


# The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English second language students

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## **ABSTRACT**

Most learners in Namibia do not perform in English at a level that would allow them university entrance. This has prompted a widespread debate, as many advocates of education believe that the current performance standards in English deprive many learners an opportunity to enroll at local universities, thus calling for a review of English admission requirements at Namibian universities. The aim of the study was to investigate the standards level to which learners are expected to perform in English, the learners' performance in ESL in comparison with other subjects and how this affects their admission to local universities. The study's objective was to identify and discuss the effects of English language requirements for Namibian students to be admitted to university. Furthermore, the study critically interrogated the Namibian school curriculum and compulsory English language entry requirements of local universities and described how the school curriculum can be adapted to allow more learners access to university.

A qualitative approach was followed with an explanatory case study design to explore the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students. Concept-based purposive sampling was employed to select the 6 institutions and the 26 respondents. Data were collected using online questionnaires, online interviews and document analysis respectively and thereafter analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the compulsory ESL admission requirements causes a delay in students' enrolment to university as students have to take a gap year improving their ESL grades and some students have to venture in undesired courses of study, because of poor ESL grades. The research also identified teachers' inadequate proficiency, underqualified ESL teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities and instructional medias, inadequate use multimedia technology, vernacular/first language linkage, lack of grammatical understanding, non-completion of the syllabus, and poor English language foundation and exposure as possible causes of learners' underperformance in matric's ESL. Furthermore, this study found that there is a gap in terms of teaching and learning materials, teaching and learning strategies, language subskills and assessment methods between the content of the matric syllabus and the universities' English preparatory courses.

**Databases consulted:** Google scholars, A–Z Publication Finder, African Journals (previously SAePublications) and Google.

**Keywords:** Second language (L2), Indigenous people, Multilingualism, Official language, Bilingualism, Mother tongue, Medium of instruction (Mol), Language proficiency, Second language acquisition, or SLA.

## **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I, *Pat Kaudimomunhu Nghuulikwa*, hereby declare that this thesis entitled, *The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students*, which I hereby submit for degree Masters of Education in Curriculum Studies, at the North-West University, is my own work that has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Signature:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature appears to be 'Pat Kaudimomunhu Nghuulikwa' with a superscript '14' at the end.

Date: 05 December 2022

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CBI- Content Based Instruction

DNEA- Directorate: National Examinations and Assessment

EE- Extramural English

EDUREC- Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education

EFL- English Foreign Language

ELTL- English Language Teaching and Learning

ESL- English Second Language

ICT- Information and Communications Technology

L1 – First language

L2 – Second language

MBESC – Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture

Mol – Medium of Instruction

NANSO – Namibia National Students Organisation

NANTU – Namibia National Teachers Union

NSSC – Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate

NSSC-O – Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary level

NWU – North-West University

SLA – Second language acquisition

TUN – Teachers Union of Namibia

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction and rationale

English is the most common language spoken in the world today (Sahid, 2019) and that is also the case in Namibia. Namibia is known for its multiculturalism and diversity of languages with an estimate of 10-30 languages spoken by its inhabitants (Frydman, 2011:181). However, the country has a monolingual language policy that is also operationalised in schools (Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture [MBESC], 2003). This trend is not unique to Namibia. Gordon (2005) reports that despite the presence of about 800 mother tongue languages in Africa, many educational institutions in Africa prefer the use of English. Crystal (2012) and Negash (2011), posit that 53 African nations use English as their medium of instruction, and English is also the official language of the African Union (Plonski, Teferra & Brady, 2013:5).

A mere 8% of Namibian citizens are English mother tongue speakers and the decision to follow a monolingual language policy was, therefore, a contentious decision (Harris, 2011). After Namibia gained independence in March 1990, the Ministry decided to institutionalise English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in schools from the fourth grade upwards, while learners in lower primary grades (grades one to three) could be instructed in their mother tongues (MBESC, 2003:2). The reason for this decision was to motivate learners to use English as part of their learning processes and to help them master the basics of content learning that would prepare them for a world that required of them to speak English (MBESC, 2003:3). Manyike (2013:188) explains this decision as follows: “In most black schools, students speak a variety of local languages as their mother tongue, making English as medium of instruction (Mol) the most practical solution from Grade 4 upwards given its status as a global language”.

At university level, students in Namibia study all their courses and subjects in English except those who are studying native languages as their major subjects. Further still, English remains a major medium of instruction in many schools and universities in the world. This approach to language in education is also necessitated to some degree given that most published subject textbooks are written in the English language and many of the latest scientific discoveries are documented in English, which demands a decent command of the English language.

Despite this emphasis on English in schools, the National Examiners’ Annual Report of 2011 stated that Namibian students have been underperforming in the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary level (NSSCO) English Second Language (ESL) examinations since Namibia’s independence (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2011). After carefully scrutinising the 2007-2011 results, the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) reports

on learners' inadequate writing skills, which can be ascribed to a lack of limited language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking (MoE, 2012).

The three largest Namibian universities require undergraduate students studying towards any bachelor's degree to have a minimum mark in English for admission. Below are the minimum ESL requirements for students who wish to study at the top three universities in Namibia, according to their 2020 prospectuses:

- University X - C (60%) in English.
- University Y - D (50%) in English
- University Z - E (40%) in English.

School learners who fail to meet the universities' minimum requirements for ESL have to either enrol for a bridging course (namely, an English access course) or agree to study an extra year or more to improve their English before they can enrol for and complete their respective degrees.

According to the 2018 statistics of the Namibia College of Learning (a centre of open learning), the subject with the highest enrolment was ESL at 31.2%. In December of 2019 the deputy minister of Education, Hon. Ester Anna Nghipondoka, reported that the average performance in subjects such as mathematics and biology had shown a gradual improvement at higher grades over the past three years (2017, 2018, and 2019), while the average ESL grades remained stagnant (Ngutjinazo, 2019) in the same period. For learners who did ordinary level, the average pass rate remained 33% for the three years. The same reports that Grade 12 ESL ordinary level learners' pass rate in Namibia has declined from 35% in 2018 to 34% in 2019, clearly indicating that ESL is a major hindrance to learners' academic success and admission to university.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

According to the former discussion and the 2019 Directorate: National Examinations and Assessment report, underperformance in ESL among Grade 12 learners in Namibia has persisted for a long time. The majority of learners fail to perform in English at a level that would allow them to gain admission to their preferred universities. This has prompted widespread debate, with Nico Smit, treasurer of the official opposition party in Namibia, advocating for an immediate review of English admission requirements within Namibian universities as he argues

that the current English admission requirements are too high and as a result many learners are deprived of an opportunity to enrol for their studies (Ngutjinazo, 2019).

Based on literature and on my professional experience, I believe that the minimum requirements for ESL cause a stumbling block for students in terms of their admission to tertiary education even though these learners performed well in other subjects that were also taught through medUniversity Y of English. Nkandi (2015) believes that there are two possible reasons for this situation: (i) the standards to which learners are expected to perform in English are too high and (ii) the learners are underperforming in ESL (sometimes a combination of (i) and (ii)).

### **1.3 Concept clarification**

The following concepts should shed light on the problem under discussion:

#### **1.3.1 Second language**

According to Simasiku (2006), the second language (L2) is the language that a learner learns after acquiring his/her first language (L1) and it is often used for a certain purpose such as education. Within the Namibian context, and according to Namibia's Language Policy for Schools the L2 is defined as a language to which learners are exposed regularly as it is widely used in the community (MBESC, 2003).

#### **1.3.2 Indigenous people**

Indigenous people are generally defined as ethnic groups who are descended from and identify with the original inhabitants of a given region (Reyes-García, Fernandez-Llamazares & McElweee, 2019).

One of the first social scientist (Frank Wilmer) who examined how indigenous people were morally excluded by Western powers defines indigenous people as people with cultures based on their tradition, who used to govern themselves but now struggle to preserve their cultural norms due to the aftermath of colonisation. (Franke, 1993).

#### **1.3.3 Multilingualism**

The term "multilingual" stemmed from Latin words "multi", which means many, and "lingua", which means language. Thus, multilingualism is the ability of speakers to express themselves in

several languages that co-exist within a society, and these languages can either be official or unofficial (Bussmann, 1996). There are between 10 and 30 languages spoken in Namibia and 13 of these languages are recognised as National languages (Maho, 1998).

#### **1.3.4 Official language**

An official language is a language that is constitutionally authorised by the nation to be employed as the main medium of communication in all government establishments (Odinye & Odinye, 2012:5). Since Namibia gained its independence, English has been its sole official language as stated by Language Act 3 of 1998 of the Constitution.

#### **1.3.5 Bilingualism**

A language speaker is regarded as bilingual when he/she is fluent in two languages and has native-like proficiency in both languages (Bloomfield, 1935; Mackey, as cited in Beardsmore, 1986). In addition, bilinguals use more than one language in their daily communication irrespective of the context of use. More than half of the world's population is bilingual (Giussani *et al.*, 2007:1109).

#### **1.3.6 Home language**

According to Olivier (2011), a home language is the very first language that a child acquires at home through immersion, and it is often the language the child knows best. Most of Namibian home languages are languages of African linguistic origin, including languages in the Khoisan and Niger-Congo families.

#### **1.3.7 Medium of instruction**

According to Stein (2017), Mol is the language used for teaching and learning in the classroom during school hours for academic purposes. In Namibian schools, the language of instruction at junior primary (grade 1-3) is the learners' first language and the medium of instruction then changes to English from grade 4 onwards (MBESC, 2003:1-4).

#### **1.3.8 Language proficiency.**

Language proficiency is the extent to which a person can use a language, this includes how well a person can use the language skills (Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied

Linguistics, 2002:292). Taylor (1988:164-166) agrees when stating that proficiency incorporates what learners know and their ability to use their knowledge in actual communication.

Frydman (2011) classified Namibians into five English language proficiency categories:

- People who received instruction mainly through medium of Afrikaans prior to Namibia's independence. They lack basic English language proficiency, even though they had the opportunity to learn English as adults (Shaleyfu, 2012).
- People who took part in the liberation struggle and were exiled to English speaking countries such as the United States of America.
- Young people born after Namibia gained independence. They have been and are being taught through medium of English in schools (Nkandi, 2015).
- Young people who do not have access to formal education because of social reasons (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture [MoEAC], 2015). They can only use their home languages, and require interpretation services in spheres of society where English is used.
- The last category consists mostly of Namibia's elderly population who were excluded from formal education during the colonial era (Shaleyfu, 2012). They communicate in either of the languages under the three language families used by indigenous Namibians: Bantu, Khoisan, and Indo-European languages (see 3.7) and also require interpretation services when participating in Namibian society.

### **1.3.9 Second language acquisition**

According to Ellis (2002), Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the learning of a language other than your first language. This language is usually learned after the acquisition of one's first language. The focus of this study is the SLA of English of Namibian learners in schools through instruction as opposed to out-of-class contact with native speakers (Viberg, 2000:28).

## **1.4 Research aims, questions, and objectives**

The aim of this study is to investigate the standards level to which learners are expected to perform in English, the learners' performance in ESL compared to other subjects and how this affects their admission to local universities.

### **1.4.1 Research questions**

The following questions are addressed:

Primary research question:

- How do the compulsory admission requirements of ESL of Namibian universities affect indigenous students' education?

Secondary research question:

- What factors influence Namibian matric learners' performance in ESL?
- How could the Namibian ESL school curriculum be adapted to enhance indigenous students' admission to universities?

Research objectives

As a professional educator and member of the community, the objectives of my study are to:

- identify and discuss the effects of English language requirements for Namibian students to be admitted to university;
- analyse and identify possible causes for learners' underperformance in ESL compared to other subjects; and
- critically analyse the grade 12 ESL syllabus and compulsory English language entry requirements of local universities and describe how the ESL school curriculum can be adapted to improve learners' ESL performance.

## **1.5 Theoretical framework**

### **1.5.1 Constructivist theory**

This theory is relevant to this study as it primarily demonstrates the degree to which individuals acquire a second language. Constructivism evolved from research by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and "is the philosophy, or belief, that learners create their own knowledge based on interactions with their environment including their interactions with other people" (Draper, 2002:522). Constructivist theory views the learning as an active and social process of participation in one's own learning. Piaget believed that learning

promotes cognitive development through observation and experimentation, while Vygotsky focussed on the achievement of cognitive development through interacting with knowledgeable members of the community (Rummel, 2008:80). For learning to be effective in a constructivist setting, active engagement, problem solving, and collaboration with others should be encouraged.

In this study, constructivism was foundational in determining the challenges ESL learners face in acquiring the language within the context ever-changing educational policies, curricula and teaching methods and it unpacks the significance of the learners' cognitive development and language acquisition throughout their schooling journey. For the reasons given, the constructivist theory is pertinent to understanding the nature of this research and what this study contributes to learning and the body of knowledge (MBESC, 2003:2).

## **1.6 Research design**

“A research design can be seen as a master plan specifying the methods and the procedures for collecting and analysing specific information” (Zikmund, 2009:59). As part of this study, we incorporated a qualitative research design and a case study design as research method.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:112), qualitative research is a methodology that generates detailed and rich data which contribute to a thorough and in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, such as hindrances to the acquisition of ESL of students who want to continue their studies at Namibian universities.

Furthermore, this was a case study that was conducted within the Namibian context. “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined” (Yin, 2003). The case study provides information relating to exploring the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students. The researcher used an exploratory case study to better examine the data within this specific context. This is in line with the true essence of case studies, namely do conduct a thorough investigation of a contemporary real-life phenomenon.

## **1.7 Research methodology**

### **1.7.1 Population**

This study targeted students and academic staff from selected tertiary institutions as participants. The participants identified for inclusion in the study consisted of 20 students and six admission staff members at the three largest universities in Namibia.

### **1.7.2 Sampling technique**

All possible participants were treated fairly in terms of selection by making use of a purposive sampling technique (Strydom, 2005). Students were selected based on the criterion they did not gain admission to the university of their choice due to their ESL matric marks and were currently in the process of improving their matric English results (at centres for open learning) to qualify for university admission.

### **1.7.3 Data collection.**

For the researcher to generate appropriate data, the right data collection methods should be employed. "It is also important for a researcher to know that the method chosen to collect data will be influenced by the research questions, ontological position and/or the conceptual framework" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:74).

The data collected in this study was categorised into predetermined response categories so that the result would be easy to summarise and compare. Data collection for this qualitative case study consisted of multiple sources, including participant interviews, questionnaires and primary policy documents, especially language policy documents and the prescribed English school curriculum in order to: identify the effects of English language requirements for Namibian students to be admitted to university and the possible causes of learners' underperformance in ESL; critically analyse the Namibian school curriculum and compulsory English language entry requirements of local universities; and describe how the ESL school curriculum can be adapted to improve learners' ESL performance.

The participants in this study were selected from different institutions to ensure a maximum reach and a good range of experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Document analysis was also conducted from different documents, including the Namibian matric ESL syllabus and select English preparatory course outlines. Gay *et al.* (2009) opine that making use of questionnaires during data collection is useful when they are structured appropriately. With this in mind, pre-designed questionnaires were used comprising open-ended questions for the ESL

learners to find out why students are underperforming in ESL and what are their experiences of the matric ESL curriculum. The researcher also used semi-structured interviews comprised of several open-ended questions (Greef, 2005). The interviews lasted approximately between 20-30 minutes and were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

#### **1.7.4 Collection of data during COVID-19 pandemic**

With the high number of COVID-19 cases that spread rapidly in Namibia during the second wave of the Corona virus, there was little guarantee that participants would not be at risk of either contracting or spreading the virus. Data was therefore collected remotely to ensure the safety of staff and the local community. To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, online questionnaires and interviews were used instead of face-to-face questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were designed using Google forms; the participants therefore needed access to the internet to complete the questionnaire and the interviews were scheduled on Zoom, Skype, Clubhouse or Google Meet and recorded with the participants' permission.

#### **1.8 Data analysis**

“Data analysis is the phase in which an investigator through various consistent methods finds and categorises information in a format that will answer questions” (Zikmund, 2009:60). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) state that the data analysis process reduces a large amount of data into meaningful and manageable units. The data from the questionnaire and interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis through ATLAS.ti. Skimming (initial superficial examination) and interpretation were used for document analysis.

#### **1.9 Ethical considerations**

The proposal of this study was submitted for scrutiny to the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (EDUREC) as well as the gatekeepers at the Namibian universities and Centres for Open learning. The following ethical guidelines applied in this study:

No participant was forced to take part in this study, as it was based on providing informed consent. An objective third party explained the objectives, estimated duration and possible consequences for participation and how results would be disseminated to participants. Participants had the right to refuse participation at any time during the data collection and analysis.

The participants remained anonymous during the reporting of the data and their personal information remained confidential and secure. Respondents acknowledged their participation in the study by signing an informed consent form prior participating in the research.

### 1.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness entails the professional mutual trust between the researcher and those taking part in the study, as this kind of trust yield quality data (Strydom, 2005). The trustworthiness of the results of the data analysis depends on the richness, appropriateness, and saturation of the data. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), researchers should consider appropriate approaches to ensure that the data they collect from the participants are trustworthy, and this study employed self-reflexivity, conformability, credibility, and dependability to ensure trustworthiness.

### 1.11 Contribution of the study

The findings from the study can assist the government and different institution of high learning in Namibia to acknowledge that ESL has been a hindrance to students' admission to universities. This should prompt the revision of English admission requirements and amendments to the current school curriculum as far as ESL is concerned. The findings of this study assisted in formulating recommendations for remedial measures that can address the problem of learners' poor performance in ESL and their access to institutions of higher learning.

### 1.12 Time schedule

This study was completed in two years, starting from April 2020 to October 2022. The chapter-by-chapter structure of the dissertation is presented below.

**Table 1-1: Study timeline**

YEAR	MONTH	ACTIVITY
2020	April-September	Finalisation of proposal
2020/2021	October-February	Submission of proposal for approval
2021	March-June	Approval of ethical clearance and Chapter 2

2021	June-August	Chapter 3 (Research design and methodology)
2021/2022	September-April	Data collection
2022	April-August	Data analysis
2022	September-November	Chapter 5 and language editing
2022	November	Submit completed dissertation for examination purposes.

### 1.13 Chapter outline

The chapters that comprised this study are outlined as follow:

**Table 1-2: Chapter outline**

CHAPTERS	DESCRIPTION OF CHAPTER
CHAPTER 1 Introduction and rationale of the study	This chapter provides an overview of this study. A brief background and rationale for the study and the research objectives are addressed. The research questions are presented as well as the research methodology. Additionally, it explains different terminology used in the study and concludes by providing a study outline and time schedule.
CHAPTER 2 Literature review	This chapter focuses on existing studies, SLA theories underpinning the study, and a comparison of the admission requirements and ESL curricula between other countries.
CHAPTER 3 Research design and methodology	This chapter describes the research design and methods employed in this study. The chapter begins with a description of the research paradigm employed. It details the choice of the research design, research sites, and sampling of participants, as well as measures taken to comply with matters of trustworthiness.
CHAPTER 4 Data analysis, results, interpretation and discussion	This chapter describes the analysis of the following; analysis of the questionnaire data, analysis of interview data, and analysis of documented data. In addition, this chapter presents the results of the research, the interpretation thereof, as well as the discussion based on the findings.
CHAPTER 5 Findings, conclusions, limitations and recommendations	This chapter provides a summary of the key findings, highlighting the significance of the

	findings and contribution to the body of knowledge. The limitations of this study, suggestions for further research, and recommendations and conclusions are also provided to conclude the research.
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## **CHAPTER 2      LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1      Introduction**

The existing literature cannot be overlooked in research, as this helps researchers to establish what is known and what is not known in their field of studies and to report on other researchers' viewpoints on similar research. Thus, it is very important that every research project starts with literature review (Mouton, 2003:86). This chapter focuses on the studies that have already been done on language planning in education, the Namibian ESL school curriculum, and universities' admission requirements. It is also important to draw a distinction between different institutions' ESL admission requirements locally and beyond to compare their ESL requirements to native Namibian universities. Current grade 12 ESL syllabi and English preparatory courses of institutions of higher learning were reviewed to find the gap between current matric ESL content and the required ESL content set out by institutions of higher learning. The literature further reviewed matric ESL performance by comparing it to subjects for 2019 and 2018 to rate the performance of ESL against performance in other subjects. Finally, the literature review explores the causes of poor ESL performance from the existing literature to identify and understand why ESL learners have been underperforming and thereby gaining admission to universities.

### **2.2      Language planning in education**

According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:3), "Language planning is a body of ideas, laws and regulations, change of rules, beliefs and practices intended to achieve a planned change". Francis and Kamanda (2001:225) regard language planning as an act of introducing systematic language change for a specific purpose. The LoLT in this study belongs to the realm of language planning, because in a multilingual nation like Namibia it is essential to develop an official language policy to address communication challenges in education (Crystal, 2003:256). It is, therefore, important to understand the underlying ideologies of existing policies and practices in Basic and Higher Education. These include ideologies about language, language policies, and language use linked to the socio-historical and political processes of educational reforms (Garcia, 2009).

Monolingual ideologies can be traced to the European age of Enlightenment, where one-language, one-nation was associated with national identity (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2015; Pennycook, 2010). This type of ideology played a major role in Namibia's liberation struggle. During and past the apartheid era, English was viewed as the language of

liberation (Alexander,1989), and thus, this resulted in English being privileged at the expense of African languages (Balfour, 2003). Considering this, it is important to understand language planning in education in terms of the background of why Namibia chose English as its sole official language and LoLT from post-primary to tertiary education before one can discuss how this language choice affects ESL learners positively and negatively. The LoLT in Namibia is highlighted in detail in the next subsection, which discusses the status of English in Namibian schools.

### **2.2.1 The status of English in Namibian schools**

Post-independence in 1990, Namibia adopted the Language Policy for schools which is still in place to date. The policy clearly states that mother tongue instructions should be used from grade one to three whilst English will be taught as a subject (Ministry of Education & Culture,1993b). As from grade four, a transition will take place, where learners switch from being instructed in their mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction. In other words, English will be the medium of instruction for all subjects from senior primary until tertiary level (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1993a:66). Proficiency in English is of paramount importance post-secondary education, either as a passport to further education or to be effective participants in society (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1993b:4). Table 2-1 below summarises the phases of basic education and the role and status of English in Namibian schools.

**Table 2-1: The phases of basic education and the role and status of English in Namibian schools**

Phase	Grades	Medium of instruction	English status
Junior primary	Pre-primary and grades 1-3	Mother tongue	Subject
Senior primary	Grades 4-7	English	Medium of instruction and subject
Junior secondary	Grades 8-10	English	Medium of instruction and subject
Senior secondary	Grades 11-12	English	Medium of instruction and subject

Despite the introduction of English Mol from grade 4 until tertiary level, Kambowe (2018:1) posits that, even if learners are performing well in other subjects that are taught through medium of English, their low marks for ESL prevents them from gaining admission to tertiary institutions. The next section discusses the language profile of indigenous students in Namibia.

### **2.2.2 The language profile of indigenous students in Namibia**

Harris (2011) notes that the decision to make English the only official language in Namibia was a contentious one, as only a minority of Namibians (8%) are English mother tongue speakers while the majority use Afrikaans and indigenous languages at home. English was, therefore, accorded official status and became the medium of instruction in schools even though only a minority of Namibia's population uses English as their mother tongue or as the primary language at home (MoE, 2010; NPC, 2004; Totemeyer, 2009). This apparent misalignment between the policy and the lived reality of Namibian citizens has an impact on the learning experiences of many students enrolled for ESL in Basic Education. Before going into more detail, the following terminologies must be understood:

**Table 2-2: Definition of key terminologies**

Terminology	Definition
First language	“A person’s mother tongue or the home language acquired first. In multilingual communities, however, where a child may gradually shift from the main use of one language to the main use of another (e.g. because of the influence of a school language), first language may refer to the language the child feels most comfortable using. Often this term is used synonymously with native language” (Language policy for schools in Namibia, 2003).
Foreign language	“A language which is not a native language in a country. A foreign language is usually studied either for communication with foreigners who speak the language, or for reading printed materials in the language” (Language policy for schools in Namibia, 2003)
Local language	“These are Namibian languages which are spoken as first or second languages in multilingual communities. Some of these languages are used as lingua franca in larger communities and could be termed as predominant local languages or languages of wider communication. They will thus become second languages for some of the learners in the community” (Language policy for schools in Namibia, 2003)
Mother tongue	The first language that a child acquires at home through immersion.
National language	“Usually considered to be the main language of a nation... Usually, the national language is also the official language; that is, the language used in government and courts of law, and for official business. However, in multilingual nations, there may be more than one official language, and in such cases the term official language is often used rather than national language” (Language policy for schools in Namibia ,2003).
Official language	Article 3 of the Constitution clearly states: “The official language of Namibia shall be English” (Language policy for schools in Namibia ,2003).. The official language refers to the language chosen to be used in government and for official business.

