

**An exploration of challenges experienced by English First Additional  
Language learners in essay writing in a selected high school in  
Sekgosese West Circuit.**

by

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## DECLARATION

I **Nchabeleng Matsee Raymond** declare that this is my own work and was never submitted at any institution. This research project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Language. The dissertation was submitted in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Limpopo.

I declare that this work is my own and that I have correctly acknowledged the work of other scholars. I also confirm that this work is in accordance with the University of Limpopo good academic conduct and approved by the Ethics Committee.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my family, the Nchabeleng fraternity and all people who believed in the completion of this study. This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at the time.

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is well known that essay writing is one of the lengthy assessment activities in the teaching and learning of English First Additional Language (FAL). This study focused on exploring the challenges faced by learners in English essay writing at Sekgosese West Circuit. The motive behind this research emanates from noticeable poor writing of English essays and related longer transactional writing by learners. This was accompanied by a rapid complain arising from teachers about the same writing incapacities which they find themselves confronted with daily. In view of this, the researcher saw it fit and academically worthy and investigated the causal causes of this challenge with a view to help the stakeholders in education in addressing this challenge going onward.

The data for this study was collected from English FAL teachers and learners. The research is projected within phenomenological design under the interpretive paradigm. In view of this, the study was specifically qualitative where principal devices used to collect data were: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis.

The findings of the study reveal that learners are experiencing challenges in spelling, diction, punctuation, paragraphing, syntax, lack of topical understanding, creativity, and coherence. When looking at the teachers, there is a limited time teach writing, they teach other skills more (literature) than writing because of personal preference. Teachers do not teach writing and there is no feedback given to learners upon completion of writing assessments. Some of these challenges are materializing because the learners do not engage in writing for leisure and teachers are not employing effective methods.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACE</b>	Advanced Certificate in Education
<b>BAED</b>	Bachelors of Arts in Education
<b>B.Ed.</b>	Bachelor in Education
<b>B.Ed. Hons</b>	Bachelor in Education (Honours)
<b>CAPS</b>	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>EFAL</b>	English First Additional Language
<b>FAL</b>	First Additional Language
<b>HC</b>	Higher Certificate
<b>HL</b>	Home Language
<b>LoTL</b>	Language of Teaching and Learning
<b>SCT</b>	Social Constructivist Theory
<b>SLT</b>	Social Learning Theory
<b>SL</b>	Second Language

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## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Language is a necessity in all aspects of human life. It is an important tool for communication and socialisation. In a social group people's ability to function effectively in the various roles depends basically on their language skills. The most fundamental skills in language are; speaking, listening, writing and reading. Thus, a language user's proficiency level is determined by his/her level of competence in these skills. The level of proficiency in a particular language can be impinged if one has challenges with any of the four language skills (Hauwen-Mo, 2012). The primary focus of this study is to investigate essay writing coherence errors in English FAL classrooms in a secondary school.

This study has been inspired by my introspective data while teaching English to second language learners. As a novice teacher, I perceived that even experienced colleagues also identified essay writing challenges in their respective classrooms. Learners are unable to write coherent essays and are not even conscious of their incapacity. Therefore, this impelled this research which aims to investigate these glitches meticulously. The study was inspired by evident poor written English texts and longer transactional writing by learners, and as well as concerns from teachers regarding this conundrum of coherence errors, which they find themselves confronted with regularly in their prospective classes.

It is essential to lay a foundation on which writing is commonly defined to enhance a clear understanding of the concept. According to Ahmed (2010), writing refers to a reflective activity which inevitably requires enough time to think about and organise around the content of a theme. It is also meant to bring forth analysis and classification of any contextual knowledge. This, for instance, requires the writers to use a suitable language to structure these ideas.

The above definition of writing implies that obvious that coherence is inevitably an essential tool which is necessary to master if writing is to be any meaningful. Ahmed

(2010) makes mention of organising ideas of a topic to formulate meaning (this statement then touches on the issue of coherence). Hinkel (2004: p.4) reiterates this point when he defines writing as an “organization of discourse with all elements present and fitting together logically”. This study adopts Hinkel’s (2004) perspective on coherence when he asserts that it encapsulates meaning configurations of the two main different kinds: register and cohesion. Coherence in written text is not a simple concept, it is achieved when sentences and ideas are connected and flow together smoothly (Fowler, Aaron & Okoomian, 2007).

It is evident that Learners’ writing challenges have been experienced even in the past decades where scholars have been investigating the problems. Studies conducted by researchers like Byrne (1988) and Hedge (1988) in the past are evidence that this problem is not new. They believed that the common writing problems learners face are mechanical problems, sentence structure problems, grammatical problems and problems of diction, and these are the linguistic problems that hinder schoolchildren’s sufficient writing in English.

According to Leki (2001), there are two challenges American teachers face in their sessions, which are not surprising because the education system evolves with time. To begin with, the class sizes and the amount of time to teach essay writing is a serious challenge since writing requires a manageable class of less than 50 learners. In many cases, the challenge arises when it is time to give learners feedback on their writing activities. Writing correcting grammar drills may be a difficult activity for many students and also consumes time which consequently makes giving feedback almost impossible. This is also a setback in the current context where disadvantaged schools have bigger numbers in the classrooms.

Research by Ahmed (2010) shows that writing is not one of the most favorable English skills to teach, and therefore it leads to students writing incoherent essays. This is because coherence is subjective, and it may vary from reader to reader, unlike fixed grammatical rules (Hoey, 2000). This will mean that learners might assume to be writing a correct text, but conversely the teacher thinks the opposite.

Belkhir and Benyelles (2017) and Angeles (2009) maintain that there are cascading complaints from the teachers about the regular or quality of written essays by the learners particularly those in the senior grade. This is because the students' written essays fail to communicate the intended meaning since there's no coherence and logic in their essays. Research shows that this coherence problem is caused by learners' lack of interest in writing activities and lessons generally because they find writing lessons boring.

According to Angeles (2009), looking at one case in Macedonia, the issues of writing and the lack of coherent tasks emanates from learners' comfort in listening to the teachers and photocopying notes. Since learners do not prefer writing simple things such as notes in the classroom, the mastering of writing skills turns to laps. Coherence is therefore difficult to achieve when looking at a perspective where learners and teachers prefers objective examination questions over long essay questions. The current research is therefore seeking to investigate the prevalence of the coherence errors in the mentioned context.

Al Murshidi (2014) indicates that low language proficiency obstructs academic writing in Australia. In view of this, Abdulkareem (2013) asserts that the writing challenges are at the area of grammar, choice of vocabulary, the use of irregular verbs, punctuation, and spelling, coupled with the interference of the first language. This accounts for lack of coherence in learners' written work.

Learners' (especially second language speakers) lack of exposure to the English language is another challenge that educators face which contributes to them experiencing challenges in writing. Learners are only exposed to English at school for that contact session with the teacher. English is not taught across the curriculum by other subjects' teachers even though all assessments are carried in it. Consequently the teaching of English remains the daunting duty of the English language teacher. The studies conducted by De Klerk (2000) and Banda (2004) maintain that, black children in community schools are often not adequately prepared in primary school for education in English at secondary. Challenges of teaching writing to students with limited exposure to English means that the transition from primary to secondary in terms of English

curriculum itself is another contributing factor. The teaching of English writing as a subject in many Black schools is still a matter of great concern in post-apartheid South Africa.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Learners are expected to be able to present ideas in writing and show transitions in their essays when writing, and this is a pillar theme that writing as a skill should cover in the classrooms (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011). This implies that learners and teachers must work together on improving the skill of writing to ensure that learners excel and communicate with the readers of their discourse. It is however unfortunate that this is not transpiring as planned, hence, the existing gap and a challenges still evident in learners' writing. The problem in this study is that there is an identified gap where learners are not able to write comprehensive and logical essays in their EFAL language classroom.

Cheng (2002) reveals that learners experience essay writing errors such as using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing. In the context of this research, the study seeks to examine the problem that learners claim to have "ideas" but in fact, they lack either the necessary linguistic skills or the pragmatic understanding of how to express themselves in their essay writing. Since essay should communicate with the readers: coherence is vital, and it is a logical arrangement of ideas to make the reader understands the meaning and value of written text; this is an element learner cannot achieve in their essays (Murray & Hughs, 2008).

Essay writing is considered tedious and boring (Ahmed, 2010). This then leads to students and teachers assuming that it is an abstract, obscure, and a controversial concept that is not easy to teach and learn. In their writing students often put more effort on the word and sentence levels in their essays and tend to forget the logic of the whole discourse, which is, textual coherence. This means that students feel that the only tool they need to write English essays is the grammar and syntax rules, but they forget the whole essay as one thing thus that is the concern of the current research.

This study seeks to investigate the above-mentioned challenge hopefully with the intention that it would pledge strategies that will improve essay writing. This is because a direct focus on teaching coherence and not only grammar rules will shift pupils' attention from syntax to discourse features such as textual structuring and unity, organisation and the knowledge of the reader which are crucial to creating meaning in texts. Indeed, helping students improve their essay writing is a significant aspect of second language writing instruction.

### **3. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study has a purpose to explore the challenges experienced by learners in writing a logical essay in English FAL. Thus, with this purpose, the study hopes to find the students' challenges in the use of coherence devices with the intention to suggest possible solutions that will help them to overcome the challenges and master a solid ground of essay writing. This purpose is hoped to be achieved and explored in with the usage of the following questions.

### **4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **4.1 Main Research Question**

What are the writing challenges that learners encounter when writing English FAL essays?

#### **4.2 Sub-Questions**

The following questions complement the main question of the research to ensure that the purpose of the study is realized. These sub-questions will also validate the relevance of data collection and analysis so that the study is characterized by valid results which are aligned with the purpose they serve.

- i. What are learners' difficulties in writing essays?
- ii. What are the causes of the coherence errors committed in learners' essay writing?
- iii. Which teaching strategies are used in teaching essay writing?
- iv. How can challenges of teaching and learning writing be overcome?

## **5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to knowledge on students' use of coherence devices in their essays and provide research data that will serve as a reference point for future researchers. The knowledge of learners' use of coherence devices will enable the researcher, as a teacher of English, to focus more on the types of coherence devices that students have problems with.

The researcher intends to share his findings with other teachers of English at the senior high school level in a grade 12 classroom. This will considerably enhance their writing lessons. Furthermore, the study will raise an awareness for students to improve on their writings upon given feedback from this study as the DBE requires the researcher to do so. Ultimately, it is believed that if the writing skills of senior high school students improve, writing problems in our post-secondary institutions will be minimal and this will lead to a general improvement in the standard of writing in South African education.

## **6. Summary**

This chapter addressed the motivation and the background of the study. The chapter shows that there are challenges that learners face in writing essays in their classrooms and this sparked the researcher's interest to conduct this study. It is hoped that this study will achieve its purpose and draw down productive conclusions and recommendations. The next chapter discusses the literature relating to the problem of the study.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is of a strong view that writing requires strong skills and conventions such as grammatical rules and writing readiness in order for the learners to become proficient and effective writers (Hyland, 2008). The discussion in this chapter is guided by the research questions which are derived into themes for analyzing the data. According to Hyland (2002), writing refers to an organized and generative set of ideas in one text. It is an activity where a writer explores an idea in order to make a particular written product; and this is an essay in this context.

Writing is one of the complex skills to achieve and this is a huge conundrum. This is because in making meaning everyday learners spend more time in talking and conversing than writing. This implies that writing is done in limited amounts in the learning institutions investigated in this study. According to Maclean (2012: p.37), “writing well is difficult, even people who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page. This difficulty includes even people who generally enjoy writing, who also have days when they would rather do anything else. Therefore for people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, writing a discourse can be stressful or even intimidating”. According to the study by Nofal (2010) and Hauwen-Mo (2012), it is genuinely hard for students to express themselves sufficiently in their writing. This is because even the most distinct characteristics of an acceptable paragraph are virtually absent in the writing of most pupils. These elements, amongst others, include consistency, unity, order, and coherence are lacking at maximum. This means that learners fail to align the direction of their thoughts.

Brown (2001) and Alavi (2011) view writing as a communicating tool which could be best seen as a product and process, a process being the set beginning and stages of writing, and again being the final product like an essay. The most important thing in writing is that it should then be able to perform a particular standard of prescribed English, implement grammar accuracy, and be organized in agreement with what the audience will consider being conventional (Brown, 2001).

On the other hand, looking at the essay, Meyers (2005) asserts that an essay is an organized discussion towards a particular subject in a series of paragraphs that develops one's critical ideas. This is to say that an essay falls and complies with standardized English rhetorical styles which students should not ignore or assume to be correct. According to Hedge (2005: p.11), essay writing is not only about putting ideas into standardized words, sentences and paragraphs which will be compressed to make one solid document. Therefore, learners must have a sense of context. The sense of context introduces the identification of audience and purpose which will influence the writer with his/her choice of words, style and content. In writing, this will depict that learners should put in their creativity with the consciousness that the discourse they write is not only meant for them to use, but is a communicating tool to the audience (teachers and other learners) to understand their realities.

In this case when the issues of context are dealt with in an essay, then the ability to differentiate which type of the essay is appropriate follows. The types include; argumentative, narrative, descriptive or informative essay. Langan (2011) maintains that all types of essays should not be mistaken to differ in structure, before we could declare a text as an essay, it should, therefore, have three parts; introduction, body and conclusion.

## **2.2 Coherence and Cohesion**

According to Mensah (2014), coherence is when the sentences are presented sequentially that there will be a smooth flow of information from one sentence to another. This view is shared by Mali (2014) who observed that in a written work; coherence is achieved when the sentences in a paragraph relate to one another and when the paragraphs in a passage are presented in a reasonable sequence. This will, therefore, include the arrangements of those sentences into paragraphs, and then organization, unity, meaning, and structure of the essay to display the whole of a written coherent work.

Coherence is based on a relationship between the reader's anticipations and the intended meaning the writer is communicating. Poudel (2018) and Tanskanen (2006)

Coherence is the result of the understanding of the meaning of the text, and it depends on the relativity between the audience and the text. It is therefore, the coherence of a text can be perceived only if the receiver's background knowledge is sufficient enough to interpret the linkage of messages in the discourse. The receiver in this context refers to the teacher who is bound to assess and evaluate the students' work; he/she uses his or her expert awareness of the world to interpret a text, expecting that his or her knowledge will correspond to the organization and argument of a text. Tshotsho (2006) concludes by saying that the major problem with the not-so-competent students' writing is the lack of cohesion resulting from poor referencing and incorrect use of conjunctions, among others.

In his study, Lee (2004) found that low English proficiency pupils find it hard to develop coherent writing due to paying attention to language matters rather than making meaning. This sentiment introduces an element where the learners emphasized coherence than the aspect of cohesion. It is solely important for learners and teachers to note that cohesion is a feature of coherence and not vice versa, therefore a coherent text must at least achieve cohesion. The two concepts in an English classroom can be taught separately but they cannot be separated in developing a text. In terms of approaches in teaching, coherence will link much with the process approach and cohesion with the product approach.

According to Aytas (2008), since the two concepts cannot be separated in developing a text, they are the two most important criteria in evaluating the text to find its text-based structure and semantic integrity. The two concepts make a written work to be of a great standard. Similarly, they make an essay to be accepted as a standard written text. He further states that texts are made up of structures comprising of words, suffixes and prefixes and sentences. Therefore, showing the connection between these words, phrases, prefixes, and suffixes is very important in achieving a sound interpretation of the text. This ability to connect the aspects is called cohesion (Karadewniz, 2017: p.94).

Ahmed (2010), Aytas (2008) and Mali (2014) share the view that coherence is the link that contains all kinds of grammatical and semantic relationships between the paragraphs, words and sentences that form the entire text. In view of this, Toklu (2003)

maintains that cohesion is there in defining the links between sentences while on the other hand coherence indicates the semantic and logic between those sentences. This would mean that cohesion brings forth aspects of the texts that are going to declare the text coherent. These concepts may sound difficult for a learner to display accurately but that is not the case, the intervention of a teacher if applied well with good strategies then achieving coherence and cohesion is a walk in the park.

### **2.3 Educational policy (CAPS) on teaching writing**

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2011: p.8), in the CAPS document, “Language is an instrument for thought and communication. It is also a cultural and aesthetic means commonly shared among people to make better sense of the world they live in. Learning to use language effectively enables learners to acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others, and to manage their world. These ideologies, identities, and feelings are best expressed through the four critical skills that the curriculum offers. Writing is coupled along with presenting, this entails that learners are expected to plan, draft, revise, proof-read and present a standardized written document.

The policy appeal to the teachers to ensure that learners are writing challenging texts gradually. Along with these tasks, it is upon the teacher to give learners regular and timely feedback on their writing to allow learners to spot areas that need improvement. The most important role of the teacher is to give high-quality feedback so that there will be progress in the classrooms.

#### **2.3.1 Teaching approaches for writing**

The DBE in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document (2011: p.16) makes mention of teaching approaches. Teachers are expected to use these approaches by embracing them in their teaching of writing. The text text-based approach and the communicative approach are approaches that are concerned with the continuous use and production of texts in a language classroom. The text-based approach involves mainly producing diverse kinds of texts for particular purposes and

audiences. Learners should have solid skills in producing text with different purposes, background and context so that their written texts can communicate with different audiences. The approach teaches learners two critical skills; to evaluate and produce texts.

The communicative approach compels learners and the teachers negotiate and bring up the exposure to opportunities to practice or produce the language through writing, speaking, listening and presenting. The teaching of writing in the communicative approach does not focus on the product only but also focuses on the purpose and process of writing. Teachers focus on teaching learners how to generate ideas as well as how to think about the purpose and the audience. Thereafter, then the writing commences with making drafts, editing their work, and to present a written product that communicates their thoughts effectively and comprehensible.

### **2.3.2 Time allocation.**

The policy emphasizes the integration of the four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing in the teaching of English.. The skills are prescribed in pairs, listening and speaking, reading and viewing and writing with presenting. Since it is not possible to teach these skills in random or in one classroom session. The policy allocated 4.5 hours per week to deliver the language from the 40 weeks academic year. Teachers and learners should spend this time efficiently to benefit their curriculum deliverance and coverage without loopholes.

The following is the time allocation as per skill coverage in every two weeks.

