that learners have to find their own concepts that were unknown and it proved to improve learners’ skills in English. Up next is team work.

4.3.2.2 Encouraging team work

Team work among learners and teachers was echoed in focus group discussions. Team work is the cooperative effort of people for a common end. Teachers stressed that if learners could be encouraged to work together, there is a possibility that learners would be at the same level. This was evidenced in the utterances below:

- Teacher X: *“Synergy promotes energy, that is, we cannot do this alone, and team teaching is needed because learners’ grammar is horrible.”*
- Teacher Y: *“Students too must work in pairs or groups to learn SVA as that might help them understand better.”*

Teachers’ finding from the above is consistent with Mphunyane’s (2014) view on team work as stated (Section 2.5.3) that team work affords learners opportunity to share ideas. The investigator therefore holds an assumption that if Grade 11 learners could work together while all ESL teachers practise team teaching, essential communication skills will be enhanced and SVA errors in essay writing and other forms of writing would be minimised. Summative perspective winds up this subsection.

4.3.3 Summative perspective

Cooperative learning, discovery method and team teaching were identified as the remedy for learners’ types of SVA errors in composition writing. These techniques are anticipated to enhance learners’ capabilities since learners would explore more than the teacher explains. The next section looks into Corder’s (1974) model.

4.4 CORDER'S (1974) MODEL OF ERROR ANALYSIS

As acknowledged earlier, error analysis model comprising four steps was used to analyse learners' errors. Error analysis was instrumental in this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was used as a method of analysing data. Secondly, it was also intended to identify and explain types of SVA errors that learners committed in composition writing, as identification might aid the researcher to determine the probable sources of such errors as alluded to (Section 3.5.1). Errors that learners committed in essay writing helped the researcher in relation to pedagogical implications. Identification of errors is unpacked in the subsequent section.

4.4.1 Identification and Explanation of errors

Identification refers to selecting the sentences which are attributed to SVA errors whereas description refers to classifying errors into their types as proposed by Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005) indicated in Section 3.5.1. The summary of errors below was extracted from Grade 11 ESL learners' compositions.

Table 3 Corder's (1974) Model of error analysis

<i>Sentence where SVA has been contravened</i>	<i>Type of error</i>	<i>Number of errors</i>	<i>Number of learners</i>	
People goes to enjoy themselves.	Misinformation	}		
My parent were not there.	Misinformation			
The place where wild animals stays.	Misinformation			
My relative were now out.	Misinformation			
Good Samaritans that knows.	Misinformation			
My mother answer the teacher.	Misinformation			
My mom say it is better to ask her.	Misinformation		16	14
There was boys.	Misinformation		}	
He has fell in that situation.	Misinformation			
When I and my brother still talking.	Misinformation			
The village have to change.	Misinformation			
He can't feel better	Misinformation			
The teacher was told my mother.	Misinformation			
He could have teach me.	Misinformation			
He bringed my lunchbox.	Misinformation			
I will took them.	Misinformation			
My life change.	Omission	}		
He speed up.	Omission			
I have take.	Omission			
I just stay.	Omission			
My mother going out.	Omission		11	10
She ask me.	Omission		}	
Unfortunately nothing happen.	Omission			
She ask me what have I done.	Omission			
He could have punish me.	Omission			
The principal call my mom.	Omission			
I caught by thunder.	Omission			
He did not even refused.	Addition	}		
I didn't went to school.	Addition			
Those who did not got married.	Addition		6	6
They did not told me in time.	Addition			
We were wrote test.	Addition	}		
I managed to passed.	Addition			
TOTAL		33	30	

Below is the summary of errors identified in the form of a bar graph.