(Source: MBESC, 2003)

Due to the challenge of distinguishing languages in terms of their dialects, it is estimated that the number of Namibian languages range from 10 to 30 in total. These languages are further

divided into three language families, namely: the Bantu languages, the Khoesan languages, and the Indo-European languages (Maho, 1998). In Namibia, 13 languages have been recognised as national languages. These include 10 indigenous African languages which are spoken by 87.8% of the population and 3 Indo-European languages spoken by 11.2% of the population. “The 10 indigenous languages include Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Rukwangali, Otjiherero, Rugciriku, Thimbukushu, Silozi, and Setswana, all belonging to the Bantu language group, and Khoekhoegowab and Jul’hoan which belong to the Khoesan language group. The three Indo-European languages include English, German, and Afrikaans. Afrikaans is spoken by 9.5% of the population, German by 0.9%, and English by a mere 0.8%” (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2001; Pütz, 1995).

According to the Language Policy for Schools in Namibia (MBESC, 2003), the language options available for indigenous students are grouped into three categories, namely first language level (L1), second-language level (L2) and foreign-language level (FL) as presented by Figure 2-1.

First-language level	
Afrikaans	English
German	Ju'hoansi
Khoekhoegowab	Oshikwanyama
Oshindonga	Otjiherero
Rukwangali	Rumanyo
Setswana	Silozi
Thimbukushu	

Second-language level	
Afrikaans	English

Foreign-language level	
French	German

**Figure 2-1: Language options available at schools for indigenous students in Namibia**

The primary school leadership teams, which include the school boards are obligated to select the medium of instruction and learning in Grades one to three. The medium of instruction is selected from the list of the officially recognised linguistic varieties in consultation with the speech community in which the school lies (MBESC, 2003). The table below presents the 2019 language enrolment numbers at junior primary level.

**Table 2-3: 2019 language enrolment at junior primary level**

Subject	Junior primary			
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Total
Afrikaans home language	1759	1742	1921	<b>5422</b>
Afrikaans second language	5256	5157	4673	<b>15103</b>
English home language	1746	1627	1267	<b>4657</b>
English second language	29238	25892	25609	<b>80763</b>
French foreign language	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
German home language	32	7	13	<b>52</b>
German foreign language	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Jul'hoan	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Khoekhoegowab	2913	2778	2672	<b>8363</b>
Oshikwanyama	6474	5668	5427	<b>17569</b>
Oshindonga	9023	8135	7985	<b>25167</b>
Otjiherero	3492	2827	3110	<b>9429</b>
Rukwangali	877	701	506	<b>2084</b>
Rumanyo	466	280	254	<b>1000</b>
Setswana	75	63	49	<b>187</b>
Silozi	899	295	293	<b>311</b>
Thimbukushu	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

(Source: MoE, 2019)

In post-junior primary, learners are required to have two languages as subjects (L1 and L2). Table 2-4 below indicates grade 12 subject entries for 2019 in terms of first and second languages.

**Table 2-4: 2019 subject entries (languages) for grade 12**

Subject	Total number of learners
Afrikaans first language	201
Afrikaans second language	3138
English first language	107
English second language	21443
German first language	4
Khoekhoegowab first language	389
Oshikwanyama first language	590
Oshindonga first language	452
Otjiherero first language	988
Rukwangali first language	2
Rumanyo first language	468
Setswana first language	21
Silozi first language	13
Thimbukushu first language	295
German foreign language	498
Portuguese first language	191
French first language	169

(Source: MoE, 2019)

Despite the many language options available for indigenous students in Namibia, learners must pass ESL because it is a compulsory admission requirement of all local universities. The next section discusses the English admission requirements of select Namibian universities.

### **2.2.3 English admission requirements of the Namibian Universities**

A good pass in ESL has become a passport to tertiary education programmes and future career opportunities in Namibia, where English is used not only as an MoI but also as the country's official language. Despite the compulsory admission requirement of English for all institutions of higher learning in Namibia, each institution of higher learning sets its own bar in terms of ESL admission requirements. Meanwhile, nearly all other subjects have a standard minimum requirement across all institutions. In other words, many Namibian students are at the mercy of

their English grades which, if poor, even if all their other grades permit them to study, disqualify them from pursuing career opportunities in varied disciplines such as science, engineering, and medicine, among others. Ithindi (2021) notes that for a learner to pursue a career in medicine or other careers that are on demand in Namibia, they need to pass Grade 12 ESL with excellent or very good results, ranging from 70% to 100%. It is of utmost importance that the grade 12 curriculum followed by aspiring students must prepare them sufficiently to meet the English language demands of tertiary education.

According University X's general information and regulation prospectus of 2020, for a grade 12 learner to enrol for a bachelor's degree programme at the university, a C (60%) or better in English as first/second language is required. University Y requires a D (50%) or better in English as first/second language and University Z requires an E or better in English as first/second language for a bachelor's degree enrolment.

Even though the study's focus is on Namibian universities, it is also necessary to explore the ESL requirements for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) universities with offices in Namibia, as several grade 12 learners in Namibia opt to study at these universities. It is hence relevant to compare the ESL requirements of these institutions with the native Namibian universities to determine any trends concerning the use of ESL. Considering this, the next subsection focuses on the admission requirements for SADC universities with offices in Namibia.

#### **2.2.4 English admission requirements of SADC universities in Namibia**

SADC universities are universities that are originally from any of the 16 SADC member states. At the North-West University (NWU), the general admission requirement as far as languages are concerned for bachelor's degrees is that a student should have 50% and above in a home language (HL) and first additional language (FAL) (NWU, 2020). To register for a bachelor's degree at NWU with English as a HL, a FAL on level 5 is required. At the NWU, English is not a compulsory requirement for students to gain admission at NWU; for instance, a student can have Afrikaans HL and Setswana FAL in grade 12 and be admitted at the institution's Potchefstroom campus.

To apply for a bachelor's degree at Rhodes University (RU), prospective students are required to take seven subjects at school level, of which four are compulsory. Student must have

obtained 50% and above for English as HL/FAL in matric to pass (RU, 2021). At least four of the seven subjects must be from a list of recommended subjects for which students must have obtained a rating of 50% and above (RU, 2021). English is a compulsory admission requirement at RU (either as a HL/FAL); local and international students must have obtained a 50% and above in matric to gain admission.

To be eligible for admission at the Great Zimbabwe University (GZU), prospective students must have passed (50% and above) at least five ordinary-level subjects or their equivalent (subjects taken on levels other than ordinary), including English (GZU, 2021), in matric. English is a compulsory requirement for admission at GZU for both national and international students with a 50% and above pass rate.

According to the Botho-University’s general admission prospectus of 2020/2021, the typical entry requirement for admission is a Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) or International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) (in Botswana), Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) (in Lesotho) or other equivalent secondary school qualification. A minimum of 50% and above in five subjects, including English and Mathematics, in BGCSE or equivalent is required for bachelor’s degree admission at Botho-University. English with a 50% or above pass rate is a compulsory requirement for admission at this university for both nationals and international students.

The table below summarises the ESL requirements for Namibian students to enrol for bachelor’s degrees locally and at African universities that have offices in Namibia.

**Table 2-5: Bachelor’s degrees’ ESL requirements for local and international African universities**

University	Country	General English language requirement	Compulsory/Optional for Namibian students
UNIVERSITY X	Namibia	60% or above	Compulsory
UNIVERSITY Y	Namibia	50% or above	Compulsory
UNIVERSITY Z	Namibia	40% or above	Compulsory

NWU	South Africa	50% or above	Optional, with 65% minimum in FAL
RU	South Africa	50% or above	Compulsory
GZU	Zimbabwe	50% or above	Compulsory
BU	Botswana	50% or above	Compulsory

(Source: Author)

It is important for Namibian students to perform well in ESL, as it emerges that they will be required by a vast majority of universities to at least have a compulsory pass grade in ESL to be able to further their studies locally and internationally in Africa.

Well-articulated course objectives and outlines determine the success of a course. According to Slattery and Carlson (2005) “A carefully planned, clearly written, comprehensive syllabus is one of the most important and valuable resources which can be provided to the students. It may prevent misunderstandings in terms of course goals and objectives, assessment and evaluation standards, grading policies, student or faculty behaviour, assignments, readings, and activities”. The next section discusses the Namibian grade 12 ESL syllabus.

### **2.3 Grade 12 ESL syllabus in Namibia**

Lanfranco (2006) defines a syllabus as “an outline of specific programmes prepared by the instructor that includes the topics to be covered, their order, the required and suggested reading materials, and any other relevant information”. In Namibia, after completion of the Junior Secondary education (grade 10), learners must proceed with the Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSCO) two-year course (grade 11-12) for examination. The NSSCO syllabus is specifically designed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia and has been approved by the National Examination, Assessment and Certification Board (NEACB) (MoE, 2010:1). It is necessary to review grade 12 ESL syllabus in this study to be able to critically analyse it.

According to Mwanza (2016), “the syllabus of any school subject needs to be simple, clear and coherent”. The content of subjects in Namibian schools are based on a specific syllabus from the National Curriculum for Basic Education, and each syllabus specifies the specific skills and information to be taught, how they should be taught as well as the expected required evaluation standards. Even though the syllabi are categorised according to grades/phases of

schooling, the senior secondary (grade 11-12) ESL syllabus was selected because it is the last syllabus the learners have to complete before they can apply for admission to university. Below is a brief summary on learning content, resources and assessment of the above-stated syllabus.

### **2.3.1 Language skills**

The five skill areas that will be assessed by the Namibian examination board form the basis of the ESL syllabus. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, writing, and language usage (MoE,2010). Furthermore, these skills are interrelated (Lerner, 2000), and should be integrated as part of the teaching process. Although language usage is listed as a separate skill in the NSSCO document, it should be taught in accordance with the practice of teaching language in an integrated manner (MoE, 2010:3). Below is a discussion of the objectives of the five language skills as outlined by the syllabus.

Listening skills: Of the four language skills, listening skills is the most fundamental skill, as this skill exposes learners to comprehensible, authentic input that leads to improvement in the other language skills (Anderson & Lynch, 1988). Rivers (1981) agrees that listening comprehension is instrumental in communication because communication will not take place unless people understand what is being spoken. The same applies for ESL – learners require effective listening skills to understand teachers and lecturers' instructions and interact with other learners during group or project work. Further, Wilt (1950) suggests that individuals always spend a longer time listening during communication than speaking, reading, and writing.

Good listening skills also promote academic literacy as students not only retain more information, but they are also less likely to feel unprepared and frustrated in class (Iwankovitsh, 2001). Graham (2011) add that good listening skills can lead to improved learner self-efficacy. Developing students' listening skills will, therefore, lead to more confidence and better prepare students for success in Basic Education. Lastly, bilingual students, use their listening skills to acquire the L2 faster (Caruso *et al.*, 2017). In today's world, much of mass communication takes place through the spoken word, which is why teaching students to listen effectively and critically is crucial for them to process information meaningfully in their daily lives. It is therefore essential for language teachers to help students become effective listeners.

The grade 12 ESL syllabus' objectives for listening are that learners “will listen to and understand a range of texts; listen to and understand instructions; listen actively to information for a variety of purposes; distinguish between different types of questions and respond

appropriately; understand information from a variety of sources for specific purposes, identify the gist of a speech or discussion, and evaluate what they hear” (MoE, 2010:4-5).

**Speaking skills:** The teaching and learning of speaking are a vital part of the ESL classroom. Spoken language is not only one of the medium of communication in the classroom but it is also an important component of content and learning outcomes of the grade 12 ESL syllabus. According to Talley and Hui-ling (2014), an effective language curriculum should aim to create authentic and practical contexts in which learners will be motivated to actively engage with lessons. They argue that ESL curriculum should allow for awareness and respect of international and local cultures (Talley & Hui-ling, 2014).

The grade 12 ESL syllabus states that upon the completion of the syllabus, “learners will: communicate information and ideas; speak clearly using appropriate intonation and word stress; use appropriate vocabulary in different situations; use language to request or pass on information and to accomplish appropriate transactions; adapt speech for different purposes and audiences; make appropriate verbal responses in different contexts; develop skills of oral presentation; use language to express and establish individual attitudes; resolve issues through discussions; and debate and use negotiation skills” (MoE, 2010:6-7).

**Reading skills:** Similar to the other receptive skill, listening, reading promotes the development of the other language skills as well as it builds on, because it expands learners’ linguistic knowledge (Namupala, 2013) including aspects such as grammar and pronunciation (Chukueggu & Ogbona, 2013). Research has also proven that developing reading skills promotes academic literacy. This includes studies that proved that good reading skills are directly related to effective learning and the achievement of academic success (Palani, 2012:91), and it assists in successful knowledge acquisition (Tien, 2015). Therefore, reading is an indispensable skill.

The grade 12 ESL syllabus makes it clear that learners should be able to “read and understand instructions and directions; recognise and understand a wide range of texts likely to be within the experience of and reflecting the interests of young people from various cultural backgrounds; apply a range of reading skills (reading with varying speed using a range of reading techniques); read extensively for wider knowledge or pleasure; make use of available library facilities and critically read materials from different sources” (MoE, 2010:8-9).

**Writing skills:** Writing is a crucial skill that will enable learners to achieve academic success, as it is important to prepare learners in successfully completing high stakes examinations (Riddel,

2003). However, often writing is regarded as the most difficult skill to acquire as learners must integrate a creative process within a rigid framework of standard forms of grammar, syntax and word choice (Jusoh *et al.*, 2019). Apart from being a difficult skill to learn, it is also a difficult skill to teach, especially in an L2 environment (Kustati & Yuhardi, 2014). However, some studies have found that utilising cooperative learning was quite successful and students learnt to give and receive immediate feedback, and it promoted student motivation in the learning process (Novia Nur Ikhlasia, 2013).

According to the grade 12 ESL syllabus, in terms of writing, “learners should be able to produce well-organised and coherent writing pieces; write appropriately for specific purposes; differentiate between written and spoken forms; demonstrate flexibility in writing about facts, feelings and opinions; show competence in the use of spelling and punctuation and use appropriate vocabulary in different contexts and situations” (MoE, 2010:10-11).

Language usage skill: Many L2 students become fluent in the language, but they are not accurate when selecting vocabulary, and in applying the grammar, and mechanics when writing and speaking English (Dar & Khan, 2015). A lack in language usage hinders students from developing cognitively and from successfully attempting cognitively demanding tasks (Rico, 2014).

According to the ESL syllabus, students are expected to “recognise the use and meaning of tenses; use the first and second conditional; correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors, synonyms, and antonyms; use appropriate grammatical structures in writing; and use grammatical structures correctly in speech” (MoE, 2010:12-13).

According to the language skills discussed, it seems as that the ESL sufficiently covers the content of the necessary language skills for learners to perform well in ESL; however, it seems that the curriculum is not sufficiently supplemented with relevant textbooks and teaching resources and this will impede the effective teaching and learning of the skills outlined in the syllabus. The next section discusses the textbooks and teaching resources recommended by the grade 12 ESL syllabus.

### **2.3.2 Textbooks and teaching resources**

Although learners are not formally assessed on specific works of literature per se, prescribed literary texts form part of the reading programme of the learners as outlined in the syllabus. Teachers are expected to select and include poetry, prose, and drama in the course of the year

and as stipulated in the syllabus, they are allowed to make use of a textbook catalogue and/or other texts such as magazines, newspapers, and internet sources as part of the learners' reading programme. The selection of texts should be determined by the suitability, background knowledge required as well as the age, and interests of the matric learners (MoE, 2010:3). To establish and promote learner-centred classrooms, teachers are encouraged to create their own teaching and learning materials aligned with the selected texts, that would engage and motivate their specific learners. (MoE, 2010:3).

Apart from stating that teachers should utilise the textbook catalogue, the syllabus is vague and does not specify relevant materials, textbooks or resources that can be used in its implementation (MoE, 2010:3). This is perplexing when seen in the light that "the first question to confront the syllabus designer is where the content is to come from in the first place" (Nuna, 1988:37). On the other hand, Mwanza (2016:160), sees the value of this vagueness in the sense that "some teachers and school authorities may take advantage of the silence in the syllabus to use or not to use certain materials". This 'silence', in a sense, gives experienced and well-trained teachers more freedom to adapt their teaching strategies in class to accommodate diverse learner needs and learning styles in their classrooms.

Notwithstanding the flexibility it offers teachers who are creative and skilled enough to use it to their benefit, the fact that the ESL curriculum does not provide a list of materials, textbooks or resources to be used is a cause for concern for effective, fair and reliable assessment of the students. The recommended assessment methods by the ESL syllabus are emphasised in the next section.

### 2.3.3 Assessment

According to Anikweze (2013), assessment refers to the process where the standard of learners' work is measured against the outcomes and objectives of a syllabus. Both formative (assessment for learning) and summative assessment (assessment of learning) methods are recommended by the ESL syllabus (Looney, 2011). Table 2-6 below presents some examples of formative and summative assessments.

**Table 2-6: Examples of formative and summative assessment**

Formative assessment	Summative assessment
In-class discussions	Instructor-created examinations
Clicker questions	Standardised tests

Low-stakes group work	Final projects
Weekly quizzes	Final essays
One-minute reflection writing assignments	Final presentations
Homework assignments	Final reports
Surveys	Final grades

(Source: adapted from Trumbull & Lash, 2013)

The MoE compiled nine objectives of assessment for learners attending the grade 12 ESL syllabus in Namibia under which all overarching assessment criteria for learning outcomes fall. These objectives are to 1) comprehend and present information; 2) present facts, ideas and opinions in a logical manner; 3) evaluate and select information relevant to the specific task; 4) identify and summarise the main points in a text; 5) infer meanings and attitudes from a given written text; 6) express and effectively articulate their feelings and viewpoints; 6) successfully communicate when speaking and writing 8) use vocabulary effectively; 7) identify the target audience of a text, 8) identify and effectively use style and register; and 9) be aware of and effectively apply accurate grammatical structures, paragraphing, spelling, and punctuation (MoE, 2010:14). As the norm, formative and summative assessments are conducted throughout the course and should address all the above assessment criteria. Grade 12 national examination results are provided in symbols representing percentages on a scale as shown in Table 2-7 below:

**Table 2-7: Grade 12 grading scales for ordinary level in Namibia**

Grade	Percentages (%)	Points
A*	90-100	8
A	80-89	7
B	70-79	6
C	60-69	5
D	50-59	4
E	40-49	3
F	30-39	2
G	20-29	1
U	0-19	0

(Source: MoE, 2012a)

Learners who have completed the ESL syllabus have an option to either sit for core or extended level examinations. All learners are required to complete the same syllabus, however, those who wish to sit for extended-level examinations will be required to take extra topics. The core-level forms the basis of the examinations written by all students, while the extended level requires additional topics and content for study. The teachers decide which learners should be enrolled for the different levels and usually those are the learners with average or above-average performance in the subject (MoE, 2010:14). Learners who are solely enrolled for the core level write papers 1, 3 and 4 and their results will be in the the bracket of C to G symbols only, while learners enrolled for the extended level write papers 2, 3 and 4 and they can achieve marks within the brackets of A\* to E (which might allow them access to university). The papers for assessment are presented in Table 2-8, while marks and weighting of papers for core and extended levels are presented in Table 2-9.

**Table 2-8: Core- and extended- level papers**

Core level		Extended level	
Paper 1		Paper 2	
Reading and directed writing (1h 45m)		Reading and directed writing (2h 30m)	
Paper 3 Listening comprehension (approximately 45 minutes)			
Paper 4 Oral communication (approximately 15 minutes)			

(Source: Adapted from MoE, 2010:14)

**Table 2-9: Marks and weighting of papers for core and extended levels**

Core level			Extended level		
Paper	Marks	Weighting	Paper	Marks	Weighting
1	60	60%	2	90÷3×2 =60	60%
3	30	30%	3	30	30%
4	10	10%	4	10	10%
Total	100	100%	Total	100	100%

(Source: Adapted from MoE 2010:14)

Learners who do not meet ESL requirements for specific universities after completing the NSCCO syllabus have an option to improve their ESL grades with any registered centre of open learning or attend English preparatory courses at universities that offer such. The next section discusses the English preparatory courses at institutions of higher learning.

## **2.4 English preparatory courses at Namibian universities**

Several educational institutions, from Basic Education to Higher Education levels, have developed remedial programmes to teach or improve ESL skills for their students (Gomez & Vicente, 2011). This is no different in Namibia, as some non-technical universities such as University X and University Y have English preparatory courses in place for students who performed well in other subjects but did not meet their ESL admission requirements. The next subsection discusses the English preparatory courses offered by the above-mentioned universities.

### 2.4.1 English preparatory course at University X

University X's language centre offers an English preparatory course called the English Access Course. They explain the rationale for the development of the course as a way for ESL students to meet their English demands of further study and to address the gap in the English proficiency of matric students. In addition, one of the main reasons for the development of the English Access Course is to help students who performed well in other academic subjects but failed to obtain a 60% minimum requirement for ESL in matric to improve their ESL grades to reach the university's minimum requirement.

The course focuses on the development of language skills and is currently offered at five University X centres country wide. The following are language skills and subskills of the English Access Course offered at University X:

*Reading and writing:* At the end of the course students should be able to “understand a reading text and be able to express information in writing; understand ideas and opinions from the text and able to present them in writing/speech in a logical order; select relevant information from a reading text and use it for specific purposes; communicate accurately and fluently in writing; interpret and use a variety of vocabulary and writing styles in writing, speaking, and listening; select and evaluate information and use it for specific purposes in writing; interpret a text by making use of own ideas; write by using other writers' ideas in own writing; demonstrate the ability to extract information from a variety of texts; analyse and synthesise information from given texts; identify the purpose of different types of texts; transfer information from texts; describe and define concepts and give relevant information; identify themes; apply different lower and higher-order reading skills; write simple tasks, such as completing forms, writing postcards or formal and informal letters in a suitable and accurate form of English in response to a written stimulus; generate ideas and organise given material in a particular form; and predict forthcoming information and write extended texts in the form of essays” (UNAM, 2020).

*Listening and speaking:* Upon completion of the course, “students should be able to: listen to a text and respond verbally; identify facts, ideas, and opinions in an oral presentation and present them orally; listen and select specific information; communicate accurately and fluently according to the situation and audience; identify and infer implied meaning; present a prepared topic to an audience; analyse and critique a text and present it orally; demonstrate understanding of a variety of spoken discourses; initiate and sustain a conversation; listen and

take notes; make a coherent presentation based on a given topic using the appropriate presentation skills; and be conscious of different communication situations that demand different registers” (UNAM, 2020).

*Language awareness:* At the end of the course students are expected to “exercise control of appropriate grammatical structures and lexis according to the situation; use variety of vocabulary according to the situation; write a coherent paragraph, taking into account punctuation and spelling; use cohesive devices at sentence and paragraph level; and demonstrate command of essay writing skills” (UNAM, 2020).

Students are assessed formatively and summatively for the English Access Course. For formative assessment, a student should attain a minimum continuous assessment mark of 50% to qualify for the examination at University X. The summative assessments that give the students access to enrol for a degree are summarised in the following table.

**Table 2-10: UNIVERSITY X English access course summative assessment summary**

Paper 1	Reading and directed Writing 50%
Paper 2	Listening 20%
Paper 3	Oral (Coursework – assessment) 30%
Pass mark	50%
Total mark	100%

(Source: Adapted from UNAM, 2020)

### **2.4.2 English preparatory course at University Y**

The purpose of the UNIVERSITY Y English preparatory course is to impart adequate knowledge of the necessary language skills that will enable students to speak, read, and write English with confidence and accuracy and use their English language skills as a tool to achieve success in their academic and professional lives.

According to the University Y Centre for Improved Institutional Performance (CIIP), there are two English access courses designed for students to improve their grade 12 English grades.