**Table 1: Time allocation table**

Skills	Time Allocation per Two-week Cycle (Hours)	%
Listening & Speaking	1	10
Reading & Viewing: Comprehension & Literature	4	45
Writing & Presenting	3	35
<b>Language structures and conventions</b> (this is also integrated into the 4 skills)	1	10

*Source: DBE (2011: p.17) Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), time allocation*

In Grade 12, 30 weeks for normal teaching/learning are prescribed along with ten weeks for examinations. This implies that classroom conduct in grade 12 is at minimal as compared to grade 10-11 since they have 36 weeks for normal classroom conduct. Looking at the table, writing and presenting is allocated 3 hours in a two-week cycle, meaning that in a week writing lesson approximate 1.5 hours. This time allocation leaves it to the schools to designate their timetabling with a sharp eye.

### **2.3.3 Assessment plan**

Assessment in a language classroom should be informal an informal. Teachers must practice giving learners regular feedback and it is important to note that this feedback is part of the assessment process. Assessment in writing should integrate events and topics about the things that happen in real life. Learners must not be exposed to writing about vague things (DBE, 2010: p.78). Informal assessment or daily assessment is best described as a daily monitoring tool to gauge learners' progress and collect information that will best help them progress. This idea is supported by Tatkovic (2005) who argues that learners should engage in writing activities every day during class time in order to learn how to use written language effectively and expressively. The

researcher agrees with this because it is a genuine cognitive practice that when one finds themselves practicing an aspect then gradually they master it. The informal assessment ensures that learners find themselves engaged in activities daily and they can measure their progress.

Formal assessment as described in the CAPS document involves all the tasks that are formally moderated, marked and used for the progression and the certification of the learners. This assessment type results in learners having year marks and final examination marks from one grade to another. It is the final step of the assessment, this implies that learners are learning and practicing daily then later on the judgment on knowledge consumption occurs through a formal assessment. Formal assessments include writing tasks, oral presentations, examinations, writing tasks, performances and oral presentations (DBE, 2011: p.78)

The following table displays a program of formal assessment in grade 12

**Table 2: Program of assessment**

Formal Assessment		
During the Year	End-of-Year Examination	
25%	75%	
School Based Assessment (SBA)-	End-of-Year Examination Papers	
25%	62,5%	12,5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 test</li> <li>• 7 tasks</li> <li>• 2 examinations (mid-year &amp; trial)</li> </ul>	<b>Written examinations</b> Paper 1 (2 hours) – Language in context Paper 2 (2 hours) – Literature Paper 3 (2½ hours) – Writing	<b>Oral Assessment Tasks: Paper 4</b> Listening Prepared speech Prepared reading aloud / unprepared speech / informal speaking in group The oral tasks undertaken during the course of the year constitute the end-of-year external assessment.

Source: DBE (2011: p.78) Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), time allocation

## **2.4 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN WRITING**

### **2.4.1 Language exposure**

According to Tatkovic (2005), as cited in Lumadi (2016), further stresses that it is generally accepted that writing is more difficult than listening, speaking or reading. Producing meaning through writing requires more effort than recognizing meaning through listening or reading. What can be said aloud cannot be expressed as easily or quickly in writing. Besides, deciding what to say learners must follow the conversions of spelling and pronunciation that will make the message understandable to others. Usually, students develop writing abilities after oral language abilities are well established.

Tatkovic (2005) and Ariyanti (2016) maintains that writing errors are derived from the difference in cultural backgrounds between the students' home language and rules of the second language. Ellis (1990) support this idea, in that the correct form of producing an acceptable form of writing is measured by the native speaker's description of what constitutes 'correctness.' Learners sometimes make errors by using their knowledge in their home language and transfer it to second language learning, which is English in the case with the participants of this study.

According to Ayodele (2016), the teaching of English writing can be a very daunting activity. In the Anambra State of Nigeria for instance, where the general means of communication is Igbo language, one discovers that the local language is a hindrance to the easy teaching of the English language. It is a very serious challenge for teachers to invest in students to unlearn their wrong writing habits that are ruled by their home language.

One may argue that learners obviously speak their home language when they are at home, and this introduces language learning difficulty as they only meet EFAL in the classroom. Learners are expected to transfer the literacies they have acquired in their Home Language (HL) to EFAL, although this remains a challenge in schools in rural areas (Department of Education (DoE), 2002). Learners do not use the EFAL in terms of reading and writing regularly, and that is why they cannot read fluently and express



themselves in writing. This would then mean that if children cannot relate new knowledge to their existing knowledge, such learning will be vain to them. In view of this, if learners' literacy skills start from home, it will be easier for them to adapt to writing in schools.

In ascertaining some of the aspects of essay writing learners cannot establish, Cheng (2002) reveals that learners experience essay writing errors in using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing. As mentioned before, many learners claim to have "ideas" but in actual fact, they lack neither the necessary linguistic skills nor the pragmatic understanding to express them in their essay writing. Thus this will be one of the secondary focuses of this study when analyzing students' text.

#### **2.4.2 Common writing problems**

Studies conducted by researchers like Byrne (1988) and Hedge (1988) in the past are evident that this problem is not new. They believed that the common writing problems learners face are mechanical problems, sentence structure problems, grammatical problems and problems of diction and these are the linguistic problems that hinder learners' writing in English.

##### **2.4.2.1 Topical problems**

According to Salem (2007), the first problem in writing essays is that students find themselves not understanding the topics they have to write based on and this alone resulted in not knowing where to start, how to develop ideas and draw a conclusion. The researcher would like to think that every teacher who teaches English writing might have also experienced this while going through their students' written texts. He further states that when writing about a difficult topic, students end up repeating ideas and failing to make a valid point in the essay. This view is supported by Tsegay (2006) in that students' single paragraph is not restricted to a single subtopic or the topic in general is not exemplified or developed adequately.

#### **2.4.2.2 Punctuation problems**

According to Almarwany (2008), the students' worse problem in writing emanates from capitalisation and punctuation. In his study, he observed that students committed errors in grammar and text organisation but punctuation stood outstanding. According to Tshotsho (2006), a South African researcher, major problem with the not-so-competent students' writing is the lack of cohesion resulting from poor referencing and incorrect use of conjunctions among others. The cause of this problem was that students applied their knowledge of the HL or L1 language on the FAL or L2 language forgetting that both the languages have different punctuation and capitalisation systems.

The problem in capitalisation could be emanating from the fact that capitalisation rules are not genuinely universal and classifying nouns as pronouns, proper nouns, and common nouns is difficult for students. The researcher also observed this issue with his students' writing, they turn to not know when to use conjunctions and that lead them to begin the sentence with them and capitalise them.

#### **2.4.2.3 Spelling Problems**

Collins (2001) defines spelling as an activity in which the process of naming or writing the letters of a word is involved. In agreeing with Collins above, Bahloul (2007) shares a sentiment that learners misspell words and there are factors involved, he believes that the cause of spelling errors is the irregularity of writing English activities. Irregularity, in this case, refers to the frequency of writing where learners are confronted by writing activities more often. It will be best for learners to write on a regular basis. This irregularity is supported by Younes and Albalawi (2015) who made an assertion that students' spelling errors emanate from the inconsistent change of English words structure. This also touches on the different standards of English in different countries, the best example is between the UK and US English standard for the spelling of the word "*colour to color.*"

### **2.4.3 Training of teachers**

According to Chou (2011), it is essential to note that before teachers could confront students on their incoherent essay writing, it is more important to first note that some of the factors emanate from teachers' training which makes no mention of teaching writing. "Even in center or metropole countries until fairly recently, teacher training programs often did not include specific training in the teaching of writing" (Ahmed, 2010). This will mean that teachers who are expected to teach essay writing stand a chance of not being able to teach writing, they are not capacitated enough to teach writing. This means that even coherence as one aspect of essay writing is an oblivious concept to the teachers, as well as students. Teachers may be aware of what to teach though there's a cascading lack of how they should teach it.

Gebhard (2006: p.17) argues that, for a language teacher to produce good results in teaching, they're obliged to learn more about language facets so that they may understand better the contests learners are facing in achieving proper essay writing. For instances, one should not just be reluctant since a provision of storybooks in different languages to schools could encourage both teachers and learners to read and write for fun, especially when those books contain simple interesting stories. As a matter of fact, reading for fun makes teachers acquire language skills such as becoming fluent readers, gaining vocabulary and developing the ability to understand and use complex grammatical structures (Maswanganye 2010). When a teacher is well-informed, he or she is able to prepare writing tasks that shall stimulate and interest learners to writing.

### **2.4.4 Class size**

According to Leki (2001), the class sizes and the amount of time to teach writing is a serious challenge since writing requires a manageable class with less than 50 learners. Conversely, with some of the American senior schools, the classes are above the number and thus create insurmountable problems for writing teachers. In many cases, the challenge arises when it is time to give learners feedback on their writing activities. While correcting grammar exercises for large numbers of students may be tedious and

time-consuming, giving appropriate and useful feedback on multiple drafts of texts to large numbers of students is almost impossible. American English teachers have a conviction that teaching writing requires ample time and resources which then becomes expensive for that matter and the educational ministries and program administrators are not aware of this when drafting the English curriculum.

Ayodele (2016) maintains that there are large percentages of the classes that are less productive and this is beyond the individual teacher's control. To this effect, it becomes impossible for teachers to reach out to the teeming population of students. For example, only a few people who are in the front seat benefit from what the teacher is saying. The rest just gist with friends till the lesson is over. In most cases, the numbers of students that stand by the windows to the classroom far outnumber the students who are inside the classroom. The most common challenge in teaching English arises from the many dialects and different cultures vested in the schools. Based on this, teachers face a challenge of giving instruction in English and still are forced to accommodate the different dialects because the learners are not yet well-versed with English instructions at their school age.

## **2.5 TEACHING APPROACHES (STRATEGIES)**

### **2.5.1 The Process approach and Product approach**

This study is underpinned on the belief that in writing, teaching strategies are associated to sentence, words, and paragraph writing. Therefore educators should understand the effect their teaching methods have on essay writing and their learners. Archibald (2001) also observes that teaching has an effect on the students' ability to reflect on their writing and to produce more effective and appropriate texts in FAL.

There are mainly two writing teaching strategies that are commonly adopted in teaching writing; the product and process approach. The product approach is mainly interested in the finished and final written product (essay) without doing much with the processes involved. This would mean that these two approaches are opposite to one another. In this approach, writing concerns the knowledge about the structure of a language, and writing development is a result of the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by

the teacher (Badger & White, 2000). Product approach could mean that learners imitate the teacher without being independent in their writing and this on the basis of this study could be seen as a delinquent.

Badger and White (2000) assert that the product approach makes no mention of the audience and the writing tenacity since learners and educators tend to exaggerate on the importance of grammar, syntax, and mechanics. The DBE (2010: p.36) also makes no provision of the product approach, it entails that writing should be a process that includes the writing process, applying language structures, knowledge and lastly writing in acceptable sentences and paragraphs. Process skills such as pre-writing, drafting, evaluating and revising are given relatively minimal role and they are very crucial to achieve a good discourse. Educators should not focus on accuracy (product) but focus more on understanding and fluency (process) in writing so coherence can be achieved.

According to Gufron (2016: p.40), the product approach aims at achieving the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices. This is followed by imitation of model texts, learners taught by a teacher who uses this approach happens not be independent in their learning of writing. Palpanadan, Salam and Ismail (2014) maintain that product approach does not leave a room for learners' creativity and natural writing. It is not prone for feedback and therefore it works for the learners who are introverts and do not want to communicate their ideas and thoughts with their classmates. The researcher wishes for communicative teaching and thus he does not relate well with the usage of product approach.

The table below depicts the stages involved in the product approach teaching:

**Table 3: Product approach stages**

Stages	Concepts	Application
Stage 1	Familiarisation	The teacher makes the students aware of a certain feature of a particular text.

Stage 2	Controlled writing	The teachers give the learners exercises on grammatical features and related vocabulary.
Stage 3	Guided writing	The learners write a similar text as given by the teacher as a model.
Stage 4	Free writing	In the last stage, the learners write a similar text by themselves.

The stages show that learners are modeling the given aspects of the lesson and emulate the facilitator. However, writing should put the student in exposure to perform their ability in expressing and organising their ideas into a written text which should be understandable for any readers and this cannot be achieved in the product approach. (Palapanadan et al, 2014).

Hyland (2002) indicates that the process approach invests much on how a text is written instead of the final outcome as in the product approach. Learners must be motivated to know “how” to write from the pre-writing stage to post-writing and evaluating stage, thus this a mechanism for them to be conscious of the writing aspects along the way. In supporting this ideology, Palapanadan et al. (2014) state that the process approach looks at “How the text is written and how to improve the produced development of the content and ideas in that text”.

According to DBE (2010: p.36), in the CAPS documents process writing has three stages; the pre-writing or planning, drafting, proofreading and presenting. In the planning stage the learners' paramount task is to brainstorm ideas for the selected topic with use of a mind-map; decide on the purpose as well as the audiences of the tasks; then finally identify main ideas; and how best they are to be supported. In the second

stage, the task is to put down the ideas by beginning to write the first draft of the text, organising ideas in a logical sequence to make arguments and establish the voice and style to present the final text with. And lastly, there follows the proofreading and presenting stage which is characterised by refining words, sentence and paragraph structure, work on sequencing paragraphs and eliminate ambiguity. In the last stage, the learner prepares the last draft and presents it. All these stages are critical and immerse learners with deeper and accurate knowledge of writing.

The table below depicts the stages involved in the process approach as proposed by Steele (2004). These stages are directly related to the process approach in the DBE CAPS document published in 2010.

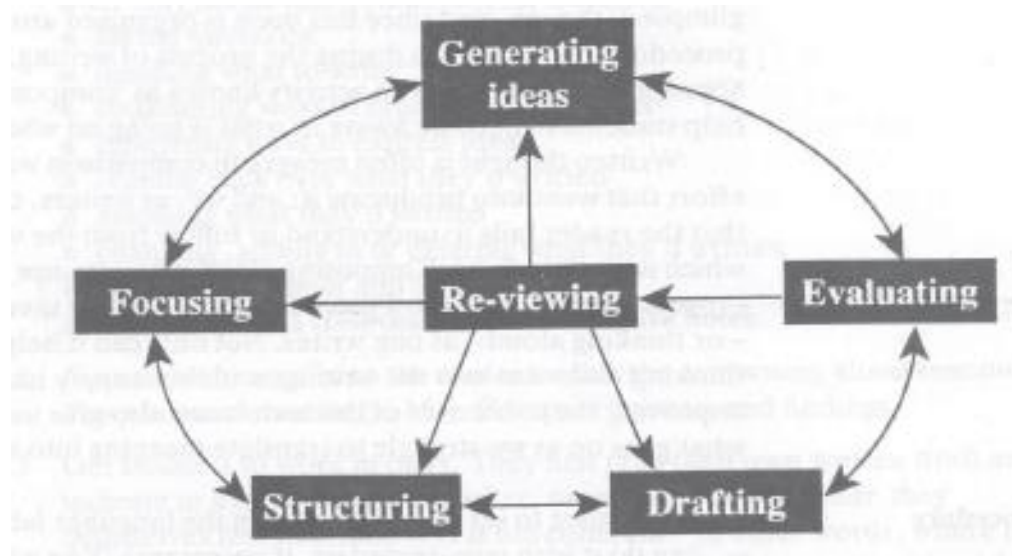
**Table 4: Process approach stages**

Stage 1	Brainstorming
Stage 2	Planning
Stage 3	Mind mapping
Stage 4	First draft
Stage 5	Peer feedback
Stage 6	Editing
Stage 7	Final draft
Stage 8	Evaluation

The following figure is a process writing model coined by White and Arndt (1991) and was revisited by Hasan and Akhand (2010). The model tries to internment the recursive, not linear, nature of writing like that in a product approach. This model is good because it relates best with the task based learning; and this is because students are

orchestrated considerable liberty within the task and not modeling what the teacher desires.

**Figure 1: Process approach writing model (1991)**

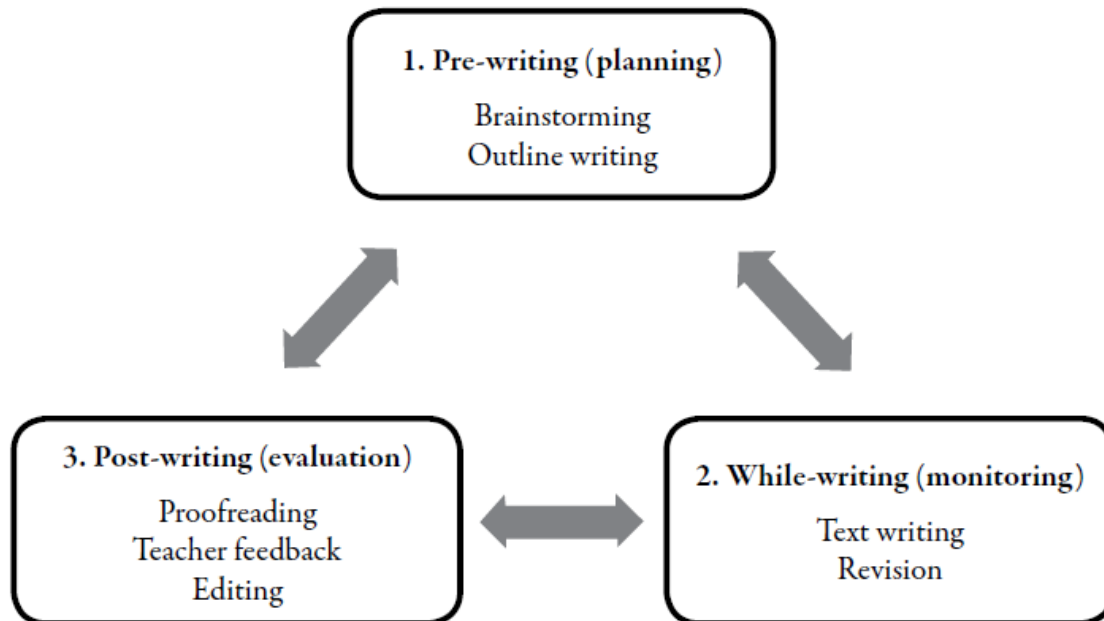


*Source: A model of writing (White and Arndt, 1991: p.43)*

The process approach in teaching has been in existence over ages ago. The most interesting aspects of the approach are that it has been revised by many researchers and scholars and they still maintained the approach's core elements. Flower and Hayes (1981) prescribed a process approach which is recently evident in the DBE CAPS (2011) in South Africa. The diagram below shows the process approach in three stages; Pre-writing, writing, and post-writing.