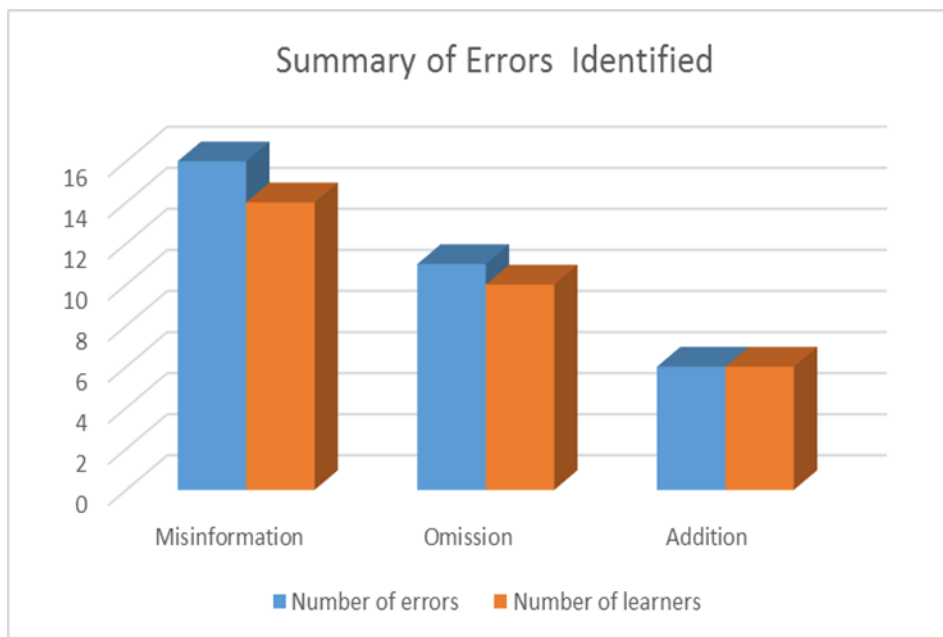


Figure 2 Summary of errors identified

The errors illustrated in Table 3 and bar graph are indicative of the challenges that Grade 11 ESL learners have in relation to the correct application of SVA in essay writing. As indicated above, 14 learners committed errors of misinformation, errors of omission were committed by 10 learners and errors of addition by 6 learners. It can be deduced that these errors may negatively affect learners' written texts if immediate action is not taken. The stated errors are expounded on in the forthcoming paragraphs.

4.4.1.1 Errors of misinformation

The analysis from the above table and graph revealed that misinformation is a dominating type of error because out of 33 recorded errors, 14 learners committed errors of misinformation. Misinformation involves use of the wrong form of structure (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The authors highlight that these errors occur due to regularisation, alternating forms and archi forms. For instance, a sentence "***He bringed my lunchbox***" instead of "***He brought my lunchbox***" constitutes regularisation for regular verb has been employed for irregular verb. Again, misinformation error in arch forms was identified in this sentence, "***My parent were not there***" instead "***My parents were not there***". In the given example, the wrong auxiliary verb has been used. Lastly, misinformation in alternating form as in "***People goes to enjoy themselves***" instead of "***People go to enjoy themselves***" featured. According to Vasquez (2008), misinformation errors are a result of lack of vocabulary and wrong form of morpheme

or structure. The prevalence of such errors by 16 learners reflects a problem that needs immediate action by teachers. They should introduce learners to correct use of dictionary with the intention to minimise errors. Most importantly, evidence by Kondal (2018) indicates that the accurate use of dictionary has high influence on learners' language performance. Errors of omission follow in the subsequent paragraph.

4.4.1.2 Errors of omission

Analysis also revealed that errors of omission were committed by 10 learners. Omission is considered to be an absence of an item that should appear in a well-formed utterance with the intention to modify L₂ (Vasquez, 2008). For instance, “*My life change*” instead of “*My life changed*” It can be inferred from the assertion of Vasquez that these errors are a result of mother tongue interference among others, which refers to influence of native language on the acquisition of TL. This suggests a need to engage learners in L₂ speaking and writing activities which will enable them to guard against omission errors as Hossain (2015) is of the view that oral activities enable learners to produce language that enables them to express themselves correctly. Errors of addition are elaborated below.

4.4.1.3 Errors of addition

These were the least committed errors as indicated in Table 3 and Figure 2 for 6 errors were committed by 6 learners. Addition involves double markings where learners included auxiliary verbs and verbs in past tense simultaneously. For instance, “*We were wrote test*” instead of “*We wrote test*”. According to Selinker (1972), this is generalisation. The occurrence of such reveals a challenge that learners have. To curb this, ESL teachers need to vary teaching approaches and give learners continuous practice of composition writing in L₂. The upcoming section summarises research questions in the order of their sequence.