1. English in Practice Upgrade Course: Students who obtained good grades in other subjects (at least 25 points in 5 subjects) and an E (40%) symbol in English are provisionally

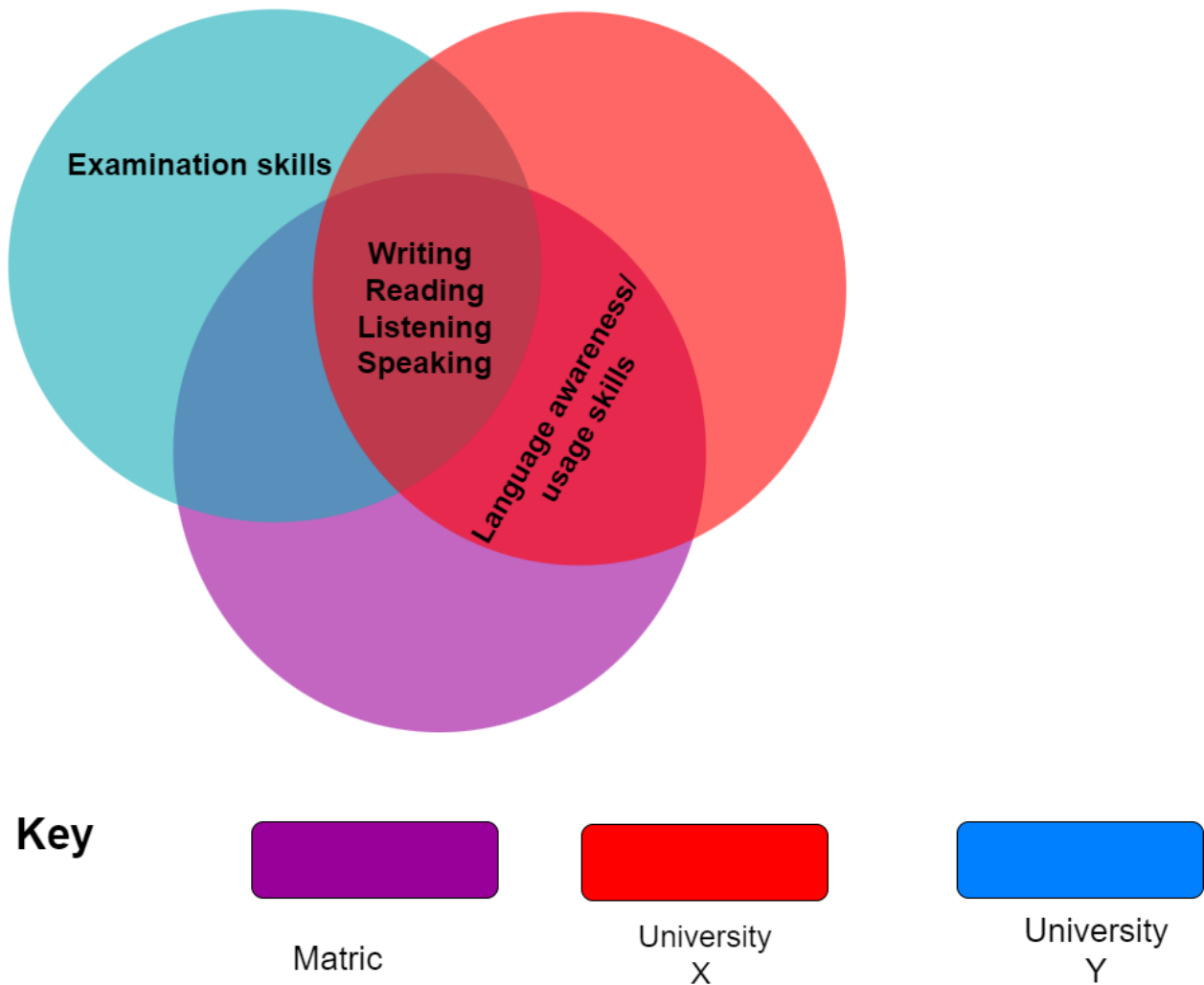
admitted to the university and have to attend the above-mentioned course for a period of six months and pass it (50%). There is no supplementary examination for students who fail this course. Such students do, however, have the opportunity to repeat the course once.

2. English in Practice Upgrade Course B: It is a course that spans two semesters, or one-year, for candidates who achieved good grades in the other matric subjects (at least 25 points in five subjects) and less than 40% in English. Such students are admitted provisionally until they pass the university's above-mentioned course. To pass this course, a candidate must obtain a mark of 50%. There is no supplementary examination for students who fail this course. Such students do, however, have the opportunity to repeat the course once.

Students learn advanced English for academic purposes in both English in practice upgrade courses. The following are the skills/themes covered during the course:

- “Speaking and listening skills;
- Reading and comprehension of academic texts;
- Essay writing;
- Note taking and note making;
- Writing standard academic English; and
- Examination skills: Preparing for and succeeding in an examination”.

The Venn diagram below presents a summary of the matric syllabus's main language skills and the main language skills offered by English preparatory courses offered by University X and University Y.

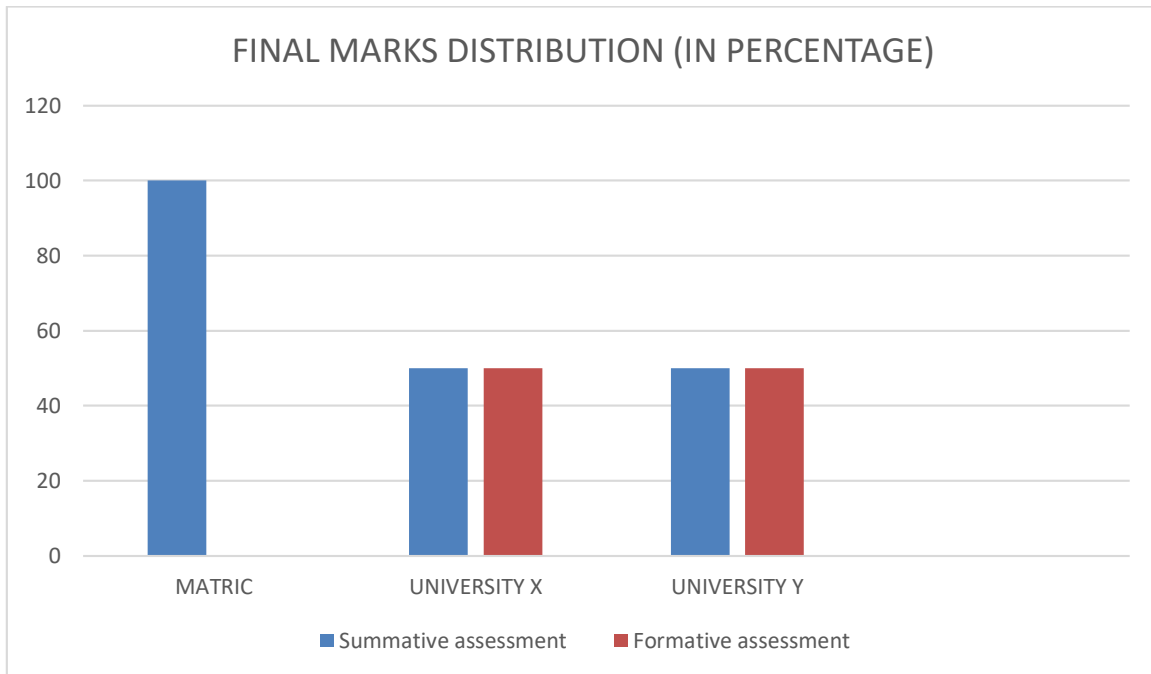


**Figure 2-2: Main English language skills offered by ESL’s matric syllabus, UNIVERSITY X’s English access course, and UNIVERSITY Y’s English upgrade courses**

(Source: Adapted from IUM, 2020; MoE, 2010 & UNAM,2020)

The two English preparatory courses offered by University X and University Y focus on four main English language skills, which correspond with the main skills addressed in the matric syllabus (writing, reading, listening, and speaking); however, University Y’s preparatory course added a unit on examination skill that the University X preparatory course does not address. University X’s preparatory course and the matric syllabus meanwhile have an extra skill (language awareness/usage skill) that the University Y preparatory course does not offer.

The bar graph below presents a summary of the final formative and summative assessment mark distributions for matric learners and English preparatory courses offered by University X and University Y.



**Figure 2-3: Final marks distribution in terms of formative and summative assessment for matric learners and English preparatory courses offered by University X and University Y**

(Source: Adapted from IUM, 2020; MoE, 2010 & UNAM,2020)

Even though both matric and English preparatory courses are assessed formatively (i.e. tests, topic tasks, assignments, projects) and summatively (i.e. final examinations), for matric the formative assessment marks are only used to prepare learners throughout the course for summative assessment, while the final results are calculated entirely on the results of the final examinations (formative assessment). In preparatory courses, on the other hand, 50% of the students' final grade score are made up of formative assessment and the other 50% summative assessment.

While the content and assessment of language is crucial, it is also important to examine the effectiveness of the teaching methods (Sajjad, 2011). The next section discusses the pedagogical practices in matric ESL in Namibian classrooms.

## **2.5 The teaching of ESL in Namibian matric classrooms**

Kyriacou (1998) posits that well-selected teaching methods foster good relationships between ESL teachers and learners and Qudsyi *et al.*, 2011 agree that “Teaching methods help to determine the success or failure of learning and teaching”. ESL teachers must know that students learn differently and are at various levels of proficiency in ESL. Therefore, it is important for teachers to use different teaching methods or find the method that is most appropriate to achieve effective learning.

### **2.5.1 Approaches to teaching**

ESL teachers apply different teaching methods accommodate the diversity in their classrooms and to address their learners’ needs. Teaching methods can be defined as the strategies used by teachers to transmit knowledge to the learners (Jacobs *et al.*, 2006), and in using various effective teaching strategies are supported to retain what they have learned and are actively engaged in lessons (Price & Nelson, 2018). This is beneficial to learners as it will help them to acquire the necessary skills in the L2.

Haimbodi and Woldemariam (2019) have identified that teachers in Namibia use teacher- and/or learner-centred approaches in their ESL classrooms. Teacher-centred approaches are associated with traditional methods of teaching whereby the teacher is the primary source of knowledge (Brown, 2003) and the “teacher is the fulcrum of the learning environment, having a wealth of knowledge about the subject being taught relative to students’ inexperience and limited knowledge” (Wright, 2011). Learner-centred approaches, on the other hand, emerged from a constructivist learning theory perspective whereby learners are active participants in the teaching and learning processes (Baeten *et al.*, 2012; McAuliffe & Eriksen, 2002). Furthermore, Baeten *et al.*, (2012) state that teachers who take a learner-centred approach “view knowledge through lenses of social and relational processes and therefore prioritise students’ individual processes of constructing personal knowledge and understanding rather than rote mastery of course content”.

At tertiary level in Namibia, the teaching methods mostly used are lectures and tutorials. According to Miller *et al.* (2009) a lecture can be described as “an oral presentation, where the lecturer’s intention is to present information about a particular subject to a large number of students”. Even though some modern lectures are now often supplemented by visual aids such

as PowerPoint Presentations which enables students to use both visual and aural channels to learn, they are still essentially teacher centred. A tutorial, however, is interactive by nature and is typically used as a follow-up to a lecture in which students are given an opportunity to discuss what they learned during lecture in smaller groups. Oftentimes, tutorials are more practical and students are expected to actively engage and respond to their lecturers (May, 2004; Stinchfield, 2006).

Research carried out by Haimbodi and Woldemariam in 2019 shows that 86% of ESL secondary school learners in Namibia indicated that teacher-initiated interaction (i.e. teacher-learner interaction) is most widely used in Namibian classrooms which is based on a teacher-centred approach. Teacher-centred approaches have been criticised as students often adopt superficial learning approaches and get by on rote learning (Diseth, 2007). Furthermore, Bain (2004) cautions teacher-centred approaches “may stifle students’ curiosity and appetite for learning as they may become accustomed to being passive receptacles of information”.

It is disheartening that only 10% of ESL classrooms in Namibia follow a learner-centred approach (Haimbodi & Woldemariam, 2019) as there are many advantages to learning associated with this approach. These include effective management of power relationships in the classroom “by intentionally creating opportunities for students to become active and engaged in the classroom while honouring and using learners’ individual experiences and perspectives and treating them as partners in the learning process” (Crick & McCombs, 2006), improving the oral skills of learners by using a variety of learner-centred activities such as tongue-twisters, drama activities, recitations, group discussions, songs, and speeches (Gathumbi & Masembe, 2005; Johnson, 2011; Oketch, 2005; Villegas & Lukas, 2002), promoting the development of critical and independent thinking, and problem-solving strategies (Ithindi, 2021) and encouraging interaction among the learners during the language learning process (Dhillon & Wanjiru, 2013; Pandiyan et al., 2017). If the learner-centred approach with its associated activities is applied more widely in classrooms across Namibia, students will be better prepared for tertiary education.

## 2.5.2 Teaching language skills

For the teaching of English to be successful, the four skills, namely reading, listening, speaking, and writing, should be taught in an integrated manner as learners need all the skills to learn effectively. Thus, it is imperative for students to understand and masters the language skills jointly and not to only focus on certain language skills and neglect other language skills. The teaching of the four skills is discussed below.

The teaching of listening skills has little priority in ESL teaching in Namibia. Abelleira (1987), Allen (1982), and Morley (1991) all found that listening skills are often not explicitly taught due to the presumption that this skill develops naturally. Furthermore, most teaching methods emphasise the productive skills (writing and speaking) while listening is often characterised as passive activity (Richards & Renandya, 2010). Underwood (1989) suggests a process approach to teaching listening skills, namely focussing pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities.

When using pre-listening activities, the teacher activates students' schemata or prior knowledge and helps students to predict what they will hear (Underwood, 1989). These may be activities such as using objects from real life in classrooms to improve understanding, stating, expecting learners to state their opinions about certain topics and brainstorming. These activities are very effective and Zohrabi *et al.* (2015) found that learners who were exposed to pre-listening activities performed better than those who were not.

While-listening activities are performed either during the listening process or immediately after (Underwood, 1989). According to Wilson (2008) these activities equip students in their comprehension, help them to focus their listening, keep them alert, teach them how to navigate the structure of spoken texts an assist them in responding effectively to spoken texts.

Post-listening activities allow students to apply both top-down and bottom-up strategies to connect the activity to their own lives (Wilson, 2008). Post-listening tasks don't necessarily have to be directly related to the preceding pre- and while-listening activities or they can just be loosely related. Wilson (2008) provides examples of these activities which could include creative responses, deconstructing and reconstructing the listening text, information exchanges, discussions and critical responses.

Globally, there is a concern that the school leavers are neither fluent nor accurate in expressing themselves orally in the L2. This includes students who achieved above average scores for their L2 in exit level exams (Alharbi, 2015; Alonso, 2014; Sarwar *et al.*, 2014). This is also true of African countries as Mwamba's (2005) study in Kenya and Lipinge's (2018) study in Namibia found that many grade 12 learners were reluctant to ask questions during their English lessons because they were not confident enough to express themselves in English. This reluctance, therefore led to decreased student participation in classes with limited opportunities for students to develop and improve their oral skills. Hui (2011) advises limiting teacher speaking time and increasing students' speaking time and providing more opportunities for collaboration. In addition to the importance of teaching speaking skills in ESL classrooms, it is also important that reading skills, which increase all language skills, because it extends linguistic knowledge (Namupala, 2013) be taught.

The ESL NSSCO syllabus does not provide a list of reading materials or textbooks to be used for reading in the classroom; however, the syllabus leaves ESL teachers to choose the materials they want to use (Ministry of Education, 2010:3). Based on a study conducted in the Namibian context, Ithindi (2019) is of the opinion that the fact that the syllabus does not provide a list of reading materials or textbooks foregrounds the question of uniformity, as every teacher chooses books according to their own judgement. They further recommend that this issue should be addressed to prevent teachers from using any materials, including those that might be inappropriate for teaching and learning (Ithindi, 2019). Teachers cannot assume that learners will acquire reading skills without explicit instruction and Mule (2016) has identified poor reading skills as a major contributing factor to poor performance in ESL. Thus, a systematic approach in teaching reading is required to ensure academic and learning success.

Lastly, besides the reading problems highlighted above, Conteh-Morgan (2002) has identified the following problems that learners experienced in terms of language usage and structure when writing ESL examinations:

- struggling to read and interpret the reading resources provided in questions;
- lacking in communication skills when responding to examination questions;
- having very little prior knowledge of subject matter; and
- experiencing difficulty with investigative skills.

The methods of teaching as well as content presentation in ESL classrooms may impact on learners' performance. The next section, therefore, discusses the grade 12 ESL performance over the past years in Namibian schools, and learners' ESL performance is analysed in relation

to other subjects offered through medium of English to find out whether students are only underperforming in ESL or also in other subjects and how this affects university entrance.

## **2.6 Matric ESL performance**

Even though English is the compulsory medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards in Namibian Basic Education, learners are still experiencing high failure rates in ESL in Grade 12 (Kamati & Woldemarian, 2016).

### **2.6.1 Matric ESL performance in 2018 and 2019**

The release of the 2018 and 2019 grade 12 examination results shows that learners underperformed in ESL for two consecutive years. This underperformance has become a national concern, critical among various education stakeholders and provoking dialogues aimed at finding a solution to this dilemma (likela & Oliveira, 2020). Table 2-11 shows learners' performance in ESL at national level for 2018 and 2019.

**Table 2-11: Performance of learners in ESL in 2018 and 2019 at national level**

Academic year	Intake	Obtained A-D symbol	Pass rate (%)	Obtained E-U symbol	Failure rate (%)
2018	20262	7081	35	13181	65
2019	21292	7174	34	14118	66

(Source: MoE, 2020)

It is evident from the table above that there was no improvement in performance from 2018 to 2019; in fact, the pass rate dropped by 1% from 35% in 2018 to 34% in 2019. This is a clear indication that a lot need be done to improve the performance in ESL and ultimately better the chances of learners gaining admission to tertiary institutions.

Underperformance in ESL is not only evident in 2018 and 2019, but it has also been a national concern for some years prior. Other scholars in the field such as Frans (2016) and Nkandi (2015) further illustrated that the past results were shockingly disappointing, majority of learners who had English L2 failed each year, which prevented many learners from continuing with tertiary studies. The 2017 grade 12 NSSCO examination results indicate that from the total of 22 091 full-time candidates who sat for examination, only 39% qualified for admission to tertiary institutions, and ESL was one of the subjects in which pupils performed the worst (Kambowe, 2018).

Looking at further historical statistics from 2015 at national level, close to 30% of learners obtained a U symbol in ESL (MoE, 2016). In the 2016 academic year, the trend continued with close to 30% of learners obtaining a U symbol in ESL in the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSC-O) national examinations (MoE, 2016).

Even further back, the extremely poor ESL performance of the 2010 academic year required stakeholders from all fourteen regions in Namibia to critically consider the results and to find ways in which to improve them (MoE, 2010). Consequently, the MoE required secondary schools to develop and implement an action plan to make the year 2011 the year in which all educational regions performed better in the ESL examinations (MoE, 2010). Despite all these efforts and arrangements to improve ESL results, there was no significant change in learner

performance. This was evident in 2015 results which revealed that grade 12 graduates who qualified for university entry remained below 30% at the national level (MoE, 2016).

### 2.6.2 2018 and 2019 ESL performance in comparison with other subjects

In contrast to the lack of performance in ESL, Kamati and Woldemariam (2016) argue that learners' performance in other subjects is much better than their performance in English. This subsection analyses the performance of ESL and other subjects offered through medium of English to find if this is still the case in Namibian schools.

The figure below provides an overview of learners' ESL performance in comparison with other subjects taught in English in matric for 2018 and 2019 in Namibia. The status of ESL performance in comparison with other subjects can be deduced from the figure.

Subject	2018	
	Number of learners who obtained > 50 (Percentage)	Learners who obtained <50 (Percentage)
English second language	7081 (35 %)	13181 (65 %)
Biology	4694 (33 %)	9742 (67 %)
Bussiness studies	815 (38 %)	1346 (62 %)
Computer studies	229 (70 %)	96 (30 %)
Accounting	1039 (43 %)	1356 (57 %)
Economics	707 (40 %)	1069 (60 %)
Mathematics	9501 (42 %)	13106 (58 %)
Geography	2348 (27 %)	6498 (73 %)
Physical science	5916 (44 %)	7669 (56 %)

Subject	2019	
	Number of learners who obtained > 50 (Percentage)	Learners who obtained <50 (Percentage)
English second language	7174 (34 %)	14118 (66 %)
Biology	5187 (34 %)	9871 (66 %)
Bussiness studies	790 (37 %)	1327 (63 %)
Computer studies	226 (72 %)	90 (28 %)
Accounting	1120 (45 %)	1348 (55 %)
Economics	784 (42 %)	1103 (58 %)
Mathematics	9883 (41 %)	14092 (59 %)
Geography	2615 (31 %)	5852 (69 %)
Physical science	5532 (39 %)	8767 (61 %)

Key : % percentages

> greater than/ more than

< less than

**Figure 2-4: 2018 and 2019 matric results per subject**

(Source: MoE, 2020)

Based on the statistics from Figure 2-3, matric learners performed poorly in ESL, biology, business studies and geography for 2018 and 2019, with less than a 40% average score. However, learners' performance in computer studies, accounting, economics, mathematics and physical science is at least acceptable as they scored higher than 40% on average. It is worth noting that there are other subjects in which learners also underperform besides ESL, however, an acceptable mark for ESL is a compulsory requirement to all Namibian institutions of higher learning. This means that learners' performance in other subjects other than ESL will still be meaningless if they did not perform well in ESL.

Beside English being used as an official language as well as the sole medium of instruction from Grade 4 for the past 30 years, Namibia still faces the challenge of poor ESL performance of learners in schools. It is therefore important to explore some notable causes of poor ESL performance in Namibian schools.

## **2.7 Causes of poor ESL performance**

For effective learning to take place, learners need to be fluent in the language of instruction, if they are struggling with the language of instruction, their learning will be negatively affected. Sibanda (2016) notes "the poor performance of students in the English language examinations has been ascribed as a major cause of decline in the general academic performance and standard of education in Namibia". Learners' poor performance in ESL can be attributed to a number of factors, and these are identified and discussed in the following sections.

### **2.7.1 Teachers' inadequate language proficiency**

Richards *et al.* (1992) defines language proficiency as "the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, including how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand the language". Kamati and Woldemariam (2016) go further to explain in their study how poor performance in English as a subject could be attributed to both teachers' and learners' inadequate proficiency in the English language. In short, debates surrounding this issue imply that some English language teachers are not well equipped with the skills and knowledge seemed necessary to teach English, the fact is, the learners cannot be expected to perform well in the examinations if even the teachers are struggling with ESL.

Poor ESL performance related to teachers' inadequate proficiency in English is not a new concern – Ithindi (2021) and many other authors from the body of literature (Ipinge, 2018; Nkandi, 2015) found that many English language teachers in multilingual countries like Namibia are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach the subject. It is against this background that the Ministry of Education in Namibia administered an English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) to all principals and teachers countrywide as part of the Department of Education's strategy to identify further training needs (Kisting, 2017). The test was administered in 2011 and involved 23 000 educators across the country (Smit, 2011). Karamata (2011) states that the test results showed that most teachers performed poorly in the test, and only 2% passed the test. Another, perhaps more disappointing finding from this study, is that a number of teachers struggled to complete their own personal particulars on the front page of the answer sheet (Kisting, 2012). Teachers' inadequate proficiency may be also be due to the fact that ESL teachers are underqualified and this factor is discussed in the next section.

### **2.7.2 Underqualified ESL teachers**

In many countries, there is a shortage of qualified English language teachers, which results in the appointment of underqualified teachers and ultimately to poor delivery of lesson content (Ganaprakasam & Karunaharan, 2020; Adedokun, 2011). Pandiyan *et al.*'s (2017) study in Ghana identified lack of qualified English language teachers to be a barrier to the performance of high school learners in English and states that employing underqualified ESL teachers "can lead to unprecedented disruption in the academic performance of students, persistent and critical low self-esteem, and decreased motivation for self-development" (Pandiyan *et al.*, 2017). According to the Education Management Information System's (EMIS) report of 2019 (MoE, 2019), there was a total of 1 493 ESL teachers at secondary schools nationwide in Namibia, of which 1 308 had grade 12 and three or more years of teacher training while 185 ESL secondary schools teachers' qualifications ranged from less than a grade 12 certificate and at least a two-year teaching qualification, this, in turn, means there are ESL teachers without any formal teaching qualifications (MoE, 2019).

### **2.7.3 Teacher-learner ratio**

Graue, Rauscher and Sherfinski (2009) state that the teacher-learner ratio refers to the “number of learners in a teacher’s class or the average number of learners a teacher instructs in a school”. Due to overcrowded classrooms, teachers and students experience various challenges during the teaching-learning processes. These included high levels of noise, restricted teacher movement, diminished quality and quantity of interaction in the classroom, poor seating arrangements and examination malpractices (Ijaiya, 1999; Bayo, 2005; Nawala, 2005). On the other hand, in schools with a smaller teacher-learner ratio, teachers have enough time to offer individualised attention to learners and can monitor the progress of every learner (Johnson, 2011).

A strategic plan for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) conducted by supports the claim that very high learner-teacher ratios severely and negatively affect the learners’ achievements. Through classroom observations, Ipinge’s (2018) study reveals that most of that grade 12 ESL classrooms in the Northern part of Namibia were overcrowded, with some classes having up to more than fifty learners. Additionally, the study conducted by Hartney (2011) in Namibia, found that the classes were overcrowded with a teacher-learner ratio of 1:40, this is beyond the recommended 1:35 teacher-learner ratio (MoEAC, 2017).

### **2.7.4 Inadequate infrastructural facilities and instructional media**

Roger (1981) emphasises the importance of infrastructure and resources “as they provide practice opportunities and feedback during the learning process”. The uneven allocation and distribution of Learning Support Materials (LSMs) within Namibian schools represents an obstacle for learner performance (Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2020). This problem was identified in 2008, where the Department of Education aimed for 1:1 textbook-learner ratio across Namibia. Sawchuck (2011) posited that even a ratio of 1:2 could affect positive learner achievement significantly.

Another significant factor is the availability of school libraries. According to the 2019 EMIS statistics, out of the total number of 1894 schools in Namibia, only 823 were equipped with libraries and media or resource centres (MoE, 2019) and a study undertaken by Mule (2012) in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia revealed that learners’ inability to read in English was attributed to the lack of reading materials made available to them. Lastly, the MoE (2015)

reported that a particular problem they identified in learners' poor performance in ESL is that learners often misinterpret questions and are unfamiliar with concepts or terms used in texts; a lack of understanding results in learners providing irrelevant answers (Hilongwa, 2011) and all of these problems are associated with poor reading habits. Teachers need reading texts to establish and nurture a culture of reading among learners and also to prepare learners for multiliteracies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Crawford, 2013; Yi, 2015).