**Figure 2: Process approach writing model (1981)**



Source:[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23955089\\_A\\_Cognitive\\_Process\\_The\\_ory\\_of\\_Writing\\_Flower\\_Hayes\\_!?](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23955089_A_Cognitive_Process_The_ory_of_Writing_Flower_Hayes_!?)

Myles (2002) witnessed that process approach allows students to comprehend the phases involved in writing and distinguishes learners' efforts towards the development of their writing abilities and contribution brought to the writing classroom contributes to the development of their writing capabilities. It also aids students to develop their critical thinking and acquire independence without the intervention of the teacher.

The process approach does not only have benefits, but it has two common disadvantages. The first one is that if a teacher finds himself/herself in a very large class it might be a very tricky approach to adopt because it is feedback oriented, and then the number of learners might not allow that. Secondly, in the process approach linguistic knowledge is not sufficiently included in the teaching and this stand at a great chance to cause the ineffective organisation of ideas in the writing (Al-Sawalha, 2014). This study seeks to investigate what approach the teachers utilise in their classroom when

responding to the research question. The researcher will be evaluating the knowledge and application of approaches in teaching writing by the teacher participants.

## **2.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING AND READING**

Reading and writing are not just English skills that learners must expertise on for the purpose of getting good grades in an English classroom. They are important aspects of other subjects such as Business Studies, Accounting, Mathematics, Life Sciences, Economics and other school subjects. The DBE (2011) states that it is the task of the teachers to develop learners' writing and reading skills so that they can get a chance of becoming independent and lifelong writers and readers. According to Karadewniz (2017), in teaching and learning reading, the aim is to find the message as the author delivered it, texts are separated into structures, cohesion and coherence elements are identified for a better understanding and interpretation of the text. The skill reading emphasises making meaning by extracting information from the text by the reader, and this is a skill a learner should be taught and learn.

According to Diliduzgun (2013), activities in reading should not be limited on the surface by understanding the questions and meaning. It should also cover the scope of how the text is written, how the text would be explained by analysing it in terms of viewpoint, plan, purpose, consistency and integrity. Learners and teachers should make it a starting point that a text before is read for textual comprehension, external elements such as the audience, purpose, and viewpoint should be understood and evaluated. The DBE (2010) make mentions of texts learners are entitled to read and taught to read, among others they include; newspaper articles, poems, comprehensions, reports, novels, short stories and case studies. All these aspects of reading are also essential for learners to achieve a significant skill of writing.

Learners who are not taught reading or casually find themselves engaged in reading might struggle to grasp simple words because they wouldn't be familiar with them. Cheng (2002) reveals that learners experience writing errors such as using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing. This could be because they might be reading less or exposed less to reading,

which then impairs their writing. The researcher would like to devote a thought that, writing is genuinely successful when it is the product of the read, the more a learner read then the richer their vocabulary becomes and that improves their writing.

The CAPS document, DBE (2011: p.13) obliges teachers to teach reading in a three-phased approach. The stages in reading are: Pre-reading, reading and post reading. Firstly, in pre-reading, learners are prepared for reading and are encouraged to make predictions about the text looking at the title. The reading process commences, and here learners are directly as well as closely reading the text so that they can extract the meaning and answer questions about the read text. Learners must be able to interpret the text looking at language usage, word choice and imagery. Lastly, in the post-reading stage, the task is to view, evaluate and assess the text as a whole. A learner must be able to summarise ideas, draw conclusions and express their own opinion about the texts. This sums up to the process approach hinted above as a teaching strategy.

In writing education, the importance of ensuring that a text has good qualities relies more on how the elements of coherence and cohesion are displayed by the students to communicate their thoughts and ideas. Students must engage in the writing process so they best know where to start and what to do in each stage (Diliduzgun, 2013). Writing is the process of putting ideas, emotions, and thoughts that are structured in the mind on a paper. For this, it is a necessity for the learners to comprehend what they read and hear well so that they structure it in the mind (Akdal & Sahin, 2014).

According to Sebetoa (2016), writing and reading are very essential in the teaching of language because they develop learners' confidence and fluency in using the language. Learners are able to understand what they read, what they write and what they will ultimately say. In other words, these skills afford learners opportunity in life engagements and communication. In writing, Aytas (2008) upholds that a criterion for a good acceptable text should display coherence and cohesion. He further states that a text may display succeeding statements which are supportive of the initial idea, and not contradicting itself but it still has to be coherent. This would mean that a text that does not display the criterion cannot be accepted as a text. It is expected of the teacher to

teach and demonstrate this criterion in their language classrooms, and it is expected of the learners to display and master the qualities of a text.

According to the DBE (2011: p3.5), Steele (2004) Hasan and Akhand (2010), Flower and Hayes (1981) writing is best taught and undertaken as a process, if it is to be learned best. The process comprises of three stages, pre-writing, writing and post writing. In the pre-writing stage, learners brainstorm ideas and decide on the audience and the purpose of the text, and they research the topic so they develop main ideas for discussion. In the writing stage, they begin writing the first draft and they caution on choosing words, tense, logical arrangements of ideas and finally establish their own voice and style to carry out the writing process for the better. The final lap is now to proofread, revise and present their work. In the last stage, it is learners evaluating their work and refining their words and sentences as a mechanism to eliminate ambiguity or redundancy.

### 2.6.1 Types of Writing

According to the DBE (2011: p.14), in the CAPS document and DBE (2015: p.1) there are five types of essay writing that learners are expected to bring their skills to complete. This puts an obligation on the language teacher to deliver and teach learners all these types of writing. The types of essay writing include; narrative, argumentative, descriptive, discursive and reflective essay. DBE (2015: p.2) in the *Mind the gap writing study guide for Grade 12* upholds that an essay must have an introduction, body and a conclusion. The overall essay must illustrate the link of ideas and paragraph flow.

These writing types are presented below in the form of a table.

**Table 5: Types of essay writing**

Writing type	Description	Key features
1. Narrative	It communicates a story or describes a sequence of events that occurred in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Past tense is key</li> </ul>

	past. It often includes a dialogue to keep the reader interested.	
2. Argumentative	From its naming, it is obvious that one idea is defended. The writer in this essay convinces or persuade the reader to agree with their opinion. It is a subjective text with strong personal opinions. The present tense is very crucial in bringing forth an argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express personal opinions about a topic</li> <li>• Defend one motion (opposite discursive text)</li> <li>• Convince and persuade the reader</li> </ul>
3. Descriptive	This writing describes experiences, events, an object, or an individual. It is a necessary skill to create a picture with words, rather than telling a story. It has a purpose to help the reader imagine what is being described.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a picture with words</li> <li>• Giving nature of the appearance of things</li> </ul>
4. Discursive	It is a type of writing as opposed to argumentative writing. Discursive writing involves sharing of thoughts on a balanced scale. The writer present thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not argumentative</li> <li>• An issue is discussed as a whole (advantages &amp; disadvantages)</li> </ul>

	<p>based on both sides of an issue, pros and cons and the text must be purely objective. Each view in this writing is supported equally, the writer concludes the text by showing the view that he/she agrees with mostly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No biasness (objectivity is key)</li> <li>• Communicates various sides of a topic</li> </ul>
<p>5. Reflective</p>	<p>A writer in this writing explains and gives their own opinions and feelings about a person, object or situations. It is subjectively based on the writer's experiences. The writer expresses his/her dreams and wishes about the topic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express own opinions on events and things</li> <li>• Draw own wishes and dreams upon a subject</li> <li>• Form the word reflective, the writer explains his feelings and emotions.</li> <li>• The writer is the main person in the story with his/her world view</li> </ul>

**2.7 OVERCOMING WRITING CHALLENGES**

According to Okotie (2010), most of the challenges encountered in teaching writing are seemingly teacher or learner inflicted. It is purely simple and not a strenuous activity to overcome learner's challenges such as having no interest in writing, educators with no productive methods, duration and assessment issues. One remarkable example of this

is that English language teachers be taught specifically how to teach writing at their training institution. Looking at this, Mackenzie (2017) complement this ideology with her conviction in scaffolding that the teachers must give learners these writing tasks and intensively guide them and correct them, this can be done at a convenient time. Janienne (2010) maintains that this will help in minimising the writing struggles and confusions because learners will develop these patterns in their perception.

According to Williamson (2015) and De Klerk (2000), there's a need to always converse informally with people of higher qualifications; what one can say they can attempt positively to write it. The most important thing for learners to avoid is translating one language to another because this alters with the rules of the LoTL (Language of Teaching and Learning) and the writing theme will not be of par. Most learners see no use for a dictionary and educators themselves do not regularly visit it, proper use of words is possible only in consultation with the verb-guide or dictionary, physical or digital dictionary.

According to Leki (2001), writing is often not taught as prescribed or as the stipulated time due to it straining the educators and boring the learners. Writing requires ample time to mediate the process and give feedback to the learners. In this case, because of the large classrooms teachers substitute the duration to teach writing for other topics preferable content based themes that could be taught conveniently and not strenuous, at the expense of writing. To attend to this petty issue this would mean that the teachers and learners deal with one segment of writing at a time and avoid chunking it together, that way it could make writing a light activity and an elated activity.

## **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theoretically, the study is informed by the Social Constructivist theory (SCT). Constructivism refers to the process of creating reality; reality is constructed through a person's active experience of it (Vygotsky, 1978). Again, this study adopts the broad tradition of on-going criticism in which all productions of the human mind are concerned (Hoffman, 1990). Therefore, the study adopts the view that social and cultural context plays a role in shaping the perspective of an individual. This view pairs with the fact that

the study will be understood from the perspective of the learners and the teachers from the school through their actions and interactions, which are teaching and learning essay writing.

It is within an assumption of a constructivist that there's no specific content in writing, the meaning is the key for interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, for this study to be commended there's a need that schools and individual writing teachers abide by the teaching of writing as a practice for social interaction and subjective meaning and not a fixed content subject matter. This is because a “social constructivist perspective locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social and educational community context” (Kepe, 2014: p.18). In this regard then it appears very important that learners and teachers should have a critical understanding of the nature of English writing in discourse and its importance as a tool to communicate.

### **2.8.1 Scaffolding and Mediation**

According to Gedera and Williams (2016), when a learner and the teacher are in one space to explore the nature of writing, the two concepts of the constructivists are in pursuit; scaffolding and mediation. The guidance from the teacher and interaction with peers is called scaffolding. During scaffolding, the teacher plays a facilitative role to mediate the content to the learner so that the learner will then be competent and independent. This will then mean that in a writing lesson, the teacher has a responsibility to identify writing errors and tackle them to and for the learners to self-actualise in the process of writing. The two concepts of scaffolding and mediation in this theory simply require the writing teacher to be between the content and the learner. This view holds the teacher accountable in eliminating the adversaries that learners face in their learning of writing and mechanisms. Remedial activities must be in place for the teacher to comply with the concept of mediation and scaffolding.

### **2.8.2 The tenets of Social Constructivist Theory (SCT)**

The vital aspect of the SCT is that learners are able and can actively construct their own knowledge and meaning in creation of their realities (Fosnot, 1996). The following three



tenets by Von Glaserfeld (1984) are the principal perspectives in the application and the understanding of the theory.

1. Knowledge is not gathered passively, it is the results of the active awareness of an individual.
2. Cognition is an adaptive process that makes an individual to behave more viable way in a particular environment.
3. Cognition is the core of making sense of the reality and organizing one's experiences.

The first tenet means that knowledge is made and accumulated by interaction with other individuals. The more the learners and teacher interact in the classroom, the more knowledge will be accumulated. This tenet calls for the learners to be active and participate in the classroom as an anti-passiveness mechanism. The second tenet touches on the element of the brain activity to process and understand knowledge as it comes. This means that learners should mentally process events and activities in their learning so that they will behave in an academically excellence way and be relevant in the society. Lastly, the last tenet calls for the individual to analyze and scrutinize their realities when interacting to generate and accumulate knowledge. The mental readiness will allow the learners to make sense of their realities and excel more with cautious actions and zeal to excel in making meaning.

The SCT has its dominant benefits in teaching, though it is criticized for two aspects; the individual and social groups. According to Lui and Matthews (2005), firstly, the SCT pays no attention to the individual but the collective. The theory disregards gifted or sensational students who can rise above the social norms. In every classroom, there's at least one student who will criticize the events taking place in the classroom and the society, and this theory puts the society before the individual, while it can possibly be vice-versa. Secondly, the SCT does not apply in all social groups. This touches on the elements of a society or classroom diverse with special students. For example, the classroom might not be comprised of equality that makes students gain the same meaning. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities might struggle in gaining the same meaning from group interactions as those that are without learning difficulties.

The Constructivists' theory is best related to Activity theory when looking at the aspects of writing activities. "Activity Theory is a theoretical framework for the analysis and understanding of human interaction through their use of tools" (Hashim, 2007). Use of tools in this way refers to the usage of the language to make meaning, and this is the meaning that the reader must detect and comprehend from a writers' perspective. Activity theory for the purpose of this study will mean that the teacher is required to give learners writing activities that they complete and use the correct and coherent language (tools) in their essays.

In relation to the Activity theory and Social Constructivism theory, there is also Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Albert Bandura (1977). The SLT is based on the notion that people learn from each other's daily interactions and eventually behavior changes resulting in those interactions. The SLT maintains that when people are observing the behaviors of others, more especially positive behaviors then they develop similar behaviors. The concept of assimilation to imitate comes in the picture (Bandura, 1977). The SLT empowers teachers to identify teaching methods that will encourage learners to change in behavior, for instances, rewarding learners will result in other learners imitating the rewarded learners. Teachers should catch up on making their language classrooms interaction free and allow learners to interact in group activities and peer teaching so that they will learn from and observe each other's' learning for the better.

According to Nabavi (2012), the SLT speaks to the facilitator on how to teach, the concept of observational learning in the SLT plays a bigger role in guiding teachers' choice in selecting teaching methods. Teachers should escape traditional teaching and add visuals in their classroom. In this study, this meant that teachers are encouraged to do away with the "chalk and chalkboard" teaching and begin displaying pictures and videos for the learners to describe. A descriptive essay is one of the paramount types of essays learners are confronted with and they find themselves blank on linking their ideas to the picture.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter captures the theoretical framework of the study and explores the most important concepts of the study. It goes further and gives an analysis of what the study entails. This review guises at the aspects that are important in the literature of teaching writing. The chapter guides the researcher in the collection and analysis of data such that the reports and results attune to the literature that informs the study. Aspects such as writing challenges from other contexts are explored in this chapter, teaching strategies, an emanation of the challenges, language exposure and impact of class size.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter outlined the literature review of the study. This chapter presents the research methodology and data collection as a measure of acquiring research objectives. It includes the research questions, paradigm, data collection tools and the sampling of the participants as well as the ethical considerations. According to Dawson (2009), research methodology refers to a broader perspective of the procedure in which a research study unfolds. This chapter will ultimately answer the question “how” the research was conducted. In this study, the method for conducting this research is qualitative.

### **3.2 METHODOLOGY**

According to Igwenagu (2016: p.8), “a methodology is the general research strategy that outlines the way in which a research project is to be undertaken. This strategy identifies the methods to be used in it and their relevancy”. Irny and Rose (2005) defines methodology as the theoretical underpinning for understanding set of methods or best practices which are applied to a specific case. In a continuation, Igwenagu (2016: p.8) maintains that methodology does not solve any problem since it is not a method. It is therefore, a necessity for deriving a method and it lies with the researcher to demonstrate which methodology will lead to which methods.

In light of the above, the researcher is confident in their understanding of research methodology, the research method and the tools used in achieving the objectives of this paper. The study is underpinned in the interpretivist paradigm, and the suitable method for this paper is a qualitative method which is accompanied by its relevant research design and data collection tools. The discussion below explains the overall activities of how the study was conducted.

### **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVIST**

It is a nature of every study to be pinned and guided by a paradigm when conducting a research. Before this study adopted a paradigm the researcher found it to be appropriate to first define what a paradigm is. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the word paradigm was first used to refer to a philosophical way of thinking. The word paradigm has also been identified to have its foundation in Greek where it means “pattern”. In educational research the term paradigm is used to describe a researcher’s ‘worldview’ (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This worldview is the perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs, that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data.

With the given foundation of what a paradigm is, since this study is characterised by interacting with human behavior and thoughts, it therefore, unfolds under the Interpretivist paradigm. Dawson (2009) maintains that Interpretivist researchers believe that the reality and knowledge are derived from people's subjective experiences of the external world. As a result they may adopt an inter-subjective interaction.

The researcher's choice for this paradigm is guided by the fact that the Interpretivist believes that human life in social and educational context can only be understood from within the person and not to be observed externally from a distance (Levees, 2006). The aforementioned led to the researcher visiting the school where the problem was investigated so that the data is collected physically and not remotely to ensure credibility and validity of the research. The researcher immersed himself within the context of the studied population so that he gains the insight and experiences of the learners and teachers concerning the issues of challenges in essay writing. It is through this paradigm that the research was conducted with the utilisation of certain data collection tools, a decision on data analysis and reporting strategies.

As Levees (2006) indicated above, it is an obligation for every Interpretivist researcher to explicitly engage the participants directly to be able to describe them and their activities in learning and teaching writing; therefore, remote observation is nullified in this paradigm. The researcher ensured that he condoned biasness in relation to

selecting the participant and recording information looking at any criteria not mentioned in the study. In this study the researcher also verified responses with the participants so that data is not infringed.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHOD: QUALITATIVE**

Leedy and Omrod (2005) describe research method as the general approach that the researcher takes in carrying out the research project. To some scope, there is a dictation of the particular tools and processes the researcher selects in research. There are two commonly known research methods: quantitative and qualitative. Each research method has evolved to fulfill specific research aims and functions, and specific methodological styles (Jackson, Camara & Drummond, 2007). Looking at the research paradigm of this study, the researcher decided to choose a method that had a provision to interact with participants in given environment so that data is captured from daily social experiences and thoughts.

The approach for this research is mainly qualitative. This is the approach that requires that the researcher understand the real world from the perspective of the participants in his/her investigation (Flick, 2014). A qualitative research is based on studying human behavior and social interaction (Islam & Faraque, 2016). This approach, therefore, requires the researcher to collect data within the settings of the respondents and is concerned with the understanding of the peoples' experiences in context. In this case, the approach guided the researcher to collect data from the learners and the teachers at their school so that there was a qualitative data and social discoveries of their multiple and different perspectives on challenges faced in writing English essays.