4.4.2 Summary of research question 1

The inquiry discovered that written communication of Grade 11 ESL learners is hampered by mismatch between subjects and verbs which are apparent in different genres of composition. To exemplify, SVA of person, SVA of number and SVA of indefinite subjects emerged as some of the major challenges for learners. Out of 30 selected learners, no learner employed either SVA with indefinite subjects, SVA of coordinated subjects or SVA of notional and proximity. The finding corresponds with Stapa & Izahar's (2010) discoveries from their study that ESL learners tend not to use the complex sub-rules of SVA.

4.4.3 Summary of research question 2

The study has revealed that mother tongue interference, lack of grammar foundation from lower grades, non-English-speaking environment and negative speaking skills were some of the probable sources of such errors.

4.4.4 Summary of research question 3

The above research question is in the form of recommendations that emerged as a result of my findings. The findings have revealed a need to implement teaching strategies which could help learners to guard against SVA errors. Such approaches include discovery method, cooperative learning as well as team teaching. It was also reported that motivation too might guarantee learners' improvement. Finally, the chapter identified, classified, explained and evaluated errors to determine which errors are more serious, perhaps necessitating immediate attentions. Up next is the summary of the chapter.

4.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter presented data which was classified for thematisation. The findings from such data were reported by research question. It appeared that types of SVA errors are caused by mother tongue interference and non-English-speaking environment. It also emerged from the findings that there are pedagogical implications which can alleviate SVA errors in composition writing if such measures could be implemented. The next chapter presents conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. Limitations and personal reflections are also featured in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 featured the presentation, analysis and the interpretation of data. The current chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the main findings of the study. Findings are discussed in terms of the research questions where types of SVA errors that characterise written composition, sources of such errors and their pedagogical implications for teaching and learning are emphasised. Finally, the conclusions pave the way for the recommendations.

5.1 CONCLUSION IN RELATION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN ORDER OF THEIR SEQUENCE

5.1.1 Types of SVA Errors That Characterise Composition Writing

This section provides discussion on data generated to address the first research question as stated in this investigation (Section 1.3.1). Such research question sought to explore types of SVA errors that characterise learners' written compositions.

The analysis of data in relation to the first research question established that SVA of person error in essay writing is common among Grade 11 learners. This challenge emerged from different data collection techniques employed in the first research question. The study established that learners failed to match subjects with their verbs. This came as a result of learners who add "s" to the verbs of plural subjects or failed to add "s" to the verb of singular subject. Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005) state that addition or omission of words in L₂ is classified as error according to Corder's (1974) model of error analysis. Based on this finding, it makes reasonable conclusion that some learners at Grade 11 are not able to apply SVA of person appropriately.

SVA of number also emerged as the main finding under types of SVA errors that characterise learners' written composition. This was noticed from essays that a number of learners committed errors relating to SVA of number. Learners failed to take into consideration number of subjects and verbs as outlined by Kirkpatrick (2013) that singular noun is accompanied by a singular verb whereas a plural noun goes together with a plural verb (Section 2.1.5). On the basis of the above finding, it can be concluded that some learners still grapple with the correct application of SVA of number in essay writing.

The analysed data reflected that compound and indefinite subjects are also types of SVA errors in composition writing. This apprehension was raised by Grade 11 ESL teachers as indicated in Section 4.1.3.2 and Section 4.1.3.3 that learners use indefinite subjects which do not tally with their verbs. Teachers' concern supports the claim that learners find SVA with indefinite subjects very challenging (Izahar & Mustafa, 2010). It can be concluded that while teachers indicated that learners struggle with the SVA of indefinite subjects, however, this did not appear in the essay written by 30 learner participants.

The findings under the first research question point to learners' challenge in matching subjects and verbs in relation to SVA of person, number and indefinite subjects. This failure suggests that the more learners fail to tally subjects with their verbs, the greater chances of committing errors. It is in this regard that the researcher employed Corder's (1974) model of error analysis to identify and classify such errors. The model bespeaks that lack of agreement is categorised as error in grammar of English language. Through the application of error analysis, research question one was accomplished.

