

**INVESTIGATION OF LANGUAGE USE IN ACADEMIC WRITING OF GRADE 10
LEARNERS IN ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EFAL) CLASSROOM**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Phomolo Matsobane Petja (student number [REDACTED]), hereby declare that this dissertation titled "***Investigation of challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as First Additional Language in classroom academic writing***" submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Master's degree at the University of Limpopo, is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree to any other institution of higher learning. The sources cited herein have been acknowledged in the reference list.

Signature:

Date: March, 2023

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- My mother, for helping develop the man that I am today.
- My siblings, for the continuous love and support they showed me.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the following people:

- My mother, Rosina Ramaesele Petja for the love and continuous support in difficult times.
- My fiancée, Lerato Mokgadi Mashapa for the love, motivation, and encouragement.
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- My late father Frans Mogare Petja and brother Keletso Matsimela Petja. May your souls rest in eternal peace.
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the first additional language in classroom academic writing. Qualitative methodology was used to conduct this study where responses from a sample of 10 learners and 2 EFAL teachers were obtained. The participants were purposefully sampled from a secondary school in Tweefontein. The researcher collected data using the semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Selected teachers were interviewed and learners were given an essay writing task. The data was analysed using the inductive thematic data analysis method. The study's findings point to social media as the major factor that contributes to the learners' usage of social language in academic essay writing. Contraction was found to be the most common language issue in the learners' academic writing. The study recommends that stakeholders such as the Department of Education, teachers, parents and learners should work together in order to improve the learners' usage of language in academic writing.

Keywords: Language usage, Academic writing, Social language/non-academic writing, English First Additional Language, Learners.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL – English Second Language

EFL – English First Language

EFAL – English First Additional Language

FET – Further Education and Training

CALS – Core Academic Language Skills

SCT – Social Cognitive Theory

SLT – Social Learning Theory

AW – Academic Writing

L1 – Mother Tongue

CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

BICS – Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills

BLC – Basic Language Cognition

HLC – Higher Language Cognition

E1 – Educator 1

E2 – Educator 2

CRJ – Cash receipts Journals

CPJ – Cash Payments Journals

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

This study is a result of what I experience as a teacher. I have worked with learners from different schools and their writing challenges seem to be more or less the same. I have taught in schools such as the Taxila Secondary School, located in Polokwane, Nirvana; Nkoshilo High School, located in Mentz; Mamabudusha Secondary School, located in Mankweng, Mamotintane Village; Hlanganani Secondary School, located in Mpumalanga, Siyabuswa, Kameelrivier; and Morotse Primary School, located in Ga-Mphahlele, Morotse. All these schools are public institutions where learners do not pay school fees, except for the Taxila ones. Taxila Secondary School was once a private institution, which was and is still one of the best performing schools in the Limpopo Province. The school uses fee payment to select learners because it is paid by the parents who can afford and want quality education for their children, not just by any parent, hence Carnelley (2011) indicates the principle of liability for school fees in the SASA is broadly based on the common law duty to maintain and provide quality education to the child wherein both parents or the non-custodian parent is responsible to pay school fees based on their affordability. The researcher observed that grade 10 learners at Extension K Secondary School at Phumula Circuit struggle with English academic writing conventions because use casual or conversational language such as contractions or informal vocabulary when writing academic essays. The researcher's observation is supported by Alexander (2005) who found that the South African black learners (including those enrolled in private English-medium schools), experience major challenges with English academic writing conventions. Therefore, this study investigated challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing essays.

Acquiring spoken skills in English as a Second Language (ESL) is daunting enough but it is even more complex to get apprenticed to formal and decontextualized English as applied in academic essays (Zhou, 2020). Learning formal English entails not only having the ability to correctly speak the language in different registers but

also getting acculturated into the Western way of academic writing (Tahira & Haider, 2019). These expectations are problematic to African children with little or no knowledge of academic writing. In South Africa, however, English is predicted to remain the language of instruction for the foreseeable future (Pandor, 2005).

There is no doubt that academic writing is significant but English cannot be an exclusively dominant language in the school curricula. There is a need to learn different controls where English is a mechanism of guidance. Eggert (2019) accepted that the embodiment of writing should adhere and conform to a particular reasoning apparatus, given its genesis nature for publishing. English is, therefore, an instrument for language improvement and basic deduction for learning. Abdulkareem (2013) affirmed that academic writing generally affects the students' advancement in subsequent languages.

For students who major in other subjects, Eodice, Geller, and Lerner (2019) claimed that their advancement and accomplishment is underpinned by their academic writing prowess. Chou (2011) conducted a study on the learners' viewpoints towards academic writing. Chou discovered that learners considered academic writing to be significant as it culminates with the distribution of their work.

Academic writing's difficulties are a worry to armature researchers. Academic writing is anything but a simple task to be accomplished, particularly in subsequent languages. Rintaningrum (2018) affirmed that a great deal of English Second Language (ESL) students see academic writing as tricky. An examination directed by Bacha (2012) in an English First Language (EFL) setting uncovered that teachers' and students' academic writing is frail. It is thought to be explicitly hard for those of non-Anglicized phonetic and social foundations.

Consequently, writing could be a difficult skill to acquire because it is anything but a basic psychological endeavour. Academic writing is a complex mental creation, which requires cautious ideas, control, and fixation (Grami, 2010:9). Al Fadda (2012) discovered that the principal challenges ESL understudies experience are differentiating among written and verbally expressed words and reviewing grammar, including concord and consolidating the sentences to make a cognizant section. Producing their thoughts regarding their themes could likewise be a boundary that frustrates learners to proceed onward in their writing (Al Murshidi, 2014). Another

worry is to peruse and afterward write in their own words. This could prompt sentence structure botches, which might make learners hesitant to summarise others' work. Consequently, they simply reorder (Amin & Alamin, 2012).

Writing might be difficult to learn because it is not a simple cognitive activity. Rather, writing is a complex mental production, which requires careful thought, discipline, and concentration (Grami, 2010). To Al Fadda (2012), the ESL students encounter challenges such as, *inter alia*, differentiating between written and spoken words and phrases, reviewing grammar (including subject-verb agreements), and joining sentences to make coherent paragraphs. Moreover, generating ideas about topics might hinder students from continuing with writing (Al Murshidi, 2014). Another concern is to read and write in their words. This might lead to grammar mistakes that make learners reluctant to paraphrase and summarize others' work. Alternatively, learners copy and paste (Amin & Alamin, 2012). This study investigated the Grade 10 EFAL learners' language use in academic writing.

1.2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The researcher observed that Grade 10 learners at Extension K Secondary School at Phumula Circuit use casual or conversational language such as contractions or informal vocabulary when writing academic essays. The learners' academic writings did not encompass specific skills that allowed them to meet academic specifications across the school curricula. This hindered the learners' academic progress as they lacked proficiency in EFAL. EFAL proficiency could have helped them acquire new vocabulary, know the meaning of unfamiliar words, and comprehend the sophisticated vocabulary that characterizes academic language. In this respect, Molteno (2000), stated that the majority of learners whose home language is not the medium of instruction, continued to experience difficulties in classroom academic writing. That is, the English learners used outside the school does not include advanced words and phrases. For example, the transition to "school talk" is a challenge to learners as they must simultaneously develop their everyday language along with academic language skills (O'Brien & Leighton, 2015; Friedberg, Mitchell, & Brook, 2017). This study, therefore, investigated the challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as a First Additional Language in academic writing. In doing so, the study assessed the intervention strategies that could assist the Grade 10 learners' proficiency in EFAL writing.

1.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ellis (1993) stated that language use is the communicative meaning of language. It can be compared to usage, which refers to the rules for writing language and structures used to make it. Learners should be aware of how English works by understanding that usage and use do not necessarily mean the same.

Furthermore, Ellis said that the tone used in academic writing is usually formal, meaning that it should not sound conversational or casual. Learners should particularly avoid colloquial, idiomatic, slang, or journalistic expressions in favour of precise vocabulary. Academic writing requires that learners use full words rather than contractions.

Academic language is the language required by learners to do their school, college and university work. Academic language includes, *inter alia*, discipline-specific vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, applications of rhetorical conventions, and devices that exemplify the content area (essays, lab reports) (Hinkel, 2003). Academic writing is clear, concise, focused, structured, and backed by evidence. Its purpose is to aid the reader's understanding. Academic writing has a formal tone and style but it is not complex and does not require the use of long sentences and complicated vocabulary (Calfoglou, 2019).

Academic writing utilizes a proper style and at times uses the third person viewpoint. The writing's focal points are realities and issues as opposed to the essayist's assessment. The language utilizes exact words and excludes slang language or short forms. Academic writing is a formal and indifferent method of writing while non-academic writing is any generally populist and subjective task (Hong, 2018). A wide meaning of academic writing is any writing done to satisfy the school or college's necessity. Academic writing is largely for the instructor and analyst's attention or is presented in conferences. Another definition would mean any writing task given in a scholarly setting.

1.3.1. Difference between academic language and non-academic language

One of the contrasts between academic and non-academic writing is the writing style used (Flores, 2020). Huddleston-Pettiway (2022) indicated that the fundamental aspect of scholarly work gives realities and data on specific scholastic subjects

gathered through perception and perusal. Non-scholarly composition or individual composition, however, is personal and individualistic in nature.

The crowd and association are different parts of the contrasts among academic and non-academic writing styles. Corresponding to what has been referenced above, explicit sorts of crowd, generally educators, and researchers are viewed as the academic writing crowd. Individual writing is written for non-scholarly purposes and crowd. The construction where thoughts are coordinated is likewise a conspicuous part of academic writing. In this style, thoughts are generally put in a particular sectional contexts and in complete and precise sentences. These thoughts are engaged with passages and are associated. The individual writing style is less inclined to follow a particular design, and hence very little soundness can be acknowledged in this style.

1.4. Theoretical framework

The researcher chose the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) because the SCT define writing as problem solving which arises from the writer's attempt to map language onto their thoughts to create content that meet the reader's expectations (Motlhaka, 2018; McCutchen, Teste & Bankston, 2008). This theory highlights the complexity of writing where problems include strategic considerations such as the organization of ideas, phrasing grammatically correct sentences, correct use of punctuation marks and spellings, and wording to the desired standard. In this case, Hayes and Flower (2012) posited that the writer's long-term memory has various types of knowledge that include knowledge of the topic, knowledge of the audience, and the learned writing schema. Therefore, the researcher considered the following four major writing processes as identified by Hayes and Flower in implementing SCT to address challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in academic writing.

- Planning takes the writing assignment and long-term memory as input to produce the document's conceptual plan as an output. Planning includes generating ideas and mentally organizing them logically, and setting local or global goals to achieve.
- Translating the document's conceptual plan to produce text that expresses the planned content.
- Reviewing the produced text by revising to improve or correct errors therein.

- Monitoring following metacognitive processes that link and coordinate planning, translating, and reviewing.