According to Megan, Ranney, Zachary, Meisel, Esther, Choo, Aris, Garro, Comilla, and Guthrie (2015), a qualitative method requires the researcher to be rooted in the participants' lives during the data collection procedure. This method discourages collecting data remotely, if done this will negatively affect issues of validity and reliability. Megan et al (2015) further stated that a qualitative study usually use written templates for data collection tools such as open-ended questions and discussion. The

aforementioned statement served as one of the motivations for the researcher to choose the qualitative method as the guide for this paper.

A qualitative approach to research informed the standpoint of this study because the researcher personally gathered data at the respondents' school. This approach was chosen because of its naturalistic pattern which prescribes that a research must study real-world situations as they unfold naturally; without an action of manipulation and control of circumstances and participants (Lawrence, 2012) so that principles of validity and credibility are achieved (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002).

The most important aspect of this approach is its humanistic nature. Bland and Derobertis (2017) maintains that humanistic methods in research encourages interaction that comprises of elements of empathy, self-efficacy and qualities that are not harmful to both the researcher and the participants. In light of this, the researcher used verbal, visual and ordinary safe physical tools to collect data and record the findings. The language used was friendly and ethical issues were addressed so that participants feel safe.

According to Islam and Faraque (2016), a qualitative method comprises of the following forms of data; field notes, audio and video recordings and diagrams to draw down linkages of a study. This paper also adopted this tool to ensure credibility and accuracy. In deriving data collection tools, Creswell (2009) maintains all the tools are coiled to their research designs in the qualitative research. The qualitative method comprises of nine research designs which are; phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. For the purpose of this research, the researcher saw it feasible and accurate to employ the phenomenological design which is discussed below. In this regard, the qualitative approach is appropriate and accommodated this research.

### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN: PHENOMENOLOGY**

The source of a research design is the research approach and the paradigm of that research since they serve as the umbrellas when looking at the ample of designs to choose from when conducting a study (Leedy & Omrod, 2005). The qualitative approach

gives any researcher an opportunity to choose from designs such as phenomenology, case study, narrative inquiry, grounded theory and ethnography depending on the type of social phenomenon investigated (Maxwell, 2012). According to Yin (2009), a research design is a blueprint and a guideline of how a researcher intends to conduct a research. This blueprint touches on the issues of sampling, population, data collection and analysis in a research. It is also a strategy to carry out a study and achieve the set goals. Since the study is mainly qualitative in nature, the design for the study is highly expected to meet the standard of a qualitative research and its paradigm. The design for this study is phenomenology.

The present study is a descriptive research. Ahmed (2010) maintains that descriptive research is all about describing people who participate in the study; which in the case of the current study this referred to the learners and their written essays as well as the teachers. The choice for this design is guided by the research title that deals with the challenges in English essay writing. Therefore there is a phenomenon to investigate and this design gives the teachers and learners leverage to express their ideas regarding writing. In this design the researcher was able to gather information from teachers through interviews and examined learners' written essays.

Mensah (2014) asserts that a phenomenological design is a method which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way. It is used when one simply wants to observe and describe something or a natural phenomenon with the intention to understand it better. Therefore, this study observed mainly the written essays of learners and recorded teachers' responses as found in order to present a valid and credible research data and report. The aim of this study was to explore the essay writing challenges and it is the nature of the phenomenological design that allowed the study to describe the writing phenomenon as found in the study without manipulation and control or even biasness.

According to Shuttleworth (2008), descriptive research design is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way. This design is significant because writing errors occur naturally without manipulation; it could be an unconscious gesture. The design is appropriate for the



current study because its interpretative nature helped the researcher to explore and reveal the problems that senior secondary school learners encountered in their attempt to achieve logical essay writing.

### **3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

#### **3.6.1 Population**

A research cannot be thorough without a solid sample and population. According to Cobuild (2001), population is a well-defined collection of individuals known to have similar characteristics from which information is collected for an inquiry on a certain phenomenon. The population for this research consisted of teachers and learners of Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo, South Africa. The population comprised of one secondary school where the current problem was detected. Eight English teachers and 95 grade 12 learners made up the population of this study.

Due to a limited time to complete the course and in light of avoiding capturing unmanageable data, not all the teachers and learners participated in the study. This helped in avoiding to capture a high volume of data which would be unmanageable and difficult to analyse. According to Bistch (2005), having a manageable sample size will bring forth valid and credible data.

#### **3.6.2 Sampling**

Sampling is defined as a practice of picking a group of subjects or objects for a study where a small group of subjects represent the larger group from which they are selected (Yount, 2006: p.6). In this case, sampling would refer to verdicts involved in terms of which settings, social processes, objects, people and events are appropriate to conduct a research at a given time. There are two types of sampling methods; probability and non-probability. Probability sampling is a sampling procedure that gives every element in the target population a known and a nonzero probability of being selected. Looking at non-probability sample there's just a slight difference from probability; it is a sampling where the elements in the population are not given a chance to be in the sample (Daniels, 2012: p.66).

For the purpose of this study purposive sampling under the non-probability sampling was considered. A purposive sampling simply refers to a sampling process where subjects are chosen for a specific purpose or criteria unlike the random sampling (Daniels, 2012). From the aforementioned, the researcher found it to be appropriate to use purposive sampling and not any other sampling simply because there was a clear target to investigate which had specific participants. Not all the teachers teach English in grade 12, and not all the learners in the school who are in grade 12 stand a chance of selection, thus purposive sampling was considered appropriate for the study. Three English teachers who teach English in grade 12 were selected purposively from the total of 8 English teachers to participate in the study. This sample was motivated by the logic that the current investigated phenomenon was focal in grade 12, therefore, teachers responsible for that grade make suitable sample. This complemented the sampled learners in the same grade as to bring forth data validation, credibility and triangulation.

The main participants of the research were grade 12 learners who were between the ages of 17 – 21 years old as per the expectation of schooling ages in the DBE (1998) pupil admission policy for public schools. This grade was chosen for a few reasons; firstly, it is commonly known that learners in this grade are seniors, flexible in their studies and even more responsible than all the other grades. Secondly, they are in an educational stage where their cognitive development is versatile and that is an expected ability to allow them to be able to write without committing trivial errors in their writing. Lastly it is because the researcher was a teacher in this class, and he too was exposed to the writing challenges.

A purposive sampling method was used to obtain a sample size of 12 learners from all the learners in the grade. For this sampling to be achieved, the researcher gave all the learners a preliminary essay to write, this task was used as a selection tool and a way of avoiding biasness in selecting learners meaninglessly. Therefore, the learners' written work was evaluated and put into different criteria. The criteria was performance based. The researcher selected the learners by categorising learners' work into "higher, middle and lower achievers". Then each category was represented by four learners. The choice

for this sampling method was to ensure fairness of representation. The sampling chosen ensured that there was no biasness in the choices.

This sample is also motivated by a research by Chen (2008) which maintained that there's a serious speculation amongst language education specialists and teachers that senior learners at school can write "better" when that was not the case. In the context of this study, the sampling of grade 12 learners and selecting only grade 12 is because the learners at that level cannot write as assumed, thus this sampling became relevant as observed and researched before. After the process of identifying the 12 learners into three performance groups, the four learners representing each group were invited for a focus group discussion. This discussion had a purpose to get more insight about the information from their scripts and this also served as a point of triangulating and validating data. These learners represented the whole class.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION**

According to Olsen (2012: p.3), data collection is the process of gathering and gauging data, information or any variables of interest in a standardised and established manner. The process enables the collector to answer or test hypothesis and evaluate outcomes of the particular collection to gain more complete data. Olsen (2012: p.3) further stated that it is important for the researcher to apply several research instruments. Creswell and Clarke (2011: p.178) maintain that a researcher is bound to allow the participants of a particular study to share their attitudes, preferences, views, concerns, opinions and perceptions on the issue under investigation. In sharing the aforementioned views, a researcher makes sure that data collection tools are ready and accurate for data collection.

These tools, amongst others, which a researcher could use includes running some interviews, questionnaires, surveys, document analysis and establishing focus groups. For this study to operationalise, the following tools were used to collect data: document analysis, focus groups, and interview schedules were key data collection tools.

### **3.7.1 Document Analysis**

Documents are accessed in workplaces, an internet, academic institutions, and libraries. When document analysis is in use, the researcher ensures that in-depth of qualitative analysis is feasible and also have background knowledge of the language in question (Olsen, 2012: p.79). Document analysis refers to the process of interpreting the text by the researcher to give voice and meaning around the text as coding the content into themes similar to those investigated. This interpretation is best characterised by the commonly known language features that are put against the research problem, it can be best seen as validity of the researched (Bowen, 2009: p.27).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed this method by reading through the texts and the content presented by the learners on their essays as to identify and investigate the phenomenon.

The researcher gave the learners an essay to write. This essay was analysed deeply feature by feature. This tool was prominent in helping the researcher to familiarise himself with the learners' written essays and also gained a deeper insight of learners' writing styles. This tool enabled the researcher to sample the learners according to their performance on the written essay.

Research shows that learners write freely when writing about objects, situations and people they are familiar with (Serra, 2014). Therefore the researcher tasked the learners to write an essay on the topic "Do you think the community should blame boys for teenage pregnancy? Agree or disagree". The researcher then physically employed document analysis by perusing through learners' written essays. This way the learners' challenges in writing were explored and understood better.

### **3.7.2 Focus Groups Discussion**

This is another tool the researcher used in collecting data from the learners. Unlike reading through learners' essays, this method involved learners' oral discussion about the phenomenon in question. Litosseliti (2007: p.1) maintains that "focus groups are

small structured groups with selected participants, normally led by a moderator. They are set up in order to explore specific topics, individuals' views and experiences through a physical interaction". Focus group is a purposive discussion of a topic with few respondents discussing themes of a research to gain insight of the topic investigated. The most productive focus groups discussions are made up of a minimal number of participants in one group. The sample in a focus group should be in a manner which the participants themselves do not disturb one another and feel left out of the discussion, (Bowen, 2009).

Carey and Asbury (2016: p.16) maintain that focus group are very productive because they are naturally appealing. People like to be heard, feel that someone is listening and understand their concerns.

In the current study, the members of the focus groups are learners that engages in the process of writing. The learners were sampled according to three competency groups rated from their written essays. The researcher decided to use learners in focus groups because they can best open-up and express themselves when they are surrounded by their peers. This relates to Maslow's (1943) self-actualizing environment derived from the hierarchy of needs theory. The questions are drawn to cover the research question so that the research problem is addressed, and relevant data is obtained. In this case, open-ended questions were discussed in a non-threatening environment by the researcher and the four (4) learners selected purposively from each category with the aim to obtain a better understanding of the writing challenges.

### **3.7.3 Interview schedule**

This is a qualitative tool the researcher used to collect data and interact with the teachers. King and Horrocks (2010: p.3) elucidate that interview schedule have three defining characteristics. The first being that it is flexible and open-ended in style, secondly it tends to focus on people's actual experiences more than generic beliefs and opinions and lastly, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is very crucial.

Edwards and Holand (2013: p.1) argue that interviews are mostly qualitative and they are a practice where one person is asking another person a question on a particular topic or issue, and the other responding. They are flexible in a way that they can be conducted in different settings such as physical contact and electronically be it telephone or video calls. It all depends on whether the researcher is versatile to administer them. In the current study the researcher physically conducted the interviews in the school premises, which were one on one with the respondents in line with the qualitative practice.

An interview in a qualitative study can either be semi-structured or structured. A structured interview is characterized by a set of questions which has no provision for the participant to divert and while a semi-structured interview is open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. Semi-structured interview is very productive because it allows the participant to offer new meaning to the study, structured interviews are rigid and focus on questions as set and prepared without diverging (William & Cross, 2013: p.1).

In light of this, this study adopted the semi-structured interviews because the studied phenomenon is related to social events which can always be explained differently and again because the researcher ensured that he monitored any response which is not relevant. Sometimes in an interview one respondent can diverge and provide with something the researcher was not aware of which can be of a great study benefit. The other reason for this is that the researcher believes in the participants not only as participants whom have information but also as professional teachers who have knowledge in their field.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher prepared open-ended questions as stated by (Islam & Faraque, 2016) in a semi-structured interview to the English teachers. The researcher believed that open-ended questions and probing gives participants the onus to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses. This was done so the study captures factual data regarding the learners' difficulties in essay writing, as well as to find out what they really want and need to improve on their abilities. This instrument allows the respondents to express themselves without fear of

favor or prejudice (Kepe, 2014). The use of multiple tools for gathering data also serves for triangulation which Cresswell (2012) refers to as the process of combining information from different instruments produced to justify evidence that solidifies the research results.

### **3.7.3.1 Research questions**

These were the questions that characterised the study and were used to design the interview schedule;-

### **3.7.3.2 Main Research Question**

What are the challenges that learners encounter when writing English FAL essays?

### **3.7.3.3 Sub-Questions**

The following questions complement the main question of the research to ensure that the purpose of the study is realized. These sub-questions also served a purpose to validate the relevancy of data collection and analysis such that the study is characterized by valid results aligning with the purpose and aim of the study.

- What are the learners' difficulties in writing essays?
- What are the causes of the errors committed in learners' essay writing?
- Which teaching strategies are used in teaching essay writing?
- How can these challenges to teaching writing be overcome?

## **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Collins (2001), ethics are the knowledge of right and wrong in order to act morally and to principles. A research cannot be thorough and acceptable without intensively adhering to a rightful, harmless and human friendly processes of conducting a study, hence research ethics are vital. This part of the study addressed the issues of, permission, informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, avoidance of harm and respect.

The researcher applied for permission to conduct this research by firstly presenting the proposed problem at the departmental level in the School of Education. The problem

was approved to be authentic and researchable. Thereafter, it was processed by the University's Higher Degree Committee, and then permission was given to apply for the ethics clearance which allowed the researcher to collect data from the field. Consequently a permission to conduct the study was sought from University's Ethical Clearance Committee, the Department of Education (Limpopo, Capricorn District), the individual school Principal and the participants through signing of consent forms. The permissions granted helped in terms of getting hold of the research participants.

- **Informed Consent**

This part of ethical issues does not only involve making the participant of a research sign a form as a mode of agreement to participate in a research study. It also subjects the researcher to outline, brief and make the participants aware about the plan of the research, purpose, benefits and possible disadvantages (Cresswell, 2014). In light of this, the participants in this research are English teachers and learners. The participants were provided with full information (guided) of the research: objectives, aim, advantages and possible disadvantages as well as the purpose of this research so that the study operates transparently. The participants will be made to understand that their participation is fully voluntary, not an obligation and they could withdraw from the research at any time without the need to explain why and without prejudice from both the researcher and other respondents. Provided a participant withdraws; their contribution or data will, therefore, be withdrawn too, unless stated for retention by the participant.

- **Anonymity and confidentiality**

Confidentiality and anonymity refers to keeping a secret by not identifying the ethnic or cultural background of respondents, refrain from referring to them by their names or divulging any other sensitive information about a participant (Mugenda, 2011). To achieve this in this study, the researcher ensured that the names and identification of the participants were confided between them will not be mentioned anywhere else in the study. The participants were made to understand that they are free to always confirm



their confidentiality and anonymity without fear to ensure that the ethics are operationalised correctly and not biased to a certain information or participant.

- **Avoidance of Harm to Participants**

According to Blumberg (2005), in social sciences research respondents can be harmed both emotionally and physically, therefore the researchers carries the responsibility to ensure that those participants are protected from any possible physical and emotional harm. The researcher informed the participants in time about the potential impact of the study. The researcher did not in any chance harass the participants verbally or physically and even made sure that the participants don't finance anything related to the study as this would be economical harassment and it's not ethical.

This study would result in no harm to the participants since the whole process was transparent; and in case that was to occur, the researcher was to take full responsibility to vouch for and protect the participants either through speaking to the school management in time or the University depending on the type of harm. The researcher envisaged trust between him and the participants by not denoting any or hiding any malicious information provided there was change of circumstances.

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Norris, Nowell, White and Moules (2017), every research contains data and the absence of severe and relevant data analysis has implications in terms of the reliability and trustworthiness of the research process. Collins (2001) maintains that analysis in research is the process of surfing through objects and information carefully and using statistical methods in order to understand it or explain it. In light of this, research data needs to be analysed and understood so that it is presented, communicated and reported without fouts.

The researcher analyzed data thematically, this is the process of classifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. The goal of thematic data analysis is to identify and categorize themes and research patterns that addresses research phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006: p.78). In this qualitative study, the researcher classified data findings

that seemed to have same codes and interpreted them. The meaning-making action can be derived from a social event (essay writing) or individual subject (writing errors from each participant) which happens and exist in everyday lives (Flick, 2014). For the purpose of this research, the researcher used qualitative data analysis proposed by Flick (2014) which is briefly explained and understood as follows:

1) Rough analysis: Overview of data findings, condensation of the data overviewed, and summaries of the data which have been recorded were read. In this research, this stage is infused in the data presentation section.

2) Detailed analysis: Elaboration and comparison between the data findings and theories from experts as well as the literature reviewed is considered in this stage. In the case of this study, this was evident in the discussion of the findings which were compared to the reviewed literature in their respective themes and familiarity.

3) Theory generating: Forming statement based on hermeneutic interpretation of the students' difficulties and needs in learning writing. And lastly in this stage, the findings are thoroughly discussed in the section where the researcher formulates conclusions and recommendations for this study.

To analyse the open-ended questions from the focus groups and interviews, the researcher began by transcribing the audios. Collins (2001) states that transcriptions are the conversion of recorded audios or clips into written formats. This transcription enabled the researcher to solidify and analyse the audios so that physical evidence of data collection can be presented. The analysis determined the themes to find the classification of students' difficulties of writing. Furthermore, the researcher also read, interpreted and analyzed the students' manuscript by classifying the errors that appeared in their texts.

### **3.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Qualitative research, ensuing from a variety of disciplines and epistemologies, embraces multiple standards of quality, known variously as validity, credibility, transferability and confirmability (Morrow, 2005).

#### **3.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Credibility establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Therefore, the researcher in this study will continuously document the process of development throughout the research and always verify participants' responses to avoid recording wrongful or misinterpreted responses. The researcher will also ensure study credibility by personally gathering data personally and be immersed in the context of his participants (learners and teachers). Data will be analysed as captured and verified.