### **2.7.5 Lack of print-friendly classrooms**

According to Najumba (2013), a print-friendly classroom is stocked with printed media, such as books, magazines, charts and posters in which reading and writing are used for a variety of authentic, everyday purposes. Print-friendly classrooms help learners to develop reading skills faster. In addition, it increases learners' vocabulary, enhances their memory, encourages acquisition of information, and supports their language learning outside the classroom (Najumba, 2013). Studies conducted in Namibia by lipinge (2018) and Ithindi (2019) highlighted the need for print-friendly classrooms in Namibian schools

lipinge's (2018) study with grade 12 ESL learners in the Northern Namibia identified the absence of multimodal ESL resources (e.g. posters and additional teaching aids apart from the chalkboard) in classrooms. According to Mwanza, 2016:58 multimodal resources are necessary as it integrates written and spoken language and it creates an interesting and motivating learning environment.

Ithindi's (2019) study similarly revealed that even at schools with libraries, the texts were old and outdated and of not much interest to. Furthermore, these libraries had limited space, few texts and the books were not catalogued or organised at all, which made it difficult for learners to find suitable texts and created a very uninviting reading environment (Ithindi, 2019).

### **2.7.6 The inadequate use of multimedia technology**

Multimedia in teaching consists of a "combination of graphics, images, sound, text, animation, and other media" (Yin, 2018) through equipment such as computers and projects to enrich the teaching and learning process, provide scaffolding and to create a fun and productive learning environment. (Guan *et al* ,2018). Furthermore, the effective use of multimedia fosters better

expression and comprehension in English, enhances the quality of education and improves learners' language skills (Alemdag & Cagiltay, 2018; Chen & Liu, 2008; Miima, 2013; Sivapalan, 2010; Jose & Raya (2011).

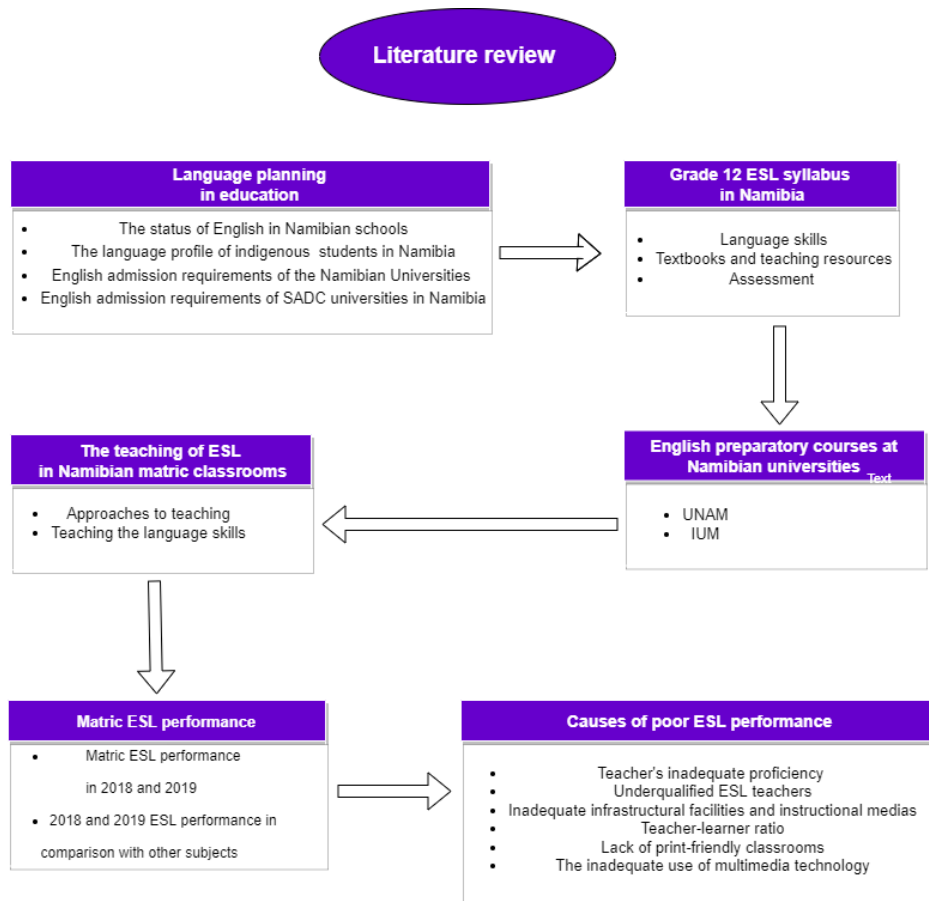
During the 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the government acted by introducing e-learning platforms to ensure progress in the education sector. However, many learners could not access these platforms as they did not have access to computers or the internet at home (Gervasius, 2020). The challenges discussed in the following paragraph have been in existence in Namibia since independence and had contributed negatively to the learning and performance of students in ESL and other subjects across the curriculum, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A mere 29.5% of Namibian households use the internet (Smit, 2019) and this posed a challenge to many learners and students as their education was severely limited during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Minister of Education, honourable Anna Nghipondoka, only 13 000 of 804 000 learners in Namibian schools (less than 2%) were able to access the ministry's e-learning platforms during the national lockdown (Bayer & Nembwaya, 2020).

Appropriate use of computers and technology in education is essential, as it has the potential to change the roles of teachers from mere knowledge transmitters to facilitators and knowledge navigators (Coleman *et al.*, 2016) In addition, Keengwe and Onchwari (2008) concluded that lessons integrated with multimedia technologies address learners' diverse need as they are very productive, interesting, motivating, and interactive. However, these benefits are possible when all schools and learners in Namibia have equal access to technology, but this access is mostly limited to urban schools (MoE, 2020).

## 2.8 Chapter summary

Figure 2-5 presents the summary of the literature that was reviewed throughout the research.



**Figure 2-5: Literature review's summary**

The existing literature was reviewed to address two objectives of this study, namely to identify and discuss the effects of English language requirements for Namibian students to be admitted to university and to analyse and identify possible causes for learners' underperformance in ESL compared to other subjects.

Several studies have identified and discussed factors that contribute to learners' poor performance in English second language (Hilongwa, 2011; lipinge, 2018, 2019; Nkandi, 2015). The findings and arguments supported from the literature discussed in this chapter indicate that

inadequate infrastructural facilities and instructional media, high teacher-learner ratios, a lack of print-rich classrooms, and the inadequate use of multimedia technology are some of the notable factors which contribute to poor performance in ESL (Hilongwa, 2011; lipinge, 2018, 2019; Nkandi, 2015). The primary factors affecting learner performance are identified as inadequate language proficiency of teachers and underqualified ESL teachers.

Despite all the policies and legislations that have been formulated to strengthen the value of education in Namibia, poor management and implementation of the English curriculum persists. Policies could be adapted in such a way that they adequately meet the needs of the country (Tait, 2007:179). The literature in this review clearly suggests that, since its independence, Namibia has not done enough to address the issues that contribute to poor performance in ESL, as most of the research done within the last five years identified similar causes, that contributed to students' underperformance in ESL and so hindered the advancement of indigenous students to university. The following chapter provides an in-depth description of the research methodology employed in this study, which enabled the researcher to address the further address the research questions

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The research design and methodology applied in this study is outlined in this chapter. In accordance with addressing the aims and objectives of the study, the chapter further outlines the research strategy, data collection methods, research participants, and the trustworthiness applicable to the study. The role of the researcher, data analysis and interpretation, and ethical considerations are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **3.2 Research design**

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative research design**

A qualitative research design was selected for this study as it allowed the researcher “to gain an understanding through the eyes of the participants” (Hargreaves, 2000). Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to ask “how”, “why”, “what”, “where” and “when” questions and to explore the answers to those questions to investigate a particular social situation in depth (Shank, 2002). This is relevant to this study in that the ESL marks of learners in Namibia is a social concern that has affected the Namibian society, and which requires research of a social, explorative nature. Merriam (2009) describes qualitative studies as performed by researchers who would like to explore particular situations and link them to people’s real -life experiences and to attempt to explain how those experiences are attributed to the real world. In addition to these characteristics, qualitative study designs are often flexible in terms of data collection as data is mostly collected in natural settings through different methods and their sample selection is usually manageable and purposeful (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research is relevant to this study because the data collection and analysis reflected the opinions, feelings and experiences of the participants (Denzin, 1989) about the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students.

The primary characteristic of this qualitative research was its focus on understanding students and administration officers’ experiences regarding the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students, with the intent of making meaning from these lived experiences. Furthermore, this qualitative study employed a case study methodology.

### 3.2.2 Case study

Creswell (2014) explains that the structure of a case study should be the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned. According to Gillham (2000:1), a case study attempts to elicit answers to specific research questions from a specific group of participants within a case setting. (Noor, 2008:1603) discusses the strength of a case study by highlighting “its ability to enable the researcher to gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon or series of events, thus providing an overall picture since many sources of evidence are used”. Meyer (2001:330) emphasises the authenticity of case study methodology as these studies are conducted in real-life situations and contemporary phenomena are addressed.

The researcher used an explanatory case study for this study because it enabled him to closely examine the data for the study within the Namibian context. This type of case study was selected as it examines the data at different levels (face vs deep) and it is effective in finding causal links for real-life interventions (Zaidah, 2003; Yin, 2003; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011)

This was a single case study with embedded cases (consisting of ESL students, admission officers at Higher Education Institutions and policy documents) that were carefully selected with the intention of collecting and analysing within and among the cases (Yin, 2003). The interview questions and questionnaires in this study contained questions that addressed the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students. Pre-defined boundaries for the case as well the embedded cases which clarify the nature covered by the case study are described in Table 4-1 below. Data relating to the embedded cases were analysed first, after which the researcher made comparisons across cases.

**Table 3-1: Pre-defined boundaries and type of evidence to be collected by the main case and embedded cases**

Main case		
Case	Boundaries	Type of evidence to be collected
ESL Students	Only students that are improving their ESL grades at any of the five selected Namibian universities/institutions of open leaning may be used	Effects of compulsory ESL admission requirements Causes of underperformance in ESL.

		The need of curriculum transformation  Perceptions on ESL grades and ESL as a compulsory admission requirement at universities
<b>Embedded cases</b>		
<b>Case</b>	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>Type of evidence to be collected</b>
Admission officers	Only admission officers involved in the admission of first years' undergraduate at a Namibian university students may be used.	Perceptions on ESL grades and ESL as compulsory admission requirement at universities  Perceptions on English as a sole medium of instructions  English language skills that should be prioritised
Documents	Only the Namibian matric ESL syllabus as well as English preparatory course outlines that are being followed at the time of the study may be used.	Language skills offered.  Recommended teaching and learning resources.  Recommended teaching and learning approaches.  Types of assessment applied

### 3.2.3 Population

Trochim (2006) defines a population as “a group of people that the researcher wants to choose a sample from for their inquiry”. From University X and University Y respectively, six participants were sampled from the total population, two of whom were staff members in the admission committee and four were students working toward improving their English results at the same universities. Two staff members in the admission committee were sampled from the total population at University Z; no students were sampled since this institution did not have provision for students to improve their English at the university. This brought the total number of participants from universities to 14. Furthermore, four students in the process of improving their English results were selected from each of the centres of open learning. This brought the total number of respondents from centres of open learning to 12. The total number of respondents from selected universities and from centres of open learning was 26. The members of the

admission committees were selected because they were involved in the ELS student admission process; the students were selected because they would provide more information on the reasons for their underperformance and their experience with the matric ESL curriculum. The distribution of respondents that were sampled from the total population is summarised in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2: Distribution of respondents that were sampled from the total population**

Institution	Target group	Total number of respondents
Centre of open learning A	Students	4
Centre of open learning B	Students	4
Centre of open learning C	Students	4
University X	Students (4) and admission team staff members (2)	6
University Y	Students (4) and admission team staff members (2)	6
University Z	Admission team staff members	2
TOTAL		26

### 3.2.4 Sampling technique

“A sample is a group of individuals, items or events that represents the characteristics of the larger group from which the sample is drawn” (Gay *et al.*, 2009:167). As it was not possible for the researcher to study the entire population of prospective students who were not admitted due to their underperformance in ESL as well as all the administrators involved in the admission of prospective students at Higher Education institutions in Namibia, a sample from this population was selected for this study.

Purposive sampling was utilised in this study, which entailed the deliberate selection of participants based on pre-determined criteria (Bernard, 2002). This method is often used in qualitative research to effectively utilise the available resources and to select cases that would provide the richest data for the study (Patton, 2002). Concept-based purposive sampling was employed to select the six institutions and the 26 participants. Table 3-3 below outlines the

inclusion and exclusion criteria for the respondents of the study and the criteria are briefly justified.

**Table 3-3: Respondents' inclusion and exclusion criteria**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
<b>Students</b>	<p><b>Students in the process of improving their matric English results to qualify for university admission.</b></p> <p>These students are enrolled for a course at a centre for open learning or an English preparatory course at one of the three selected Namibian universities to improve their results in English to qualify for admission to university.</p>	<p>The purpose of the study is to investigate the reasons why students were not accepted after matric.</p>	<p>Students already enrolled for degree programmes at university.</p>
<b>University admission officers</b>	<p><b>University admission officers responsible for students' admissions.</b></p>	<p>The participants should be part of the admission committee across the faculties of one of the three selected Namibian universities and involved with the admission of ESL students.</p>	<p>Other university staff not directly involved with the admission of first-year students.</p>

### 3.2.5 Data collection

Methods of qualitative data collection include interviews, observations, documents, and artefacts (Creswell, 2009:179). In this research, I used open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to gather data on the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students. In qualitative

research, and especially when complex problems are studied, a range of data collection methods should be utilised to enable the researcher to answer the research questions with sufficient depth and breadth (Poth & Munce, 2020; Enosh *et al.*, 2014).

Constructivist theory played a fundamental role in this section during data collection process as it views learning as an active and social process and promotes cognitive development through observation and experimentation, and through interacting with knowledgeable members of the community (Rummel, 2008:80). For learning to be effective in a constructivist setting, active engagement, problem solving, and collaboration with others should be encouraged. Students were afforded an opportunity to share their own experiences on how their matric ESL results directly affected their non-admission to universities through online questionnaires. In addition to the students' experiences, admission officers from different institutions of higher learning also shared their experiences and opinions on the context and challenges associated with the admission of first year students who are underperforming in English Second Language through online interviews.

### **3.2.5.1 Online questionnaires**

Questionnaires comprising open-ended questions were used to collect data on the reasons why students underperformed in ESL and their experiences with the matric ESL curriculum. The use of questionnaires in this study enabled the respondents to express their opinions and experiences on how they were affected by the English language requirements for admission to university with enough time to think about and properly formulate their responses. The researcher fully utilised the benefits of questionnaires as discussed by Litosseliti (2010:60) in the sense that the online questionnaires saved time (participants could complete them in their own time and submit them online) and in the online responses allowed the researcher to easily process and organise the data before the analysis process started.

The questionnaires were created as Google Forms, and the participants could complete them by using a link that was provided to them. An independent third party distributed the link to the 20 respondents from five selected institutions who agreed to take part in the study. The link to the questionnaire was distributed via email or WhatsApp, depending on the participants' preferences. The independent party also explained the purpose of the study to the respondents. The questionnaire took between 20 and 30 minutes to complete and no physical contact was made with participants, as virtual methods of data collection were used.

Notwithstanding its many benefits around convenience, affordability, and time (Litosseliti, 2010) a disadvantage of using online questionnaires in research is a low return rate, especially for online questionnaires (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989:172). Possible reasons for this are that some respondents may not have virtual modes of communication, prefer not to use these, or be unfamiliar with some of the more advanced functions that may be necessary in answering an online questionnaire. This was addressed by providing respondents short video explaining how to fill a Google form. Furthermore, students with no data were supplied with data on request. Another disadvantage in using questionnaires is that questionnaires cannot probe deeply into respondents' opinions and feelings in the way that interviews allow (Gall *et al.*, 1996:289) because items distributed in a questionnaire cannot be modified. Given these and the limited contextual information questionnaires can provide, it is important that the questions be formulated as simplistically, clearly, and unambiguously as possible to facilitate understanding and encourage participation. In view of this and in an attempt to address this drawback, the researcher took care to ensure that the wording of each question was precise and unambiguous so that each respondent could interpret its intended meaning accurately and with ease (Payne, 1951). The researcher further ensured that questions were short, simple and in line with the target population's vernacular and avoided problems such as double-barrelled questions (Check & Schutt, 2012). Every question had a clear role and purpose (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2005) and the questionnaires contained instructions for respondents to ensure further clarity.

### **3.2.5.2 Online interviews**

Online individual interviews were used to collect data from the universities' respective admission committees on their perceptions of how ESL matric results have affected students' admission to degree programmes. Individual interviews encourage participants to share opinions that they may not have felt comfortable sharing in groups. Individual interviews were conducted with six purposively sampled staff members from five selected institutions. Each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes and no physical contact was made with participants as virtual methods of data collection were used. Participants indicated their choice of platform for the interview, which was either telephonically, via Skype, Clubhouse, Zoom, or Google Meet.

The interviews that were conducted with these participants were guided by semi-structured questions to obtain specific data from the participants and that would allow the researcher to respond to new views and ideas that emerge during the interview (Merriam, 1998), which is not possible during a structured interview or questionnaire.

Another advantage of online interviews is that an interviewer can explain questions and tasks in a much more comprehensive way to achieve and maintain clarity and understanding (Fowler, 2014; Loosveldt, 2008; Schnell, 2012). Additionally, semi-structured interviews are adaptable and flexible as questions are not rigid and have no specific order (Verma & Mallick, 1999:128). This allows for the collection of richer, more detailed information.

However, a disadvantage of online interviews is the risk that the interviewer might, unduly or unwittingly, influence the participants. Groves *et al.* (2009:87) add that “interviewer bias can also arise when the response behaviour of certain groups of respondents depends on specific characteristics of the interviewer, for example that person’s gender”. To minimise researcher bias, the researcher standardised the interview as much as possible, and the interview questions were submitted to the ethics committee for scrutiny before using them to gather data.

### **3.2.5.3 Document analysis**

Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as “a process of evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced, and understanding is developed”. Like other methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using document analysis is practical (O’Leary, 2014) and, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, even more documents were available online, which made a number of relevant documents easily accessible. Furthermore, document analysis is cost effective, saves time, and they are “stable, non-reactive data sources, meaning that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher’s influence or research process” (Bowen, 2009).

The documents that were analysed were the Namibian matric ESL curriculum, as that was the guideline followed during teaching and learning in schools at the time of the study, and the content of the selected universities’ English preparatory course outlines. This document analysis made it possible for me as the researcher to identify the gaps in the ESL content taught at school and in preparatory courses. Document analysis was used as a complement to the online questionnaires and interviews.

The disadvantages of document analysis include that a document may not necessarily directly provide the data required to answer the research questions, data from certain documents may be inaccurate and sometimes documents can be difficult to access (Bowen, 2009). Lastly, there

is a danger of bias that could exist in either the document or in the researcher. As the researcher of this study, I was attuned to the possible influence of the my own and other authors' subjectivity and personal biases on the research and discussed these with the supervisor and co-supervisor. I also evaluated the original purpose of the documents that were analysed, considering the target audience, as suggested by Bowen (2009). The researcher also assessed documents for their completeness, in other words, how selective or comprehensive their data was, as suggested by Bowen (2009).

### **3.3 Data analysis**

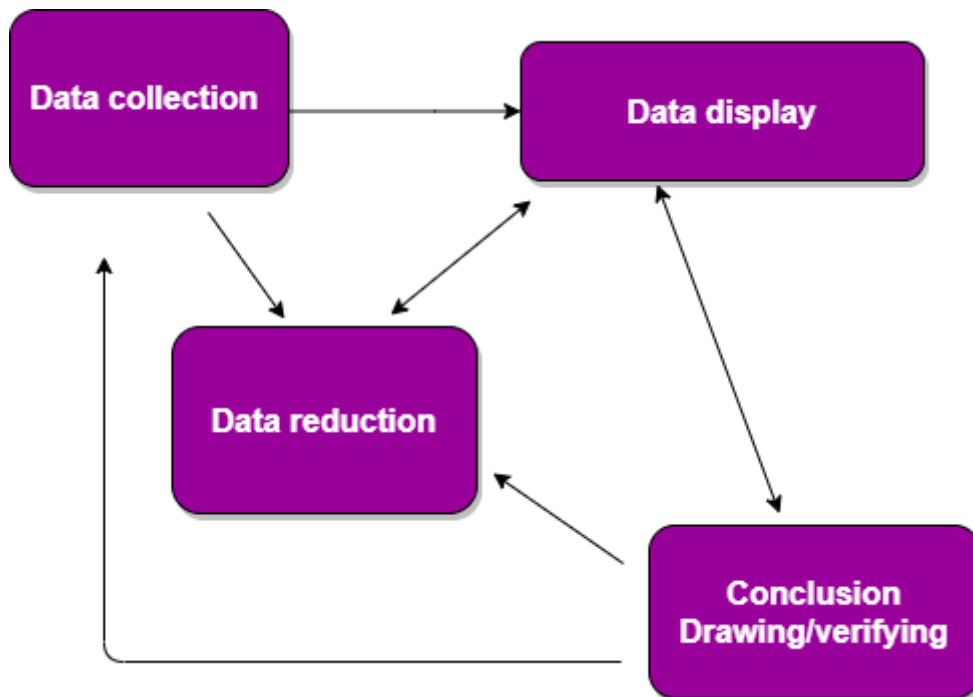
During data analysis, data is further broken down into smaller parts so that the researcher can gain a better insight of the phenomenon represented by the data (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016:61). The purpose of analysing data is to transform collected data into findings (Patton, 2002:432). Qualitative data analysis and data collection are on-going processes and this is especially true for case study research (Yin, 2014). Data analysis forms a crucial part of a research study which a researcher must always monitor, and report on regarding its progress (Patton, 2002:434).

Data were analysed using thematic analysis. This method allows for the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns that occur repeatedly (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). The data analysis was done by selecting codes and constructing them into themes. Lastly, thematic analysis allows flexibility to the researcher in terms of the choice and type of research questions, the type of documents, the range of the data that will be analysed, the selection of an appropriate theoretical framework and the approach to data analysis (inductive vs deductive) (Clarke & Braun 2013). Below is an overview of how findings from each method of data collection were analysed.

#### **3.3.1 Analysis of questionnaires and interviews**

The questionnaires and interviews of the current study were analysed using thematic analysis where the researcher grouped a list of common themes from the answers to give expression to the participants' common voice. The researcher derived themes from the words of participants and then grouped themes in a manner that directly reflects the responses as a whole (Anderson, 2007:1). The responses from university staff and students were categorised into emerging themes using ATLAS.ti (Friese, 2011:2).

The thematic analysis process model adopted by Miles and Huberman (1994) was followed during the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews as illustrated by Figure 3-1.



**Figure 3-1: Components of data analysis: interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994)**

The process consisted of three stages, namely data reduction, data display and data conclusion-drawing/verifying. During these stages, the researcher visually represented the data by means of quotations, narrative text, figures, tabulating differences, and similarities, in an attempt to explore and explain the relationships among them (Gibbs, 2002; Miles & Huberman 1994; Yin, 2010).

Data reduction allows the researcher to focus and organise the data by selecting, simplifying, and transforming the data in such a manner that he/she can draw some conclusions from it that can be verified (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this, study data were reduced through summarisation.

Miles and Huberman (1994:196) describes data display as “using textual representations of your data for the purpose of selecting segments that best illustrate your concepts of interest”. They (Miles and Huberman,1994:202) further highlight that data display should include the following:

- repeatedly reading transcriptions or documents;

- adding notes in the margins of transcribed data, or
- identifying and marking parts of the data as representations of particular concepts.

The most appealing benefit of data display is that it allows the researcher to classify and categorise data and arrange it logically (Huberman & Miles,1994). In this study, the concepts and thoughts of students were arranged according to the study's objectives, namely: To identify and discuss the effects of English language requirements for Namibian students to be admitted to university, to analyse and identify possible causes for learners' underperformance in ESL compared to other subjects and to critically analyse the Namibian school curriculum and compulsory English language entry requirements of local universities and describe how the ESL school curriculum can be adapted to improve learners' ESL performance.

The final step of the Miles and Huberman (1994) model involves data drawing and conclusions. In this study, the researcher adopted elements from Miles and Huberman's (1994:86) model to generate meaning from data. These elements were:

- Identifying and indicating any patterns relevant to the aims of the study;
- Organising and categorising the data;
- Indicating the relationships among codes and themes in the data;
- Ensuring coherence and consistency, with the theoretical basis of the study.