5.1.2 Sources of Types of SVA Errors in Composition Writing

Mother tongue interference appeared as one of the main findings under the second research question. Some learners could not use linguistically and semantically accurate language. For instance, they erroneously translated various phrases and sentences. Translation is considered to be inter-lingual error (Sanal, 2008). The finding strengthens Selinker's (1972) and Mphunyane's (2014) opinion on language transfer (Section 4.2.1.1). Because learners have not only violated the agreement rules, but have also transferred language, it is realistic to conclude that learners' tendency to translate from L₁ to answer questions in L₂ impacts negatively on composition writing.

Poor language proficiency also emerged as the finding under second research question. The study has revealed that some learners' grammar is deficient as they failed to adhere to grammatical rules. For instance, their compositions incorporated prepositional, tense and spelling errors. It was also raised by teachers that learners' grammar is inadequate (Section 4.2.1.3). Having noted grammatically incorrect sentences in learners' essays, it is reasonable to conclude that learners' failure to demonstrate language proficiency, particularly types of SVA, might affect essay writing as the intended meaning may be distorted.

The analysis of the study disclosed that learners' tendency to forget and ignore the rules of SVA contributes to types of SVA errors in essay writing. This concern was raised by Grade 11

English language teachers as acknowledged (Section 4.2.1.2). It seems that such inclination to forget rules makes it clear that learners have not internalised SVA rules (Section 4.2.1.2). This observation repudiates Stapa & Izahar (2010) that learners whose piece of writing is error free have mastered grammatical rules. It is, therefore, convincing to draw conclusion that ignoring grammatical rules leads to disorganised compositions full of errors.

Analysis also revealed lack of grammar foundation and English-speaking environment as source of SVA errors in essay writing. The concern was raised by teachers in both questionnaires and focus group discussions that little exposure to English and inadequate grammar contribute in learners overgeneralising the rules of SVA (Section 4.2.1.2). It is pedagogically rational to conclude that Grade 11 learners commit errors as a result of lack of L₂ oral practice in environments outside school.

The main findings under research question two are categorised as sources of errors as per Corder's (1974) model of error analysis. Errors such as mother tongue interference are also termed inter-lingual errors or transfer errors (Selinker, 1972). The second research question achieved its objective of identifying sources of types of SVA errors in composition writing.

5.1.3 Pedagogical Implications of The Identified Types of SVA Errors in The Teaching and Learning of Composition Writing

The pedagogic implication to surface from the findings relates to the influence that SVA exerts in sentence construction. Learners are expected to write grammatically correct sentences in order to communicate their messages. Effective communication in English would mean that teaching of grammar in English inclusive of SVA should therefore be in context. As it stands, it appears as though ESL teachers are only teaching grammar in passing based on errors that the researcher came across. In favour of teaching grammar in context is Mart (2013) who asserts that grammar in context may give learners chance to see how grammatical structures function in sentences as well as helping learners to acquire the nature of the language which will facilitate their understanding. This will enable learners to communicate confidently and effectively in both spoken and written texts.

Correspondingly, learners who keep on committing similar errors should be given a lot of practice on types of SVA with the intention to put them on the same level with other learners. Echoing similar view is Ericsson (2006) that practice makes perfect (Section 4.2.1.3). In addition, writing and speaking must be incorporated in the teaching of grammar as these skills might complement each other. It is believed that proficiency in spoken English may translate

to accuracy in written English. Eventually, learners' communication in written texts such as composition writing may improve.

Teachers should also create positive and conducive environment where learning experiences and prerequisite knowledge of learners are not separated. These experiences can be instigated by teaching and learning approaches such as discovery learning. Accordingly, Hanafi (2016) and Anani (2017) in support of discovery method confirm that this approach helps learners to unearth concepts that were unknown to them and improves their skills in English (Section 4.4.1.1). Such strategy should be applied evenly such that it generates acquisition of knowledge of types of SVA. In addition, team work can achieve commendable results if teachers reconsider implementing it and stop looking at the negative side of it for Mphunyane (2014) asserts that team work affords learners opportunities to share ideas which will enhance learning competences (Section 4.4.1.2).