#### **3.10.2 Confirmability**

Confirmability addresses the issues a relationship of same results confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. Therefore, it is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but is clearly derived from the data. Studies suggest that confirmability of qualitative inquiry is achieved through an audit trail and triangulation (Tobin & Begley, 2004,). Creswell (2014) maintains that a researcher should extend time with the participant to confirm and ensures that correct reliable data is captured. For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted Creswell (2014) assertions and ensured confirmability through prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer reviews as well use different tools to collect data. Evidence from the process and product of the study will be achieved as to validate that the researcher practically collected data and did not imagine the whole research process.

### **3.10.3 Dependability**

According to Bitsch (2005: p.86), dependability refers to “the stability of findings over time”. Dependability involves participants evaluating the findings and the interpretation and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (Bowen, 2009). In this study, for the researcher to adhere to the dependability of the study, the following documents will be kept for crosschecking the inquiry process: raw data, interview records and observation notes, documents and audio records collected from the field.

### **3.10.4 Transferability**

Transferability entails the possibilities of results being found in another context with different respondents (Bitsch, 2005). According to Li (2004), thick description enables judgments about how well the research context fits other contexts, thick descriptive data, i.e. a rich and extensive set of details concerning methodology and context, should be included in the research report. The researcher will therefore use correct qualitative methods and analysis; this will ensure transferability in that other researcher may pursue the current study conditions in different contexts.

### **3.11 Summary**

This chapter presented the study to have adopted the qualitative approach to unfold the proceedings of the research, and also recognized phenomenology as the design to. The multiple uses of different tools allowed flexibility and triangulation of the study so that the results could be justified. More importantly, this is the part of the study where the data presentation is born as to appropriate the discussion leading to the findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter detailed the methodology that was carried out in this study. This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data collected from the school where the case was detected. The chapter starts with the profiles of the school. For the purpose of this chapter, the researcher presented the information as captured and would detect useful information from the given data to make conclusions. Most of the data collected for this study seemed to have been harmonious with the themes described in the literature review.

### 4.2 PROFILES

#### 4.2.1 School Profile

The school is located at Nyakelang section, Botlokwa village in Sekgosese West. It comprises of 25 staff teachers including the principal, the deputy principal and the four HODs. The school have 809 diverse learners (most of them are Sepedi speaking). There are 7 blocks which are divided into 15 classrooms, four staff rooms, a science lab and a kitchen.

#### 4.2.2 Teacher participant profiles

Teacher participants	Age	Teaching experience in 2019	Qualifications	Subjects delivery
Teacher A	49 years old	22 years	BAEd B.Ed. Hons HC in English	English FAL Life Orientation
Teacher B	25 years old	3 years	B.Ed.	English and Geography
Teacher C	35 years old	4 years	B.Ed. B.Ed. Hons	English FAL

### **4.2.3 Learner participant profile**

The study comprised of 12 learners named learner A – L. The learners were diverse in that there were seven girls and five boys. All the learners speak Sepedi as their home language except for two learners who speak Tshivenda as their home language. In this group of learner participant, all the learners are doing grade 12 for the first time in 2019 except of Learner E, F and I. Three participants were under the age of 18 and the rest were older than that.

### **4.3 DATA PRESENTATION**

Data was collected through interviews, focus groups and document analysis. The interview transcripts are very long and due to the length it was not possible to include all of them in the document. The researcher saw it feasible to select few transcripts as an example of the data which the researcher worked with in this study (see addendums H and I). In this study some of the themes tend to overlap and in view of that, the researcher blended some together in the presentation to escape redundancy. Based on this, the researcher proposes to present the data in the following manner:

- Data segment 1: data from teachers' interviews
- Data segment 2: data from the focus groups
- Date segment 3: data from the written essays (document analysis)

The researcher found it convenient and productive to present the first two data segments in chronology as they are results of interviews and are transcribed, and presented the data from the learners at the end as they are physical documents and are analysed differently.

The above segments of the data would elicit the following themes:

- Challenges in writing
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Frequency of writing assessments
- Common errors in writing
- Teaching and learning duration

- Causes of challenges in essay writing
- Overcoming writing challenges

#### 4.3.1 Data Segment 1: Teachers' interviews

Themes	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
<b>Challenges in writing</b>	<p><b>Q:</b> Do you think that essay writing is challenging learners?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>Yes it is a challenge especially when you find that learners aren't familiar with the topics given to write about.</i></p> <p><b>Q:</b> What do you observe with your learner's writing?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>Lack of correct interpretation and wrongful usage of tenses. And Learners cannot spell common words.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> Do you think that essay writing is challenging learners?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>No it is not, learners are just lazy to write. A person cannot for example be unable to remember "their best day in their lives or to explain a picture they are looking at".</i></p> <p><b>Q:</b> What do you observe with your learner's writing?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>We see spelling errors, insufficient planning and grammar problems.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> Do you think that essay writing is challenging learners?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>Yes it is a little bit challenging more especially when looking at sentence structure and overall language use</i></p> <p><b>Q:</b> What do you observe with your learner's writing?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>learners commit errors such as poor punctuations.</i></p>
<b>Teaching &amp; learning strategies</b>	<p><b>Q:</b> What teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>I use group activities. I would give one group to</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>I prefer group teaching. As a teacher we I cannot</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>I prefer visual teaching where I use pictures for</i></p>

	<i>tackle a narrative essay, the other group to tackle argumentative essay and so forth.</i>	<i>touch every learner because our classes are overcrowded so peer learning is best.</i>	<i>them to describe.</i>
<b>Frequency of writing assessments</b>	<p><b>Q:</b> How many times do you give learners writing activities and why?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>Writing is a very lengthy exercise. At least in a week I give them two activities.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> How many times do you give learners writing activities and why?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>I give activities everyday so that they are aware on how to answer questions and dealing with issues such as punctuation and grammar errors.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> How many times do you give learners writing activities and why?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>After every lesson because I want to assess learners' level of understanding. That will mean I give two extended writing activities twice a week</i></p>
<b>Common errors in writing</b>	<p><b>Q:</b> What common errors do learners commit in their essay writing?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>Spelling errors, mixing of pronouns, and lack of planning before writing</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What common errors do learners commit in their essay writing?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>Learners do not finish writing their essay completely, we find spelling errors, erroneous punctuation, poor paragraphing and learners do not plan</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What common errors do learners commit in their essay writing?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>Poor punctuation, poor sentence construction, spelling errors, poor paragraphing connection and redundancy.</i></p>



<p><b>Teaching and learning duration</b></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> How often do you teach writing in your classroom?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>As per the pace setter, I teach it almost twice a week but when is nearing the time for writing formal tasks I give writing more time.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> How often do you teach writing in your classroom?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>It depends on the pace setter as it guides us, for example if we don't have essay in a term then we are not going to teach learners that.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> How often do you teach writing in your classroom?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>Normally I follow the pace setter but I like teaching writing two days in a week.</i></p>
<p><b>Causes of the challenges in writing</b></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What do you think is the cause for these writing errors?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>Exposure is the first problem and they need to practice writing about variety of topics. Learners don't write and read during leisure, and write and this cause lack of vocabulary.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What do you think is the cause for these writing errors?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>Learners are just lazy, their topics and what we expect from them are the things we teach daily.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> What do you think is the cause for these writing errors?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>learners do not plan and write the first draft that will guide them in their final essay writing. They chose topics which they don't understand. They cannot differentiate types of essays.</i></p>
<p><b>Overcoming writing challenges</b></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> <i>How can the problems of errors in essay writing be overcome?</i></p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>I think there's a need for essay writing competitions which I think will give these learners another dimension in molding their creativeness and build their interest.</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> <i>How can the problems of errors in essay writing be overcome?</i></p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>The first thing is for the department to be consistent in their schools with the teacher-learner ratio. We are not able to teach overcrowded classes, essay teaching requires</i></p>	<p><b>Q:</b> <i>How can the problems of errors in essay writing be overcome?</i></p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>I think the department should increase the time allocation for teaching writing in a week with another hour. It is also best for the learners to always write their</i></p>

	<p><b>Q:</b> What do you do after observing learners' writing errors in their essays?</p> <p><b>A:</b> <i>I normally give them feedback and give guidelines such as making them aware of "key words, meaning and interpretation,</i></p>	<p><i>more time for a learner. It is not possible to feed 66 learners in a class within the prescribed one hour session. We need enough infrastructure and more human resource.</i></p> <p><b>Q:</b> What do you do after observing learners' writing errors in their essays?</p> <p><b>B:</b> <i>I option for finding the best learner to present and explain to their class how they did a good job. We encourage peer learning.</i></p>	<p><i>activities without the teacher hunting after them.</i></p> <p><b>Q:</b> What do you do after observing learners' writing errors in their essays?</p> <p><b>C:</b> <i>I firstly correct and highlight these errors on their response sheets. Secondly, i oral feedback and comments about their writing class during class and lastly, I request a good performing learner to explain and assist them on how to get good marks like him/her.</i></p>
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### 4.3.2 Data Segment 2: Focus groups interviews

#### 4.3.2.1 Challenges in writing

Question: Is writing a challenge to you?

*Learner A: No it's not a challenge but I am not satisfied with how far I am in essay writing.*

*Learner C: Yes, sometimes when I begin I feel that I am blank and I don't know how to start more especially with arranging my ideas.*

*Learners E: Yes, I am struggling to combine ideas. You find that the last part of the essay does not relate with the first part. I confuse the ideas in the whole essay.*

Most of the learners responded "yes" to this question and their responses made it

evidential that writing is a challenge to them. The researcher would like to make an assumption that learner A's response aligns with teacher B's response that learners don't find writing a challenge, they're just lazy.

Question: What are the things that make writing challenging?

*Learner G: we run out of words when we are writing.*

*Learner F: we don't spell words correctly.*

*Learner H: I think grammar is a problem.*

#### **4.3.2.2 Teaching & learning strategies**

Question: How best do you want to learn how to write an essay?

*Learner A: I think if our teachers also write their essay and we are able to see a very well written essay then we will be able to use those factors on our own work.*

*Learner D: The teachers must teach every aspect alone starting from a mind-map. We struggle to even plot down a simple thing such as a mind map. The teacher must also return our essays and correct our work so we don't repeat the same mistakes.*

#### **4.3.2.3. Frequency of writing assessments**

Question: How many writing activities (transactional) do you receive a week?

*Learner F: Zero percent or even once in two months.*

*Learner I: None, we are only writing essays formally and there are no lessons on essay writing.*

*Learner D: Nothing, we only write essays when it's time for formal assessments.*

#### **4.3.2.4 Common errors in writing**

Question: What are the common errors you commit in essay writing?

*Learner A: We commit many spelling errors and omission of words.*

*Learner D: Repetition of the same words continuously.*

*Learner C: I forget to punctuate.*

*Learner J: Writing a lengthy paragraph that is not making sense.*

#### **4.3.2.5 Teaching and learning duration**

Question: Question: Do you think essay writing is taught enough in your English class?

*Learner B: No, teachers focus more on literature (paper 2) teaching.*

*Learner D: No, teachers just assume that essay writing is an easy and an obvious thing for us to write.*

All the learners responded No to this question and gave reasons.

#### **4.3.2.6 Causes of the challenges in writing**

Question: Why do you think you commit errors in essay writing?

*Learner F: It is because we are not well prepared before writing.*

*Learner I: Sometimes it is because since we can't pronounce the word then we write wrongful spelling and we don't understand the topic.*

*Learner G: Some of the topics are problematic and we cannot write about them. And secondly we write with a serious speed because the time is not enough.*

#### **4.3.2.7 Overcoming writing challenges**

Question: What do you do to reduce the amount of writing errors in your essay?

*Learner E: I take my marked essay and practice writing correctly when I am home.*

*Learner B: I write and proofread my essay before submission.*

*Learner I: I have spelling problems so I give it to a friend for help.*

Question: What do you think can be done to improve your essay writing and avoid errors?

*Learner I: Teachers should teach us how to write essays and differentiate the types of essays for us to understand better.*

*Learner J: Teachers must make time to teach essay writing and give us classwork. We as learners must have dictionaries.*

*Learner F: Teacher must stop assuming essays are simple for us by imposing that we've done essay writing from grade 8. This is because we normally forget, I cannot remember what I did in grade 8 when I am in grade 12.*

*Learner D: We need the writing time to be extended to two hours.*

*Learner E: Our textbooks must also have different types of written essays, not just instructions for us to write.*

### 4.3.3 Data segment 3: Written essays

The data from this segment was coded from the learners' documents into codes. Gibbs (2007) maintains that coding is a creative technique of presenting or categorising the text in question in order to institute a structure of thematic ideas about that code. Data in this study is analysed thematically where questions and similar findings are converted into codes to avoid redundancy and overflowing of the same ideas. Since in this segment there are physical documents involved, the researcher opted to use preliminary codes (these codes are infused in the main themes), this will help in relating the texts to the oral responses given by the learners.

This data segment was used to triangulate the responses above in order to ensure reliability and validity. Bowen (2009) maintains that in order to seek conjunction and validation, at least a qualitative researcher should use confirmatory methods. The documents in nature are long and the researcher optioned for hinting some results and attached full documents (see addendum J) at the end of the paper. The data form the learners' essay is as follows:

Learners	Raw data	Preliminary codes
Learner A	"who should be responsible" "what causes pregnancy" "They should think about their future and some Girls force their boyfriends...."	<b>Punctuation errors</b>
Learner H	"...They must do somethings that they can. Like other people of their age....."	
Learner F	"...that is not how things are	

	done, even girls should be blamed, why did she agree to visit a boy while she knows what will happen....”	
Learner D	“... we don’t use a protetion...” “ because we don’t support this child...”	<b>Spelling errors</b>
Learner A	“Teenage pregenancy is when a young girl fall pregenant.” “.....durying sexual intercause boys are not forcing girls...”	
Learner B	“In a group of peers, there is one pregnant or impreg someone..... peers must all be pregnant or impreg someone, it is their culture”	
Learner E	“I am nit agreeing with this topic becaus....”	
Learner F	“No one will be blame” “Boys are not force girls to sleep with them”	
Learner K	“Those girls should have use the 7bs method.....”	<b>Tense errors</b>
Learner A	“it’s better to abstain until you feel like you will be able to	

	look after the child and not blaming boys....”	
Learner B	“...not knowing that this peers are bad influence....” “...a peer’s lives there is a competition....”	<b>Concord errors</b>
Learner D	“...and the community blame that boys...”	
Learner H	“...get into a things that attracts your attention...” “...boys they must not be blamed...”	
Learner A	“That why I disagree...”	
Learner E	“I am disagreeing with this topic because not only boys”	<b>Omissions</b>
Learner I	“Nowadays the situation is not same...”	

#### 4.4 DATA PRESENTATION SUMMARY

The findings above and the summary below confirms the link between the findings and the review in chapter 2. This link and relativity shows that the investigated challenge is not new in the research field, the difference is the context and the manner in which the challenge occur. The literature shows that the challenges in writing have been there since different periods and contexts. The researcher would like to also anticipate that this has always been of a research interest, since learning and teaching facilities were introduced by human kind.

The researcher saw it reader convenient to establish and present the key findings first before the discussion of the same findings so that the discussion will have clear shape

and solid point of reference. The findings in the table below are attached to their reviewed findings from the literature. These findings are summarised thematically just below the table. The purpose of this table is to highlight some of the key findings discussed in the study.

**Summary of key findings table**

<b>Findings</b>	<b>Reviewed literature</b>
Learners are not taught writing regularly, therefore they find themselves writing essays for formal assessment only.	Younes and Albalawi (2015) and Bahloul (2000) advocates that there are writing irregularities and inconsistencies, writing activities are not confronted on frequent basis.
Large classrooms makes it almost impossible to teach essay writing. Essay writing is a lengthy exercise requiring small number of learners.	It becomes impossible for teachers to reach out to the teeming population of students. Only learners at the front are at luck to grasp the content (Ayodeli, 2016)
Learners find it difficult to understand most of the topics they are required to write about.	Students find themselves not understanding the topics and this prevents building up ideas and drawing conclusions (Salem, 2007)
There's a consistent poor punctuation and capitalisation on the discourse of the learners.	Almarwany (2008) students' worse problem in writing emanates from capitalization and punctuation. Tshotsho (2006) students confuse the L1 and L2 punctuation and capitalization systems.
Spelling errors, confusion of pronouns and poor paragraphing are very common.	Errors are found in using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing (Cheng, 2002)
Teachers do not give learners feedback	The DBE (2011: p.78) and Janienne



after assessing their essays.	(2010) teachers are expected to give learners comprehensive feedback so that errors will be minimized in future.
Learners are not given enough writing activities and teachers do not honour their writing sessions.	Chou (2011) teachers are not trained to teach writing in their training institutions, therefore, the teaching of writing will remain minimal because teachers are not writers.

The findings in this study show challenges in spelling, diction, tense, topical issues, coherence, punctuation errors, ineffective teaching strategies as well as the contribution of big classrooms. The literature confirms most of these findings and refutes a few. Besides the table above and the summary of findings below, this is presented well in next chapter, the discussion.

The theoretical framework of the study and the supporting theories are also characterised in these findings. The teachers in the study mentioned guiding learners and giving them intensive feedback. In the context of the theory, the SCT speaks of the scaffolding where the teacher plays a facilitative role to mediate the content to the learner so that the learner will then be competent and independent (Gedera and Williams, 2016). The findings shows that learners are sometimes writing based on real events and topics, this is a tenet of the SCT in that “social constructivist perspective locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social and educational community context” (Kepe, 2014, p.18).

The data presentation summary is presented in the following format of themes:

**4.4.1 Challenges in writing**

In responding to the question on writing challenges and confirming that learners do find essay writing challenging, teacher A and B do share the same sentiments confirming that learners do find writing challenging. Teacher C maintains that writing is a challenge to learners more especially when comes to the aspects of sentence structure and

language usage. This latter finding is shared by Akdal and Sahin (2014) when they assert that learners are not able to formulate sentences because of lack of writing frequencies. Conversely on the other side, teacher C believes that learners are just lazy to put effort in writing since their day to day topics covers social and personal experience. Teacher C responded, *“No writing is not a challenge, learners are just lazy to write. A person cannot for example be unable to remember “their best day in their lives or to explain a picture they are looking at”.*

The teachers also made mention of some of the observations they encounter on their learners' written essays which cements their respond in that learners have challenges. In the responding to the question; “what do you observe with your learner's writing?” Teacher A responded: *“lack of correct interpretation and wrongful usage of tenses. Learners cannot spell common words”.* This was supported by the other two teachers with a comment that learners are facing spelling and punctuation challenges in their writing. According to Cheng (2002), learners experience essay writing errors such as using suitable vocabulary and accurate spelling. To support the finding on poor punctuation, Almarwany (2008) maintains that the students' worse problem in writing emanates from capitalisation and punctuation. In his study, he observed that students committed errors in grammar and text organisation but punctuation stood outstanding.