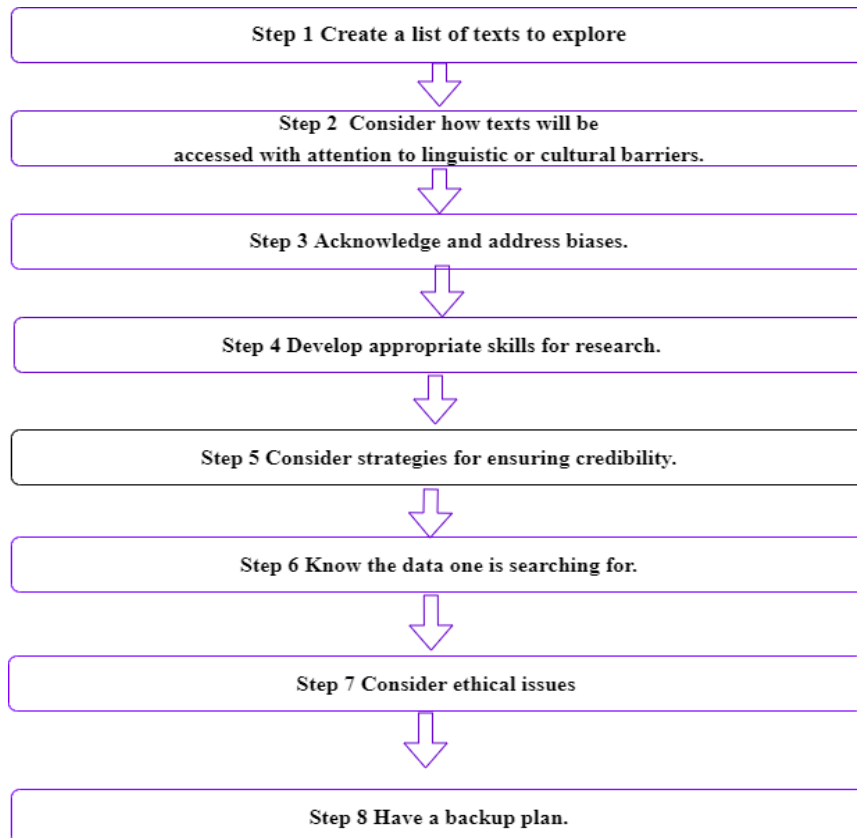
Duffy (2006) states that constructivist theory is a theory of knowledge, which argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and ideas. This theory was pertinent in this section as the data analysed was derived from students and admission officers' real-life experiences on the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English second language students.

After analysing data from questionnaires and interviews, the researcher further analysed the documents to add credibility to the research findings. The next subsection discusses the analysis of data from documents.

### **3.3.2 Analysis of data from documents**

Similar to the questionnaires and surveys, the primary method of document analysis was thematic analysis. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) describes this process as a "form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis".

The researcher devised and followed a detailed planning process for attaining reliable results before conducting the document analysis by following an eight-step planning process, as presented by Figure 3-2, for textual analysis.



**Figure 3-2: Textual analysis 8-step planning process**

In order to avoid bias in the text and interpretation, the researcher used a technique suggested by O’Leary (2014) called the interview technique in which the documents are treated like respondents that could provide the researcher with relevant information pertaining the study. The researcher asked the following questions then highlighted the answers within the text

- Which language skills/themes should students master by the end of the course?
- Which teaching and learning resources does this document prescribe?
- Which teaching approaches are recommended in this document?
- Which assessment methods should be employed during/after course presentation?

After the planning process, the researcher then analysed data using thematic analysis. This requires categorising emerging into categories for further analysis and can be considered a form of pattern recognition with the document's data (Bowen, 2009). Thematic analysis includes careful, focused reading and re-reading of data, as well as coding and category construction (Bowen, 2009). ATLAS.ti was again used in the document analysis for thematic analysis.

### **3.4 Role of the researcher**

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher is very important, because the researcher is involved directly in deciding what is to be investigated and who will participate, developing data collection methods, and analysing and interpreting the data (Merriam, 1998:65). Creswell (2009:177) suggests that researchers should identify aspects that could compromise the collection of trustworthy data explicitly.

My passion for teaching stems from the belief that the goal of teaching is ultimately to make learners think, act, and discover new knowledge on their own. Through this study I intend to indicate and justify my belief that English is a tool of communication and not a measure of intelligence upon which students' admission to university should be based. Nevertheless, I am aware that each participant has their own underlying beliefs about ESL. Therefore, to ensure that the results are reliable, I identified and explicitly stated my biases and beliefs, keeping their possible influence in mind throughout the study. Importantly, I considered and observed all necessary ethical considerations throughout the research process.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

All studies have ethical aspects which researchers must consider before, during, and after the research (Maree, 2016:44). Mustafa (2011:27) highlights that ethical issues are important in any social study because such studies often intrude on the participants' privacy, as the researchers are inherently interested in participants' personal views, which may be of a sensitive or intimate nature.

Ethical research entails distinguishing between right and wrong when conducting research. According to Strydom (2012:113), research should be based on developed codes of conduct

that involve acceptance, cooperation, mutual respect, and well-accepted conventions. The study adhered to the following ethical aspects:

- Ethical clearance from the North-West University was requested and the study was approved by the EMELTEN-REC Ethics Committee.
- A request to conduct research with students and admission staff from different institutions was submitted to different institutions via gatekeepers. The request was approved by the gatekeepers of all the institutions involved in the study.
- All the participants received consent forms, which provided detailed information about the following: the research background, expectation from the participants, benefits and risks of taking part in the study, assurance of confidentiality and the protection of identity, how findings will be disseminated, and a declaration section. Participants' signatures were captured on the consent forms.
- An independent third party was involved in this study whose role was to approach the participants, explain the purpose of the study, and obtain consent from them.
- All participants were notified that their involvement was voluntary and that they were entitled to withdraw from the research at any moment without penalty.
- The researcher assured the participants, that their identity and that of their association to the respective institutions would be kept anonymous throughout the study. The researcher applied anonymity from as early as the organisation of data whereby participating respondents were accorded pseudonyms.
- Data gathered from interviews and questionnaires will be stored for five years in electronic files on USB memory sticks that will be stored in a locked filing cabinet of the supervisor's office at the NWU, Potchefstroom Campus. The recordings and transcriptions were password protected and only the supervisor, co-supervisor and researcher had access to the data.
- Once the Google Forms were downloaded, the access link to the forms removed and made available to only the researcher and the supervisors.
- All participants were treated fairly, with honesty, consideration and respect. Prior the interview, the researcher requested permission from the participants for audio recording.
- The researcher strove to report the findings of the study objectively, with high level of accuracy and without any bias.
- The participants were informed on their consent forms that the research findings would be made available to them upon their request.

Furthermore, as a responsible citizen and empathetic individual I adhered to my government and university's call on contributing to curbing the 2019 novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic by doing the following during data collection:

- Data were collected using electronic platforms, so participants would be able to choose a facility that was convenient and safe to them as there would be no face-to-face contact to avoid risks associated with the spread of Covid-19.
- Participants were contacted telephonically or electronically via gatekeepers.
- The link to the student participants' questionnaires was distributed via email or WhatsApp, depending on the participants' preference.
- Participants had the opportunity to choose the mode for the interview, which could be telephonically, via Skype, Zoom, Clubhouse, or Google Meet.

Adhering to and keeping these ethical considerations in mind, among other strategies, allowed the researcher to ensure a trustworthy study.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness**

Lincoln & Guba (1994:110) indicate that the quality assurance of qualitative research is based on the notion of trustworthiness. This is the "extent to which the data analysis is believable" (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:3). In the case of this study, trustworthiness was established through self-reflexivity, confirmability, credibility, and dependability.

#### **3.6.1 Self-reflexivity**

According to Dowling (2006) self-reflexivity "pertains to the analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research, [and] it is both a concept and a process". It, therefore, refers to the extent to which the researcher is conscious and aware of his/her own role in the research process (Lambert *et al.*, 2010). The researcher cannot ignore the fact that he/she is part of the world that is under study and it is, therefore about being honest and accountable throughout the research process and by being upfront about his/her position in relation to the research (Reay, 2007:611). According to Jootun *et al.* (2009), "qualitative researchers are prone to a degree of subjectivity since the interpretation of the participants' behaviour and collected data is influenced by the values, beliefs, experience, and interest of the researcher". In this study, the issue of subjectivity was addressed by concisely and accurately identifying categories and data, constantly being mindful of the researcher's beliefs and biases during data analysis, and not

allowing those beliefs and biases to influence interpretation of the data by discussing and sound boarding them with the supervisor and co-supervisor.

### **3.6.2 Confirmability**

Confirmability is the extent to which the results of the study could be verified by other researchers in the field (Baxter & Eyles,1997). This means that the researcher can prove that the data collected accurately reflect the participants' views (Polit & Beck, 2012) and that conclusions are directly drawn from the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004:392).

Confirmability guaranteed that the findings of this study remained free from prejudice, bias, and misinformation, which was operationalised in this study by creating an audit trail. The trail contains a detailed description of the process of how that data was collected, analysed, and interpreted (Bowen, 2009; Li, 2004). As part of a thorough audit trail, the interview recordings, questionnaire transcripts and data from documents were kept for crosschecking with the inquiry process.

### **3.6.3 Credibility**

Credibility refers to how well the data is aligned with the focus of the study (Polit & Beck, 2012) and it “establishes whether the research findings are a plausible representation of the original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views” (Lincoln & Guba,1985).

In this study the researcher applied the technique of triangulation to strengthen the credibility (Anney, 2014). Triangulation entails the use of different data sources and methods of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1958) and Table 3-4 below summarises the three types of methods used for triangulation and to ensure credibility in this study.

**Table 3-3: Types of triangulation**

Type of triangulation	Definition	How it was employed in the study
Data triangulation	Using multiple data sources in time, space, and person	Data was collected on the same phenomenon from multiple sites and participants with different roles to provide views on the topic from more than one angle (students and administration officers)
Investigator triangulation	Using two or more researchers to crosscheck the coding, analysis, and findings	The supervisors informally assessed the researcher's interpretation of results
Method triangulation	The use of multiple data collection methods.	Multiple data collection methods were employed (interviews, questionnaires and document analysis).

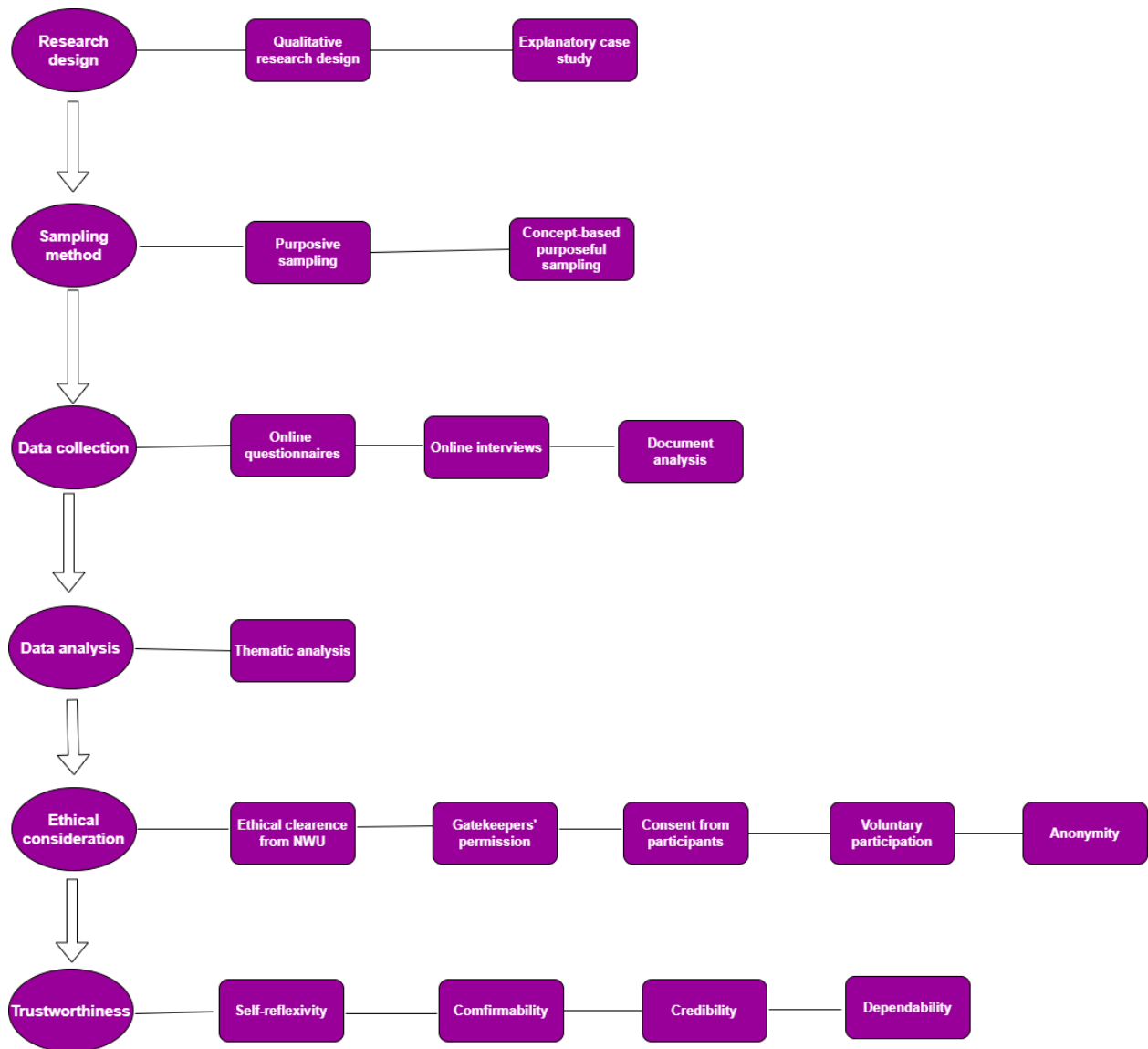
(Source: Adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

### 3.6.4 Dependability

Dependability refers to the overall stability and consistency of the findings of a study (Bitsch ,2005:86). The dependability of this study was established through a code-recode strategy. “The code-recode strategy, is a process whereby a researcher codes the data, leaves the analysis for a period of time, and then returns to recode the data and compare the two sets of coded materials” (Ary *et al.*, 2010). In this study, the researcher coded the same data twice, having waited one week between the codings. The results from different coding sessions were compared and similarities and differences were scrutinised thoroughly by the researcher and the supervisors (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Inconsistencies were addressed to improve the dependability of the inquiry, and similar results indicated that a dependable inquiry had been achieved (Ary *et al.*, 2010).

### 3.7 Chapter summary

The research methodology and design for this study were presented in this chapter. The chapter also addressed the methods of sampling, data collection and data analysis. Measures to maintain the study's trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also discussed. A summary of the research design employed by this study is presented in Figure 3-5 below.



**Figure 3-5:** *Research methodology summary*

The following chapter analyses the data collected from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS**

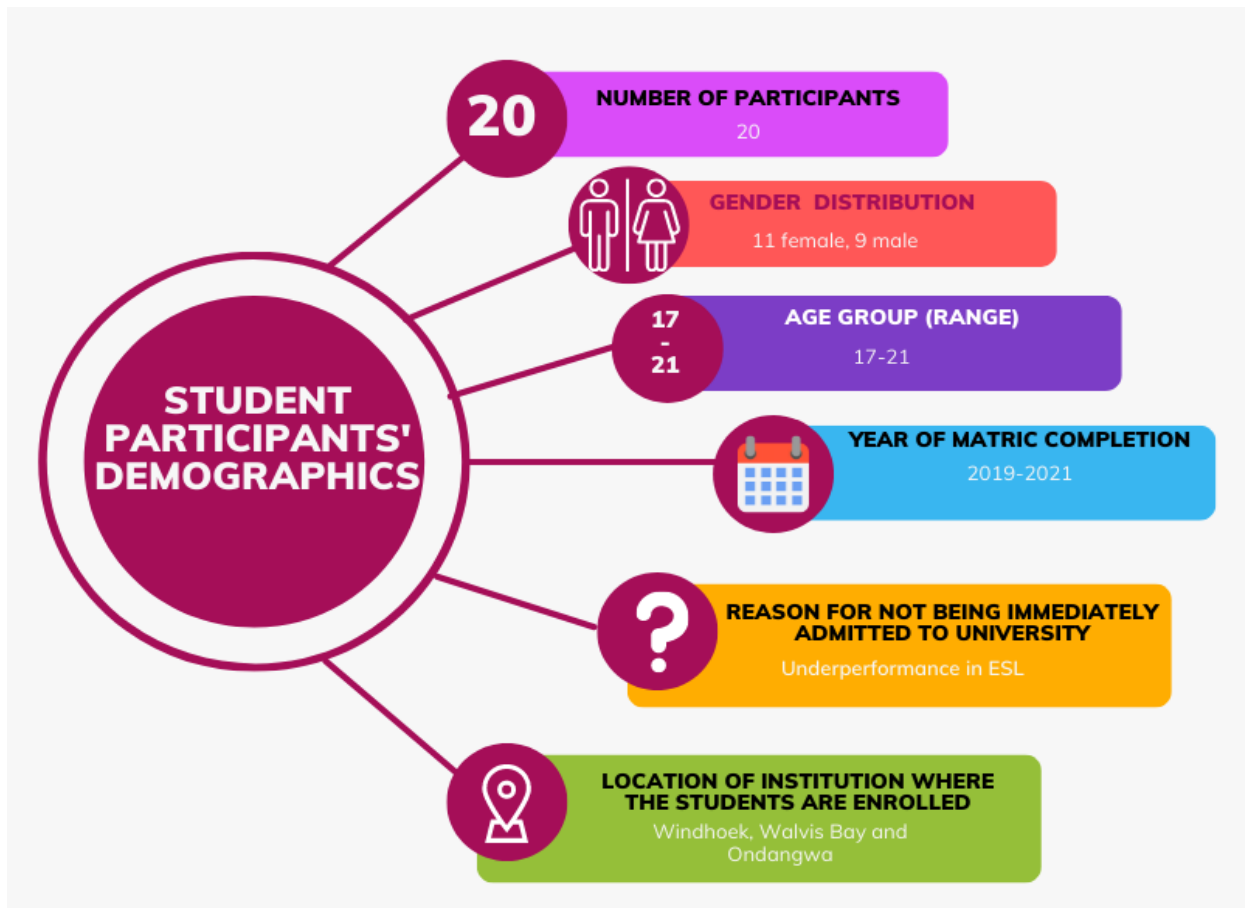
### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented a detailed characterisation of the study's research methodology. The data obtained from the questionnaires, individual interviews, and document analysis are presented and analysed in this chapter. Specifically, the findings are presented in four categories. The first three categories correspond with the three cases identified (see section 3.2.2), namely: students, admission officers, and documents. The fourth category represents an integration of all the cases (data triangulation). The cases are aimed at answering the research questions of the study.

### **4.2 Analysis and interpretation of students' online questionnaires**

#### **4.2.1 Background information**

The aim of the online questionnaires was to gather information on students' views regarding the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students. Twenty (20) randomly selected ESL students participated in the online questionnaire. The complete demographics of student participants are provided in Figure 4-1 below.



**Figure 4-1: Student participants' demographics**

(Source: Author)

The online questionnaires were analysed using thematic analysis, during which a list of common themes that emerged from the coding of the answers were grouped in order to give expression to the commonality of voices from the participants. In the next section, data collected from online questionnaires are presented and analysed.

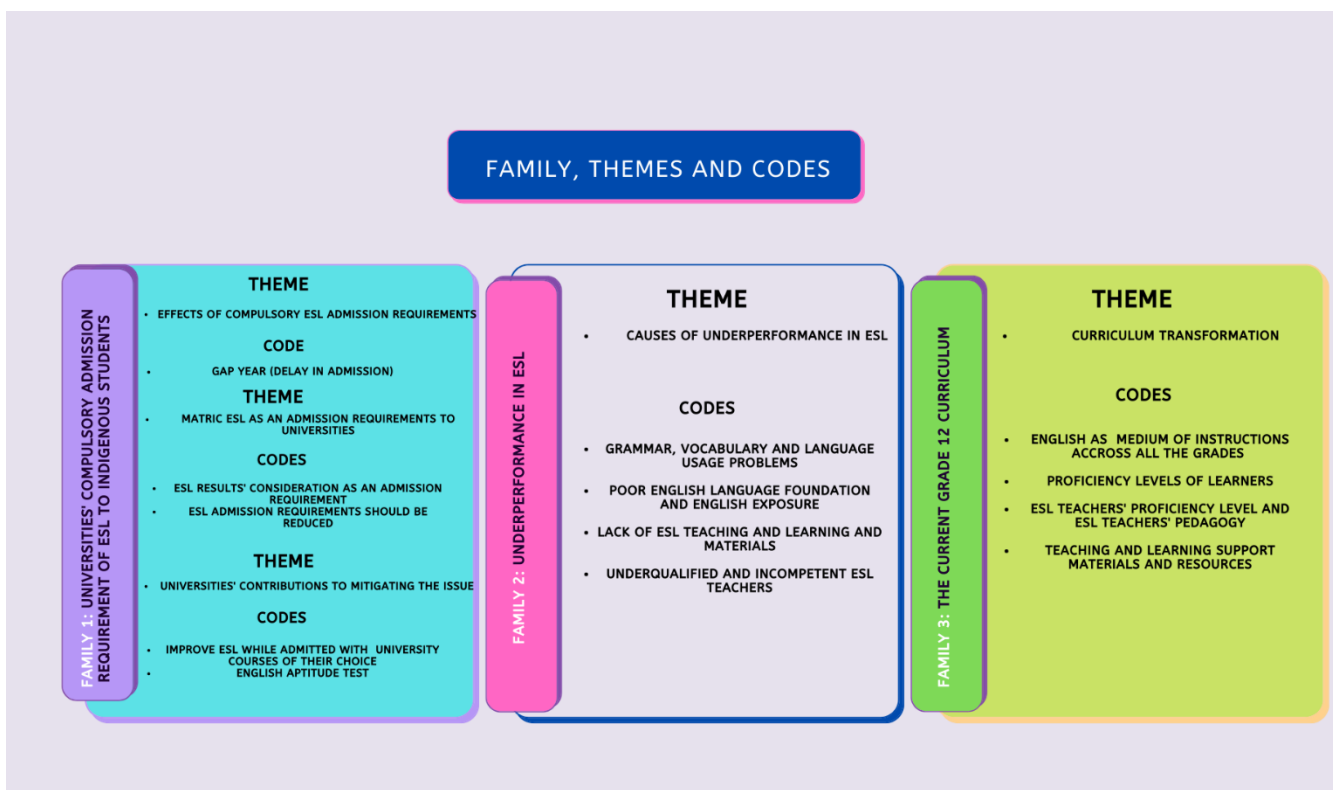
#### **4.2.2 Presentation of themes and codes of online questionnaires**

The raw transcribed data were based on the following questions, derived from the online questionnaires:

1. What are the effects of ESL matric results to your immediate university admission?

2. What should be done differently to our current school curriculum to help more students flourish in ESL?
3. Why are matric students underperforming in ESL?
4. What do you think local universities should do collectively to help students in your situation in the future? Please provide detailed descriptions.
5. Do you think English results should be taken into consideration for university admission? Why do you say so?

The aim of these five questions was to gather student participants' views on the effects of the language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students. The families, themes, and codes identified during the analysis of the participants' online questionnaires are provided in Figure 4-2 below. The data was analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) process discussed in Chapter 3. The data was reduced by summarising the essential data that related directly to the research questions, aims, and objectives. The data was displayed and the data transcripts were read and reread carefully, during which categories and eventually important themes were formulated in line with the research aim and objectives. The conclusion was drawn by drawing meaning from the data display.



**Figure 4-2: Families, themes and codes derived from participants' online questionnaires**

(Source: Author)

Furthermore, the coded data are presented in Table 4-1, and the complete transcribed questionnaires are provided in Appendix N. Due to the complexity of data associated with this study, different techniques, including quotations, figures, tabulation of differences and similarities, were employed during data analysis.