5.1.4 Summative perspective

The main findings under research question three specify what needs to be done in the process of teaching and learning of types of SVA in essay writing to curb errors that might be committed. Adoption of teaching grammar in context, a lot of practice as well as discovery method and team work are hoped to bring about desired outcomes.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and conclusions of the investigation are translated into recommendations. Based on such discoveries, it is recommended that the teaching of types of SVA should be intensified as Grade 11 learners' errors present false picture that teachers do not lay emphasis on such aspect or learners might have failed to internalise the concept. For instance, errors relating to SVA of person and number reflect that learners were not fully equipped with the rules of SVA. This calls for interventions that will diminish occurrence of errors. Be that as it may, teachers still need to stress all types of SVA in their lessons as the findings revealed that learners tend not to use SVA with coordinated subjects, indefinite subjects, proximity and notional (Section 4.6.2).

The study has also revealed a number of sources of types of SVA errors. It is, therefore, recommended that ESL teachers should incite learners to speak English not only at school but also at environments outside school. This could help learners to minimise grammatical errors which derive from mother tongue interference as indicated in the earlier chapters. Guarding against transfer errors might make it easy for learners to apply SVA rules in L₂ at ease. The

researcher believes that understanding the cause and the nature of SVA errors can afford ESL teachers appropriate teaching methods and resources with the intention to reduce SVA errors in composition writing.

The study was also intended to investigate what pedagogical implications of the identified types of SVA errors call for in the teaching and learning of composition writing. The discoveries of the investigation revealed the approaches that might enhance grammatical competence in essay writing. It is against this background that the researcher recommends the adoption of cooperative and discovery learning as well as team teaching by ESL teachers. It is believed that adoption of these strategies coupled with teaching English grammar in context may reduce errors that learners commit not only in English language, but even in other subjects that are taught in English. Elaborated below are suggestions for further research.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommendable that further research be carried out to determine if ESL high school teachers are cognisant of types of SVA. The researcher believes that if teachers are not conversant with SVA, learners' understanding of such concept may be in vain. Although the inquiry focused on types of SVA errors in composition writing by Grade 11 learners, the researcher came across different errors other than SVA. It seems as though spelling, prepositional and punctuation errors were ignored; consequently, that resulted in a need for further research in the following areas:

- Different grammatical errors in composition writing by high school ESL learners.
- Types of SVA errors committed by high school learners on reading, listening, speaking and writing skill.
- Factors leading to learners' difficulty to meet the required length of essay writing for majority of learners failed to write 2-2½ pages as per ECOL's requirement.
- SVA related errors in descriptive, informative and argumentative for out of 30 selected learners, only 3 learners chose the stated genres. Up next are limitations.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

Though the objectives of this study have been achieved, the inquiry cannot be declared credible without limitations. The researcher identified the following limitations. Firstly, the selection of participants was limited to three schools; therefore, 20 learners per school participated before they could be randomly selected to 30. Although their number is deemed rational in qualitative study, data collected was limited to such schools and it might not be possible to

generalise the findings of the study as only Grade 11 learners from selected schools participated.

Data collection tools formed the list of the limitations. It was not easy to meet with teachers and administer questionnaires and focus group discussions due to prevailing situation of Covid-19. After questionnaires were administered, respondents took close to a month and a couple of days to return the questionnaires. As a result, the researcher had to wait for them. Again, some participants withdrew at the last moment prior to the focus group discussions. The researcher anticipated having focus group discussions with eight teachers based on their responses in questionnaires but only four were available. In the same vein, learners were expected to write compositions of two and half pages, however, most learners decided to write short essays even though they were allocated sufficient time. The researcher thus had a marginal data to deal with. Lastly, open-ended questionnaires for learners could not be administered as the schools were already closed due to lockdown restrictions. The upcoming subsection highlights self-reflections.

5.5 SELF-REFLECTIONS

The journey of research and dissertation writing was strenuous and action-packed. The study has in many respects, transformed me. Reflecting from the second year of my study where proposal writing started to this moment where I am drafting the final chapter, there is academic evolution in continuous academic writing and research capabilities. I must admit that adventuring in this journey has broadened my horizon; reviewing literature pertinent to my study, hypotheses underpinning this inquiry and research methods moulded me academically. I have also learnt that research is not only continuous and daunting but it also exposes the inquirer to the world of academics.