1.5. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study's purpose was to investigate challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study answered the following research questions:

- What are the challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing classroom?
- What are the teaching strategies that can be used to harness the learners' usage of English as the first additional language in academic writing classroom?

1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is referred to as academic movement. In this sense, the term ought to be utilized accordingly. Research involves characterizing and rethinking issues, detailing speculation or recommended arrangements. Furthermore, research involves gathering, sorting out and assessing information, and testing the ends to decide if they fit the planning theory (Kothari, 2004).

Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data. For example, text, video, or audio to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem to generate new ideas for research (Kuckartz, 2014). The study followed this technique because it helped the investigator to explore the participants' thoughts and experiences in depth. This methodology enabled the researcher to experience reality and, to describe and explain the social world.

1.8. RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the study's general plan that provides the overall framework for collecting data. Durrheim (2004) defined the research design as a strategic framework for action that bridges the research questions and the execution, or the research strategy's implementation. In short, the research design is the plan whose goal is to provide the findings that are based on the collected data, and hence

credibility. This study used the exploratory research design. This design was chosen because the study's problem required thorough investigations. The exploratory study design is used to research a problem that is not plainly characterized. For such an exploration, one begins with an overall thought and uses that examination to recognize issues concentrated for future exploration (Mvududu & Sink, 2013).

1.9. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

1.9.1. Population

The study's population is a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, and objects with common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher (Kellehear, 2020). This study's case school is situated in Extension K, Tweefontein. The school caters to learners from various neighbouring villages such as Vlaaklaagte 1, BB, and CC, among other rural villages. It incorporates two African languages as part of its language curriculum, namely Sepedi and IsiNdebele. EFAL is the language of instruction in this school. This study sampled ten Grade 10 learners and two FET English educators from the Extension K FET, a public school in the Nkangala District. The school has 80 Grade 10 learners in total. These are divided into three classes, vis; Grade 10A, 10B, and 10C.

1.9.2. Sampling

Sampling is the process of choosing a specific number of people from a larger group to represent that population group (Burns, 2009). This study used the purposive sampling technique to obtain its sample. This study used simple random sampling which is a type of probability sampling in which the researcher randomly selects a subset of participants from a population (Elfil & Negida, 2017). The researcher used number cards in a box to select ten learners in grade 10 A in order to give equal opportunity for all participants to participate in the study. This technique was opted for because it enabled the researcher to recruit the participants who provided in-depth information about the topic investigated (Campbell et al., 2020). Ten learners and two EFAL Grade 10 teachers were selected. The study's sample size minimised errors that would have been made had the study used a larger sample.

1.10. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection is obtaining useful information from the identified sources. A document analysis method was used to collect data. That is, a descriptive essay of about 40 minutes and interviews were used to collect data. The semi-structured

interviews were used. To conduct the interviews, the research first made appointments with the interviewees. The teacher participants were notified about the interviews' specific dates. Doing so enabled them to prepare for the interviews. Teachers were interviewed one-on-one because they were only two. Approximately ± 15 minutes were allocated for each interview. On the other hand, the essay given to the sampled learners was descriptive. Learners were expected to describe their first day at the Extension K Secondary School. The researcher selected these two data collection methods because they facilitated the collection of in-depth and rich information concerning the study topic from the participants.

1.11. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Keough (2002) referred to data analysis as the procedure of bringing order, meaning, and structure to the mass of collected information. The researcher used the inductive thematic data analysis technique to analyse data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). This technique was used because it is concerned with understanding the participants' lived experiences and how they made sense of their experiences in addressing challenges of language use in EFAL academic writing. The researcher first familiarized himself with data, assigned preliminary codes to data in order to describe the content, identified common patterns or themes from the interview and observation data, reviewed themes, and then began the write up process. The above is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) description of inductive thematic analysis (Seidel & Urquhart, 2016). The researcher began with the study area and then applied the chosen theory to understand topical issues. The researcher read the transcribed data and those from observations several times to familiarise himself with them.

1.12. QUALITY CRITERIA

Quality criteria in this study was done by following credibility, confirmability, and dependability formalities.

1.12.1. Credibility

Credibility is the alternative to internal validity where the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (De Vos, 2011). The researcher ensured the study's credibility by matching the research participants' views and the researcher's reconstruction of those views and producing a report that represented them.

1.12.2. Confirmability

Confirmability can be equated to the traditional quantitative concept of objectivity (De Vos, 2011). To ensure the study's confirmability, the researcher used literature related to the study topic. After data collection, the researcher used the member check technique to verify the collected information's authenticity as a true reflection of what actually transpired during the data collection process.

1.12.3. Dependability

Dependability ensures that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated. Dependability is measured by the standard of the research conducted, data analysed, and presented (Ary, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). The researcher ensured that the findings were verified with the data collected to ensure that nothing was missed in the study.

1.13. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the problems most schools face in EFAL academic writing. The study, therefore, potentially provides the solution to the identified problem so that learners could be rescued from the academic writing challenges they face. The study intends to bring changes to specific and selected learners and teachers' lives by enhancing their academic writing knowledge.

Academic writing serves as a communication tool that conveys acquired knowledge in specific study fields. The study would help learners to analyse, convey understanding, think critically, and focus on the academic writing techniques and style. The study would also help teachers to identify topics and contents on the EFAL curriculum that should be allocated more teaching and learning time. The problem would be made clear to teachers. Policy makers and curriculum advisors would also benefit from this study. That is, the study outlined the problems teachers and learners face in the teaching and learning process. Necessary amendments were made to address the problem faced by learners and teachers.

1.14. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was conducted under the following ethical issues; permission, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and consent, among others.

1.14.1. Permission

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of Limpopo's Research and Ethics Committee (TREC) to conduct the study. Permission to conduct the study was also requested from the circuit manager, the case school's principal, parents, teachers, and the learners. These requests were granted.

1.14.2. Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation is the subjects' activity of freedom of thought in concluding whether to take part in a study or not (Vanclay, Baines, & Taylor, 2013). Learners and teachers were not forced to participate in this study. The participants were requested to sign the consent form. The participants were made aware of the study's purpose prior to their participation.

1.14.3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the condition where the researcher knows the research subjects' identity and takes steps to conceal such identity to those outside of the study (Surmiak, 2018). The participants were made anonymous by using letter codes instead of their actual names in the study. In this way, confidentiality was maintained.

1.14.4. Consent form

The participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the research at any stage without fear of violence or intimidation. The researcher gave all participants the consent forms to sign before taking part in the study. Underage participants had their consent forms signed by their parents. The consent form did not bind anyone as those who wished to withdraw from the study were free to do so at any given time.

1.14.5. Full disclosure

The participants were informed of the study processes and the steps to be followed before their participation. The participants were also informed of any likely risks they faced by participating in the study. Necessary information was shared with the participants before the study commenced.

1.14.6. Respect, dignity and standard

The participants were treated with respect to ensure that their well-being and self-determination were respected and dignified. The participants were not exposed to unnecessarily or disproportionately high levels of danger.

1.14.7. The benefits and risks/harm

Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) noted that the participants' risks of harm should be considered. The researcher ensured that all participants were protected from physical harm, loss of resources, and emotional harm. To ensure that the participants were assisted when they emotionally broke down the researcher planned to use these two steps. Firstly, the researcher would stop the interview and refer the participant to the available counsellors. If the participant felt comfortable to continue after the counselling session, the interview would resume. Secondly, if the participant was to be unable to continue with the interview, they would be excused from the process without any problem.

1.15 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The study comprises of five chapters. The study's chapters are designed to present a well-structured research report where its content flows sequentially.

Chapter one: Introduction and background.

This chapter illustrates the study's background, the study's purpose, and the research objectives. It also provides a brief discussion of the research design and methodology, data collection and analysis techniques, and the organization of the chapters.

Chapter two: Literature review

This chapter reviewed literature concerning this study's theoretical framework and that which substantiated the research topic. Issues reviewed were the importance of academic language and the impact of social language, the features of academic writing, and challenges and their effects on the learners' academic writing.

Chapter three: Research Methodology and design

Chapter three illustrates the study's research methodology. The research design and, data collection and analysis methods were also outlined. The study's population, sample size and the sampling techniques, and the validity, reliability, and the ethical consideration issues are discussed in chapter three.

Chapter four: Presentation and analysis of data

This chapter presents and discusses data collected using the semi-structure face-to-face interviews and observations. Documentary data are integrated with primary data.

Chapter five: Discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

This chapter presents the summary of the study's main findings, the significance of the study, the study's recommendations, the study's limitations, and suggestions for further research. The chapter concludes by providing a section that ties up the whole research.

1.16 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter presented the study's context, the background of the problems addressed herein, the aim of the study, its rationale, and the research objectives. This chapter outlined the impact of social and academic language usage by learners in their academic essays. The next chapter outlines the study's theoretical framework and reviews literature related to the study topic.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the study's background, problem statement, aim, objectives and significance of the study, and the study's limitation. This chapter outlines the study's theoretical framework and reviews literature related to language as a social practice, academic language, core Academic Language Skills Construct, academic language as sociocultural practice, the impact of academic language in the classroom, academic writing, the impact of academic language in academic writing, features of academic writing, and the impact of social language in academic writing. The last section is this chapter's summary.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework shows the beliefs and the researcher's worldview while defining the position the researcher takes in accounting for knowledge interpretation and making (McGregor, 2017). McGregor asserted that the theoretical framework is the structure that guides research by relying on propounded theories using an established and coherent explanation of phenomena. This study adopted the SCT to underpin its theoretical framework. The theory indicates that an individual's knowledge acquisition is directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences (Phipps, Ozanne, Luchs, Subrahmanyam, Kapitan, Catlin, Naylor, Rose, Simpson, and Weaver, 2013). The SCT was, therefore, relevant here because the study investigated the challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing. The SCT started as the Social Learning Theory (SLT) propounded by Albert Bandura in the 1960s. The SLT was developed into the SCT in 1986. The SCT posits that learning transpires in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour (Abbas, Ekowati, Suhariadi, Fenitra and Fahlevi, 2022). The SCT's unique feature is the emphasis on social influence and on external and internal social reinforcement.

The SCT theory's tenet is that people learn by watching others. SCT postulates that one learns a skill or a behaviour from observing other people. In this study, the theory was used to evaluate whether learners write their essays in the way they communicate with their peers or not.

2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1. Language as a social practice

Language is inextricably entwined with our mental life, perceptions, memory, attention, comprehension, and thoughts (Clark & Owtram, 2012). Language is a tool that enables people to organize and control mental processes such as planning, problem solving, and learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2000 cited in Wilberschied & Berman, 2004). Sivasubramaniam (2011) cited in Langa (2016) views language as a creative instrument of meaning-making that has the power to create new and fresh meaning each time someone uses it. Language is the medium of instruction in both class and school (Bohlmann, 2001). Sivasubramaniam (2011) stated that language is a set of higher psychological processes that include creativity, critical and hypothetical thinking, and reasoning. These views make it easier for this researcher to explain the language's social context use and the relationship language has with the culture of the study's participants.