Ayodele (2016) maintains that writing is a challenging skill to grasp and this could be due to number of learners in a classroom, dialects, and learners' culture. Most of the learners in responding to the question “Is writing a challenge to you?” confirmed that writing is a challenge and shared the same response as the teachers. Learner C responded that *“Yes, sometimes when I begin I feel that I am blank and I don't know how to start more especially with arranging my ideas”.* The aspect of inability of arranging ideas by learners is evident in Cheng (2002) that learners claim to have “ideas” but in fact, they lack either the necessary linguistic skills or the pragmatic understanding to express themselves in their essay writing.

There was one learner (learner A) who remained outstanding by making it clear that writing is not a challenge but they are not yet satisfied with their writing style and trend. This finding from learner A stood outstanding and refute the literature reviewed, the

researcher feels that if most of the learners are on the level of learner A then there would be so much excellence in writing. These responses between teachers and learners have a direct link of their day to day writing lessons or lack thereof. Learners also indicated that the things that makes writing a challenge is the fact that they run out of words during writing and they are not aware of the spellings of other words, as it was alluded to by Cheng (2002).

#### **4.4.2 Teaching and learning strategy**

The question for the teachers was that “*which teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?*” Teacher B responded, “*I prefer group teaching. As a teacher I cannot touch every learner because our classes are overcrowded so peer learning is best*”. This sentiment was shared by teacher A by stating that he gives learners different topics in different groups to work on. The teachers seem not to have productive strategies in teaching writing and the evidence on the learners’ written work proves this case. Mackenzie (2017) and Gedera and Williams (2016) maintains that teachers should employ scaffolding strategies which will allow them to facilitate the work of individual learners. In this context, group teaching strategy will not be flexible in scaffolding each learner since some learners can hide behind others. Therefore, this finding refutes the strategy recommended in the literature.

Teacher C finds it easier and progressive for him to use visual teaching strategies where learners interpret and describe pictures. Teacher C’s idea is found in the study of Nabavi (2012) who maintains that social learning theory encourages teachers to move away from traditional teaching and introduce visuals in the classrooms to suit the modernised generation they teach.

The DBE (2011: p.78) encourages teachers to give learners comprehensive feedback so that errors will be minimised in future. In discussing the strategies with the learners, the researcher learnt that the responses the teacher gave might not be the case or vice versa. The strategies the teachers employ seemed not to be effective. Evidence in the form of learners’ responses suggests that these strategies might not have been implemented. Learners feel that they are not taught at all and their responses are not

relating to that of the teachers. Learner D recommended that teachers must teach every aspect separate and they must also return their marked essays with feedback to ensure that they do not repeat the same mistakes.

According to Leki (2001), it is not surprising when learners do not receive feedback; teachers have a challenge when it is time to give learners feedback on their writing activities. This is because correcting grammar exercises for large numbers of students may be tedious and time-consuming, giving appropriate and useful feedback on multiple drafts of texts to large numbers of students is almost impossible. The findings between the teachers and the learners about the teaching and learning strategies seemed to be unrelated. Learners feel that explanation and feedback method will work for them, whereas teachers feel that group work is the way to go. With these imbalances, the researcher would like to show that the teachers do not know the needs of their learners and this is because of the minimal interaction they have on writing issues.

#### **4.4.3 Frequency of writing assessments**

This theme addresses the regularity of teachers giving tasks and learners completing those tasks. The question directed to the teacher was that how often or how many times in a week do they give learners writing activities. Teacher A responded that, "*writing is a very lengthy exercise. At least in a week I give learners two activities*". This sentiment was also shared by teacher C., Teacher A and C supports Ayodele (2016) notion that the teaching of writing can be a very lengthy and daunting activity. This implies that teachers are facing a challenge in adapting to the teaching of writing which then will obviously results in minimal assessment since there was no teaching.

The findings got a little more interesting when teacher B indicated that, "I give activities every day of the week to enable them to answer questions and deal with issues such as punctuation and grammar errors". Teacher B is very outstanding with his response as compared to the other teachers. DBE (2011: p.17) sows that writing is designated only two days in a week , therefore, the sentiment shared by teacher B on giving writing activities every day is incorrect and resembles ignorance of the policy document and the pace setter.

Looking at the responses learners gave, the researcher would like to make an assumption that the teachers did not give a true reflection. All the learner participants indicated that in week they do not engage in transactional writing and revealed evidence from their activity book. In answering the question, “*How many writing activities (transactional) do you receive a week?*” learner D responded “*nothing, we only write essays when it’s time for formal assessments*” and learner I indicated “*None, we are only writing essays formally and there are no lessons on essay writing*”. There is a discrepancy between what learners and their teachers report.

Hashim (2007) maintains that the activity theory encourages teachers to give learners many activities to sharpen, unfortunately the findings of the study shows that this is not the case. Teachers should abide by the theory and the language policy and give learners writing activities as required. .

#### **4.4.4 Common errors in writing**

The teachers agree that the learners have common errors that describe their writing. In responding to the question on common errors learners commit, the teachers indicated that they notice spelling errors, confusion of pronouns (Cheng, 2002), poor punctuation, poor sentence construction and paragraphing (Tshotsho, 2006 & Almarwany, 2008). Teacher B went even further and indicated apart from writing errors, learners do not finish their essays completely. This is supported by Ayodele (2016) when he maintains that writing can be a very lengthy and daunting activity which requires ample of time.

The very same sentiments were shared by the learners. Learner A responded: “*We commit many spelling errors and omission of words*” and this was supported by learner C when he indicated that they forget to punctuate. It is very interesting and concrete that both the teachers and learners agree that the learners continuously commit errors in their essay writing. This however, raises a question of what the teachers must do to assist the learners, since the errors are identified.

#### **4.4.5 Teaching and learning duration**

All the teachers indicated that they follow pace setter form their language policy. They teach writing twice a week. Teacher A responded that, *“I teach it almost twice a week but when is nearing the time for writing formal tasks I give writing more time”*. The response from teacher A shows that there’s an additional contribution to help the learners by extending the duration of teaching writing. The extent to which the teacher contribute towards the learners’ benefits as indicated by teacher A above shows what Gedera and Williams ( 2016) refers to as giving remedies to learners and affording them extra time to comprehend the delivered content.

The learners brought a different view form this aspect, all the learners responded that they are not taught essay writing at all. Learner B responded, *“No, teachers focus more on teaching literature (paper 2)”* and learner D stresses that *“teachers do not teach essay writing; they just assume that essay writing is an easy and obvious thing for us to write”*. The finding above proofs Chou (2011) study which shows that teachers are not writers themselves, they don’t teach writing and this is because their training did not involve teaching writing.

The responses from the teachers and learners in this instance are on disagreement and will be discussed more in the next chapter (discussion of findings). The researcher would like to make an exception that the learners’ responses may be true. The teachers might not be willing to reveal the reality regarding frequency of teaching writing. This could be due to the fact that they might be regarded as “bad teachers” who are not “competent enough” to teach the learners effectively.

#### **4.4.6 Causes of the challenges in writing**

We learnt earlier from both the teachers and learners’ responses that indeed learners face number of challenges in their writing classrooms. In response to this, one teacher stressed that the main challenge learners are facing emanate from their day-to-day exposure to writing and language usage. This finding is evident in the study of Tatkovic (2005) and Ariyanti (2016) who maintains that writing challenges are derived from the

difference in cultural backgrounds and home language which is their daily mode of interaction. Learners engage more in their home language till it is the English lesson, thus these challenges are pouring.

The teacher further said that learners do not write and read in their leisure time and this causes their lacking vocabulary. Ayodele (2016) refers to this is a lack of language exposure. Teacher C maintained that, "*learners do not plan before they write, they chose topics they do not even understand better and they cannot differentiate different types of essay writing*". Learners' inability or lack of understanding topics is mentioned in the study of Salem (2007). He made an assertion that "students find themselves not understanding the topics and this prevents building up ideas and drawing conclusions". Apart from lack of understanding of topics, teacher B feels that learners show great potential but they are lazy to write. What sparks an interest is the fact that the teachers are aware of the fact that there are various causes and the question that is left hanging is "what are they willing do to improve their learners writing?".

A learner is a responsible recipient of the teacher (Bandura, 1977). Learner F stressed that the cause for their challenges is that, "*we are not well prepared before writing*" while learner I maintains that, "*it is because since we cannot pronounce some words then we cannot write correct spelling*". The responses from the learners link best with the issue of lack of exposure towards writing and using the language in daily basis (Ayodele, 2016).

Some learner participants felt that the challenges they face emanate from the fact that topics given in their essays are difficult to understand and they are not familiar with them. The DBE (2011) in the CAPS document encourages teachers to assess learners in writing with social and realistic issues which learners are exposed to. The study shows that teachers are not contextually evaluating the kind of topics they give learners, and this results in the lack of understanding of the topic. The challenge of not understanding topics can also be that learners do not read for leisure to grasp current affairs content around them.

#### **4.4.7 Overcoming writing challenges**

The teachers indicated that they have mechanisms in place to overcome these writing challenges. The teachers made a mention of giving learners intensive feedback and finding the best learner in writing to assist other learners. The teachers seemed to be inclined to use peer-teaching and giving in-depth feedback to help learners overcome these challenges. It is very interesting when looking at the fact that learners maintains that they still have difficulties in writing, it is either that the strategies are not effective and enough or the learners are not responding well to the strategies used by the teacher to improve writing. In a way, there isn't much done in overcoming this challenge from both the teacher and learners. However, it is vital to ensure that learners are devoted to writing activities and they are motivated and well-organised in order to ensure that there is effective teaching and learning.

Mackenzie (2017) maintains that teachers should employ strategies that are inclined to "scaffold learners" and give learners the writing tasks. This practice does not exclude guiding learners and correcting them, this can be done at a convenient time. Janienne (2010) maintains this will help in minimising the writing struggles and confusions because learners will develop these patterns in their perception. The findings shows that teachers spoke little of the mechanisms to overcome the challenges learners face. This is obvious because the study also proves that teachers do not teach writing. So they cannot solve what they don't teach in their classrooms.

Learners responded with visional mindset that teachers should make time to teach essay writing, give daily writing activities and eventually stop assuming writing is as simple as they anticipate (DBE, 2011). Learner F responded, "teachers must stop assuming essay are simple for us by imposing that we've done essay writing from grade 8. This is because we normally forget; I cannot remember what I did in grade 8 when I am in grade 12". These responses shows evidence that the teaching and learning of writing has a milestone ahead before there could be excellence. Learners feel that their writing duration should be extended with an hour so that they manage to write to finish and have time to proofread.



The teachers mentioned few aspects that are essential for effective teaching of writing. Teacher A maintains, "I think there's a need for essay writing competitions which I think will give these learners another dimension in molding their creativeness and build their interest". Provided that learners aren't actively competing in writing, then they will have a continuous disinterest and less exposure on essay writing; sentiments of teacher A.

Teachers call upon the department to build enough classrooms and improve their resources so that they can teach classes that are not overcrowded. Teacher C stresses that the department should revisit their policy more especially as writing is concerned because the time allocated for writing is not sufficient. The need for more time is supported by (Ayodele, 2016) with the idea that teaching writing is lengthy and daunting so there's a need to go extra mile for remedying such writing imbalances. All this still raises questions like "how will increased time and minimise learners in a class get the teachers to teach?" As learners said they are no lessons in writing. The researcher is not convinced that the minimised number of learners in a classroom along with increasing allocated duration will be a solution. Teachers should root productive methods, attend to their classroom, teach according to the pace setter, give constructive feedback and learners must also be fully committed to learn.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter dealt with the profiles of the school, teachers and learners and presented the data as capture from the interviews and learners documents. The researcher made observations such as the disagreement of the responses between learners and teachers. It is very important to highlight that looking at the analysis, the responses from the learners relate with their writing. There are difference amongst the teachers on how they teach writing and how learners wish to be taught. The next chapter will deal with a full discussion of the data presented and also relate it to the literature review.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter. This chapter discusses the findings of the study as the information required is captured in the previous chapter. The researcher visualised his understanding of the data after taking his time analysing it. There's a noticeable trend that learners are not able to use the appropriate vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and solid foundation of constituting a coherent essay (Cheng, 2002). This chapter discusses the findings as per the questions and the purpose of the study which is to explore the challenges faced by learners in English FAL essay writing.

The discussion is guided by the reviewed literature, the purpose and lastly the research questions of the study. For this research to be carried out, the following questions acted as a guide for the acquisition of data in the study:

- What are the writing challenges learners encounter when writing English FAL essays?
- What are the causes of the coherence errors committed in learners' essay writing?
- Which teaching strategies are used in teaching essay writing?

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH**

The focus of the study was to investigate the challenges faced by learners in writing English FAL essays. The background of the study shows that the challenges in writing essays are found in different contexts and times in the teaching and learning institutions. The researcher also experienced some of the challenges mentioned in the study when he was an English FAL high school teacher in the year 2017, and this motivated this study to materialise. The study shows in chapter one that there are writing irregularities in English FAL writing classrooms (Albalawi, 2015). Learners claim to have the abilities and the competencies to write an essay but they dismally lack the

necessary linguistic skills or the pragmatic understanding to express themselves in their essay writing. According to Cheng (2002), learners experience essay writing errors in using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing.

The background of the study was done and arranged based on the literature on the teaching and learning of writing essays internationally, nationally and in the Limpopo province, in particular with usage of articles written about these writing challenges faced by schools in Limpopo. The background of the research problem covers the essential challenges that learners are facing as well as their teachers in their classrooms.

The literature on chapter two was done with the consideration of the challenges faced by learners in writing EFAL essays. The literature shows that learners have been having these challenges, from the internal content to the physical structure of the essay. The theoretical framework of the study is SCT, which believes in making meaning in social context about the events of the society. The SCT states that there's no specific content in writing, the meaning is the key for interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). This formed the basis of the study in that learners are forming their different realities every day through interacting with each other, the teachers and lastly by writing down their experiences.

The literature displays some of the challenges in different contexts as follows; teachers cannot reach out to the teeming population of students. Only learners at the front are at luck to grasp the content (Ayodeli, 2016). There are writing irregularities and inconsistencies, writing activities are not confronted on frequent basis and learners have a poor writing exposure (Younes & Albalawi, 2015, Bahloul, 2000). Teachers are not taught how to teach writing in their training (Chou, 2011). Students find themselves not understanding the topics and this prevents building up ideas and drawing conclusions (Salem, 2007). Lastly, Instances of errors are found in using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing (Cheng, 2002).

The research methodology in the study resulted in the interpretivist paradigm with the qualitative approach being the method to carry out the study. Since the researcher understand the method of the study, the chosen study was approached with a

phenomenological research design as the way to get an insight of the problem and draw down procedures and collecting tools of the study.

The population of the study comprised of learners in grade 12 and their English teachers. The majority of the population speaks Sepedi as their home language. The sampling method used to select participants was purposive sampling; this was because the researcher saw it fit to sample the accurate sample with relevant criteria to best suit the study such that the overall population is represented with confidence. The researcher believed that the most important data could be obtained from this sample. The number of participants who took part in the study was 15 (see chapter 3).

The data collection tools used in the study were; interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Learners and teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. In order for the researcher to observe learners writing styles and the errors they could be committing, document analysis was employed. The interview audios were transcribed (see addendum H). Learners participated in essay writing in a controlled environment, and the researcher assessed them with the contribution of the English HOD of the school.

The findings were presented in chapter four in the form of tables and themes derived from the research questions. The finding from the interviews and the documents (learners' essays) complements each other. The findings reveals that learners are experiencing challenges in spelling, diction, punctuation, paragraphing, syntax, tense, topic understanding, creativity, coherence and they also do not finish their writing in time. When looking at the teachers, there's a limited time for teach writing. They teach other skills more (literature) than writing because of personal preference. There is also no feedback given to learners and they blame the learners for laziness.

The following section shows a discussion of the findings presented in chapter four:

## **5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.3.1 Challenges in writing**

This study found that writing is both challenging for the teachers to teach and for the learners to learn. Learners are not able to grasp and present their essay document with basic writing aspects such as sentence construction and language usage in general; assertion by teacher C in the study. The teachers themselves find it difficult to adapt to the short time in a two weeks cycle provided to teach writing which is regarded as a lengthy aspect of English teaching to deal with. This time allocation is evident in the DBE CAPS document (2011: p.17). According to Nofal (2010) and Hauwen-Mo (2012), it is genuinely hard for students to express themselves sufficiently in their writing. This is because even the most distinct characteristics of an acceptable paragraph are virtually absent in the writings of most pupils. Previous studies such as the study carried out by Ahmed (2010), proves that teaching and learning writing is a daunting and lengthy exercise.

In the context of this study, it is found that the overall number of learners who have challenges in writing outnumbers the number of independent and competent learners. This is purely evident on the learners' work which the researcher found while assessing the participants' essays. According to the DBE (2010: p.78), assessment in writing should integrate events and topics about the things that happen in real life. This means that learners must not be exposed to writing about vague and more abstract things. When the teachers and learners introduced the issue of topical challenges when writing essay, it was found that teachers do comply with the curriculum needs and give learners real life topics and those based on real events.

Salem (2007) made an assertion that was also found in this study that it is unfortunate that learners are not able to build up ideas when not understanding the topic. Though learners may claim to have ideas, in actual fact the situation is that they lack the necessary linguistic skills and the pragmatic understanding to express them in their essay writing (Cheng, 2002). Learner G in the focus group interview maintained that they find the topics problematic and difficult to write about, which this is also followed by using wrong words and context. On the other hand learner C indicated that “*yes writing is a challenge for me, sometimes I feel blank and I don't know how to start arranging my ideas*”. This will then imply that if incorrect diction and context when writing are in place, then the essay cannot achieve cohesion. Karadewniz (2017: p.94) views cohesion as the connection between words, phrases, prefixes, and suffixes. This study found the same results which complements the study carried out by Karadewniz (2017) as far as cohesion is concerned.

This study found that learners are punctuating erroneously in their written work, and this is evident on addendum J and 4.3.3 data segment 3 in chapter 4. Almarwany (2008) and Tshotsho (2006) maintains that students' worst problem in writing emanates from capitalisation and punctuation. This is because there's also a consistent confusion of L1 and L2 punctuation and capitalisation systems amongst learners. This confusion is also found in Tatkovic's (2005) study in which he maintained that students' English language exposure is the root of crisis. Students are confronted with interacting in their home languages (in this context, Sepedi) every day and write in English in the classroom, and this brings language competent imbalances.