**Table 4-1: Themes and codes associated with the universities' compulsory admission requirements, underperformance in ESL and the current matric curriculum**

FAMILY	THEME	CODES	SOME QUOTES
Universities' compulsory admission requirements of ESL to indigenous students	Effects of compulsory ESL admission requirements	Gap year (delay in admission)	<p>Student 5: <i>"I have to take a gap year improving my ESL results"</i>.</p> <p>Student 6: <i>"It delayed my admission. I have to improve my English while my mate went straight to the university"</i>.</p>
	Matric ESL as an admission requirement to universities	ESL results' consideration as an admission requirement	<p>Student 18: <i>"They should only consider English results in courses that require it e.g. Teaching profession"</i>.</p> <p>Student 12: <i>"Yes, at least each student should have basic English understanding in order to ensure that they cope at university as it will be the language they will be taught in"</i>.</p> <p>Student 9: <i>"I don't think so because sometimes the courses students choose have nothing do to with English language. Unless maybe they choose to study about English"</i>.</p>
	Universities' contributions to mitigating the issue	ESL admission requirements should be reduced	<p>Student 17: <i>"Probably for certain admissions but not for all. I mean,</i></p>

		<p>Improve ESL while admitted with university courses of their choice</p> <p>English aptitude test</p>	<p><i>don't my other results matter and is it not sufficient evidence to see that I do understand English and can read and write it".</i></p> <p>Student 16: <i>"They should lower their required passing grade for English, for example if you are required to obtain a D symbol or better in order to be admitted into a university, I suggest they lower the mark and change it to an E".</i></p> <p>Student 5: <i>"Students with good points in other subjects can start with their courses while improving their English marks with those universities, to avoid gap years".</i></p> <p>Student 17: <i>"I think a basic aptitude test on whether or not the applicant understands English".</i></p> <p>Student 12: <i>"Give them an opportunity. They could have oral interviews conducted before entering the university, some people that do ESL struggle with writing but better with oral".</i></p>
Underperformance in ESL	Causes of underperformance in ESL	<p>Grammar, vocabulary and language usage problems</p> <p>Poor English language foundation and English exposure</p>	<p>Student 15: <i>"Some students have poor vocabulary knowledge that leads to wider language weaknesses and reading comprehension difficulties".</i></p> <p>Student 10: <i>"Their (learners) foundation in previous grades is the cause of this".</i></p> <p>Student 5: <i>"Students are not exposed to English at an early age".</i></p>

		<p>Lack of ESL teaching and learning materials</p> <p>Underqualified and incompetent ESL teachers</p>	<p>Student 17: <i>“Learners’ underperformances are due to lack of resources, ineffective teaching strategies, negative teachers and learners’ attitudes and low socio-economic status of learners”.</i></p> <p>Student 20: <i>“English is very foreign. Pupils are taught by people who are underqualified, incompetent and also struggling very much with the subject concepts”.</i></p>
The current grade 12 curriculum	Curriculum transformation	<p>English as medium of instruction across all the grades</p> <p>Proficiency levels of learners</p> <p>ESL teachers’ proficiency level and ESL teachers’ pedagogy</p>	<p>Student 11: <i>“Curriculum need to address the usage of English second language as a medium of instruction from junior primary schools to secondary schools whether in public schools or private schools. This will help learners to become competent at communicating in English and become native speakers”.</i></p> <p>Student 5: <i>“The curriculum should consider the fact that most of the students are not English first language speakers, so the curriculum should consider the average proficiency of the nation”.</i></p> <p>Student 18: <i>“Teachers should not be strict when marking as English is a second language. They must also do more practice in the teaching and learning process as that way learners will learn better. ESL teachers</i></p>

		Teaching and learning support materials and resources	<p><i>must share with learners how they mark final exams so that learners will know how they must answer the questions”.</i></p> <p>Student 16: <i>“Provide more English learning resources, increase technology based learning and teach skills that change mindsets”.</i></p> <p>Student 11: <i>“Regular more training to learners, so that they can be able to read, write and speak English and introduce weekly English debating classes as well as giving more activities this leads to better performance in English”.</i></p> <p>Student 11: <i>“The curriculum should recommend more English periods per week per grade, this will allow teachers to finish their syllabus and have more time to make revisions”.</i></p> <p>Student 19: <i>“The curriculum should do away with English on extended/core mode, opt only for ordinary level.</i></p>
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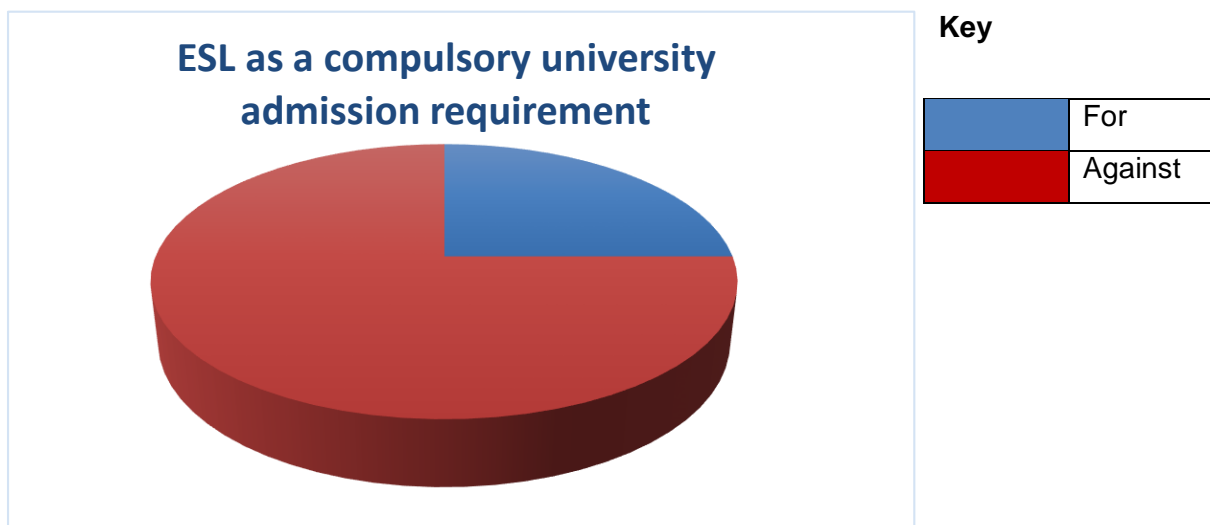
#### **4.2.3 Analysis and interpretation of emerging themes from students’ online questionnaires**

After data from students’ questionnaires relating to the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous ESL students were collected, the following themes emerged: effects of compulsory ESL admission requirements, matric ESL grades as a compulsory requirement, universities’ contributions to mitigating the issue, causes of underperformance in ESL and curriculum transformation.

#### 4.2.3.1 Effects of compulsory ESL admission requirements

This theme is concerned with the matric ESL grade as a compulsory requirement for university entrance, which is backed by the National language policy that clearly states that English shall be the only medium of instruction from grade 4 until tertiary education level (MBESC, 2003:3). Besides the general compulsory English admission requirement, the minimum admission requirement varies across the local universities; each university is mandated to set its own minimum English admission requirements. This variation is evident in the study's sample: University X requires a minimum of 60% in English, University Y requires a minimum of 50%, and University Z requires 40% as a minimum English requirement to enrol for a degree programme.

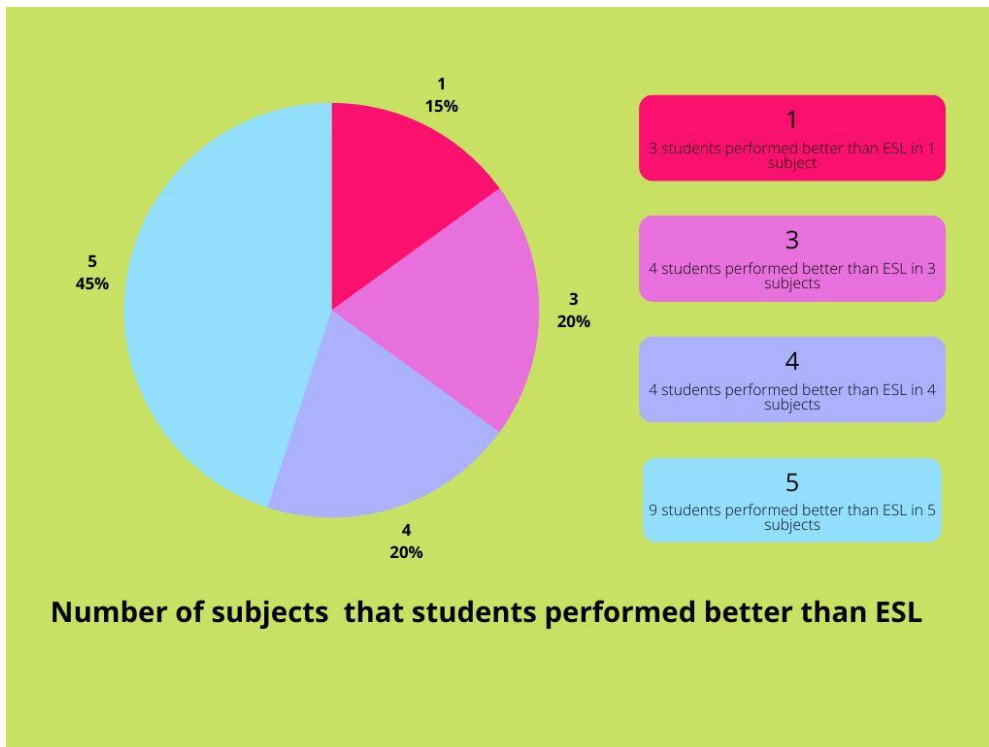
Most of the student participants in this study expressed their dissatisfaction with the ruling that learners must pass ESL in order to gain admission to university, because English is not their mother tongue and they feel that ESL grades are not a measure of their intelligence; they also argued that most of the courses students enrol for have nothing to do with English. Nevertheless, some supported the compulsory ESL passing grade because they felt that English is a universal language that better facilitates communication at universities. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of the student respondents indicated that they were against the compulsory ESL admission requirement, whilst 25% of the students indicated that they were in support of the decision as presented by Figure 4-3 below.



### **Figure 4-3: For or against: ESL as a compulsory admission requirement**

In line with the ruling sentiment concerning the compulsory ESL admission requirements for universities in this study, Nkandi (2015) concluded that using English as Mol was among the most significant causes of poor scholastic performance under learners. Simasiku *et al.* (2014) found likewise in their study on the use of English as Mol to teach subjects in Namibian classrooms that, learners failed to achieve desired results due to their lack in English proficiency. On the other hand, 25% of the students are in support of ESL as a compulsory university admission requirement because they believe that students should possess basic English proficiency in order to ensure that they cope at university as it will be the language of instruction at university. Without a good passing grade in Grade 12 English, many indigenous students are unable to pursue career opportunities in a variety of disciplines, for example science, engineering, and the medical field, among many others (Ithindi, 2021). For instance, for a learner to pursue a career in medicine or other careers that are on demand in Namibia, they need to pass grade 12 ESL with good results, ranging from 70% to 100% (Ithindi, 2021).

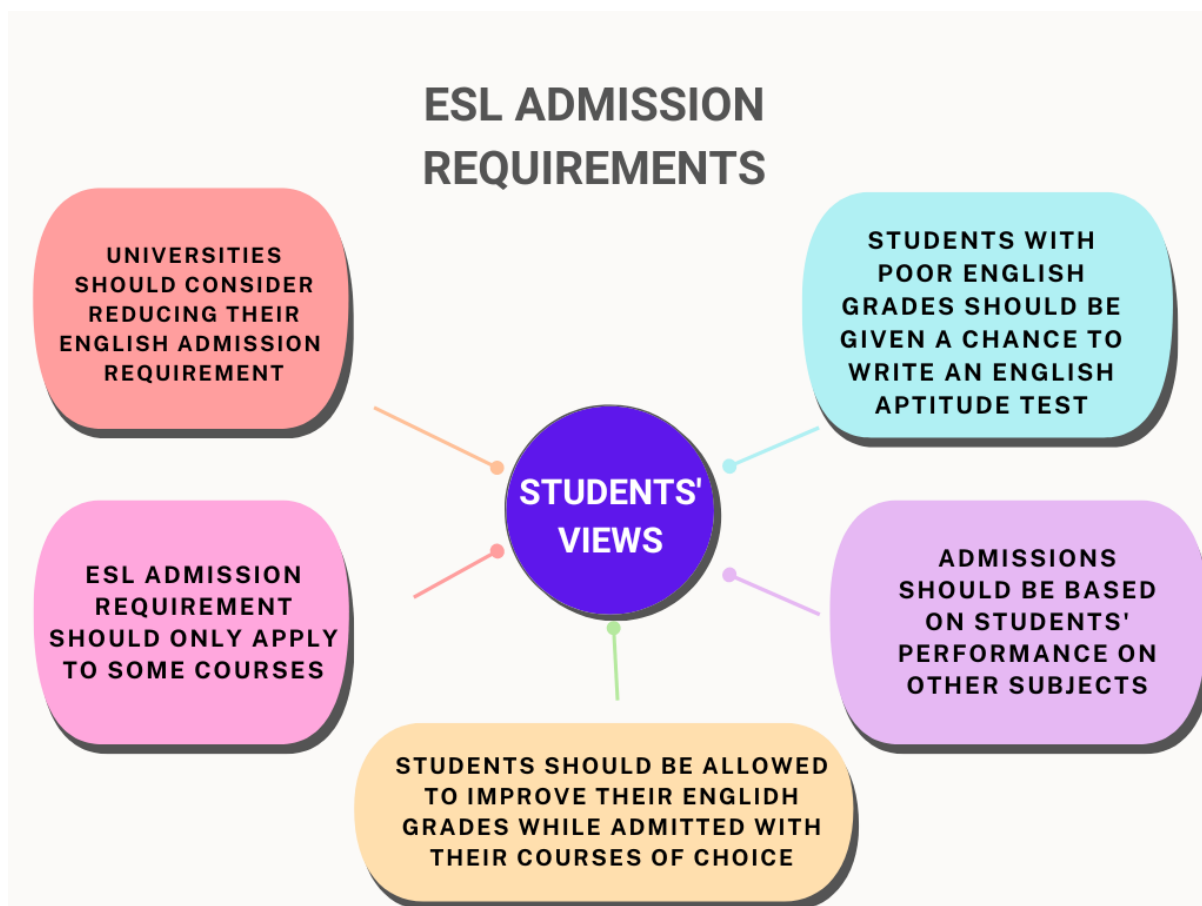
Poor performance in English as a subject is a major concern as it affects learners' opportunities to get admitted to institutions of higher learning, despite outstanding performance in other subjects (Ithindi, 2021). To support this claim, from the 20 student participants who participated in this study, 65% of them indicated that they performed better in more than four of their subjects than they did in English (see Figure 4-4 below).



**Figure 4-4: Number of subjects in which students performed better than in ESL**

#### **4.2.3.2 Universities' contributions to mitigating the issue**

This theme is concerned with how Namibian universities can, both individually and collectively, mitigate the issues surrounding the imposed ESL admission requirements to allow more students with the capacity and aptitude to study to enrol for their desired courses of studies. The results from the online questionnaires show that most of the respondents felt that the universities' current minimum English admission requirements are excessive and suggested that the universities should consider lowering their minimum admission requirements. Some respondents suggested that students should be allowed to register for their respective courses of studies while improving their English grades with those universities or take extra English modules throughout their studies. The respondents' views regarding the ESL admission requirements are summarised in Fig 4-5 below.



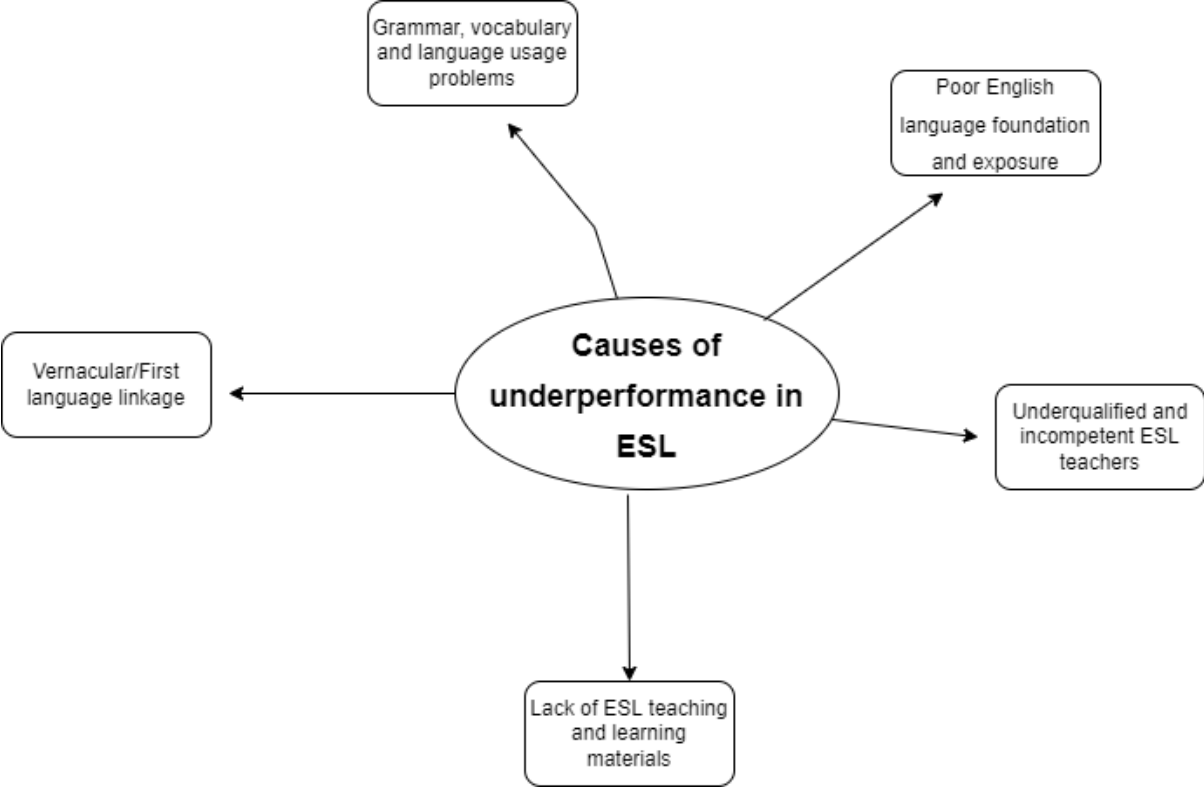
**Figure 4-5: ESL admission requirement suggestions**

The next theme focuses on the causes of matric underperformance in ESL.

#### **4.2.3.3 Causes of underperformance in ESL**

Several factors have been identified to lead to poor ESL performance of matric learners in the national examinations. With reference to the literature review (section 2.7), the existing literature identified prominent underlying causes of underperformance in ESL among Namibian learners. Learners encounter a variety of challenges in efforts to become proficient in the English language which for some might not only be a second language but rather a third or even fourth language (Ithindi, 2021). Creating a balance between native languages and English language is one of the challenges (Abdullah, 2015). Some educators believe that poor English performance is a result of poor English foundation as learners are only exposed to the English language from grade 4 onwards (Kangira, 2022). They argue that it is unrealistic to expect a high level of English proficiency by the time learners enter and exit secondary school level if they did not have a firm foundation in English during their formative primary school years (Kangira, 2022).

In this study, the respondents felt that ESL was a primary cause of academic underperformance, which corroborates the findings in the literature review. Figure 4-5 presents the various causes of underperformance in ESL which the respondents identified.



**Figure 4-6: Causes of ESL underperformance identified by respondents**

The causes of underperformance in ESL in Figure 4-6 corroborate the following subheadings and quotes:

Lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge:

Student 11: *“Due to language usage, grammar and vocabulary”*.

Student 14: *“Matric students that are based in rural areas mostly communicate in their vernaculars which has an effect on acquiring English language skills. Meanwhile, the students from townships can speak fluently, however they lack proper grammar and English proficiency”*.

Young-Davy (2014) expresses how language usage, grammar and vocabulary are attributed to learners' underperformance in English, and further suggested that emphasis should be placed on teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), such as understanding scientific and technical vocabulary.

"Vocabulary is the basis of language, thus, we can never underestimate its importance in learning a target language" (Hoshino, 2010). A certain level of vocabulary, is therefore crucial for learners' ESL proficiency as it improves comprehension, enables learners to use words in the correct context, and leads to a feeling of success (Young-Davy, 2014; Faerch & Phillipson, 1984). On the other hand, limited vocabulary is an impairment to learners in all their academic endeavours and it severely undermines their learning (Faerch & Phillipson, 1984).

Grammar is another important subskill of language that ESL learners need as they are expected to apply their understanding of the structures in a language in both oral and written formats (Faerch & Phillipson, 1984).

Furthermore, ESL learners also need to master pronunciation. There are many advantages to teaching pronunciation that include creating awareness of the sounds and forms of a language, improving speaking skills and making speech more intelligible in a global world and the improvement of the segmental and suprasegmental features of English (Harmer, 2005; Ketabi & Saeb, 2015); Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2010; Saito & Lyster, 2012).

Underqualified and incompetent teachers:

*Student 20: "English is very foreign. Pupils are taught by people who are underqualified, incompetent and also struggling very much with the subject concepts".*

In concurrence with the respondents' view on the causes of underperformance in English due to incompetent/underqualified educators, Nekondo (2021) identified poor English teachers' pedagogic content knowledge as a cause of underperformance in English. This can also be attributed to the shortage of qualified teachers; as confirmed by Ganaprakasam and Karunaharan, (2020). Statistics that came to light in 2011 indicate that 98% of Namibian teachers could not read or write English at the level that they were required to teach. The report showed strong evidence that the low performance of teachers and other educators overall has a negative impact on learners' performance in English (Kisting, 2011) and this was also supported by the study of Kamati and Woldemariam (2016). This is discouraging because learners cannot be expected to perform well in their examinations when even the teachers are struggling with the language in which they teach.

Minimal exposure to the language:

Student 3: *“I think it’s because they are not exposed to more English, especially outside the classroom environment as they mostly communicate in their home languages”.*

There are many learners in contexts where English is used as a second language, with minimal exposure to the language outside the classroom.

Lack of ESL teaching and learning materials:

Student 4: *“It could be because of teachers’ approaches to teaching English and irrelevant teaching materials”.*

Student 12: *“Lack of teaching and learning materials for English second language. Poor learners’ English language proficiency. Lack of teaching experience in English second language and lack of appropriate teaching methods. Lastly learners fail because they do not know how to read, write and speak English, some have difficulties in expressing themselves in English.*

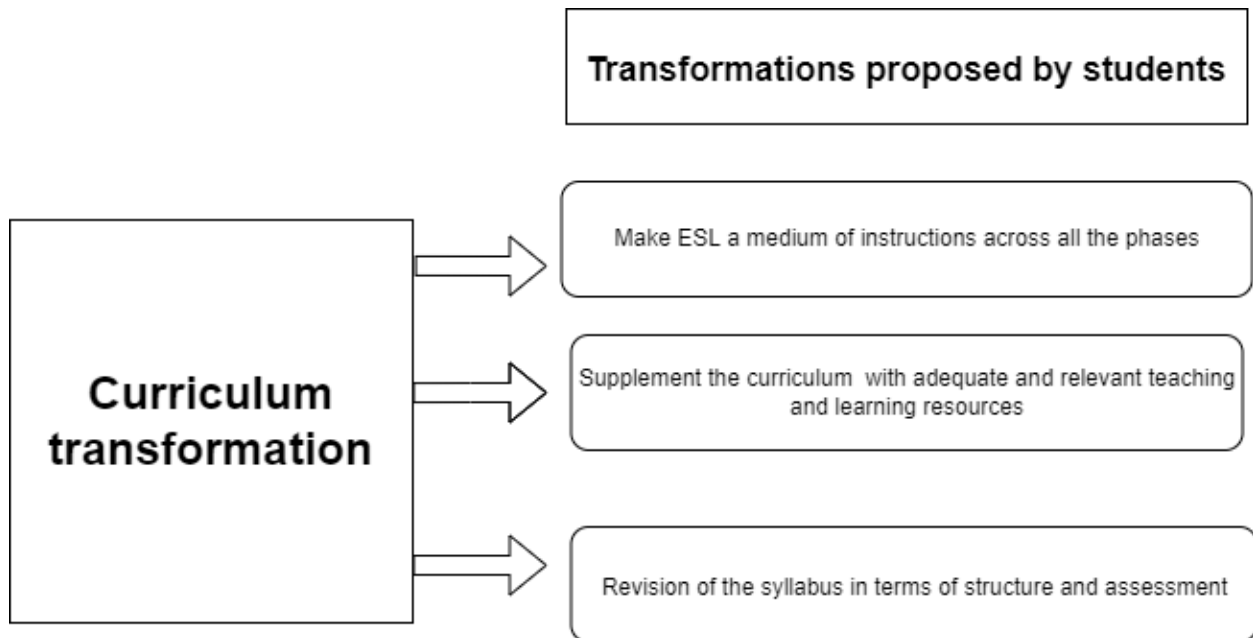
Both Young-Davy (2014) and Ojanen (2007) found that the low standard of English proficiency among learners is due to a lack of effective teaching methods. Moats and Foorman (2003) posit that teaching strategies have great significance on learners’ performance, and thus, English teachers should be encouraged to use teaching approaches that are effective and relevant to the contexts of their learners.

Hartney (2011) further discovered a great shortage of teaching and learning materials as well access to well-equipped library facilities as another cause of ESL underperformance in Namibia. A similar study undertaken by Mule (2012) in Okongo circuit in Ohangwena Region of Namibia discovered that underperformance in ESL was attributed to the lack of teaching and learning materials available to the learners. Mule (2012) cited the absence of teaching and learning materials in schools as one of the factors that contribute to poor participation and underperformance of learners.

#### **4.2.3.4 Curriculum transformation**

Most of the respondents indicated a need for curriculum transformation in different ways. Some desired for ESL to be made Mol across all the schooling phases (from junior primary level to tertiary level), in contrast with current provisions that exclude junior primary. Other respondents

wished for the curriculum to be supplemented with adequate and relevant teaching and learning resources. Others, still, suggested that the English syllabus should be revised in terms of its structure and assessment. Figure 4-7 below summarises the respondents' opinions regarding curriculum transformation.