An understanding of language is an open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal entity (Shohamy, 2007 cited in Sarani, Ganji, & Khoosf, 2014) encompasses communication's rich complexities. This language view makes the educational experience more engaging for learners. Language is not to be studied but a way of seeing, understanding, and communicating issues (Foncha & Sivasubramaniam, 2014). People use language for purposive communication. Learning a new language involves learning how to use words, rules, and knowledge about that language and its use in order to communicate with the language's speakers.

Language is also something that people do in their daily lives, something they use to express, create, and interpret meanings, and to establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships. If language is a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation, then it is not enough for the language learners to just know grammar

and vocabulary. They also need to know how that language is used to create and represent meanings and how to communicate with others. This requires the development of awareness of the nature of language and its impact on the world (Svalberg, 2007). It is necessary to make clear ‘what kinds of language practices are valued and considered good, normal, appropriate, or correct in classrooms and schools (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001 cited in Dooly, 2013).

2.3.2. Academic language

Academic language is the language needed by students and learners to do their school, college, and university work. It includes discipline-specific vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation, applications of rhetorical conventions, and devices that are typical of the content area (essays, lab reports) (Hinkel, 2003). Silliman and Wilkinson (2015) opined that beyond vocabulary, the students’ academic language production with significant language learning difficulties has not been systematically investigated.

The term academic language might be used to mean formal English rules, structure, and content for academic dialogue and text, and the communicative conventions that allow students to meet the school environment’s demands. Another definition refers to academic language as the specialized language, both oral and written, of academic settings that facilitates communication and thinking about disciplinary content (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). For actionable and instructional purposes, the specialized language skills include the advanced vocabulary and syntax that help students unlock key elements of both oral and written language. These skills support the listener or reader in having a deep understanding of the message delivered.

2.3.3. The nature of academic language

What is tough about learning in academic subjects is that each area is knotted to language’s academic expert varieties that are complex and technical (Gee, 2004). Even though in recent years academic language has been central in many educational efforts, educators and researchers have conceptualized academic language in different ways. Current studies point to the teachers’ understanding of academic language as challenging content-area vocabulary or “hard words” (Ernst-Slavit & Mason, 2011; Homza, 2011; Lee, 2011 cited in (Frantz, Starr, and Bailey, 2015; Wong & Fillmore, 2011). Nevertheless, academic language is a complex

concept. “The difference in purpose, audience, and context results in differences among language use in the choice of words, formality, sentence construction, and discourse patterns” (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2013: 2).

2.3.4. Core academic language skills construct

The Core Academic Language Skills (CALs) refer to a knowledge and deployment of a range of language forms and purposes that co-transpire with oral and written school learning tasks across disciplines (Uccelli, Barr, Dobbs, Galloway, Meneses, & Sánchez, 2015). Furthermore, the CALs instrument (CALs-I) encompasses a set of theoretically grounded tasks designed to measure a subset of CALs believed to support text comprehension in upper elementary and middle school students.

CALs refers to language skills that cut across content areas and are used to fulfill similar language goals such as communicating or understanding precise meanings, concisely packed information, and clearly marked conceptual relations (Bailey, 2007; Hyland, 2009; Schleppegrell, 2004; Uccelli, Dobbs, & Scott, 2013).



Figure 2.1. Core Academic Language Skills (CALs) ((Uccelli, Barr, Dobbs, Galloway, Meneses, & Sánchez, 2015)

Below is an overview of six CALS areas that underlie skilled comprehension of academic texts.

Unpacking complex words. Morphological skills: - the exact skills in derivational morphology are crucial to understand and produce complex words used to pack information in academic texts. Current research reveals that skills in decomposing morphologically complex words (contribution, cultural) contribute positively to reading comprehension in upper elementary/middle school students (Carlisle, 2000; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007, 2008, 2010; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006).

- **Comprehending complex sentences.** Limited studies interrogate the relationship between the syntactic awareness skills and reading comprehension (Cain, 2007). This part is involved because studies have produced evidence of later syntactic skills such as extended noun phrases and complex sentences, positively contributing to reading comprehension in children, adolescents, and

adults (Mokhtari & Thompson, 2006; Nation & Snowling, 2000; Taylor, Greenberg, Laures-Gore, & Wise, 2011).

- **Connecting ideas.** Academic discourse markers (such as connectives and lexical cue phrases) constitute the prevalent signalling devices that openly mark intra-sentential conceptual relations and text transitions in academic discourse (Hyland, 2004). Several sources from lexical databases to corpus linguistics studies document the greatest prevalent causal and discourse creators in academic texts at school (Crosson, Lesaux, & Martiniello, 2008) and beyond, in academic texts swapped by specialists across disciplines (Hyland, 2005; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010). Though not without some controversy, several studies offer evidence to propose that discourse markers affect online processing, text memory, and learning from academic text (Hyönä & Lorch, 2004; Meyer & Poon, 2001).
- **Tracking themes.** Anaphors, words or phrases appearing in a text that refer to a previous participant or idea, can be understood as directives to the reader or listener to link a previous idea with an element in the text (Crossley, Kyle, & Dascalu, 2019). While concrete anaphoric elements are omnipresent in colloquial language, that is, 'she' refers to 'Joy', one type of anaphor, conceptual anaphora, is a particular feature of academic text (Kabbara, 2022). The conceptual anaphora consists of a demonstrative determiner. For example, 'this' with or without a hyper noun, a noun that summarises meanings expressed in previous discourse. For example, the water vapour occurs due to rising temperatures (Flowerdew, 2003; Hunston & Francis, 2000). An optimistic relationship between skills in determining conceptual anaphora and reading comprehension was discovered for the upper elementary school students (Sánchez & García, 2009).
- **Organizing argumentative texts.** Studies have defined later language development as moving along a continuum at the interface of modality and text type (genre). That is, from the initial mastery of oral narrative to slow progress in written narrative, tailed by proficiency in oral expository and subsequent written expository texts (Berman & Ravid, 2009). Prior research proposed that narrative organization be well-achieved by ages nine and ten. Nonetheless, the knowledge of the global structure of expository discourse progresses gradually and consolidates at high school age (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007). Skills in structuring narratives contribute to reading comprehension through the primary school years

when children read narrative texts (Oakhill & Cain, 2000). Within the prevalent non-narrative text types in school discourses, we only selected the argumentative text to assess the global discourse structure's knowledge. Given the argumentative nature of academic language (Rex, Thomas & Engel, 2010), skills in structuring argumentative texts (thesis, arguments, examples, conclusion) were hypothesized to be associated with school literacy during the middle school years.

- **Awareness of academic register:** Definitions provide an optimal minimal genre to assess identification and production of short texts that display core academic language features, including those used to attain lexical precision (the use of less versus more precise superordinate, bicycle is an object versus the bicycle is a vehicle), and concise information packing (complex grammatical structures such as nominalizations and centre-embedded clauses). Research document the predictive power of productive definitional skills for later academic success (Benelli, Belacchi, Gini, & Lucangeli, 2006).

2.3.5. Academic language as sociocultural practice

Sociocultural perspectives view language learning as a social practice, consider students as active participants in the construction of knowledge, and consider a variety of social and cultural factors involved in the teaching and learning process (Villegas, Varona, & Sanchez, 2020). From this perspective, there is much more to learning a language than its structural aspects. In classrooms, students need to learn when they can ask a question about a classroom presentation, under what circumstances can they copy information from a text, or when can they speak without raising their hands. Within this stance, language learning is seen as a social practice where talk and interaction are central to human development and learning.

Academic language is more involved than terms, conventions, and genres. In other words, the teaching and learning of academic language requires more than learning about a variety of linguistic components. It includes knowledge about ways of being in the world, ways of thinking, interacting, speaking, and sometimes writing and reading connected to identities and social roles (García & Kleifgen, 2020). That is, language needs to be understood in relation to the speakers involved, the purpose of the communication, the audience, and the context.

This social-oriented view of teaching and learning is more inclusive for teachers and students, both of whom are active participants in the process. Ultimately, student achievements, especially for ELLs, are influenced by the sociocultural frame in which learning occurs (Gibbons, 2002 cited in Gottlieb & Ernst-slavit, 2013). Thus, language is one of the several resources students need and use to participate in thinking and learning. Students also draw on social cues (gestures) and material resources (artefacts) and the use of their home languages to access and construct meaning as they engage in learning in English.

Language operates within a sociocultural context, not in isolation. At school, the classroom environment often serves as the sociocultural context for learning academic language. Although the students' distinct backgrounds, experiences, and views need to be considered, the classroom becomes the mediator for accruing individual knowledge that leads to shared meaning. Thus, by listening to and coming to understand other perspectives, students form a community of learners with its cultural practices and social norms. In this way, we come to see distinct communities of practice in every classroom, each with established social and cultural ways of being (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

As these communities develop, teachers and students also become aware of the various processes involved in language learning and use. Besides the sociocultural interactions that permeate the classroom, students are becoming more conscious of how they learn and use language. Teachers are becoming more responsive on how they teach language to learners.

2.3.6. Key elements of academic language

Vocabulary and syntactic knowledge in oral and written language include specific skills that allow students to meet academic demands across the curriculum. Though commonly used to denote breadth of knowledge of word definitions (how many words a student knows), vocabulary knowledge also refers to depth of understanding of word parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots), multiple meanings, and figurative language that shape the vocabulary use's subtleties. Proficiency in word parts and relationships helps students acquire new vocabulary, reason about the meaning of unfamiliar words, and comprehend the sophisticated vocabulary that characterizes academic language. These include the following:

- General-academic words that are high frequency and may be abstract or have multiple meanings. For example, investigate, principle, asylum.
- Discipline-specific words that typically contain Greek combining forms, for example, ecosystem, longitude, integer.

Syntactic knowledge refers to the understanding of parts of speech and rules that govern how words and phrases combine into sentences, and how sentences combine into paragraphs (Friedberg, Mitchell, & Brook, 2017). To understand connected text, students must master basic grammatical rules and sophisticated knowledge of words and phrases used to establish referents, organize ideas, denote relationships between concepts, and develop text cohesion. These include,

- Use of connective words requiring sentence-level inferencing, for example, consequently, whereas, similarly.
- Resolution of pronoun reference, for example, we examined the extent to which native plants in coastal regions adapted to climatic changes in their environment. (The reader needs to connect the pronoun to the noun native plants).
- Grammatical agreement between subjects, verbs, and tenses. For example, all of the candidates and the current President, are attending the televised debate.