One of the ultimate findings of this study is that learners are unable to spell words correctly. Bahloul (2007) share's a sentiment that learners misspell words and believes that the cause of spelling errors is the irregularity of writing English activities. Supporting this finding, Younes and Albalawi (2015) maintains that students suffer from spelling words incorrectly and this could be because of the inconsistent change of words or standard version of the language the students are used to.

In this study, Learner B maintained that “*yes writing is a challenge because spelling some of the words is a huge problem*”, this was supported by teacher A in that they

observe the learners' essay daily and learners are not able to spell common words. Data segment 3, 4.3.3 in chapter 4, learner A misspelled words as follows "...*durying sexual intercause boys are not forcing girls...*". This shows a concrete evidence that even at a grade 12 band learners are still not ready for advanced English or produce standard essay writing.

### **5.3.2 Teaching and learning strategies**

Since this study is administered in the education department, point of reference is of most reference in the education policies. The DBE (2010: p.36) makes a provision of a process approach to teaching writing (pre-writing, writing and post-writing). This would mean that the strategies employed in teaching writing should seemingly relate to the recommendation of the policy even if they are external strategies. It therefore makes no provision of the product approach. The strategies employed in this regard should help learners in applying language structures, knowledge and lastly writing in acceptable sentences and paragraphs. Writing in an acceptable sentences and paragraphs in this sense will denote coherence.

The study found that teachers resort to "group teaching" which seems to be ineffective looking at the results of the learners in the essays. Teacher A and B believed that group teaching helps them in two ways, firstly that it allows for discussion of different types of essay in one lesson and secondly because they cannot engage all the learners through the content due to overcrowded classrooms. The study shows that this strategy is not effective since the majority of learners in the classroom are struggling. Therefore, the research would like to assume that it is not possible for the competent learners in the classroom to be in groups to assist the large number of the disadvantaged learners. This is because group work is good only on condition that most or all the learners in the group will participate.

There is an assertion by the learners in the study that teachers do not employ any specific technique to assist them simply because they are always told and conditioned that essay is not a problem and does not require a full lesson. According to Gufron

(2016: p.40), the product approach aims at achieving the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices. Learner A made an assertion, "*I think our teachers must also write essay and present them in the classroom so that we see all the elements involved. This will help us work on our own work*". This recommendation by the learners aligns with the product approach teaching. Product approach teaching has 'imitation of model texts' as one of its tenets (Gufron, 2016: p.40).

The lack of proper and productive teaching strategies as found in this study is supported by Ahmed (2010) and Chou (2011). In their studies they maintained that teachers cannot teach writing simply because even their training did not include teaching writing in practice. Gebhard (2006: p.17) argues that, for a language teacher to produce good results in teaching, they're obliged to learn more about language facets and how they will deliver them. This will enable them to understand better the contexts learners are facing in achieving proper essay writing. The learners and teachers responded in absolute diverse ways regarding the strategies and this showed a serious gap in terms of teacher-learner interaction. It is therefore paramount for the researcher to conclude that teachers are not necessarily excelling in employing strategies in teaching writing.

### **5.3.3 Frequency of writing assessments**

The study found that teachers are not giving learners writing assessments as frequent as expected. There's an ancient educational Chinese proverb (551 BC) that state that "*I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand*". This proverb is coined in many curriculum systems either directly or indirectly. According to the DBE (2010: p.78), and Tatkovic (2005) learners should engage in writing activities every day during class time in order to learn how to use written language effectively and expressively. This idea of giving learners writing activities everyday support the perspective the researcher has as a teacher. Learners need to engage in activities everyday so that they expand their knowledge writing. They should learn by doing as the proverb indicates.

Teacher A made an assertion on 4.3.1 data segment 1 that "*writing is a very lengthy exercise. At least in a week I give learners two activities*". The idea that teaching and



assessing writing is a lengthy task is supported by Ayodele (2016) as he maintains that the teaching of English writing can be a very daunting activity. Teacher A's statement differed with the points raised by Teacher B and C because they indicated that they give writing activities daily. The study shows that the assertions made by teacher B and C could not be true based on the level of proficiency and competency in learners' essays and secondly based on the time allocated in the policy for teaching writing, evident on 2.4.2 in chapter 2.

The DBE (2010: p.78) in CAPS document shows that formal assessment involves all the tasks that are formally moderated, marked and used for the progression and the certification of the learners. These will definitely include assessments carried out for the purpose of getting a term and year marks. They include tests, projects, oral examination and assignments. The study found that all the learner participants reject the idea the teachers gave in relation to giving them writing activities. Learners indicated in 4.3.2.3 data segment 2, that there are no writing activities given and writing is also not taught.

The only time learners are confronted with writing essays is when they are writing it for formal assessment and for that particular term they will be done with aspects relating to writing. This finding that learners only write essays in formal assessment is found in the study of Ahmed (2010) as he maintained that writing teachers cannot write and therefore cannot teach writing. The researcher would like to make an assertion that, with this finding then it means learners write essays four times a year (one formal essay for every term). The level of competency in learners' essays support the finding that they are not exposed to writing even when it is due of them.

#### **5.3.4 Common errors in writing**

It is evident that in this theme, the learners and the teachers are two side of one coin. They agreed on the common errors that they experience, the teachers as the assessors and the learners as the writers. The study found that the first common challenge that learners are continuously facing is not even on a discourse level, it is the fact that they don't finish writing their essays to the required length. This was followed by a

proposition by Teacher B that the time for teaching writing and assessing be extended at least by an hour.

The studies by Nofal (2010) and Hauwen-Mo (2012) shows that consistency, unity, order, and coherence are lacking at maximum in students' essays. This will mean that learners fail to align the direction of their thoughts. The study found that learners are not able write a coherent and cohesive essay. Learner J in 4.3.2.4 maintains that they write lengthy paragraphs that makes no sense. It is very common on most of the essays the researcher moderated for the purpose of this study that lacks logical arrangements of ideas. Learners are different and respond differently to learning. The lack of organising ideas was a key common things amongst other writing aspects.

An average number of learners in the study cannot punctuate and capitalise correctly. As mentioned earlier, the cause for this could be the confusion of L1 and L2 systems, inconsistencies in participating in writing activities and lack of writing lessons. In 4.3.1, Teacher B uttered that learners commit common errors simply because they are just lazy. This might be true, but at the same time the teachers might also be shifting blame to learners. There are other factors such as using ineffective strategies and not teaching writing that must be looked into.

The study is no exception to other found results such as spelling errors and redundancy. It is found in the study that learners misspell many words and most of them are very common. The learners' spelling errors as displayed in 4.3.3 is only a tip of the ice in this study, see also addendum. J. Younes and Albalawi (2015), Cheng (2002) and Bahloul (2007) asserts that spelling errors and the use of inaccurate vocabulary are the root problems in writing. This spelling problems results from different factors such as not reading extensively, writing inconsistencies and change in spelling of words depending on the standard version of the used language.

### **5.3.5 Teaching and learning duration**

The DBE (2011: p.17) makes a provision of approximately 1.5 hours in a week for writing lessons. This time allocation leaves to the schools to designate their timetabling with a sharp eye. The study found that the teachers do not honor this duration allocated

for teaching and the learning of writing. All teachers in 4.3.1 indicated they offer writing lessons with the guidance of this allocated time and the pace setter but unfortunately the results from the essays and the learners are in conjunction with that. When looking at the learners' written essays, it is evidential that there is a very minimal time spent on teaching writing.

Learner B indicated in 4.3.2.5 that teachers spend the time for teaching writing on teaching literature (paper 2) because learners do not perform well in literature. One of the other reasons why the duration for writing is not honored, the study found that teachers are under assumption that writing an essay is an easy aspect that learners can deal with on their own. The researcher would like to conclude that the teachers are not teaching the learners based on the learners' interest, hence the essay writing is a continuing problem.

It is also of obvious complement to the fact that learners are not encouraged to practice writing, and also to the fact that they only write essays in formal essay simply because the time spared for essay teaching is not used for such. Chou (2011) indicated that teachers do not teach essay writing because even their training did not include or make a mention of how to teach it. This assertion is relevant to the current study's finding in that teachers avoid teaching writing and render the duration spared for writing void.

### **5.3.6 Causes of challenges in writing**

The study shows evidence that one the causes of these writing challenges is the lack of understanding of the topics which lead to impaired meaning. According to Salem (2007), the first problem in writing essays is that students find themselves not understanding the topics they have to write on. In the study, learner G and I as well as teacher C support the idea that some of the topics are not understood well. It is of a vital need that teachers start teaching essay writing intensively so as to prepare and alert the learners of the kind of topics and their variations which are set in essays.

Teachers and learners must engage in reading for fun in leisure times so that they acquire language skills such as becoming fluent readers, gaining vocabulary and developing the ability to understand and use complex grammatical structures so that in

return they can write them down (Maswanganye, 2010). This means that when one reads often, that familiarity with texts will enhance their writing skills as they will be transferring the known to the paper. Teacher A in 4.3.1 responded “*learners do not read nor write during their leisure, and this cause lack of vocabulary*”. This assertion is supported by learner I when he said that sometimes the inability to pronounce words makes them to spell it wrongfully. It is evident that for a person to write with competent, they will have to engage in more reading and write more often so that the competency and the skill develops.

The study also established that language exposure is the cause of these imbalances in writing. Ariyanti (2016) alluded that the biggest challenge in errors is derived from the difference in cultural backgrounds between the students’ home language and rules of the second language. Both the learners and the teachers only find themselves interacting in English only during English lessons and this hardens the work of the teacher and the learner to write. The fact that the learners as mentioned above, do not engage in reading and writing during leisure, it is the exposure crisis that causes these challenges. According to Chou (2011) teachers themselves were not exposed to teaching writing even in their training, they ultimately learn some of the writing facets when busy teaching their subject.

### **5.3.7 Overcoming writing challenges**

The study found that the recommendations that the teachers have as solutions are more departmental than individual. It is clear to the researcher that the teachers do not see any loop-holes on their side as the practitioners. Teacher B made an assertion that “*it is very important for the department of education to be consistent with teacher-learner ratio. We are not able to deal with overcrowded classes.*” This statement is supported by the study of Ayodele (2016) where it is maintained that there are large percentages of the classes that are less productive and to this effect, it becomes impossible for teachers to reach out to the teeming population of students.

It is evident that the preliminary suggestions that the teachers and the learners possess as the main sources of overcoming the challenges above are not really matching with

the problems. This is because the study found that learners are struggling dismally to write proper paragraphs, organising ideas, choosing the right diction, instituting correct spelling and punctuation as well as not understanding the topics and the type of essay in question. With that said, the researcher does not think that number of learners in this case is a problem more especially looking at the classroom band (grade 12) of the learners.

Since the study reveals that the teachers are not ready to intervene as individuals, teacher C also makes mention of the department increasing the time allocated for teaching writing at least with an hour in the two weeks cycle discussed in 2.4.2 figure 1. Mackenzie (2017) calls for scaffolding, that the teachers must give learners writing tasks and intensively guide them and correct them, this can be done at a convenient time as Janienne (2010) maintains this will help in minimizing the writing struggles and confusions because learners will develop these patterns in their perception. This affirmation is supported by the learners in the study that teachers must make time to teach them and make them write more so they get used to writing rather than being confronted in the examination room with something they were never taught before.

The study also reveals that the teachers as the facilitators in their classrooms, they do not understand the causes of the problem as they are strategies do not align with solving them. Navavi (2017) and Bandura (1977) asserts that teachers must identify learning challenges and come with teaching methods that will encourage learners to change in behavior. For instances, rewarding learners will result in other learners imitating the rewarded learners. This strategy is shared by Teacher A in 4.3.1 that there must be essay writing competitions in the school where we reward learners and this will mold their creativeness and build their interest. The researcher have a perspective that teachers must not confront learners with the concept that they are lazy but rather employ effective strategies to fascinate them into this writing environment.

The DBE in the CAPS document (2011: p.16) makes mention of teaching approaches. Teachers are expected to follow on these approaches intertwined in their teaching of writing. The text-based approach and the communicative approach are approaches that are concerned with the continuous use and production of texts in a language classroom.

The researcher is under an impression that teachers do not consult their language policies. It is found in the study that teachers did not make any mention of the approaches or strategies mentioned in the policy document. The policy serves as a guide and a monitoring tool, and this study would like to anticipate that if the consultation transpires then the challenges could be at minimal.

Gebhard (2006: p.17) argues that for a writer to be productive in writing they need to be readers and write even for fun. This relates to both the learners and teachers that they will have to engage in reading and writing even on their leisure time. The study shows one of the causes of writing challenges emanates from the fact that learners and teachers are not writers and readers during their leisure. To overcome this, it will require a vast commitment to read and interact with the language even outside the classrooms so that proficiency and competency can be enhanced. Maswanganye (2010) alludes that reading for fun makes teachers and learners acquire language skills such as becoming fluent readers, gaining vocabulary and developing the ability to understand and use complex grammatical structures.

According to the DBE (2011: p.8), in the CAPS document learners should be writing gradually more challenging texts. Along with these tasks, they must get a regular and timely feedback on their writing so that aspects for improvement are identified. Learners must also grant themselves independency in their learning so that they will also contribute to their success. All the learner participants in the study made a claim that there are no writing lessons offered to them. The researcher is not trying to burden the learners, but he feels that since these learners are from a senior grade-band then they should also put on a minimal pressure on themselves to write, read and request lessons on topics they are struggling at.

The study also found that there is a heavy level of spelling errors in the learners' written work. According to Williamson (2015) and De Klerk (2000), most of the learners see no important use for a dictionary or they don't possess them and unfortunately even the educators do not consult them. The correct and the more successful route to overcome spelling imbalances is through the consultation of a dictionary. It is the teachers and learners' duty to always have one and consult it for a fine proficient spelling of words.

## 5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The researcher would like to conclude that the study addressed the proposed problem in chapter 1 and successfully achieved its aim in exploring the challenges faced by learners in essay writing. The study established that indeed there are varied challenges that learners as the primary participants of the study faces. The challenges found in the study are not new in the research field. The results in this study confirms the findings discussed in the literature review (chapter 2) from other scholars.

The learners' written essays administered by the researcher as part of the data collection tool reveals that learners lack the ability to spell words correctly, to punctuate appropriately, usage of correct tense, diction and a logical flow of ideas throughout the paragraphs. Cheng (2002) reveals that learners experience essay writing errors in using suitable vocabulary, accurate spelling, knowledge of grammar rules and instituting coherence in writing. In his study, Almarwany (2008) also found that the students' worse problem in writing emanates from capitalisation and punctuation. In his study, he observed that students committed errors in grammar and text organisation but punctuation stood outstanding.

The results of the study also show there are problems related to topics. Learners are struggling to understand the topics that they have to discuss in their writing. This conclusion is also expressed in Salem (2007)'s work which allude that the first problem in writing essays is that students find themselves not understanding the topics they have to write based on and this alone resulted in not knowing where to start, how to develop ideas and draw a conclusion. This highlights the convictions shared by Mensah (2014) and Mali (2014) that coherence is achieved when the sentences in a paragraph relate to one another and when the paragraphs in a passage are presented in a reasonable sequence. This will, therefore, include the arrangements of those sentences into paragraphs, the organisation, unity, meaning, and structure of the essay to display the whole of a written coherent work. In light of this study, students are not able to achieve coherence in an essay.

The classrooms are populated in this school and that is an adversary to both teachers and learners. The teachers in the study are not able to teach writing skill in their large populated classroom and their conviction is that learners are lazy and teaching essay is a lengthy and a hectic concept more especially where the number of learners is large. This conclusion is shared by Ayodele (2016) who maintains that it becomes impossible for teachers to reach out to the teeming population of students in a classroom, and this is beyond the individual teacher's control.

In relation to the teaching writing and employing effective strategies, it is clear that teachers avoid writing lessons and they again cannot institute productive teaching strategies. The researcher would like to conclude that the teachers are prone to traditional teaching. They only made mention of “group teaching” as the effective strategy and this alone exposed that they are not frequent in their classrooms as the learners alluded and this is obvious because this strategy is not effective for teaching writing in their context. The researcher is not surprised by this finding because it is evident in the study of Chou (2011), Ahmed (2010) and Gebhard (2006) that teachers are not able to teach writing because their training programs made no mention of teaching writing as a skill, and therefore some of the writing aspects are unfamiliar to them.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings presented in chapter 4, the discussion in chapter 5 and the conclusions drawn in this chapter, the study makes the following recommendations:

### **5.5.1 Recommendations for the Department of Education**

- The Department of Education should draw down intervention mechanisms in order to identify schools with over-populated classrooms and raise funds (from parastatal organisations as an example) to improve and build better infrastructure for public schools. This will eliminate the cry of populated classrooms and lack of resources in government schools.
- The teaching duration for writing should be slightly extended and monitor if the teachers would fully deliver writing lessons. This extension is recommended



because learners in higher grade band should be able to write. This is because in higher institution of learning writing is the key skill in assessing students.

- The monitoring systems through the curriculum language advisors should be really activated and enforced, so that teachers will sweat and teach all the four English skills to the core.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for teachers and SMT**

- Teachers must invest their time in teaching writing as prescribed in the policy document. They should follow the guide and the pace setter in the language policies and honour the writing lessons the same way they honour language and literature lessons.
- It is of a great importance that teachers engage in writing and reading in their spare time so that they will inspire learners and live their profession in daily basis even outside the walls of the school.
- Teachers should always remember that they are source of knowledge and cannot be judged and viewed the same way as the learners they teach. Issues such as “learners are lazy” are not commendable, they should derive interesting and encouraging teaching tactics and activities to hypnotize the learners.
- Teachers should expose learners to different text structures and how they are organised and different from each other
- Teachers must minimise their absence in the subject developmental workshops the department host for them quarterly.
- The extra classes for learners who are behind should be arranged not only for subject such as Mathematics but also include all the subjects since different learners struggle different subjects.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations for learners**

- Learners must engage in reading and writing activities on daily basis even outside of the classrooms at school. This will enhance their linguistic and discourse capacity as well as a clear understanding of varied modern and daily topics.