**Figure 4-7: Students opinion on curriculum transformation**

Below are some quotes from the student participants regarding curriculum transformation proposed by students:

- Make ESL a medium of instructions across all the phases

Harris (2011) argues that similar to other countries in East and Southern Africa, Namibian learners have low literacy scores. This has been attributed to language policy for schools where learners are taught through medium of their mother tongues until Grade 3 and then English becomes the MoI. Simataa and Nyathi (2017) strongly suggest that Namibian learners should have more focussed and explicit instruction in English from Grade 1 already with a specific focus on English literature. The compulsory study of literature across grades would generally enable the learners to understand the English language in different contexts. In agreement with the points discussed, some students suggested that it is high time that English language be prioritised at junior primary as well.

Student 11: *“Curriculum need to address the usage of English second language as a medium of instruction from junior primary schools to secondary schools whether in public schools or private schools. This will help learners to become competent at communicating in English and become native speakers”.*

- Supplement of the curriculum with adequate and relevant teaching and learning resources.

In presentation of a comprehensive list of reasons behind the poor performance of learners in English as a subject, Nekondo (2021) listed a lack of English teaching and learning resources as one of the reasons behind the poor performance of grade 12 learners, amongst others.

Student 16: *“Provide more English learning resources, increase technology based learning and teach skills that change mind-set”.*

- Revise the language policy and curriculum in terms of structure and assessment

Ithindi's (2021) study found that the grade 12 English language examinations' setup and execution in Namibia was problematic. Another observation was that the learner-centred approach and the communicative approach were not applied effectively at schools, and critical thinking was not also emphasised in the current English curriculum. Ithindi (2021) recommends that the learner-centred approach should be encouraged in the English curriculum as this will help learners to take initiative through self-expression. The approach furthermore inculcates values of personal responsibility, problem solving strategies, self-actualisation, and independent thinking as opposed to the memorisation of facts without understanding.

The recommended number of lessons per week in matric for ESL curriculum is seven lessons of 40 minutes each. Students feel that the number of lessons per week should be extended because some teachers struggle to finish the syllabus and remedial lessons should be offered to students. Similarly, Yilmaz (2018) is of the view that 40 minute-lessons will favour teacher-centred approaches and more time needs to be allocated to implement learner-centred approaches where students are exposed to hands-on activities that may require more time. The work of researchers such as Block *et al.* (1989) conclude that structured subjects such as mathematics and foreign languages require increased time-on-task (the time spent on each task) in order for students to master the subjects.

Student 19: *“The authority must do away with English on Extended mode, opt only for ordinary. Also English must be taught as a subject, not a medium of instructions to determine the pupils’ failing or passing”.*

Despite the majority of students who say that English should be used as a medium of instruction throughout, student 19 disagree with the latter. Other students further suggested the following:

Student 16: *“Subject policy must be changed. Namibian pupils must not get disadvantaged by the foreign language which many teachers do not know how to teach it. Children must progress to varsities if they have acquired minimum of 25/27 points in five subjects, whether inclusive of English foreign language or not. However, if the ministry want to selfishly continue with their ill-fated foreign language, they must provide English first language speakers to teach our children, especially in the northern part of the country that only attracts teachers with minimal knowledge in English foreign language or the curriculum must follow suit of existentialism concepts so that children could choose from a provision of many second languages e.g. Kiswahili, Arabia and other outspoken African languages rather than letting our learners to be continuously getting intimidated and harassed by a mere foreign language which was forced on people as a package of the apparent independence. Priorities of local languages before European languages. In fact, the curriculum should be translated into local and vernacular languages so our children can learn better”.*

Student 19: *“Look, firstly the Ministry of Education should change that promotion policy that dictates English as a determiner. Other languages must play a role as well. For example, if a learner has passed all 4 subjects and a language, that child must progress to varsity, the problem is the government that is hesitating to drop the foreign language as the key determiner in the progress of the students. For me English is the colonial language thus necessary alterations has to be made drastically”.*

#### **4.2.4 Conclusion**

The results from the online questionnaires show that the compulsory ESL admission requirements delayed most students’ university careers as they had to take a gap year to improve their ESL grades. Some had to resort to non-preferential courses of study, because of poor ESL grades. The respondents also identified poor grammar, vocabulary, and language usage problems, a lack of English language foundations and exposure to the language,

underqualified and incompetent ESL teachers, and a lack of ESL teaching and learning materials as causes of learners' underperformance in matric ESL.

The first section focused on students' perspectives; the next section presents analyses and interprets data from semi-structured interviews with universities' admission officers' semi-structured interviews to get their perspectives on the subject matter.

### 4.3 Analysis and interpretation of universities' admission officers' semi-structured interviews

#### 4.3.1 Background information

The following section presents findings from semi-structured interviews with admission officers from three different universities. Six purposively selected university officers working with students' admissions from three universities in Namibia participated in the semi-structured individual interviews. Pseudonyms (e.g. AO1-AO6) were used to code the admission officers' responses so as to protect their identities. Table 4-2 presents the participants' description and pseudonyms assigned to each participant.

**Table 4-2: Description of participants (admission officers)**

Pseudonym assigned	Description	Years of experience
AO1	A female admission officer. She is head of admission at an institution of higher learning and an English lecturer.	11
AO2	A male assistant admission officer. He is responsible for verifying if students have met the minimum requirements.	8
AO3	A female assistant admission officer. She is responsible for verifying if the students have met the admission requirements.	3
AO4	A male admission officer. He is responsible for verifying if applicants have met the admission requirements.	4
AO5	A male admission officer. He is responsible for overseeing all admission at the university and verification purposes.	7
AO6	A male admission officer. He is responsible for admitting students to the university, checking if students have met the university's minimum requirements and verifying if students' grade 12 certificates are truly accredited by The Ministry of Education and not obtained unethically.	3

#### **4.3.2 Presentation of themes and codes of universities' admission officers' semi-structured**

The raw transcribed data of the individual interviews corroborate the coded accounts of the first two interview questions, which aimed to gather the participants' opinions on the use of English as the sole MoI and the English admission requirement set by their respective institutions. The questions were as follows:

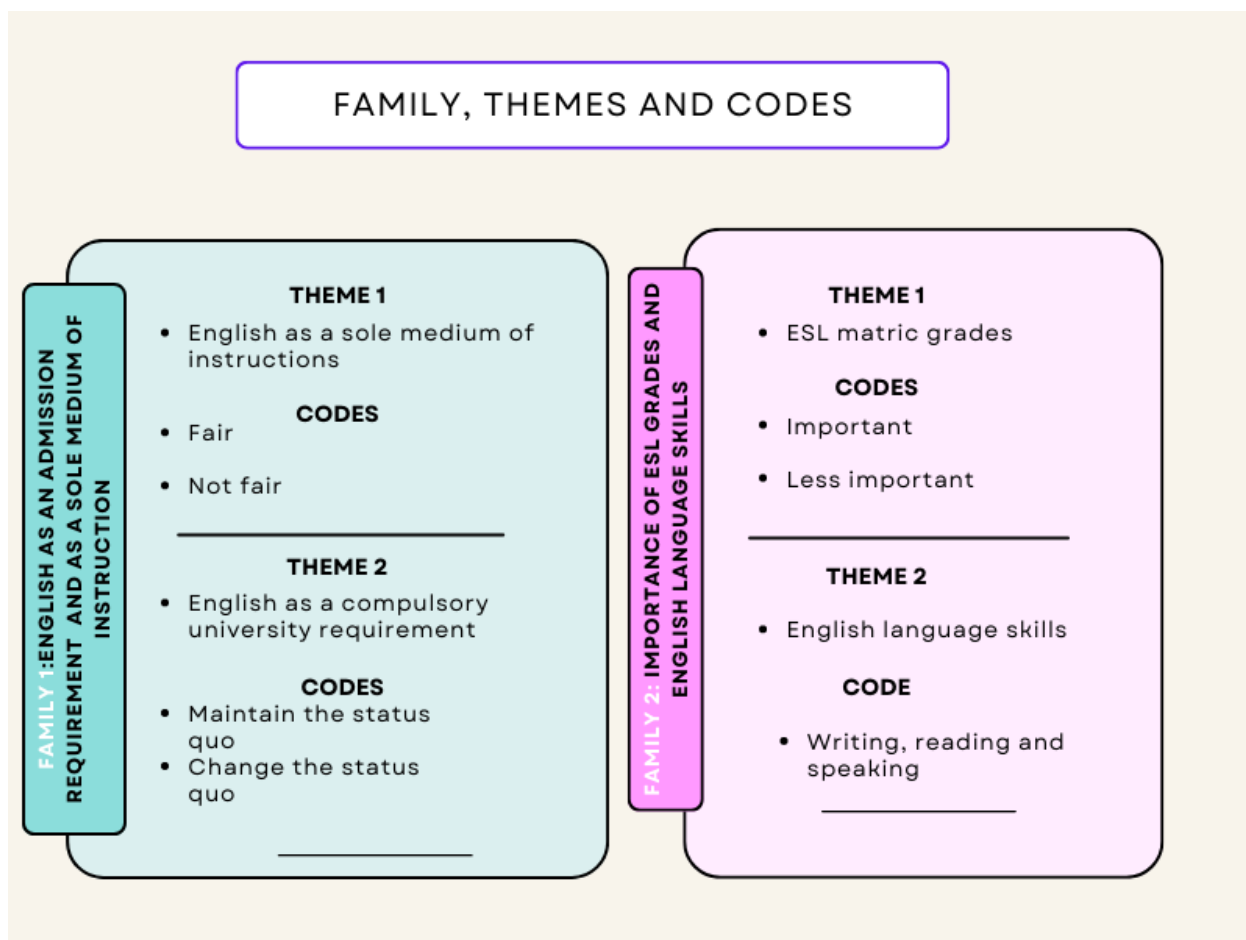
1. *What is your opinion on the use of English as a sole medium of instruction in your institution?*

*In your opinion, do you think the university needs to reconsider the English admission requirements? Please justify your answer.*

The third and fourth interview questions served as an additional means for gathering admission officers' beliefs regarding the importance of ESL matric grades and language skills/knowledge, however question 2 and question 3 are merged as they yielded similar results:

2. *In your view, how important is matric ESL marks for indigenous students to gain admission to university? Give a reason for your answer.*
3. *In your view, which English language knowledge and skills should matric learners work on in order to gain admission to university? Why do you say so?*

The families, themes and codes identified from participants' interview analyses are presented in Figure 4-7 below. As in data analysis of online questionnaires, the data for interviews were also analysed using the process of Huberman and Miles (1994) discussed in Chapter 3. The researcher reduced data by summarisation of the most important data that relate directly to the research questions, aims, and objectives. The important themes as representations of concepts that emerged from the interviews were highlighted in a data display, and then the conclusions were drawn from the meanings that had been extracted from data display.



**Figure 4-8: Families, themes, and codes**

The coded data are further presented in Tables 4-3, complemented by some quotes from the participants and the complete transcribed interviews are provided in Appendix O. Furthermore, different techniques, such as, quotations, figures, tabulating differences and similarities, and clarifying the relationship including its associated complexity of data were employed during data analysis.

FAMILY	THEMES	CODES	SOME QUOTES
English as an admission requirement and as a sole medium of instruction	English as sole Mol	Fair	<p>“Well, it is very nice, it does not really affect that much, since we have students from different language fraternity so it develops the communication for students for meaningful interaction in multilingual society. It also enables learners to express their thoughts, their ideas and experience with other students from different society”.</p> <p>“Well... this debate has been going</p>

FAMILY	THEMES	CODES	SOME QUOTES
	English as a compulsory university requirement	<p>Not fair</p> <p>Maintain the status quo</p> <p>Change the status quo</p>	<p>on, even though nothing has been done... but in actual fact, this has to change, because we need to introduce our indigenous languages even though we know is a very long process, you need to do the printing of materials and so on, but we need to move from English as a sole medium of instructions in our institutions ,however we need to start from somewhere with curriculum planning, developing materials and also training people in indigenous languages that are going to be offered as a medium of instructions in our institutions “.</p> <p>” According to my opinion, I don’t think it is necessary for universities to reconsider the admission requirements because English is already taught as a subject from grade 1 -12 and as a medium of instructions from grade 4-12, these English skills are enough for somebody to do a certain course at the university because somebody has already English skills from school (primary-secondary)”.</p> <p>“That is very obvious, because we only need to set the criteria that is specific for the course, the subject that a person is going to focus on, so we don’t need to be specific like now we put a benchmark like a C or a D and so on, as long as the person has met the requirement for that specific course or department”.</p>
Importance of	ESL matric grades ESL grades and English language skills	<p>Important</p> <p>Less important</p>	<p>“English is important, because it’s a language of communication at the university and also for students who wishes to further their studies abroad at postgraduate level, English is the universal language”</p> <p>“Well, less important. As long as learner demonstrated intelligence in the other subjects, English language can be polished at the university when a learner will be more</p>

FAMILY	THEMES	CODES	SOME QUOTES
	English language skills	Writing, reading and speaking	<p>exposed to reading, interaction, as customary narrated, English is not our mother tongue... perhaps Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga (first languages)".</p> <p>"Focus in Reading and writing, it seems like they can speak".</p> <p>" I think for university entry, all skills are important, but to single out, I would say they need to be competent in writing and speaking. Why I am saying that is simply because...mhhh in writing is where they are going to complete assignments, examination assessment. For speaking, students are required to go through presentations to attest if they are ready for the job market, or present a certain phenomenon if they are to become community agent".</p>

In the next section, the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from interviews with admissions officers (emerging themes presented in Table 4-3) are discussed.

### 4.3.3 Analysis and interpretation of emerging themes from universities' admission officers' semi-structured interviews

Below, each theme is discussed in detail, however English as an admission requirement and ESL grades are integrated in one discussion because ESL grades are compulsory for students' admission. English as a sole Mol is then discussed and finally the English language skills.

#### 4.3.3.1 English as an admission requirement and ESL grades

Sixty-seven per cent (67%) of the respondents were against the current English admission requirements in place at their respective institutions. Most of these participants held the view that the current admission requirements are too high and they deprive students (especially those who performed well in other subjects) of the opportunity to gain admission to university. This view is substantiated by the following quotes:

*AO3: "Ok, with our university, it requires a C in English, and other universities have different minimum requirements, in my opinion, symbol C is a bit high, I think the*

*university need to reduce/minimise the requirements, at least to a D, because when we are searching out for students to be admitted during the verification process, most learners' application are turned down because they did not meet the requirements, I think the university need to minimise from a C to a D".*

*AO5: "For the mere fact that most subjects are written and taught in English, when a learner passed with flying colours and perform poorly in English, English will be ironed as times goes, after a duration of 4 years, the university should serve students to be able to communicate proficiently, English proficiency is not a measure of intelligence, so I hold the view".*

AO6 is also against the current English admission requirement in place at their institution. He emphasised that he felt the high English criteria were put in place to minimise the number of applicants due to the university's capacity. He further suggested that the university expand its capacity in the near future for English admission to be minimised and to take other languages into consideration. This is evident in the following quote:

*AO6: "Yah...they need to reconsider that (English admission requirement), it is actually used as a tool that is used to belittle the number of students entering the university, the capacity of the university cannot take all the students, otherwise it will be under pressure, that is one of the criteria that we are using at the moment, so that we can consider only those that meet certain percentage in English for admission... but in the near future if the university can expand its capacity to accept as many students, I think there will be a look to at other languages aspects e.g. first language, because most of the students can pass the first language... If we now say we consider first language, the students cannot fit in the university".*

On the contrary, 33% of the respondents feel that the current English admission requirement status quo should be maintained because students are still offered an opportunity to improve on their English and it is taught as a subject throughout their schooling careers:

*AO1: "I would say it's not strict, because my university still allows students to improve their English grades through special courses, I don't think it's unfair"*

*AO2:" According to my opinion, I don't think it is necessary for universities to reconsider the admission requirements because English is already taught as a subject from grade 1 -12 and as a medium of instructions from grade 4-12, these English skills are enough for*

*somebody to do a certain course at the university because somebody has already English skills from school (primary-secondary)”.*

Al-Arifi (2020) argues that better performance in English is important to students, because English a global language and used in varied contexts, moreover, many publications and scientific research in diverse fields are written in English language. Without any doubt, good ESL grades are a must for Namibian indigenous students to gain admission to local universities. Besides that, ESL grades are important for many other reasons to indigenous students. Here is what some of the respondents have to say regarding ESL grades:

*AO1: “...English good grades are important, because English is a language of communication at the university and also for students who wishes to further their studies abroad at postgraduate level, English is the universal language”.*

*AO2: “English second language marks is important but it should not be too strict or requiring high marks in English. As part of admission requirement, it is important if students have basic English communication skills since English is medium of instructions at universities”.*

Contrariwise, some of the respondents opined that English grades are less important because of numbers of reasons such as learners who demonstrate intelligence in other subjects and the fact that English is not their mother tongue. This is evident in the following quote:

*AO5: “Well, less important. As long as learner demonstrated intelligence in the other subjects, English language can be polished at the university when a learner will be more exposed to reading, interaction ...as customary narrated, English is not our mother tongue..., perhaps Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga (first languages)”.*

#### **4.3.3.2 English as a sole medium of instruction**

Namibia uses English as a sole medium of instruction from senior primary until to tertiary level. This is prescribed in the national language policy and leaves institutions of higher learning with no option but to have English as the sole medium of instruction. The researcher sought the admission officers’ views on the use of English as sole Mol at their institutions. The majority of the respondents reiterated that having English as a Mol is in line with the official Namibian language policy and for good reason. AO3 opined that English develops meaningful communication skills in students from different language backgrounds in a multicultural society

such as Namibia. Other respondents mentioned that English is the most widely spoken language and that most of the materials are in the English language.

In contrast, some of the respondents were against the use of English as sole Mol, motivating that various fields of study do not require English mastery. In substantiation of these points, Nekondo (2021) advocates for a review of admission of learners at universities based on their results in English as a subject rather than on English as a medium of instruction. His argument is that “basic competence in the medium of instruction is essential to higher education success; grammatical awareness of the language is not” (Nekondo, 2021), yet priority is given to English as a subject. To put it differently, his argument is that if a student was able to pass other subjects that are taught in English as medium exceptionally well, this should serve as an indication that such a student will be eligible to cope with English demands at institutions of higher learning and should not be held back by poor performance in English as a subject. These arguments are supported by the following quotes:

*AO2:” English is one of the most geographically widely spoken language in the world, and it is also used as an official language in most of the African countries. There are many outspoken indigenous languages, so it will be costly and challenging to develop a curriculum that integrates all the African languages to using English widen chances of communication, this improve communication skills as I have alluded earlier that English language is an official language to many African countries and also in addition Using English as medium of instructions leads to better accessibility of English materials, there are a lot of materials that are written in English for example textbooks, journals, newspapers, articles”.*

*AO5: “Well, it cannot be correct to have English as the sole medium of instruction in our institution simply because we have various fields of studies that does not require English application of knowledge, many students are not conversant with English language but possess brilliant ideas and courses like engineering is more reliant on numeracy skills as opposed to do anything with language. It must not be compulsory that English be a medium of instructions, students must be given privilege to learn English during their time at the institution”.*

*AO6: “Yah... hmmm. English is the medium of instructions, it is used to give instructions to students, as well as for main communication purposes among the university staff, my intake is that, it is a universal language that is being chosen to be used as a mean of*

*communication in the university but the other point is, now that we are moving towards the 4th industrial revolution, I think the university need to take more than language as a mean of communication, simply because students from various aspect need to express themselves in different languages of their choice, not necessarily English, but in the meantime or at the moment English is the language that we have as a mean of communication”.*

From the admission officers’ points of view, it is evident that the issue of English as a sole Mol at their respective institutions is quite complex. A study that was conducted by the Centre for Research and Development in English Medium Instruction at the University of Oxford determined that the use of English as Mol is a complex issue globally (Dearden, 2015). Some of the issues emerging from teaching and learning through English Mol include lack of competent teachers in the English language, insufficient resources, lack of clear educational policies, challenges regarding assessment and ambiguity regarding whether English should be used alone or if it could be mixed with vernaculars (Dearden, 2015). Even though a majority of the admission officers opined that the status quo should remain, some feel that interventions should be made to supplement English as a sole medium of instruction.

#### **4.3.3.3 English language skills**

The four language skills of English (speaking, writing, listening and reading) should be taught in an integrated manner to enhance the proficiency of learners. Similarly, Lerner (2000) asserts that these “skill areas are interrelated in the sense that good listening skills promote speaking, good reading skills enhance speaking, and good instruction in reading improves writing, while good writing skills improve one’s knowledge and skills in speaking and reading”. The researcher tried to get respondents’ views on which of the skills should be given preference at school and tertiary level to improve their ESL performance, this is represented by Table 4-4 below.

**Table 4-3: Respondents’ views on English language skills**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Language skill/s identified</b>	<b>Supporting statement</b>
AO1	Reading and writing	“Focus on reading and writing.... it seems like they (students) can speak”.
AO2	All four skills	<i>“...all these skills are needed, for</i>

		<i>somebody to develop a complete communication and for students to take their examinations in English, they all go together”.</i>
AO3	Writing and speaking	<i>“... I think the most important ones are writing and speaking, writing because most of the examinations, tests and assignments are done in writing... and I am also choosing speaking because there are a lot of presentations and discussions that are done in class through speaking”.</i>
AO4& AO6	Writing and speaking	<i>“...writing and speaking are the most important, because we communicate through writing and speaking, and our students do presentations and they will be required to speak, also they will be required to write like reports and research, therefore they need to gain good skills in writing and speaking for effective communication”.</i>
AO5	Writing and Reading	<i>” .. a matric learner should be able to write and read because most of the activities at the university require reading and writing</i>

A number of admission officers first highlighted that all English skills are important as they work in an integrated way. However, the majority of them pin pointed writing and speaking as the most important language skills and that they should be given more priority. All respondents indicated that they have chosen writing skills because most of the universities activities such as writing assignments, tests and examinations are done in writing. Speaking was regarded important because of presentations and discussions at the university, which are done orally.

#### **4.3.4 Conclusion**

The admission officers hold different opinions regarding the English admission requirements and English as a sole medium of instructions at their respective universities. Some feel that the English admission requirements should be reconsidered and are against the fact that English is the sole MoI. However, the institutions of higher learning are not geared to accommodate another MoI as the current national language policy strictly stipulates that only English shall be used as a medium of instructions from grade 4 until tertiary level (MBESC, 2003:3). On contrary, some are for the idea of English being the sole MoI and feel that the ESL requirement status quo should be maintained. The next section analyses and interprets data from documents.

## 4.4 Analysis and interpretation of documents

### 4.4.1 Background information

Document analysis was employed in this study because it can support and strengthen the research in various ways. Documents were analysed to identify the gaps in the matric ESL curriculum and English preparatory courses. Three documents were analysed, namely: the matric ESL syllabus, the University X English preparatory course outline and the University Y English preparatory course outline.

During the exploration of the documents' content, the researcher used O'Leary's (2014) interview technique. Documents were treated like respondents or informants that provided the researcher with the data that is relevant to the study (O'Leary, 2014). The researcher asked questions and then highlighted possible answers within the texts. The researcher then analysed data using thematic analysis. categorised emerging codes into themes for further analysis (Bowen, 2009).

### 4.4.2 Presentation of themes and codes of documents

The following questions guided the transcription of data:

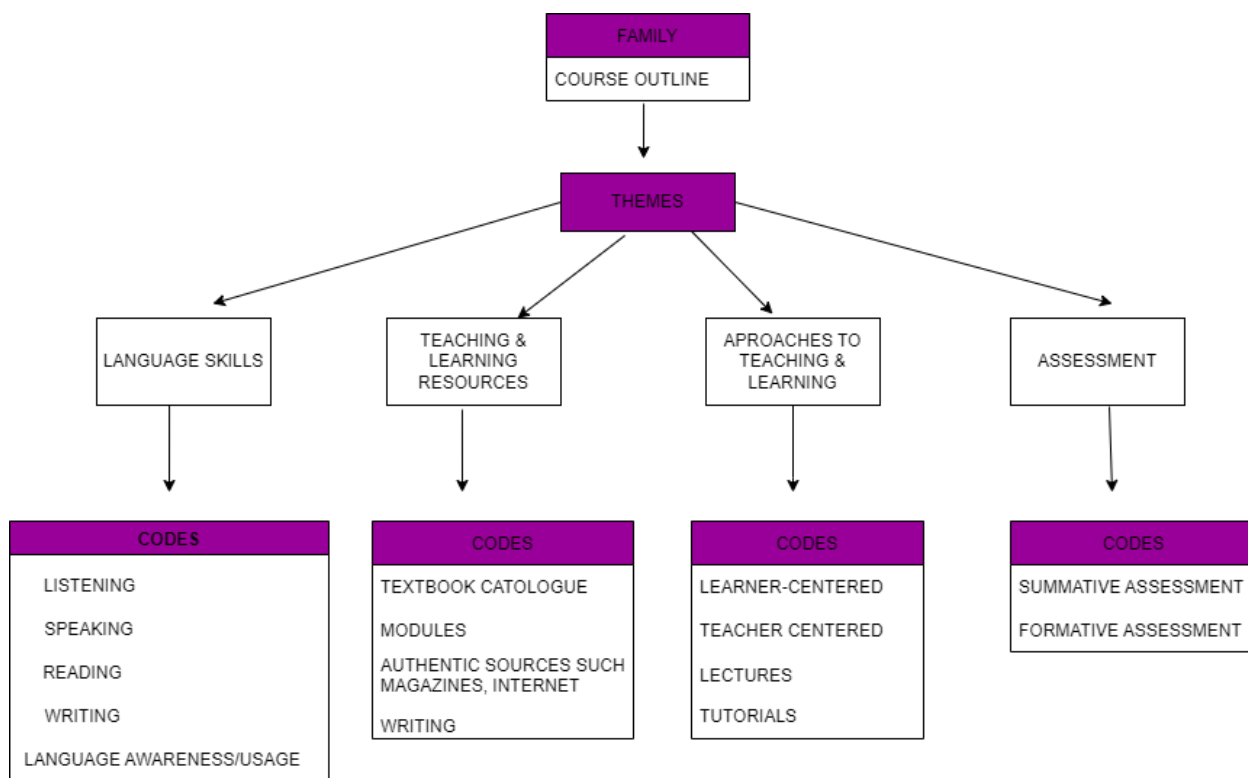
- *Which language skills/themes should be mastered by the students/learners by the end of the course?*
  - *Which teaching and learning resources are prescribed by this document?*
  - *Which teaching approaches are recommended by this document?*
- Which assessment methods should be employed during/after course presentation?*

What prompted these questions are the findings from other Namibian scholars, whose studies found the following:

- Most ESL students demonstrate a weakness in English language skills (Minshar,2020).
- 86% of ESL secondary school learners in Namibia indicated that the type of instruction that mostly takes place in class was teacher-centred (Haimbodi & Woldemariam, 2019). Learner-centred approaches and the communicative approach per se were not applied effectively at schools, and critical thinking was not emphasised (Ithindi, 2021).