Given the increasing emphasis on students' abilities to independently engage with complex texts, perhaps the domain most impacted by students' academic language skills as they progress through school is reading for comprehension. In fact, researchers have shown that reading for comprehension difficulties are in large part due to students' challenges in understanding the school texts' academic language (Uccelli et al., 2015). Vocabulary knowledge predicts the students' literacy achievements because it contributes significantly to both word identification and reading comprehension skills. In addition, vocabulary and syntactic knowledge account for most individual differences in reading comprehension performance for students in upper elementary school through to high school (Foorman, Koon, Petscher, Mitchell, & Truckenmiller, 2015). Vocabulary and syntactic knowledge help students engage with text and progress towards deep reading for comprehension with increasing independence. They support their abilities to;

- Acquire knowledge through reading and synthesize it with previously learned material.
- Analyse audience, structure, purpose, and tone of texts.

- Evaluate evidence, main ideas, and details in what they read.

2.3.7. The impact of academic language in the classroom

As students progress through school, they are expected to demonstrate increasing levels of sophistication in their language and reading skills across all subject areas. To gain knowledge through independent reading and participate in meaningful discussions in the classroom, students must master the complex words and phrases that characterize the school language. Proficiency in these skills known as academic language, is critical for reading comprehension and overall academic success.

Across the country, educators and policymakers now acknowledge the importance of academic language and its notable absence from the curriculum and assessment. National standards reflect a shift towards academic language by calling for instructional focus on words that appear across subject areas and opportunities for students to develop knowledge of words and concepts through discussion and reading (Baker et al., 2014 cited in Friedberg, Mitchell, & Brook, 2017). Students must be able to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, understand nuances in word meanings and multiple meaning words, and utilize sophisticated words and phrases including transitions and precise word choice (National Governors Association Centre for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). These demands are particularly challenging for students with poor background or limited exposure to English.

Many students struggle with academic language because their exposure to language outside of school does not include advanced words and phrases (Friedberg et al., 2017). The transition to “school talk” poses a particular challenge for ELLs since they must simultaneously develop everyday language along with academic language skills (O’Brien & Leighton, 2015). Without exposure to advanced English language skills at home, ELLs face double the demands of language learning. The increasing numbers of ELL students attending schools across the country, and the significant numbers of students from low-income backgrounds and those with learning disabilities have made it an educational imperative that instruction and assessment directly promote students’ academic language proficiency.

2.3.8. Social language

Winner (2016), author of *Social Thinking*, defines social language as the ability to effectively share the space around us with others. This definition defines a complex life skill that can be quite abstract for students if their thinking is not intuitive.

Social language is the simple, informal language we use when talking face to face with family members and friends (Pooley, Midgley, & Farley, 2019). These authors postulated that it allows us to use contemporary or slang terms like “cool,” “awesome,” or “dude.” We can also communicate feelings, needs, and wants using symbolic hand gestures for drink, eat, hot, cold, hurt, or tired. Social language also includes writing emails, friendly letters, and texts or retelling stories.

For some, social language does not come naturally. Special needs children might need specific instructions in social language and behaviours like greeting people, giving and receiving compliments, apologizing, and making polite requests (Burdelski, 2011). They might also need instruction to understand nonverbal language (facial expressions and body language), respecting rules of personal space, and using an appropriate tone of voice and volume for different environments (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2003).

For example, some children might address a teacher in the classroom in the same tone and volume they use when speaking to friends. With exposure, practice, and interaction, social language would continually develop. Role playing, teacher and peer modelling, and viewing age-appropriate videos are good tools for students to observe social language skills and behaviours. Teachers and parents can set up opportunities to use and encourage appropriate social language and behaviours with real incidents that come up in class or at home. For example, having the child or student practice greeting or saying good morning (and good-bye) to their teachers, classmates, or siblings.

2.3.9. The impact of social language in the classroom

If we look at the Common Core, many languages of arts, social studies, and even science standards have a social language piece to them (Britt & Howe, 2014). Furthermore, the concepts of inferencing, predicting, compare and contrast,

identifying a point of view, perspective-taking, and working in groups are all social language skills.

Most learners in South African schools face a language barrier in the classroom (de Jager, 2013). De Jager stipulated that any child who cannot use the language, which he/she is most familiar with (usually the home language) is disadvantaged and unlikely to perform to the best of his/her ability. But, it is not just being able to use an effective communication medium in the learning situation that is at stake. A child's self-confidence and sense of self in society are undermined if the home language cannot be used for learning. These are further undermined by the experience of repeated underachievement. This disadvantage has cognitive, psychological, social, and cultural aspects, all manifested in our ongoing education system's failures.

In an English classroom, most of the learners' writings should be written using academic language. The language use should be strictly formal, and the social language is allowed only in some types of texts such as friendly letters, dialogue between friends and a diary entry. The social language has a negative impact on learners in class because they have a tendency to employ it in academic texts, which require them to be formal. They do so because they use it more frequently than the academic language.

2.3.10. Academic writing

Academic writing is nonfiction writing produced as part of academic work. It is writing that reports on university research, writing produced by university students, and writing in which scholars analyse culture or propose new theories (Beaufort, 2008). Academic writing is clear, concise, focused, structured, and backed up by evidence. Its purpose is to aid the reader's understanding. It has a formal tone and style but it is not complex and does not require the use of long sentences and complicated vocabulary (Calfoglou, 2019).

Academic writing utilizes a proper style and ordinarily use the third individual viewpoint. The writing's focal point is on realities and issues as opposed to the essayist's assessment. The academic language utilizes exact words and exclude slangs or shortenings. Academic writing is formal and an indifferent method of writing (Kumar, 2020).

Stroble, Ailhaud, Benetos, Devitt, Kruse, Proske, and Rapp (2019) postulated that a wide meaning of academic writing is any composing done to satisfy the school or college's necessity. Furthermore, academic writing is utilized for distributions that are perused by instructor and analysts or introduced in conferences. A generalised definition could incorporate any composing task given in a scholarly manner.

2.3.11.1. The linguistic demands of academic writing

At school, students are expected to master not only new genres or text types (for example, explanation, argumentation) but also new school-relevant registers or language repertoires prevalent in the school's social context (for example, the language of history, the language of science) (Bazerman & Paradis, 2004). The progress in mastering new genres or types of texts was characterized by Martin (1989) and Schleppgrell (2004) as moving progressively across three categories: (1) personal genres such as narratives and recounts; (2) factual genres such as procedures and reports; and (3) analytic genres, those focused on analysis and argumentation (explanations, persuasive or argumentative essays). Empirical data suggest that while the written narrative organization tends to be well-mastered at ten years, analytic genres constitute a later developmental accomplishment (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007). The persuasive essay is a particularly prominent school genre, which consists of the writer's position or thesis about a topic. This is followed by the organized stepwise argumentation that includes precise claims, data, warrants, counterarguments, and rebuttals that lead to a well-justified conclusion (Toulmin, 2003). It is during the middle school years that persuasive essays are introduced consistently in writing instruction and assessment (Hillocks, 2002). High-stake examinations required for college admission such as the SAT or ACT routinely assess students' writing by eliciting a persuasive essay that needs to be produced within a limited timeframe (College Board, 2012).

In reaction to these testing practices, researchers and teachers have called for more valid and authentic assessments (Hillocks, 2011). The need for future research on better alternatives for writing assessment cannot be sufficiently emphasized given the influential role of the current high stakes testing methods in determining the students' future opportunities.

2.3.11. The impact of academic language in academic writing

Several studies show that insufficient academic language proficiency in (mother tongue) L1 in particular, academic writing might hinder academic achievement (Mahmood, Shah, & Alam, 2020; Hulstijn, 2011; 2015). Compared to native students, (EFAL) L2 students do not enjoy the same level of academic success as L1 students and are at a greater risk of failing (Iannelli & Huang, 2014; Paton 2007). What seems clear from this research on both L1 and L2 is that L1 and L2 learners appear to have many problems in common, as academic language is a special register that must be learned by all students. Control over academic language is a requirement for challenging tasks such as reading a scientific article, or writing a research paper or a literature review. Failure to understand discipline-related texts to organise information, and to make appropriate lexical choices can thus be a serious obstacle (Biber 2006; Biber, Gray, and Poonpon 2011; De Wachter et al., 2013; Hyland, 2009; Snow & Uccelli, 2009; Turner 2011; Van Kalsbeek & Kuiken, 2014).

An important finding in many of these studies is that the relationship between academic language proficiency and results obtained in the first year of study and during the first semester, seems to be important and might even be predictive for success in the further study career. Kuiken and Vedder (2021) established a relationship between language proficiency in L2, as assessed by means of TOEFL and IELTS scores, and the average marks obtained in the first semester. Daller and Phelan (2013) found that language proficiency and vocabulary knowledge appeared to be the key factors in predicting the final marks that students achieve. The study also showed that although standardised tests such as the TOEFL and IELTS provide a valid cut-off point for entry to university. Other factors than language proficiency such as cultural, motivation, and familiarity with the subject area appeared to influence academic achievement.

2.3.12. Features of academic language in academic writing

Despite the widespread concern about students' insufficient language proficiency, there is no simple definition of 'academic language' and what it entails. In the last decades, several definitions were proposed. Kuiken and Vedder (2021) distinguished between BICS and CALP. BICS refers to conversational language used daily. CALP refers to a more abstract language used in formal, institutionalised settings (official

reports, text books, or scientific publications). Despite the importance of Cummins' work in raising the awareness of the differences between conversational and academic language, it has not been specified which linguistic features are encompassed in CALP. The contrast between daily and academic language is echoed in Hulstijn's (2015) distinction between Basic Language Cognition (BLC) and Higher Language Cognition (HLC). Both for BICS vs CALP, and BLC vs HLC, it might, however, be hard to delineate the exact borders between what forms part of BICS or BLC, and what belongs to CALP or HLC.

Other studies tried to describe several features thought to be typical of academic language. Krashen and Brown (2007) conceptualised academic language as being characterised by academic vocabulary, complex syntax, and complex discourse style. This characterisation, however, leaves open what exactly comes under the heading, 'academic vocabulary' and when syntax or discourse styles are 'complex'. Biber (2006) confined the concept to the university context, defining academic language as specific language patterns occurring across a broad range of spoken and written university registers. Academic language proficiency is described by Uccelli et al. (2015) in terms of knowledge and deployment of a repertoire of language forms that co-occur across disciplines. Along these lines, our conceptualisation of what constitutes (written) academic language proficiency follows Biber (2006) and Uccelli et al.'s (2015) definitions.

Attempting to classify the linguistic elements identified in literature as being characteristic to academic language in their inventory of academic language features, Snow and Uccelli (2009) subdivided these features into those referring to (1) interpersonal stance (detached, authoritative), (2) information load (conciseness, density), (3) organisation of information (embedding, use of discourse markers, argument structure), (4) lexical choices (diversity, precision, abstract/technical concepts), and (5) grammatical choices (complex sentences, use of abstract concepts as agents). The employment of these linguistic elements must be coordinated with genre mastery, disciplinary knowledge, reasoning skills, and use of argumentative strategies. The underlying rationale of these linguistic and cognitive requirements, as stated by Snow and Uccelli, are three communicative challenges; 'representing the self' (representation of one's stance in the message to be transmitted, selection of a specific relationship with the audience), and 'representing

the message' (conceptualisation and representation of ideas/thoughts in a particular context).