My study was affected by Covid-19 situation. Perhaps data collection could have been easy and focus group discussions with teachers could have been better had it not been because of lockdown restrictions. I struggled to access data from teachers since schools were already closed. The struggle rested with the inaccessibility of ESL teachers and I had to use telephone to arrange meetings with them and travel to administer questionnaires. Be that as it may, data accumulated from both teachers and learners was of great value because errors that learners from three high schools committed enabled me to reflect on my teaching.

Indicated in Section 1.2 of this report is the fact that Lesotho seemingly experiences the scarcity of research in relation to SVA errors in composition writing. Therefore, it is advisable for the

upcoming researchers to extensively research in the field of error analysis, perhaps incorporating different grammatical items. Error analysis tool was news to me until I embarked on this investigation. I feel that if ESL teachers are introduced and given intensive training pertaining error analysis and how to apply it, grammatical errors may be reduced.

If I am to revise my study in order to improve the research findings, I would conduct an action-oriented study with a longer period of more than one year. It is believed that the longer substantial time one invests in researching how teaching and learning of types of SVA in essay writing are put in place, the better the outcomes. Most importantly, being research-implicated as an insider will help me to understand how learners perceive SVA as well as reflecting on my own actions. The next item is summary which concludes this chapter.

5.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter presented conclusions which were drawn from the main discoveries of this inquiry. Such conclusions were reported in terms of the research questions. Regarding the first research question which was intended to identify types of SVA errors that characterise learners' written composition, it was discovered that learners' difficulty lies around the accurate application of SVA in composition writing. To exemplify, learners failed to employ SVA of person and number accurately as their errors were evident in their essays.

What also emerged from this research are sources of types of SVA in essay writing as the second research question intended to investigate such. The inquiry revealed that mother tongue interference, non-English-speaking environments and lack of grammar foundation are the major causes of SVA errors. As it stands, learners translated their phrases and sentences from Sesotho to English language.

The findings were reported in relation to the third research question where pedagogical implications of the identified types of SVA errors in the teaching and learning were explicated. Approaches such as cooperative learning, discovery learning and teaching grammar in context may help learners to reduce types of SVA errors in composition writing. The chapter also reported the recommendations, suggestions for further research and limitations. Lastly, personal reflections are also featured in this chapter.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

'Muela Combined School

P.O. Box 18

Khukhune 452

13 March 2020

District Education Manager

Botha-Bothe Education Office

Dear Madam

RE: Conducting research in three high schools in Botha-Bothe District

I am employed as a senior teacher at the aforementioned school. I am currently studying for Master of Arts in Education (MA. Ed) degree at the National University of Lesotho. As part of requirement for this qualification, I have to conduct a study. It is in this regard that I am writing this letter to ask for your permission to carry out the said inquiry and collect data from Botha-Bothe High School, Likila High School and Rehauhetsoe High School in Botha-Bothe.

The research title aims at exploring *Types of composition writing-based subject-verb agreement errors by ESL high school learners*. Participation will require Grade 11 learners and their teachers of English Language to take in the study. Learners will be requested to write an essay of 2½ Pages within 1 hour as well as filling an open ended questionnaire. Similarly, their teachers will be given open-ended questionnaires and thereafter will be requested to partake in focus group discussion. Such activities will be carried outside the normal teaching hours to ensure that classes are not interfered with. Participants who shall agree to take part are assured of anonymity. The researcher will not use participants' names but will adopt pseudonyms for participating learners and teachers.

I am looking forward to your positive response.

Yours faithfully

THOBI GJ (Mr)

APPENDIX 2

'Muela Combined School

P.O. Box 18

Khukhune 452

13 March 2020

The Principal

Dear Sir

RE: Conducting a study in your school

I am employed as a senior teacher at the aforementioned school. I am currently studying for Master of Arts in Education (MA. Ed) degree at the National University of Lesotho. As part of requirement for this qualification, I have to conduct a study. It is in this regard that I am writing this letter to ask for your permission to carry out the said inquiry in your school.