- This recommendation is made because of the type of “social media slang” used in formal texts. Learners must differentiate the context and the manner in which they spell words on social media from the formal presentation of words in the classrooms. They should spell words correctly and become fully conscious of a classroom environment.
- For learners who are in a high grade band like grade 12 should confront the teachers when they are struggling in their work and state it out to the them that they need them in the classrooms.
- In order for a successful learning to occur, learners must arrive early at school and in lessons and at the same avoid bunking classes.

#### **5.5.4 Recommendations for future studies**

This study has a significance to contribute the body of knowledge and to other researchers in the field of writing education. The researcher would like to recommend that the same research idea be pursuit in future as to help in deriving varied means and strategies to overcome these challenges in writing. Specific areas such as spelling problems and inability to achieve coherence in essay writing should be studied more. This could help in contributing to the department how they could prescribe the teaching and learning policies looking at specific loopholes that are found in schools.

#### **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study is limited to one classroom of one school in Sekgosese West Circuit, Limpopo province. The results from this study are from the data extracted from grade 12 learners and their English teachers. As this study only focused on grade 12, it is therefore limited to the grade 12 classroom of the chosen school. Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher did not interview all the learners in the classroom. The sampled participants represented their classroom and the teachers represented their other colleagues.

## **5.7 GENERALISATION OF THE STUDY**

The researcher indicated that the study is limited to one classroom band of on school in Sekgosese West Circuit. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all the grade 12 classrooms in the circuit. The findings of this study are only generalised within the same school the data was collected. Although the researcher did not interview all the learners, the findings of the study generalises all the learners in the grade or the band that the study was invested on.

## **5.8 Summary**

This chapter reflected on the recommendations and conclusions based on the discussed and found results. The study has shown that learners are suffering a great inconsistencies in punctuation, spelling errors, illogical arrangements of ideas and topical problems. The teachers seems not to have a plan and techniques on teaching writing in their classrooms and they alternatively resort to teaching other skills. The study is concluded with a range of recommendations which the researcher think they are of a great contribution to overcome the investigated problem.

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## Addendums

### Addendum A: Consent form for learners (Template)

Dear Learners

I am Nchabeleng M.R. I am a Masters student (M.Ed.) in language Education at University of Limpopo. The study you are about to participate in is for advancing my career and my deepest interest in making a contribution in the learning and teaching of English essay writing. Therefore, as part of the research study, I am expected to collect information from you as the participants of this study. You are important and relevant to participate in this study because you are taught English writing as a skill in education.

All data collected from you will be coded in order to protect your identity. Following the study there will be no way to connect your name with your data. I further reassure you the participants that you will be protected from any kind of harm, be it physical, psychological and emotional.

The sessions will take approximately one (1) hour. You are requested to be as open and honest as possible in answering questions. You are also requested to give answers freely and provide information to the best of your abilities. Confidentiality will be preserved at all cost by the researcher. It should also be noted that there are no right and/or wrong answers. The researcher will be extremely vigilant in respecting your rights to privacy and self-determination.

Any additional information about the study results will be provided to you at its conclusion, upon your request. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you agree to participate, please sign your name below, indicating that you have read and understood the nature of the study, and that all your inquiries concerning the activities have been answered to your satisfaction.

Complete the following if you wish to receive a copy of the results of this study.

Name: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATION

Nchabeleng M.R

signature.....

Masters Candidate (Researcher)

## **Addendum B: Questionnaire for Teachers**

I am Nchabeleng MR, a Masters (M.Ed.) student at the University Of Limpopo School Of Education. As a requirement of the program I am conducting a study on “Errors committed by learners in coherence essay writing in English First Additional Language”. I am currently collecting information for the study, and your school is selected to participate. I shall be grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time to participate in the questionnaires. You are guaranteed that the information you provide will be confidential and will not be disclosed to anybody. Your identity will only be known by me and nobody else. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions as honestly as you can as the responses will assist in the study.

1. What do you understand about a coherent essay writing?
2. How often do you teach writing in your classroom?
3. How many times do you give writing activities to your learners and why?
4. Why would you say that these activities are adequate?
5. Are you convinced that you have enough time to teach essay writing?
6. What do you observe with your learner’s writing?
7. What do you do after observing learners writing errors in their essays?
8. Can you recall and name the error types found in the learners’ essays? If yes; please list them.
9. How serious are the problems of writing in your classroom?
10. What do you think is the cause for this coherence writing errors?
11. What common errors do learners commit in their essay writing?
12. What teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?
13. Why would you think that these strategies are effective?
14. Are extended opportunities helpful for your learners?
15. Do you think that essay writing is challenging learners?

16. How can the problems of errors in coherent essay writing be overcome?

### **Addendum C: Interview schedule for learners**

1. What do you think is coherence/logic in an essay writing?
2. Do you think essay that is not coherent will make sense?
3. Is writing a challenge to you?
4. What are the things that makes writing challenging?
5. What are the things that makes an essay a good essay?
6. In your free-time, do you ever write longer texts in personal journal or diary?
7. Do you think essay writing is taught enough in your English class?
8. Besides mind-map, introduction, body and conclusion, what other things in the essay do you think are important?
9. How best do you want to learn how to write an essay?
10. How many writing activities (transactional) do you receive each week?
11. Are you able to identify your own errors in your essay writing?
12. When you identify the errors, what do you do to make your essay acceptable?
13. What are the common writing errors you commit in a writing essay?
14. What do you do to reduce the amount of writing errors in your essay?
15. Do you think your home language (Sepedi) affect writing English essays? If so, how?
16. Do you write essays in other subjects? How can you compare them to English essays?
17. Which subject do you receive too much errors in writing?
18. Why do you think you commit these errors in essay writing?

19. What do you think can be done to improve your essay writing and avoid coherence errors?

**Addendum D: Voluntary participation (template)**

I agree that the interview procedures and processes have been clearly explained to me as the participant and that my identity and responses will be kept private and confidential; and that I may choose to discontinue with the interview at any stage should I feel uncomfortable, without providing any reason. I also consent that the interview be audio-recorded digitally and electronically so that data provided be analyzed correctly by the researcher; and the findings of the study be reported correctly as captured for research purposes I am participating in. The researcher has explained to me the benefits of participating in this study and I understand fully what I am about to partake in.

I, the interviewer, Nchabeleng Matsee Raymond have explained all procedures to be followed, the risks and benefits involved in the interview, and my ethical obligations.

Signature of Interviewer\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Participant\_\_\_\_\_



## **Addendum E: University Ethical clearance letter**

**Addendum F: Department of Education Permission letter**

**Addendum G: Permission letter from the school**

## Addendum H: Teachers' transcripts

### Responses from Teacher A

1. What do you understand about a coherent essay?

*Coherence in essay writing means that the essay must be logical and relevant especially in relation to the learner.*

2. How often do you teach writing in your classroom?

*As per the pace setter, I teach it almost twice a week but when is nearing the time for writing formal tasks I give writing more time.*

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

*Writing is a very lengthy exercise, I try to give it as many time as I could because it carries 100 marks. At least in a week I give them two activities.*

4. Are these activities enough?

*In my capacity I see them not to be adequate. I give them minimal activities so that I am able to give productive feedback. My workload does not allow me to give out more writing activities and there's not much I can do to overcome the situation.*

5. Are you convinced that you have enough time to teach essay writing?

*Personally, I am not convinced. We have many types of essay to cover in a syllabus in they need more time and the time is not enough. I sometimes teach them essay writing after school hours just so they try to master every aspect of the different types of essays.*

6. What do you observe with your learner's writing?

*Exposure is the first problem, learners find other essay topics very difficult to understand and this impairs their writing since they write off topic.*

*Lack of correct interpretation and wrongful usage of tenses.*

*Learners cannot spell common words*

7. What do you do after observing learners writing errors in their essays?

*I normally give them feedback and give guidelines such as making them aware of "key words, meaning and interpretation".*

8. How serious are the problem of writing in your classroom?

*It is a serious problems because essays carry higher marks that should boost their year marks but with these problems affecting their score, it makes it a real problem. Essay writing requires creativity, learners lacks a creative thinking when writing.*

9. What do you think is the cause for this coherence writing errors?

*Exposure is the first problem and they need to practice writing about variety of topics. They are not reading on their own and this results in not having enough vocabulary. Learners do not engage in writing when they are at home?*

10. What common errors do learners commit in their essay writing?  
*Spelling errors, mixing of pronouns, lack of planning before writing*

11. What teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?

*I use group activities. I try to give them varied topics of the same time of an essay and make them practice writing in groups. For example, I would give one group to tackle a narrative essay, the other group to tackle argumentative essay and so forth and the end they motivate their writing.*

12. Do you think these strategies are effective?

*Yes to a certain extend but it depend on the type of learners that I am having. This allows them to help each other in rectifying their own work. Since they would have worked in groups, then the other learners in then group would have benefited*

13. Are extended opportunities helpful for your learners?

*Some other times*

14. Do you think that essay writing is challenging learners?

*Yes it is a challenge especially when you find that learners aren't familiar with the topics given to write about. Again it is a challenge in a way that if learners are not familiar with social media they would not be familiar with current issues around them to equip them with societal issues.*

*I don't think parents intervene in the learners' work. After giving learners work or even feedback it just comes back to me to see no difference. In aspects of literature there's some minimal involvement at home but not in essay writing.*

15. Do you have overcrowded classes? And how do they affect your essay teaching?  
*Yes we have overcrowded classes, essay have three categories; content, language and the structure. In this case when you are faced with 71 learners in a classroom, to give them individual attention is going to be a challenge because different learners*

*have different problems and the risky once would be even more disadvantaged since they won't get the attention they need from the teacher.*

16. How can the problems of errors in coherent essay writing be overcome?

*I think there's a need for essay writing competitions which I think will give these learners another dimension in molding their creativeness and build their interest.*

## Responses form Teacher B

1. What do you understand about a coherent essay?

*My understanding is that ideas must follow each other, for example if one writes about a trip from Limpopo to Johannesburg, the learners must not start detailing how Joburg was. Instead they must start writing about the beginning of the trip.*

2. How often do you teach writing in your classroom?

*It depends on the pace setter as it guides us, for example if we don't have essay in a term then we are not going to teach learners that.*

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

*I give activities everyday so that they are aware on how to answer questions and dealing with issues such as punctuation and grammar errors.*

4. Are these activities enough?

*The activities will never be enough. This is because we spent too much time chasing learners who do not participate in writing and it waste time to give actual tasks.*

5. Are you convinced that you have enough time to teach essay writing?

*I can say we don't have enough time. The department just gives us directions and deadlines which then we plan looking at what is required from us but not on how far the teacher and learner are succeeding or not.*

*I can still say the time given is enough for us to deliver lessons, though in this case the challenge now is the number of learners we teach in that time. So logically the more learners we have in one class the lesser the time looks to be. We need to give feedback to individuals on every aspect till they write what is needed.*

6. What do you observe with your learner's writing?

*The first thing i observe is to check learners' draft whether they understood the topic. We see spelling errors, insufficient planning and grammar problems. We correct these errors with the learners but still they will reoccur*

7. What do you do after observing learners writing errors in their essays?

*Normally in giving feedback, I option for finding the learner who did well to present and explain to their class how they did a good job. We encourage peer learning because we believe if someone of their age is carrying out the assistance they can understand better.*

8. How serious are the problem of writing in your classroom?

*This writing problem is very serious because once they cannot write proper essays then they will automatically have problems in other subjects.*

9. What do you think is the cause for this coherence writing errors?

*Learners are just lazy, their topics and what we expect from them are the things we teach daily*

10. What common errors do learners commit in their essay writing?

*Learners do not finish writing their essay completely, we find spelling errors, erroneous punctuation, poor paragraphing and learners do not plan*

11. What teaching strategies do you use in teaching writing?

*I prefer group teaching, I think its best when learners share knowledge amongst themselves. As a teacher we I cannot touch every learner because our classes are overcrowded (mass meetings) so peer learning is best.*

12. Do you think these strategies are effective?

*I think this strategy is effective because learners are free before their peers and that is the time they will learn best. Learners enjoy taking instructions from each other than from their teacher.*

13. Are extended opportunities helpful for your learners?

*Yes we offer these opportunities everyday*

14. Do you think that essay writing is challenging learners?

*No it is not, learners are just lazy to write. There's no way a person cannot for example be unable to remember "their best day in their lives or to explain a picture they are looking at". Some essay topics are from their everyday life events*

15. Do you think parents are participating in their learners' learning?

*No they are not, I haven't focused on it that much but I can they are not. If they were they would be coming to school to complain about their learners' results. There's no learning taking place at home*

16. How can the problems of errors in coherent essay writing be overcome?

*The first thing is for the department to be consistent in their schools with the teacher-learner ration (1-30). We are not able to teach overcrowded classes, essay teaching requires more time for a learner so them being many in a class is problematic. It is not possible to feed 66 learners in a class within the prescribed one hour session. We need enough infrastructure and more human resource*



## Addendum I: Learners' transcripts

### Transcribed Data: Focus group A responses

1. What do you think is coherence/logic in an essay writing?

*Learner A: when you write about something important and it makes sense*

*Learner C: essay that is coherence must have order and sequence of events*

2. Do you think essay that is not coherent will make sense?

*Learner C: No, essay that does not make sense will not have sense.*

*Learner A: No, coherence means sense and an essay without senses will not make sense*

3. Is writing a challenge to you?

*Learner C: Yes, sometimes when I begin I feel that I am blank and I don't know how to start more especially with arranging my ideas*

*Learner A: No it's not a challenge but I am not satisfied with how far I am in essay writing*

*Learner D: it just depends on the type of topic I get*

*Learners E: Yes, I am struggling to combine ideas. You find that the last part of the essay does not relate with the first part. I confuse the ideas in the whole essay*

4. What are the things that makes writing challenging?

*Learner A: The connection of words and organizing sentences into order*

*Learner C: Writing want us to have more ideas and that it too much for me to do*

*Learner E: Sometimes we don't get enough time to prepare or plan and teacher do not teach us how to write an essay.*

5. What are the things that makes an essay a good essay?

*Learner D: A good essay comes from the topics that we are best familiar with because we have a lot to tell.*

*Learner B: A good structure makes a good essay. Proper paragraphing and sentence constructions*

6. *In your free-time, do you ever write longer texts in personal journal or diary?*

*Learner E: I do find myself writing formally even when I am home*

*Learner A, B, E: we don't write at all*

*Learner C: I enjoy reading than writing, I write short things in my diary but never longer writing*

7. Do you think essay writing is taught enough in your English class?

*All the learners responded No to this question and gave reasons*

*Learner B: No, teachers focus more on literature (paper 2) teaching*

*Learner D: No, they just assume that essay writing is an obvious thing for us to write.*

8. Besides mind-map, introduction, body and conclusion, what other things in the essay do you think are important?

*Learner B: Language, we need to use a formal language when writing in a formal format and vice-versa.*

*Learner D: Spelling and focusing on one topic at a time*

9. How best do you want to learn how to write an essay?

*Learner A: I think if our teacher also write their essay and we are able to see a very well written essay then we will be able to use those factors on our own work.*

*Learner D: The teachers must teach every aspect alone starting from a mind-map. We struggle to even plot down a simple thing such as a mind map. The teacher must also return our essays and correct our work so we don't repeat the same mistakes.*

10. How many writing activities (transactional) do you receive each week?

*All the learners responded "none" to this questions*

*Learner D: we only write essays when it's time for formal assessments.*

*Learner B: after writing that one time, we just receive our scores and then no feedback from the teacher.*

11. Are you able to identify your own errors in your essay writing?

*Learner B: yes I see them sometimes more especially after the teacher had marked the essay*

*Learner A: I see them when I am almost done writing and you find that time is not on my side to proofread*

12. When you identify the errors, what do you do to make your essay acceptable?

*Learner D & A: I normally cancel and rectify where possible*

*Learner B: we go look assistance from other people since our teachers are not helping after marking*

13. What are the common writing errors you commit in a writing essay?

*Learner A: We commit many spelling errors and omission of words*

*Learner D: repetition of the same words continuously*

*Learner B: I normally write a word at the end of the line it overlaps to the line below, one word taking two lines*

*Learner C: I forget to punctuate correctly*

14. What do you do to reduce the amount of writing errors in your essay?

*Learner E: I take my marked essay and practice writing correctly when I am home*

*Learner B: I write and proofread my essay before submission*

15. Do you think your home language (Sepedi) affect writing English essays? If so, how?

*Learner B: No*

*Learner A: Yes but in a good way because English and Sepedi are relative*

16. Do you write essays in other subjects? How can you compare them to English essays?

*All learners responded yes to this questions. They write essays in Life sciences, Sepedi and business studies*

*Learner A: yes we write essays in other subjects, in life science we don't have a mind map and we are allowed to write essays in both point-forms and paragraphing.*

*Learner C: yes we write essays in other subjects, in business studies we write essays and they give us clear direction of what to write in the introduction, body and conclusion.*

17. Which subject do you receive too much errors in writing?

*Learner A, C & D: Sepedi Home language*

*Learner B: In life sciences*

18. Why do you think you commit these errors in essay writing?

*Learner D: we commit these errors because we writing within a short space of time and we cannot write on our own pace*

*Learner B: sometimes we are writing with hurried because we thinking of time and submission at the same time. Teachers are there announcing is almost time up.*

19. What do you think can be done to improve your essay writing and avoid coherence errors?

*Learner B: we need extra time to think and plan so that when we write we have enough time. We need two hours to write an essay*

*Learner D: we need the writing time to be extended to two hours, we also must start writing essays even after school hours at home an lastly the teachers must also give us essays as class activities and not just as tests and examination*

*Learner C: teachers must correct us and give feedback after marking our essays*

*Learner E: Our textbooks must also have different types of written essays, not just instructions for us to write.*

## **Addendum J: Learners' essays**

## **Addendum K: Marking tools and symbols**

- Sp** Spelling error
- Co** Concord or agreement error (subject and verb)
- L** Language error (diction, tone, and style, etc.)
- Pc** No or poor punctuation in a sentence
- Pr** confusion and error in pronoun usage
  
- =** Left no space between paragraphs/poor spacing
  
- Cc** Error in capitalization in a or in the beginning of a sentence
- Lo** The sentences are too long and hard to portray a meaning
- Om** Omission of words (suffixes, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.)
- Rep** Repetition of words or ideas
- Ee** A learner wrote an Information that shows no evidence or it's too abstract
- //** Error in words presentation (instances where a solid word is separated. e.g. Sometimes vs Some times)
- Spp** Incomplete and a very short paragraph that lacks supporting information