Hyland (2002; 2009) noted that scientific texts in comparison to other texts contain a higher number of nouns, adjectives, and prepositions, whereas pronouns are less frequent. What characterises academic language is the relatively large number of nominalisations, particularly complex noun phrases in which the noun is preceded and/or followed respectively by one or more pre- and/or post-modifiers (for example, 'Cultural and Social Anthropology deals with many aspects of the people's social lives around the world, including our society and the interrelationships of various systems in environmental adaptation and social change (Biber, 2006). Other syntactic structures that often occur are passive sentences. With regard to lexical features, academic prose is generally characterised by abstract and specialised vocabulary ('amplitude', 'chromatography'), particular collocations and lexical bundles ('as a result of', 'the nature of'), discourse markers and connectors ('alternatively', 'consequently'), expressions of stance and evaluation ('actually', 'unfortunately').

As pointed out in many studies (Biber, Gray, & Poonpon, 2011; Biber & Gray, 2011; Snow & Uccelli, 2009) there are a number of differences between oral and written academic discourse and between various disciplines. Personal pronouns, for instance, which might often be used in oral academic speech ('We must talk about some basic concepts. Let me show you them), are hardly present in written discourse. Oral academic language might also contain many sentences introduced by 'that ...' ('that the living standard of the people in the area was improved is the good aspect. That's what interest us'), and many adverbial clauses, such as conditionals ('if'), causatives ('because') and temporals ('before'). In contrast, written academic language is characterised by clausal embedding. As pointed out by Biber, the typical sentence structure of a written scientific text consists of the main clause with relatively few subordinate clauses, containing several noun phrases and a prepositional clause. For example, 'Each new level of system differentiation opens space for further increases in complexity, that is, for additional functional specifications and a correspondingly more abstract integration of the ensuing sub-systems' (Biber, 2006).

2.4. CONCLUSION

The most important aspects in academic writing are to keep one's writing clear and concise and make sure that one gets their ideas over in a comprehensible form. Informal language must not be used but sentences must be complete with ideas arranged in paragraphs and sections. The next chapter illustrates the research methodology and details the steps followed to collect data.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the theoretical framework and theories supporting the study were discussed. In addition, the relevant literature on language use in academic writing by Grade 10 EFAL learners is discussed. Additionally, literature was reviewed in response to the research's aim. This chapter outlines the research methodology followed by the study. It also discusses the sampling method used to select the participants. The researcher gives an overview of the research paradigm followed in the study and defines research design that was selected for the tenacity of this study and the explanations for this choice. The method that was used for data collection is also defined and the processes that were followed to bring out this study are included. The investigator also discusses the approaches used to analyse the data. Lastly, the ethical topics that were followed herein are likewise discussed.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm and other philosophical assumptions are called world views (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is the belief that reason is the best way to generate knowledge about reality. Creswell (2007) alluded that the interpretivists aim to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context, not to generalize to the whole population. The researcher followed the interpretivist paradigm because it is considered the most appropriate for addressing the research problem that involves the semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Said (2021) defined the research design as a strategy for a study providing the general framework for collecting data. MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) cited in Zulu (2013) stated that it is a plot for choosing subjects, research locations, and data collection measures to reply to the research questions. They further showed that the research design's objective is to afford results that are judged to be trustworthy. According to this definition, the research design refers to the plan whose goal is to

provide credible findings based on the collected data. This study used the case study design to help explore the study's topic as stated on the cover page. The case study research design was appropriate here as it helped to explore the research problem through a variety of lenses to reveal multiple facets of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study design was used to explore the EFAL teachers' insights as they taught the Grade 10 learners how to write academically in class. This study followed this research design as it dealt with the nature of the problems that affect the Grade 10 EFAL learners' academic writing. The case study research design helped this researcher to gather the participants' opinions about academic writing at Grade 10 EFAL level.

3.4. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.4.1. Population

The study population is defined as a group of participants, institutions, and objects with mutual features that are of interest to the researcher (Kellehear, 2020). This study's population consisted of 80 Grade ten learners and two EFAL teachers at the Extension K Secondary School situated in Tweefontein K, Nkangala District of the Mpumalanga Province. The school's feeder communities are villages such as Vlaaklaagte 1, BB, and CC whose home languages are Sepedi and IsiNdebele.

3.4.2. Sample and sampling

Sampling refers to the act of getting a few people from a larger population group in order to find out about that whole group (Burns, 2009). This study used the purposive sampling technique to obtain its population sample. The researcher is permitted to recruit the participants who can provide in-depth and complete information about the phenomenon under investigation (Campbell et al., 2020). According to Neuman (2000), the emphasis of the qualitative research is more on the participants' ability to clarify and extend the understanding of their experiences. The participants, in non-probability sampling technique are selected according to their applicability to the research design because the purpose is to advance a profound understanding than to generalize to a greater population (Neuman, 2000).

The researcher used the purposive type of non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a process of selecting units from a population using a subjective method. Therefore, it does not necessitate a complete survey frame. It is a fast, easy and economical way of attaining data (Neuman, 2000). Thus, the study's sample had ten Grade 10 learners and two EFAL FET teachers. The researcher purposively selected two teacher participants subjectively because they are the only two teachers who teach EFAL, hence one of them is a senior educator at the school. This study used simple random sampling which is a type of probability sampling in which the researcher randomly selected grade 10 learners (Elfil & Negida, 2017). The researcher used number cards in a box to select ten learners in grade 10 A in order to give equal opportunity for all participants to participate in the study. This technique was opted for because it enabled the researcher to recruit the participants who provided in-depth information about the topic investigated (Campell et al., 2020). The study's sample size minimised errors that would have been made had the study used a larger sample. The searcher opted for this population size because it was manageable. Time management was critical during data collection given that teachers and learners were always busy with school work.

3.4.3. Data collection

According to Creswell (2014), data collection refers to collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured interviews, observations, documentary surveys, and visual materials. The methods used to collect data for this study were document analysis and the semi-structured interviews. These are detailed below.

3.4.4. Document analysis

Document analysis refers to the form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). In this data collection method, the learner participants were given a descriptive essay topic, which required them to describe their first day at the Extension K FET School. The use of this method allowed the researcher to make sense of his resources and helped in selecting the appropriate responses. Dalglish, Khalid, and McMahon (2020) defined document analysis as a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyse document evidence to answer specific research questions.

The researcher made the learners write about the topic they were familiar with to reduce the chances of them running out of ideas. The learners' ideas were not central in this study but the language usage. This was because the focus was on how these learners use language in their essays. The researcher used the document analysis technique to look for informal language such as slangs, contractions, and colloquial.

3.4.5 Semi-structured interview

Creswell (2011) defined the semi-structured interview as a data collection method with the pre-set questions. That is, questions were known in advance. The semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to collect data, explore the participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the learners' language usage in academic writing. Wishkoski (2020) said that the use of the semi-structured interview gives the researcher some flexibility in the way he expressed questions for each teacher participant. In addition, it provided the researcher with the opportunity to probe for more information and clarifications where necessary.

The researcher arranged the classroom prior to the interview with the teacher participants to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Teachers were interviewed individually to ensure independent responses. The interviews lasted for about ± 15 minutes per session. The given time was enough for the researcher to gather information from them. The researcher prepared the interview schedule with open-ended questions to guide the proceedings. The semi-structured interviews focused on the teachers' perceptions of the learners' problems on language use in their academic essays and the strategies to be put in place to mitigate that. The researcher took notes during the interviews.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Quinn and Keough (2002) asserted that data analysis is the process of bringing order, sense, and structure to the mass of collected information. The researcher used the thematic data analysis method to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The researcher used the inductive thematic analysis to analyse data. His concern was to understand the participants' lived experiences regarding how they made sense of their experiences in addressing the challenges faced by learners in academic writing. The researcher familiarized himself with data, then assigned preliminary codes to them in order to describe the

content, identified common patterns, reviewed the same data and then began the write up process. This is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) description of the inductive thematic data analysis (Seidel & Urquhart, 2016). The researcher began with an area of study and used the theory to understand the emerged themes. The researcher read the learners' writings and analysed the teachers' answers several times to understand his data.

3.6. QUALITY CRITERIA

Quality criteria in this study was done by following credibility, confirmability, and dependability formalities.

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is the alternative to internal validity where the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (De Vos, 2011). The researcher ensured the study's credibility by matching the research participants' views and the researcher's reconstruction of those views and producing a report that represented them.

3.6.2 Confirmability

Confirmability can be equated to the traditional quantitative concept of objectivity (De Vos, 2011). To ensure the study's confirmability, the researcher used literature related to the study topic. After data collection, the researcher used the member check technique to verify the collected information's authenticity as a true reflection of what actually transpired during the data collection process.

3.6.2 Dependability

Dependability ensures that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated. Dependability is measured by the standard of the research conducted, data analysed, and presented (Ary, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). The researcher ensured that the findings were verified with the data collected to ensure that nothing was missed in the study.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter concentrated on the methodology that was used in this study. An enlightenment of qualitative research as a method for data collection and analysis was

specified. Measures tailed during the data collection were deliberated in this chapter and the information about the sample was discussed. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis, discussion, and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4: DATA FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology, data collection methods, and the research design adopted for this study. This chapter presents and discusses data gathered by using the semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The data collected in this way are also analysed and interpreted.

4.2. LEARNERS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The learners' biological information is a crucial variable in this study, particularly their native language. The idea is to make sure that there is no learner participant whose home language is English. This might compromise the study's objectives given that the assumption is that English is foreign to all learners at the case school.

4.2.1. The learners' ages

The learners' ages were important in this study because they showed the level at which the learners should be in their education.

Table 4.1: Learner participants' ages.

	Age Representation	
Years	Frequency	Percent
17	6	60
18	2	20
19	2	20

4.2.1.1. Age analysis

The majority of the learners (six) were 17 years old, followed by two who were 18 years old, and another two who were 19 years old. In response to this table, there is no age balance among the participants.

4.2.2. The gender representation of participants

The gender difference was also crucial in the study's analysis because it shows the number of the participants according to their gender. It also shows how the dominant gender affected the study's objectives.

Table 4.2: Learner participants' sex.

Gender Representation		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	3	30
Female	7	70
Total	10	100

4.2.2.1. Gender analysis

Table 4.2 shows that a total of ten learner participants took part in this study. The table further shows that the total number of male learners were three while the female participants were seven. In respect to percentages, the study had 30 percent of male participants and 70 of female ones. Looking at these numbers, there was no gender balance between the male and female participants.

4.2.3. The participants' home language

The home language was also an important variable in the study's analysis, particularly the language the majority of the learners use at school, outside the classrooms, and at home because language has a bearing on the study's objectives.

Table 4.3: The participants' home language.