My investigation aims at exploring *Types of composition writing-based subject-verb agreement errors by ESL high school learners*. I therefore wish to ask for authorisation to meet with the intention of disseminating test, questionnaires and focus group discussion to both Grade 11 learners and their educators of English language. Such activities will be carried outside the normal teaching hours to ensure that classes are not interfered with. Participants who shall agree to take part are assured of anonymity and no information they shall divulge shall be directly ascribed to or used against them in any way. Finally, the name of your school shall also not be disclosed to anyone.

Thanking you in advance for your kind consideration. I will remain being,

Yours faithfully

THOBI GJ (Mr)

APPENDIX 4

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR

GRADE 11 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

I am THOBI GJ, a Master of Arts in Education (MA Ed.) student at The National University of Lesotho in the Faculty of Education. As part of requirement for this qualification, I have to conduct a study. My inquiry is entitled **TYPES OF COMPOSTION WRITING-BASED SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS BY ESL HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS**. I therefore ask your assistance by completing the questionnaire herein attached.

CATEGORY 1 Tick the appropriate

PERSONAL DATA

Male []

Female []

Age

20-29 []

30-39 []

40-49 []

50-59 []

CATEGORY 2

COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE BY WRITING YOUR ANSWERS ON THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. WHAT CHALLENGES DO LEARNERS ENCOUNTER WITH SVA IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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2. WHAT TEACHING RELATED CHALLENGES DO YOU HAVE TEACHING SVA IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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3. WHAT TYPES OF SVA ERRORS TEND TO CHARACTERISE LEARNERS' WRITTEN COMPOSITION?

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4. WHAT IN YOUR EXPERIENCE ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SVA ERRORS COMMITTED BY STUDENTS IN COMPOSITION/ESSAY WRITING?

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5. COMMENT ON THE PREVELANCE OF STUDENTS' SVA ERRORS BY COMPOSITION/ESSAY TYPE.

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6. WHAT ARE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNERS' SVA ERRORS IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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7. WHAT IN YOUR EXPERIENCE-BASED OPINION ARE TEACHERS' NEEDS TOWARDS ALLEVIATION OF SVA ERRORS IN STUDENTS ESSAY WRITING?

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8. BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATOR, WHICH METHODS DO YOU USE IN THE TEACHING OF TYPES OF SVA IN ESSAY WRITING?

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9. WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DO YOU HAVE IN EMPLOYING SUCH STRATEGIES?

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10. WHAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH SUCH CHALLENGES?

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11. WHAT PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES DO YOU THINK CAN BE EMPLOYED TO OVERCOME TYPES OF SVA ERRORS IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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APPENDIX 5

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR TEACHERS

Types of Composition Writing Based SVA Errors by ESL Grade 11 Learners

1. What are your experiences of teaching English Language at Grade 11?
2. What causes such challenges that you have mentioned above?
3. How do you overcome such challenges?
4. What are causes of SVA errors in composition writing?
5. How do you teach SVA in composition writing at Grade 11?
6. What do think can be done to help learners' overcome types of SVA errors in composition writing?

APPENDIX 6

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 11 LEARNERS

Types of Composition Writing-Based Subject-Verb Agreement Errors by ESL Learners

CATEGORY 1 (tick [] where appropriate)

GENDER

Male []

Female []

AGE

15-16 []

17-18 []

19-20 []

21-22 []

23+ []

CATEGORY 2

COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE BY WRITING YOUR ANSWERS ON THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU HAVE REGARDING CORRECT USAGE OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT IN ESSAY WRITING?

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2. WHICH SVA ASPECTS/TYPES DO YOU FIND MOST CHALLENGING DURING COMPOSITION WRITING?

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3. IN WHAT TYPES OF COMPOSITIONS/ESSAYS DO YOU EXPERIENCE CHALLENGES WITH THESE TYPES /ASPECTS OF SVA?

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4. WHAT IN YOUR OPINION MAKE SVA RULES CHALLENGING?

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5. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE CAUSES OF SVA IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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6. WHICH INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES DO TEACHERS USE IN THE TEACHING OF TYPES OF SVA IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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7. WHAT IMPACT DO SUCH STRATEGIES HAVE IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF TYPES OF SVA?

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8. WHAT DO YOU THINK TEACHERS NEED TO DO TO BETTER HELP LEARNERS UNDERSTAND TYPES OF SVA IN COMPOSITION WRITING?

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