Home Language		
Language	Frequency	Percent
Sepedi	1	10
IsiNdebele	9	90

4.2.3.1. Home Language analysis

According to Table 4.3, there were nine IsiNdebele speakers representing the majority of the participants in the study and one Sepedi speaking participant. Table 4.3 shows that there was no balance on the participants' home language as many participants spoke IsiNdebele and one spoke Sepedi.

4.3. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF LANGUAGE SUBJECT EDUCATORS

The participant teachers' biographical data were important in the study. The data demonstrated how these teachers were relevant to the study. Table 4.4 shows the teachers' qualifications, the subjects they specialised to teach and they currently teach, their gender, and their teaching experience.

Table 4.4: The teacher participants' biographical information.

Educator	Qualification	Subject	Gender	Teaching Experience
E1	Bed	English	M	10
E2	Bed	English	F	2

Key

E1: Educator 1

E2: Educator 2

Bed: Bachelor of Education

The data presented in Table 4.4 shows that two educators were sampled. Of these two, one was a male and the other a female. In this regard, the participants' sex distribution was even. Table 4.4 further shows that both educators are qualified to teach the English subject in the FET phase. In terms of work experience, the male participant had 10 years of teaching experience and his female counterpart had served for two years as a teacher.

4.4. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS (ESSAY)

The document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give his views and meaning around the assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). This researcher embraced this view because the learners were given a topic from which they wrote an essay about. The topic was; “Write a descriptive essay about your first day at the Extension K Secondary School.” From the learners’ essays, the researcher looked for informal language used by individual writers in an academic writing such as colloquial language (slangs, abbreviations, informal words, and contractions).

4.4.1. Learners’ written responses

A. Slangs

A slang is a type of language that consists of words and phrases regarded as informal. Slangs are common in speeches than written work and are typically restricted to a particular group of people. An example of a slang is ‘lit’ instead of enjoyable or exciting.

Letters of the alphabet A – J were used to name the learners’ essays. The following sentences containing grammatically poor language were found in the learners’ essays.

Response D: *It was at morning my dad dropped me at the school gate.*

Response F: *My first day at school was such an awkward.*

Evidence points to the fact that learners have poor command of English when writing. The word ‘dad’ from participant D’s essay also indicate the use of slang when writing. Formerly, Dad means Father. Thus participant D should have written ‘father’ instead of ‘dad’. Participant E wrote the word “awkward”, which is also an example of a slang language. Instead, the learner should have written ‘inconvenient’.

These were the two responses which contained the slang language that hinders the learners’ academic writing proficiency. Slangs impact the learners’ academic performance if they are penalised for their failure to use proper language. De Jager (2009) averred that most learners in South African schools face a language barrier in the classroom. He stipulated that any child who cannot use the language, which he or she is most familiar with (English language) is disadvantaged and unlikely to perform to the best of his/her ability.

B. Contractions

This researcher defines contractions as the shortening of words (short forms). For examples, didn't, wouldn't. The following sentences are examples of the learners' use of contracted words.

Response A: *On Friday I was shy don't my classroom.*

Response G: *I met Ma'am Moloji who teaches accounting.*

Response D: *It was at morning my dad dropped me at the gate.*

Participant A's response contains a contraction, 'don't'. This word is written, 'do not' in full. This is how participant A should have written the word because it is part of formal language writing as expected in academic writing. Participant G wrote, 'Ma'am', indicating the contracted Madam. Participant D wrote 'dad' also, which is a contraction. The word in full is Daddy, also an informal language, slang. The participant was informal to use dad instead of the formal 'father'. On this issue, all the participants used contractions in their essays where academic writing was expected. Doing so demonstrated that the problem is common among the Grade 10 EFAL learners in rural areas. Ellis (2000) pointed out that academic writing requires that learners use full forms rather than contractions.

Contractions in academic language are a punishable offence, which could make learners perform poorly in academic writing. In some texts learners are encouraged to be brief (summary writing) but they must adhere to academic writing rules when writing essays as doing so enhances their grasp of vocabulary. De Jager (2009) acknowledged that most learners in South Africa face language barriers and cannot use language appropriately. Such learners perform poorly at school. In addition, for these learners to be able to use language appropriately they must regularly write using formal language.

C. Informal words

The researcher defines informal words as all types of words that are not formal and hinder academic writing. Such words are; 'plus' instead of 'also'. The following responses contained informal words:

Response I: *My teachers are all nice & kind.*

Response B: *I saw my cusin sister walking inside the class.*

Response F: *Ma'am Mawela came to see if we all in the right class.*

The word '&', an informal word for 'and', was found in participant I's essay. In this regard, the participants should have written the word 'and' in place of '&'. Participant B used 'cusin' in her essay. The participant did not misspell the word but used its social language version, which is informal. The formal word is 'cousin'. 'Ma'am' in participant F's essay was informal. The formal word is Madam. Informal words can be used only in informal context or informal writing or when speaking, and writing to friends and family. Jamal and Nasrum (2018) noted that learners may use informal words when writing emails and letters to friends and family.

D. Abbreviations

The researcher defines abbreviation as the shorter form of a word or phrase such as RSA for the Republic of South Africa. The following sentence was noted in participants F's work; *Sangweni taught us Accounting that we have CRJ and CPJ.* The participant abbreviated two words in this sentence, CRJ for Cash Receipts Journal and CPJ for Cash Payments Journals. The participant should have written the words in full instead of writing their abbreviated versions before writing full words. This is consistent with Vú (2010) who said that the first time one writes a phrase that can be abbreviated, it must be written in full first and then provide the abbreviation parentheses. Thereafter use the abbreviation.

4.5. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The researcher interviewed two English language teachers from the case school. The researcher selected them because they were the only two teachers at school who teach English to Grade 10 classes. The two teachers were asked similar questions from the interview schedule. The teachers' responses to the questions asked are presented and discussed below.

4.5.1. Teachers' interview responses

The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews with two Grade 10 English teachers at the Extension K Secondary School. The questions sought to get answers about the challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as

First Additional Language in academic writing. The two teachers answered the same number of questions. Data were analysed based on the teachers' responses. The teachers' responses are given below.

1. What do you understand about language use or usage of language in essay writing?

This question sought to establish whether teachers understood language use or usage in academic writing. In this regard, what the teachers said in response to the above question follows.

Educator 1 responded thus,

The correct way of writing one's ideas, thoughts, feelings, or experiences, and word choice put together and punctuated sentences.

Educator 2 said,

I understand that punctuations need to be used, contractions are not allowed, and social or informal language must not be used.

The results from the two participants are that they clearly understood what academic writing requires and knew what learners should do in their essay writing. Participant E2 spoken about contractions not being allowed in academic essay writing. This view is in line with Ellis' (2000) observation that academic writing requires that learners use full forms rather than contractions.

2. How often do you teach learners the correct way of language usage in academic writing in your class?

This question sought to understand the time teachers spend teaching language usage in academic writing. That is, was the time enough for teaching non-English speakers the usage of English language in class? This is how the teachers responded to the above question.

Educator 1 answered thus, "Almost in every lesson".

Educator 2 responded thus, "Twice a week".

The participants' answers were that they teach the learners how to use English language in their academic essay writing even though they do not do so in every lesson. The researcher wanted to understand why participant E2 teaches language use twice a week even though she knew that learners had difficulties in understanding academic writing.

Participant E2 responded thus,

I am guided by the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP).

From this response, the researcher noted that the ATP developers are not doing any justice to the learners' quest to master English academic writing by allowing teachers not to put more effort on teaching language use in academic writing. Doing so promotes writing irregularities. Younes and Albalawi (2015); Bahloul (2000) indicated that there are writing irregularities and inconsistencies among high school learners as their writing activities are not done frequently.

3. How many times do you give essay writing activities to your learners and why?

This question aimed at obtaining knowledge about how often learners write essays in class. The following are the participants' responses to this question.

Participants E1 indicated that,

Five times because the ATP suggests that we teach them five types of essays.

Participant E2 claimed that,

Twice in three weeks because there is a huge gap in literature. So, I spend most of the time tackling literature study.

Participant E1 gave learners essay writing tasks five times as guided by the ATP. The ATP says that the essay writing tasks must be five with all types included. The researcher noticed that this educator does everything according to the ATP as provided to him by the DBE, regardless of the challenges learners experience. Participant E2 said that she gives learners essay writing tasks twice in three weeks as she spends most of her time on literature. She claimed that literature study is very demanding. Younes and Albalawi (2015); Bahloul (2000) alluded to the fact that

there are writing irregularities and inconsistencies where writing activities are not done according to plan. This researcher believes that given the two participants' responses to the above question, the writing tasks given to learners are not adequate as far as usage of language teaching is concerned.

4. What do you observe with your learner's usage of language in their academic writing tasks?

Asking this question was meant to bring into attention the challenges learners experience in their academic writing tasks. The idea was to ascertain whether the English EFAL teachers were aware of these difficulties during the assessment controls. The following are the teachers' answers to the above questions.

Participant E1's answer was that,

Misspelled words, wrong usage of tenses, and writing in casual language.

Participant E2 acknowledged thus,

Learners struggle to use formal language. They use contractions a lot and they do not know how to use punctuation marks correctly.

Both participants identified informal language use as one of the language challenges they have observed from their learners' written tasks. Participant E2 further mentioned the employment of contractions as another language challenge observed in her learners' written tasks. Words which are shortened are not academic and they are not wanted in academic writing tasks. The results are consistent with Ellis' (2000) idea that academic writing requires that learners use full forms rather than contractions.

5. What do you do after observing the learners' poor language use in their essays?

By asking this question, the researcher wanted to understand whether learners receive feedbacks from their teachers after they write and submit their tasks for assessment. The two teacher participants responded thus;

Participant E1 answered thus,

I underline the word with a red pen and put a symbol on the word or I underline the word and put the correct one above it.

Participant E2 said the following in response,

I hold one-on-one sessions with learners so that we correct the mistakes they make in their essays.

Participant E1 remarked that he marks the essay and put various symbols where he spots incorrect ways of language use. In addition, he writes a correct word where the wrong one is used to indicate the correct way of writing that word. Participant E2 holds one-on-one sessions with her learners as a way of giving feedback to them. She shows them where they went wrong in their essays. The researcher noted that both these teachers believe in giving their learners feedback. Giving learners feedback is important because learners become aware of the mistakes they commit in their academic writing. Smith (2000) also believes that giving feedback is vital as he said that writing is communication between the writer and the reader and, therefore, feedback is the best way to sample how that communication develops.

6. Can you remember the casual or informal language found in the learners' essays? If yes, please list them.

This question needed the participants to identify and describe the informal language employed by the learners in their academic writings. The teachers' responses were as follows.

Participants E1 answered in this way,

Yes. They make such kinds of errors when writing; coz instead of because, I'd, I'm, don't, can't, ASAP, she's.

Participants E2's answer was,

Yes. Learners use slang language such as 'wanna', 'gonna'. They also use contractions such as 'can't, couldn't, among others.

The study investigated the language casualties mentioned by these two participants. Participant E1 identified contractions and abbreviations as one of the informal language used by the learners in their essay writing tasks. Participants E2 also

mentioned contractions as one of the informal language use by her learners in class essay writing. These are the same mistakes Ellis (2000) warned against. He alluded to the fact that academic writing requires learners to use full forms rather than contractions. The use of contractions seems to be one of the common language challenges faced by teachers who teach Grade 10 EFAL learners.

7. How serious is the problem of non-academic language usage in your class?

This question was meant to determine the seriousness of the usage of non-academic language in academic writing tasks. The participants responded as follows;

Participants E1 asserted that,

It is very serious because time and again, I have to remind them to stop using the non-academic language when writing academic work.

Participant E2 also claimed that,

It is very serious. About 95% of my learners cannot write proper essays using formal language. This result in poor academic performance.

Given the above results, one observed the learners' trend to use non-academic language in academic context or setting is a serious issue in the case school. The problem leads to the learners' poor academic performance. De Jager (2009) said that most learners in South Africa face language barriers and cannot use language appropriately, thereby experience poor academic performance at school.

8. What do you think is the cause of this social language usage instead of academic language in your class?

The question aimed at identifying the possible cause of the usage of social language in academic language settings. The participants answered thus,

Participant E1's answer was short,

The reason could be social media.

Participant E2 reasoned thus,

My learners spend a lot of time on social media and that has a huge impact on their academic language. So, it is a contributing factor.

Both responses are about social media being the central factor in contributing to the learners' employment of informal language in their academic writing. That is, learners with habit of using social media such as WhatsApp in their day-to-day writing, then they might not be able to write appropriately in formal situations. Roelofse (2013) contended that exposure to new literacies found in new technologies undoubtedly impact the way in which the second language learners perceive the world. Furthermore, the amount of contact with these social utilities certainly influences the learners' literacy practices. The social media is found to be the factor that leads learners to failure in as far as their academic performance is concerned.

9. What common informal language do learners employ in their essay writing?

The aim of asking this question was to identify the common language casualties found in the learners' essay writing. In response to this question, one participant provided the following observation.

Participant E2 said,

Slang language as reflected in words such as 'wanna', 'gonna'.

The result shows that slangs are common in the learners' written tasks, particularly essays. The result is in line with what this researcher discovered with the learners' sampled essay writings. Learners employed slang language in their essays. Doing so is not academic and is likely to lead them to perform poorly at school. The learners' writing demonstrates their failure to use acceptable language use in their academic writing. De Jager (2009) illustrated that most learners in South African schools face a language barrier in the classroom. In addition, De Jager stipulated that any child who cannot use the language which he/she is most familiar with (English language) is disadvantaged and unlikely to perform well at school.

10. What teaching strategies do you use in teaching language use in academic writing?

11. Why would you think that these strategies are effective?

These questions sought for knowledge about the strategies teachers employ in class when teaching language use in academic writing. The idea was to determine whether these strategies were effective enough to foster the knowledge of language use among learners in class. The teachers' responses were as follows;

Participant E1 gave the strategies as,

Strengthening out sounds in words for spelling, reading, and editing writing. Encouraging learners to write a first draft and give it to their peers for corrections, then write the final draft.

Participant E2 pointed out that,

Narrative strategy, question and answer strategy, and discussions.

Participant E1 claimed that,

They are effective in the sense that learners are able to realise their errors.

Participant E2 observed that,

Learners become actively involved in the lesson. As the teacher, I then understand where they lack and assist accordingly.

Participant E1 encouraged and used peer assessment as one of his language teaching strategies. This process is when students provide formative or summative feedback to fellow students about their work. In this case, the teacher allows his learners to write drafts first before writing the final report. The draft is then assessed by the learners' peers in class who edit the language and then give feedback before they write the final draft. Participant E1 further stated that his strategy is effective as his learners realise their errors. The researcher also believes that this strategy is very effective because most learners understand better what their peers say compared to what teachers say. Chien, Hwang, and Jong (2020) alluded to the fact that many decades of research into the potential benefits of peer assessment have culminated into the adoption of such strategies by institutions of learning.

Participant E2 spoke about class discussions as one of the teaching strategies she employs in her class when teaching language use in academic writing. She added that this strategy helps to have all learners involved during lessons. Discussions

were also found to be very effective in helping learners improve their academic writing skills. In this case, learners have time to discuss what is right and what is wrong, what to do and what not to do when writing academic work. Discussion allows learners to think critically before making comments or engage themselves in writing. Saleh (2019) said that using discussions stimulate critical thinking.

12. Do you think that language use in academic writing is challenging to learners? Why?

The question sought for the teachers' perceptions regarding their beliefs whether language use in academic writing is challenging to learners or not. Their responses were as follows;

Participant E1 concluded thus,

Yes, because they are used to this social media style of writing.

Participant E2's answer was that,

Yes, because when marking their essays, I still find interjections and contractions. In a nutshell, they use informal language.

Participants E1 and E2 were very clear about the cause of the use of informal language in academic writing by their learners. Participant 1 believed that language use in academic writing is a challenge to his learners as they are used to the social media style of writing. That is, social media plays a big role in the learners' non-use of academic language in an academic project. Due to this issue, learners become slow and inefficient in using the right words to express their ideas, and they develop poor ideation (Mahdiyksa, Mardiana, & Mustofa, 2019).

13. What impact does the employment of informal language usage in academic writing has on the learners' academic performance?

The question sought to help address issues about the impact that the non-usage of academic language has on the learners' academic performance. The two teachers responded to this question as follows;

Participant E1's answer was short and precise; "Learners lose marks."

Participant E2 claimed that,

Informal language usage has negative impact on learners because I end up penalizing them and that results in the decline of their marks, resulting in failure.

The two teachers said that the learners' use of the non-academic language has negative impact on the learners' academic performance. That is, by using such language, learners lose marks due to penalization. This means that if learners use academic language in their essays, they are likely to obtain good marks, and hence improve academically. Abdulkareem (2013) confirmed that the appropriate use of language in academic writing has a fundamental impact on the learners' academic performance or progress.

4.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented qualitative data collected using the semi-structured interviews and that collected by analysing documents. The data were presented, analysed, and interpreted. The results were that learners struggle to adhere to academic language usage in their essays due to varied reasons. Contraction as informal language was one of the common challenges learners experienced at the case school. The next chapter concludes this study. This is done by providing the summary of the study's main findings and its recommendations. The last section concludes this research.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented, discussed, and interpreted data collected from the study's participants. This chapter provides the study's summary, conclusion, and recommendations based on the study's findings. This study investigated the challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the first additional language in academic writing. This study described the challenges that learners face when writing academic essays in class. The study also sought to identify the factors that contribute to the learners' failure to adhere to the academic writing rules concerning language usage. The study's summary is provided in cognisance of the research questions. The conclusion is based on the study's findings. Recommendations based on the major study findings suggest areas for further studies is also presented. This study identified and described the challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the first additional language in academic writing. The study also assessed intervention strategies that could be used to harness the learners' usage of English in academic writing. The study was conducted at Extension K Secondary School in Tweefontein, Mpumalanga.

5.2. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY'S MAIN FINDINGS

The researcher interviewed teachers who teach English First Additional Language at Grade 10 level. Furthermore, document analysis was used where learners were assessed by their written essays. This study was directed by the following research questions:

- What are the challenges experienced by the Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in classroom academic writing?
- What are the intervention strategies that can be used to harness the learners' usage of English as the first additional language in classroom academic writing?

To answer these research questions, the main findings were identified as follows.

5.2.1. Contractions

The study found that learners use contractions regularly in their essays to the point where they do not know the full meaning of the contracted words they used. This finding is from the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews with teachers. The data obtained through the document analysis correlates with what the teachers said about learners who use contractions in their essays. Through analysing the learners' written essays, the researcher found that learners use contractions in their essays as all essays obtained were found to have this issue.

5.2.2. Slangs

This type of language is used for communicating with friends and family. The use of slangs in academic writing negatively impact essays. This is one of the types of language found in the learners' academic essays. The study found that teachers complain about the learners' use of social language in their academic essays. The learners' essay had evidence of slangs, thus corroborating the teachers' claims.

5.2.3. Abbreviations

Before one writes an abbreviated word or acronym, one must first write the whole words in that abbreviated word. This study found that learners use abbreviations before writing their full meaning. In extreme cases, the full meaning is not even provided. One of the issues this study looked at was the use of abbreviations. The teacher participants did not say anything about this problem in their responses. Through document analysis, the researcher identified the use of abbreviations as one of the language challenges learners face in language usage when writing academic essays. On the selected learners' responses, only one of them was found

with this type of language issue. This means that the use of abbreviations is not a serious challenge as initially thought.

The contractions and slangs were identified as the common language challenges in the learners' academic essays. Through interviews, the study found that slangs and contractions were issues teachers grappled with as they taught essay writing in class. The teachers' claims were verified by document analyses, where most of the learners' responses were full of slangs and contractions. When teachers were asked what they do when they identified this challenge, one of them alluded to using the one-on-one session with learners where she corrected their mistakes with them as a means of feedback. The other teacher said that he highlights their mistakes and write the correct word for them. The finding here was that learners get both verbal and written feedback from their teachers. However, this strategy seems to have little impact as the investigated problem persisted.

According to teachers, the cause of the language challenges is social media. Teachers claimed that learners spend too much on WhatsApp platforms writing slangs and other social language related misdemeanours. Through document analysis, the study proved that social media contributes to the learners' poor usage of language in their academic essays. All the selected learners' essays were fraught with social language.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the recommendations made in this study is to improve the learners' English language usage when writing academic essays. The study identified and described the effective teaching methods Grade 10 EFAL teachers could employ to eradicate the problems faced by their learners when they write academic essays. These recommendations are informed by the study's main findings as presented above. These recommendations are about what teachers, learners, parents, and the DBE should do in respect of the study's findings are given below.

5.3.1. Teachers' effective language teaching strategies

The study made the following recommendations regarding the effective language teaching strategies teachers could employ when teaching English language to Grade 10 EFAL learners. The assumption is that these would aid the learners' academic improvement in this area of study.

- **The basics of language**

Teachers need to go back to basics when teaching English. The use of good English books to solidify the learners' foundation here is recommended. Learners must be exposed to classic books. Those good old books have proper English and if learners are used to reading such books, their English would improve for the better.

- **Role play**

Role play is an important strategy teachers can employ to develop their learners' writing skills. The study recommends that teachers use this strategy to give learners playing time while learning. Learners enjoy while they mix learning play with teaching and learning processes.

- **Co-operative learning**

The sole purpose of co-operative learning is to provide learners with opportunities to learn from one another. Learners must be exposed to opportunities to teach each other because they might understand one another better than teachers.

- **Story writing**

This is an interesting strategy that encourages learners to participate, develop, and improve their writing skills. Allow learners to narrate stories in the form of writing as doing so enhances their writing skills.

- **Intertextuality**

Expose learners to reading opportunities because they cannot write. Reading and writing complement each other. Take a book from the library, give it to them to read and later, retrieve it and allow them to write whatever they read from it. This would also improve their writing skills and the usage of language in academic writing.

- **Practicing writing**

Allow learners to write more in class, even if they write academic paragraphs, it is fine. Expose them to writing opportunities in most periods as doing so makes them practice more the use of academic language in academic contexts. Allow them to write about interesting essay topics. Doing so allows learners to demonstrate their writing abilities to their full potential.

5.3.2. Learners' strategies on improving their language usage in academic writing

- Social media was found be a serious problem to the learners' failure to master academic writing in class. When learners develop the habit of using social media such as Whatsapp language in their day-to-day writing, they might not be able to write appropriate academic language.
- We cannot stop learners from using social media platforms as it is not easy to do so. Therefore, the study recommends that learners should refrain from using contractions and slangs on their social media platforms and start applying academic language thereto. Furthermore, learners would not experience serious challenges when they are confronted with an academic writing task. Learners must also task themselves to write regularly to enhance their writing skills and their language usage in academic writing tasks.

5.3.3. Recommendations to parents

- The study recommends that learners should use academic language when they engage with whoever in everyday context. Here, the study recommends that parents should do adult education so that they become literate. Doing so would enable them to speak English with their children at home, and hence encourage them to do a lot of academic writing both at home and school.
- Parents should be involved in their children's studies and go through their formative books to help them in areas they lack behind, particularly in EFAL.
- Parents who can afford to hire tutors should consider doing so. English language experts could help their children away from school to practice the perfect usage of language in academic writing.

5.3.4. Recommendations to the DBE

- The department should build libraries in schools so that teachers and learners can access various teaching and learning materials that would assist learners with EFAL at school.
- The ATP developers should develop it such that it allows writing to be done five times a week in class.
- Introducing the EFAL writing competitions could also go a long way in boosting the learners' abilities to write perfect academic language in class.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study involved two language teachers and ten Grade 10 learners from a township school in Tweefontein. The study's findings might not be generalised to other secondary schools in the Nkangala District and the Mpumalanga Province. Future studies should expand the number of participants and include more schools in the district to produce a detailed report about the challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing. Thereafter comparisons could be made. The upcoming researchers might use the quantitative approach or other methodology than the ones used herein to gain in-depth knowledge regarding the challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing.

5.5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as the First Additional Language in academic writing. The study found that social media platforms contribute to the learners' poor language usage in their academic essay writing. The study also found various language issues employed by the learners in their academic essay writing. These were contractions, slangs, and abbreviations. Two of these issues fall under social language. They are meant for socializing. Through interviews with the teachers, one of them said that they do penalize learners for such language issues when they do come across them

in their writings. Using social language contributes to the learners' poor academic performance.

Through thorough investigations, the study revealed that learners are taught, assessed, and given feedback but nothing changes in terms of their academic improvement. The study recommended and discussed several strategies which teachers can employ to eradicate the situation in their classes. The strategies were as follows; the basics of language, role play, co-operative learning, story writing, spellings and pronunciation, intertextuality, and practicing writing. The purpose of these strategies is to ensure the learners' improvement in their usage of language in academic writing of essays. The study also suggested that learners should avoid employing social language when texting and start texting using academic language to whoever they chat with at any given time.

In conclusion, the study found contractions as common language issues, which teachers are confronted with in class. To control the issue, the researcher outlined various strategies that could deal with this type of problem. This study showed that the problem under investigation affects the learners' academic performance as learners are punished for such errors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



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TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 26 September 2022

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/521/2022: UG

PROJECT:

Title: Investigation of Language Use in Academic Writing Of Grade 10 Learners in an English First Additional Language (EFAL) Classroom.
Researcher: PM Petja
Supervisor: Dr HA Motlhaka
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Education
Degree: Master of Education (Language Education)

PROF D MAPOSA
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Finding solutions for Africa

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

P O BOX 7642

LEBOWAKGOMO

0737

17 January 2021

The Principal
Extension K FET
P O BOX 432
KWAMHLANGA
1022

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT EXTENSION K FET

Dear Sir/Madam

I Petja Phomolo Matsobane, student no: 201502186, enrolled as a Masters student at University of Limpopo, hereby request a permission to conduct a research at Extension K FET. The study investigates challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as a First Additional Language in academic writing classroom.

For further information, please contact me at 079 729 9454 or email: phomolopetja@gmail.com.

Hoping and anticipating your positive response.

Yours sincerely

Petja Phomolo Matsobane

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P O BOX 7642
LEBOWAKGOMO
0737
17 January 2021

The District Director
Nkangala District Office
Building 5, Government Complex
Private Bag X4021
KwaMhlanga
1022

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT EXTENSION K FET

Dear Sir/ Madam

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Hoping and anticipating your positive response.

Yours sincerely

Petja Phomolo Matsobane

APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION (ENGLISH TEACHER)

P O BOX 7642

Lebowakgomo

0737

17 January 2021

Extension K FET

P O BOX 432

KWAMHLANGA

1022

A REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION (ENGLISH TEACHER)

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Petja Phomolo Matsobane, Master student at University of Limpopo in the Faculty of Humanities, School of Education, hereby humbly request for your participation in the study that will take place at Extension K FET. The study investigates challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as a First Additional Language in academic writing classroom.

As the English teacher at the above mentioned school, the researcher finds you suitable for this study as your view on the problem that is being investigated will be vital to the study. Therefore, I will be happy if you accept this request.

I Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours Sincerely

Petja Phomolo Matsobane

APPENDIX E: PARENTS' CONSENT FORM FOR UNDERAGE LEARNERS

P O BOX 7642
Lebowakgomo
0737
17 January 2021

Extension K FET
P O BOX 432
KWAMHLANGA
1022

PARENTS' CONSENT FORM FOR UNDERAGE LEARNERS

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Petja Phomolo Matsobane, Master student at the University of Limpopo in the faculty of humanities, school of education, hereby ask your child to take part in the research study because they are relevant for the study. The study investigates challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as a First Additional Language in academic writing classroom. For this research, the researcher will keep all the respondents' answers private. This study might help your child in building up their confidence in language use in academic writing.

- The learner does not have to be in this study if he or she does not want to.
- The learner may discontinue being in the study at any time.

- The learner is allowed to refuse to take part in the study even if their parents/guardians have agreed.
- You are free to ask the researcher questions related to the study, now or later.

Feel free to contact me on this number 079 729 9454.

Sign this form only if you:

- have understood what your child will be doing for this study,
- Have had all your queries answered.

Name of parent/guardian : _____

Signature : _____

Name of the researcher who explains the study: _____

Signature : _____

APPENDIX F: TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Title of the study: Investigation of challenges experienced by Grade 10 Learners in the usage of English as First Additional Language (EFAL) in academic Classroom

Researcher : Petja P.M
Student number : 201502186
Discipline : Masters of Education in Language Education
Email address : phomolopetja@gmail.com

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to investigate challenges experienced by Grade 10 learners in the usage of English as a First Additional Language in academic writing classroom.

Procedures: The researcher will use the tape recorder; he will then ask you questions based on your experience of teaching. You will then give answers based on what you know.

Duration and location: The procedure will take appropriately 30 minutes. The research will take place in the classroom.

Participant's requirements: The participant will only be required to answer to the set questions and give an explanation of what they know based on the asked questions.

Risks: There will not be any harm and risks other than the risks that are there in the everyday life. You may feel tired during the interview, and should that happen you may take self-paced breaks.

Benefits: The information collected may help you as a teacher in knowing the levels at which your learners are performing, which can help in identifying the gaps that your learners have in learning how to read. This will help you to know how to vary your teaching methods.

Compensation and costs: There will not be any cost for participating in this study. Participation in the study is voluntary.

Confidentiality: By taking part in this study, you agree that you understand that you may be required to disclose your consent form, and the tape record, if it is required by the law, subpoena or court order. The records of the interview will only be in the hands of the researcher and will only be disclosed to other researchers, by signing to participate in the study and agreeing that the information gathered in the study may

be disclosed or used by the University of Limpopo for educational purposes. But your name, address, contact numbers and other personal identifiers will remain protected.

Rights: You have the right to stop with the interview and will not face any penalty, as participation in the study is completely voluntary. The interviewer has the right to remove you from the participating in the study for whatever reasons, should that happen you will not have to face any consequence.

Right to ask questions and contact information

You have the right to ask questions about the procedures and any other query you might have based on the study. You may ask the question now or later on the study. Feel free to contact the researcher by mail.

Voluntary consent

By signing this form, it means you have understood and agreed to participate in the study.

Participant's signature

Date

I confirm that I have explained the procedure to the participant, the possible benefits and the risks that may be associated with the study, and that I will answer to their questions during the process of the study and in future as they arise.

Researcher's signature

Date


APPENDIX G: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What do you understand about language use or usage of language in essay writing?
2. How often do you teach learners the correct way of language usage in academic writing in your classroom?
3. How many times do you give essay writing activities to your learners and why?
4. Why would you say that these activities are adequate and relevant in enhancing learners' usage of language when they write essays?
5. What do you observe with your learners' usage of language in their academic writing?
6. What do you do after observing learners' incorrect way of language use in their essays?
7. Can you remember casual or informal language found in the learners' essays? If yes; please list them.
8. How serious is the problem of non-academic language usage in your classroom?
9. What do you think is the cause of this social language usage instead of academic language in your classroom?
10. What common informal language do learners employ in their essay writing?
11. What teaching strategies do you use in teaching language use in academic writing?
12. Why would you think that these strategies are effective?
13. Do you think that language use in academic writing is challenging learners? Why?
14. What impact does the employment of informal language usage in academic writing has on learners' academic performance?

APPENDIX H: LEARNERS' ESSAY QUESTION

WRITE a **DESCRIPTIVE** essay of about **ONE** page where you **DESCRIBE** your first day at Extension K FET.

APPENDIX I: EDITORIAL LETTER



CROCODILE LANGUAGE EDITING AND PROOF READING

MISTAKES AFFECT THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK. WE CORRECT THEM TO ENHANCE IT, ACADEMICALLY SO.

28 November, 2022.

To whom it may concern,

This is to confirm that I did proofread and edit Mr. PHOMOLO MATSOBANE PETJA's Master's dissertation whose title reads; ***INVESTIGATION OF CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN THE USAGE OF ENGLISH AS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN CLASSROOM ACADEMIC WRITING.***

His dissertation read fairly well. Errors attended to included but were not limited to concordance, genitives, repetitions, determiners, colloquialism, long and word sentences as well as discourse markers. After attending to these errors, Mr. Petja's mini-dissertation now reads perfectly well. **It however remains his sole responsibility to effect the changes outlined therein.**

Should you require any clarification, my contact details follow below:
Cell: 0784803023 or 0607589535

Email: 68ngwenya@gmail.com
Or: ngwenyachris@webmail.co.za

Sincerely,

Ngwenya Christopher (PhD).