- ESL teachers use any materials, including those that might be inappropriate for teaching and learning because the syllabus does not prescribe specific teaching and learning materials to be used (Ithindi, 2019).
- The way teachers assess in their classrooms does not fully support teaching and learning (Kayoko, 2019). The way Grade 12 English language examinations were set in Namibia was problematic (Ithindi, 2021).

A summary of themes, codes and quotes associated with language skills, teaching and learning resources, approaches to teaching and learning and assessment methods of the documents is presented by Figure 4-9 below.



**Figure 4-9: Family associated with language skills, teaching and learning resources, approaches to teaching and learning and assessment methods of the documents**

### **4.4.3 Analysis and interpretation of emerging themes from documents**

The coded data from the documents, corresponding with emerging themes in Figure 4-5 describe the type of skills, resources, approaches, and assessment methods recommended by the three documents. The following themes with regard to the three documents emerged:

- Language skills
- Teaching and learning resources
- Approaches to teaching and learning
- Assessment

These themes are further elaborated in the following sub-sections.

#### **4.4.3.1 Language skills**

The learning content of English as a Second Language's (ESL) has been categorised into five skill areas, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing and language usage (MoE, 2010). It is recommended that all these skills (including language usage) be taught in an integrated manner, for example, reading together with writing and language usage and listening with speaking (Ministry of Education, 2010:3). Below is a discussion of the objectives of the five language skills outlined by the syllabus.

Listening skills: Listening has been a fundamental language skill in language learning and teaching. Listening comprehension plays an important role in the process of learning a language as it also allows learners to master the other language skills. Thus, "listening is highly necessary in language learning in the sense that it supplies the learner with the required input and learners can't acquire anything without the comprehension of the specific input" (Hamouda, 2013). In the modern world, learners are constantly exposed to mass communication, which is primarily conducted orally, which is why it is essential that students are taught to listen effectively and critically.

Despite the importance of listening skill both in language learning and in daily communication, it is very interesting that none of the admission officers highlighted listening as important for learning. Huei-Chun (1998) contends that listening as a skill is not explicitly taught as it is assumed that it is learnt automatically. In addition, in countries where English is a foreign language or where learners don't have much exposure to the language listening "is oftentimes

ignored because it is regarded as a problematic language skill...where real practice chances are narrow" (Nowrouzi *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, some teachers find it difficult to teach listening skills as due to their own limited language proficiency or the fact that they are underqualified. For this reason, even the learners who are proficient in speaking and reading might experience problems with listening (Ghaderpanahi, 2012).

The objectives for listening of the grade 12 ESL syllabus are that "learners will listen to and understand a range of texts; listen to and understand instructions; listen actively to information for a variety of purposes; distinguish between different types of questions and respond appropriately; understand information from a variety of sources for specific purposes and identify the gist of a speech or discussion and evaluate what they hear" (MoE, 2010:4-5).

Speaking skills: The teaching and learning of speaking are a vital part of the ESL classroom, because in Namibia much of the classroom instruction is through speaking. Talley and Hui-ling (2014) assert that curriculum for teaching speaking skill should endeavour to expose learners to authentic, practical settings for speaking English and encourage active learner involvement in the lesson.

The grade 12 ESL syllabus states that upon the completion of the syllabus, learners should be able to: communicate information and ideas; speak clearly using appropriate intonation and word stress; use appropriate vocabulary in different situations; use language to request or pass on information and to accomplish appropriate transactions; adapt speech for different purposes and audiences; make appropriate verbal responses in different contexts; develop skills of oral presentation; use language to express and establish individual attitudes; resolve issues through discussions and debate and use negotiation skills (MoE, 2010:6-7). It is important that learners master these skills before they enter tertiary education because at tertiary level, as they will need the language to communicate with others and express their points of view in different settings. Rivers (1981) argues that speaking skills are essential in communication because these skills are used twice as much as reading and writing in our daily communication.

Even though speaking seems to be regarded as quite important in the ESL syllabus, there are other factors that could influence whether these skills are indeed developed effectively. Thus, it is also important to ask whether the curriculum is implemented effectively. Hamad (2013) notes that speaking can be negatively impacted by internal and external factors. Internal factors include out emotional problems and anxiety, while external factors include teaching methods and resources.

Reading skills: Reading increases all language skills, because it extends linguistic knowledge (Namupala, 2013). Additionally, Chukueggu and Ogbona (2013) assert that learning English through reading not only improves the basic language skills but also other aspects of language, such as grammar and pronunciation. Similar to the above assertions, Shoebottom (2012) posits that there is strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge. This is confirmed by Khatib *et al.* (2011) who state that vocabulary “knowledge can be expanded through considerable exposure to literary texts which contain both formal and informal language”. In doing so, ESL learners would acquire vocabulary that may enhance their academic discourse experience.

The grade 12 ESL syllabus makes it clear that “learners should be able to read and understand instructions and directions; recognise and understand a wide range of texts likely to be within the experience of and reflecting the interests of young people from various cultural backgrounds; apply a range of reading skills (reading with varying speed using a range of reading techniques); read extensively for wider knowledge or pleasure; make use of available library facilities and critically read materials from different sources” (MoE, 2010:8-9).

Writing skills: ESL is mainly assessed through learners’ written work, it is very important that learners are well prepared in this skill for academic success. Riddel (2003) reiterates that writing is an essential skill for learners’ examination preparation. Walsh (2010) argues that writing is important because it is used extensively in higher education and in the workplace. In his investigation on the writing errors of learners, Kapolo (2013) found that most of the matric learners were not performing well in ESL writing tasks and mostly made errors related to omission, concord, word choice, spelling, paragraph structure and misunderstanding of topics.

When referring to writing skills the grade 12 syllabus state that “learners should be able to produce well-organised and coherent pieces of writing; write appropriately for specific purposes; differentiate between written and spoken forms; demonstrate flexibility in writing about facts, feelings and opinions; show competence in the use of spelling and punctuation and use appropriate vocabulary in different contexts and situations” (MoE, 2010:10-11).

The objectives for language usage are stated as follows: “Learners will recognise the use and meaning of the tenses, use the first and second conditional, correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors, synonyms and antonyms, use appropriate grammatical structures in writing and use grammatical structures in speech correctly” (MoE, 2010:12-13). These language skills are taught in combination with the other language skills such a writing, speaking, reading and listening.

The syllabus states that the above discussed skills are equally important and equal preference should be given to them in the teaching programme.

#### In-depth analysis of language skills (University X English preparatory courses)

After an in-depth analysis of University X English preparatory course, the findings about the language skills shows that all the four English skills are addressed in University X English preparatory course, this corroborates the findings from the other two documents that were analysed (the grade 12 syllabus and the University Y English preparatory course document). It is worth mentioning that the subskills present University X English preparatory course document are similar to the subskills of the grade 12 syllabus as well as the University Y English preparatory course document even though they are not stated exactly in the same way (see Figure 4-10 for full details).

#### In-depth analysis of language skills (University Y English preparatory courses)

After an in-depth analysis of the University Y English preparatory course (English in practice upgrade course), the language skills from the course outline are elaborated in detail.

Students learn advanced English for academic purposes in both English in practice upgrade courses. The following are the skills/themes are covered in the course (IUM, 2020):

#### Speaking and Listening skills

According to the course outline (IUM, 2020), during speaking and listening, students engage themselves in activities that involve the use of the following: (degrees of comparison, concord, modal verbs, and negative forms)

#### Reading and writing skills

According to the course outline, during reading and writing, students engage themselves in activities that involve the following: (extensive and intensive reading, modal verbs, negative forms and types of essays, essays writing, paragraph, construction, note taking, types of essays as well as writing standard academic English).

#### Comparison

Table 4-6 above shows that, the four English language skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) are present in all documents. The skills are further divided into subskills as presented

in Figure 4-10 below. Rahmatullah *et al.* (2019) argue that subskills should be effectively incorporated in the curriculum as they form the foundation of the main skills. They further identify vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation as crucial subskills for language learning (Rahmatullah *et al.*, 2019:148). All these subskills are present in the three documents analysed.

Rahmatullah *et al.* (2019) are of the view that extensive vocabulary help learners to understand word meanings from different contexts and prepare them to use appropriate words when communicating. Likewise, Jose (2015) found that a strong base of vocabulary knowledge is indispensable to fostering the language skills which are the four pillars of English language. Brinton *et al.* (2010) identify pronunciation a subskill salient to language proficiency. In light of this assertion, it is encouraging that pronunciation is addressed in all of the documents analysed. Figure 4-10 below presents the main skills and subskills present in grade 12 syllabus and preparatory skills programmes of the universities.

		SUBSKILLS	
MAIN SKILL	GRADE 12 SYLLABUS	UNIVERSITIES' ENGLISH PREPARATORY COURSES	
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand instructions and directions</li> <li>Recognise and understand a wide range of texts likely to be within the experience of and reflecting the interests of young people from various cultural backgrounds;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply a range of reading skills ;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Read extensively for wider knowledge or pleasure;</li> <li>Making use of available library facilities and</li> <li>Read critically materials from different sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand a reading text and be able to express information in writing;</li> <li>Understand ideas and opinions from the text and be able to present them in writing /speaking in a logical order;</li> <li>Select relevant information from a reading text and use it for specific purposes;</li> <li>Communicate accurately and fluently in writing;</li> <li>Interpret and use a variety of vocabulary and writing styles in writing, speaking and listening;</li> <li>Select and evaluate information and use it for specific purposes in writing;</li> <li>Interpret a text by making use of their own ideas; write by using other writers' ideas in their own writing;</li> <li>Demonstrate the ability to extract information from a variety of texts;</li> <li>Analyse and synthesise information from given texts;</li> <li>Identify the purpose of different types of texts;</li> <li>Transfer information from texts;</li> <li>Describe and define concepts and give relevant information;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify themes;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Apply different lower and higher order reading skills;</li> <li>Write simple tasks, such as completing forms, writing postcards or formal and informal letters in an appropriate and accurate form of English in response to a written stimulus;</li> <li>Generate ideas and organise given material in a particular form;</li> <li>Predict forthcoming information and</li> <li>Write extended texts in the form of essays</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce well organised and coherent pieces of writing;</li> <li>Write appropriately for specific purposes;</li> <li>Differentiate between written and spoken forms;</li> <li>Demonstrate flexibility in writing about facts, feelings and opinions;</li> <li>Show competence in the use of spelling and punctuation and</li> <li>Use appropriate vocabulary in different contexts and situations</li> </ul>		
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate information and ideas;</li> <li>Speak clearly using appropriate intonation and word stress;</li> <li>Use appropriate vocabulary in different situations;</li> <li>Use language to request or pass on information and to accomplish appropriate transactions;</li> <li>Adapt speech for different purposes and audiences;</li> <li>Make appropriate verbal responses in different contexts;</li> <li>Develop skills of oral presentation;</li> <li>Use language to express and establish individual attitudes;</li> <li>Resolve issues through discussions and</li> <li>Debate and use negotiation skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to a text and respond verbally;</li> <li>Identify facts, ideas and opinions in an oral presentation, and present them orally;</li> <li>Listen and select specific information;</li> <li>Communicate accurately and fluently according to the situation and audience;</li> <li>Identify and infer implied meaning;</li> <li>Present a prepared topic to an audience;</li> <li>Analyse and critique a text and present it orally;</li> <li>Demonstrate understanding of a variety of spoken discourses;</li> <li>Initiate and sustain a conversation;</li> <li>Listen and take notes;</li> <li>Make a coherent presentation based on a given topic using the appropriate presentation skills;</li> <li>Be conscious of different communication situations that demand different registers</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to and understand a range of texts;</li> <li>Listen to and understand instructions;</li> <li>Listen actively to information for a variety of purposes;</li> <li>Distinguish between different types of questions and respond appropriately;</li> <li>Understand information from a variety of sources for specific purposes and</li> <li>Identify the gist of a speech or discussion and evaluate what they hear</li> </ul>		
SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the use and meaning of the tenses, use the first and second conditional, correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors , synonyms and antonyms , use appropriate grammatical structures in writing and use grammatical structures correctly in speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise control of appropriate grammatical structures and lexis according to the situation;</li> <li>Use variety of vocabulary according to the situation;</li> <li>Write a coherent paragraph, taking into account punctuation and spelling;</li> <li>Use cohesive devices at sentence and paragraph level and</li> <li>Demonstrate command of essay writing skills</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to and understand a range of texts;</li> <li>Listen to and understand instructions;</li> <li>Listen actively to information for a variety of purposes;</li> <li>Distinguish between different types of questions and respond appropriately;</li> <li>Understand information from a variety of sources for specific purposes and</li> <li>Identify the gist of a speech or discussion and evaluate what they hear</li> </ul>		
LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the use and meaning of the tenses, use the first and second conditional, correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors , synonyms and antonyms , use appropriate grammatical structures in writing and use grammatical structures correctly in speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise control of appropriate grammatical structures and lexis according to the situation;</li> <li>Use variety of vocabulary according to the situation;</li> <li>Write a coherent paragraph, taking into account punctuation and spelling;</li> <li>Use cohesive devices at sentence and paragraph level and</li> <li>Demonstrate command of essay writing skills</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the use and meaning of the tenses, use the first and second conditional, correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors , synonyms and antonyms , use appropriate grammatical structures in writing and use grammatical structures correctly in speech</li> </ul>		
LANGUAGE AWARENESS/ USAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the use and meaning of the tenses, use the first and second conditional, correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors , synonyms and antonyms , use appropriate grammatical structures in writing and use grammatical structures correctly in speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise control of appropriate grammatical structures and lexis according to the situation;</li> <li>Use variety of vocabulary according to the situation;</li> <li>Write a coherent paragraph, taking into account punctuation and spelling;</li> <li>Use cohesive devices at sentence and paragraph level and</li> <li>Demonstrate command of essay writing skills</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the use and meaning of the tenses, use the first and second conditional, correctly use countable nouns, uncountable nouns, similes, metaphors , synonyms and antonyms , use appropriate grammatical structures in writing and use grammatical structures correctly in speech</li> </ul>		

**Figure 4-10: Main skills and subskills present in grade 12 syllabus and universities' English preparatory courses**

#### 4.4.3.1.1 Teaching and learning resources

Relevant and adequate teaching and learning resources are essential in the teaching and learning process. McDonough and Shaw (2003) as well as Richards (2001) emphasise the importance of teaching materials as they provide comprehensible input, and reliable and valuable support for inexperienced teachers. The value of good quality textbooks should also not be underestimated. Simataa (2014) is of the view that current matric ESL textbooks in

Namibia do not properly provide input and activities for the development of higher level cognitive skills required by the matric examination.

**Table 4-4: Recommended teaching and learning resources**

Document	Recommended teaching and learning resources
Grade 12 syllabus	Teachers may consult the textbook catalogue and authentic sources such as magazines, newspapers and internet for suitable non-fiction and literary texts.
University X English preparatory courses	Course module, articles, lecture notes, overhead projectors.
University Y English preparatory courses	Course module, articles, lecture notes, overhead projectors.

#### 4.4.3.2 Comparison

From Table 4-7, it is evident that there is a gap between the grade 12 syllabus and the two universities' English preparatory courses in terms of teaching and learning resources. There is no uniformity in teaching and learning resources for the grade 12 syllabus as the educators are given an option to choose from a variety of the recommended resources by consulting the textbook catalogue and other authentic materials for suitable texts (MoE, 2010:3). Mwanza (2016:160) emphasises that "the implication of the syllabus being silent on teaching materials is that some teachers and school authorities may take advantage of the silence in the syllabus to use or not to use authentic materials". On the other hand, the universities' English preparatory courses for the two institutions of higher learning recommended very specific resources to be used during the teaching and learning process. For instance, one of the recommended texts by the English preparatory course is the new macro English aid, language, grammar, and general knowledge. This is not encouraged in the grade 12 syllabus, but the fact that teachers can select their own resources is not necessarily effective because some of them might not select authentic and appropriate resources. Moreover, due to the exclusion of prescribed ESL reading materials from the curriculum, especially underqualified or underprepared teachers might select reading texts, which may not be authentic and appropriate (Snyder, 2014). The selection of resources links closely with the teaching and learning approaches implemented by teachers.

#### 4.4.3.3 Approaches to teaching and learning

Effective teaching and learning methods promote learner independence allowing learners to explore topics more deeply on their own, requiring teachers to provide effective scaffolding and facilitation during classes in what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as the Zone of Proximal Development. This theme explored how the learning and teaching processes are facilitated at matric level as well as at tertiary level in English preparatory courses. The main methods and approaches recommended by the grade 12 syllabus are learner-centred approaches. The learner-centred methods put learners' interests the focus is shifted from the teacher to the learners, providing learners with a more effective learning experience.

According to Nellie Mea Education Foundation (NMEF) (2020), learner-centred methods are beneficial in the teaching and learning process because of the following reasons:

- They for a better fit between the learning content and student interests.
- Students get the opportunity to develop their language proficiency at their own pace.
- Students have to identify and select their own learning strategies.
- Students can monitor their progress themselves.
- The communication and collaboration skills of students are improved.
- Meaningful relationships between students and teachers are fostered through shared experiences.

Despite the recommendation of learner-centred approaches by the grade 12 syllabus, research has indicated that most of the instruction that happens in Namibian classroom are teacher-centred (Haimbodi & Woldemariam, 2019). This could be attributed to the causes of underperformance in ESL as identified by the students, admission officers and existing literature. To substantiate this observation, a study conducted by Yilmaz (2018) which examined the reasons behind the largely unsuccessful implementation of learner-centred approaches in the classroom revealed that the challenges experienced resulted from the physical organisation of classrooms, overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, time constraints, and inadequate training of ESL teachers.

Universities' English preparatory courses recommend lectures and tutorials as their main methods of teaching and learning approaches. These teaching and learning approaches include central class presentation (Power Point and chalk and talk) by the lecturer, central class presentation (power point and chalk-talk) by students, lecturer-led class discussions, individual

and group exercises and case analyses (where applicable). These methods and approaches are further elaborated on in Table 4-6 below:

**Table 4-5: Lecture and tutorial approaches**

Lecture	Tutorial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lecture is an organised verbal presentation of a particular topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tutorial is a teaching session involving a tutor and a small group of students</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can have many students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually has a small group of students</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often used in the field of higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used in both secondary and tertiary education system</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on information and facts regarding a certain topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifically focuses on exact and specific facts in a subject</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not very interactive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very interactive</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of a student is passive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of a student is active</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lecturer has an active role.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tutor has a somewhat passive role since tutorials encourage more student-centred activities.</li> </ul>

(Source: Hall *et al.*, 2011).

#### 4.4.3.3.1 Comparison

Teacher centred approaches and lecture approaches are much more similar during presentations in the sense that the teacher/lecture is expected to be an expert. Contrariwise, the learner centred approaches and tutorials complement each other as the learners/students are actively involved in the learning role and the teacher/tutor acts as the facilitator. Learner-centred approaches recommended in the grade 12 syllabus and tutorials recommended in the English preparatory courses are essential as they promote classroom interactions. This is important because these approaches promote the development of language skills, promote the development of critical thinking skills and promote interaction among peers (Hall *et al.*, 2011).

#### 4.4.3.4 Assessment

This theme is concerned with the assessment methods used at matric as well at preparatory courses offered by higher education institutions. The two general assessment methods used proposed in all three documents are formative and summative assessment. The grade 12

syllabus uses topic tasks, topic tests, and projects as their main methods of formative assessment, while the preparatory courses use assignments, presentations, and tests as the main methods of formative assessment. After completing either of the course, learners and students have to be assessed to determine their final grades and be accorded a pass or fail status (see Table 4-7).

A difference between the three documents can be seen in summative assessment. For matric learners, the final mark is exclusively determined by the end of course examinations; in other words, all the formative assessment marks accumulated throughout the course are not used at the end of the course, because 100% of the mark comes from the end of course examinations. This may disadvantage learners who perform better during formative assessment than summative assessment. On the contrary, for institutions of higher learning, the final mark is made up of 50% of the end of course examinations and 50% of the formative assessment marks accumulated throughout the course as presented in Table 4-7.

**Table 4-6: Matric’s and universities’ English preparatory courses’ end of the year assessment rubric**

	Type of assessment	Weighting (%)
Matric	Formative assessment (Topic tasks, projects, tests)	0
	Summative assessment (End of course examinations)	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Preparatory courses	Formative assessment (Tests, assignments and presentations)	50
	Summative assessment (End of course examinations)	50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4-8 below shows where the documents are aligned and where the matric syllabus differs from universities’ English preparatory courses.

**Table 4-7: Documents comparison in terms of language skills, assessment, teaching and learning resources as well as approaches to teaching and learning**

Theme	Status	Supporting remark/s
Language skills	Aligned	All language skills developed to a sufficient extent

Assessment	Differs	Matric - solely summative assessment influences grades.  Preparatory courses - formative and summative assessment contribute equally to final marks.
Teaching and learning resources	Differs	Matric- Teaching and learning resources not prescribed  Preparatory courses- Teaching and learning resources prescribed
Approaches to teaching and learning	Differs	Matric- Learner centred approach prescribed  Preparatory courses- Lectures and tutorials methods prescribed

#### 4.4.3.4.1 Comparison

After analysing the documents, it was found that there are some gaps between the documents analysed, especially between the matric syllabus and the two English preparatory course outline. This gap is evident in terms of teaching and learning materials, teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods.

### 4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter was guided by the three research questions of this study (see section 1.4). The qualitative data obtained by means of online questionnaires, interviews and document analysis were presented, analysed and interpreted. This was achieved by using thematic analysis whereby responses from the respondents were categorised into emerging themes using Atlas.ti (Friese, 2011; Sheridan & Storch, 2009; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

The results of the online questionnaires revealed that the compulsory ESL admission requirements have a substantial effect on Namibian indigenous students. The respondents identified possible causes of learners' underperformance in matric ESL. In addition to data from online questionnaires, the interviewees held different opinions regarding the English admission requirements and English as a sole medium of instructions at their respective universities. The document analysis revealed further that there is a gap between the content of the documents analysed, especially between the matric syllabus and the two English preparatory course outlines. In the next chapter, the final findings of the research are discussed and recommendations, based on the findings are made.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study's findings were given and discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter concludes the findings of the study and makes relevant suggestions. This study posed important questions regarding the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students. As revealed in the first chapter, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

Primary research question:

- How do the compulsory admission requirements of ESL of Namibian universities affect indigenous students' education?

Secondary research questions:

- What factors influence Namibian matric learners' performance in ESL?
- How could the Namibian ESL school curriculum be adapted to enhance indigenous students' admission to universities?

The questions were addressed by means of a literature review and empirical study. Recommendations are made. Furthermore, limitations and contributions of this research are explored and suggestions for further research are made.

### **5.2 Addressing the research questions**

#### **5.2.1 Primary research question**

- **How do the compulsory admission requirements of ESL of Namibian universities affect indigenous students' education?**

The objective of this question was to identify some of the effects caused by the compulsory admission requirements of ESL to indigenous students' education. After engaging students and the literature, the study revealed that ESL students in Namibia are affected in different ways due to the compulsory admission requirements of ESL. These include:

- **Taking a gap year**

A vast majority of students indicated that taking a gap year whilst improving their ESL grades was one of the effects they have experienced due to compulsory ESL admission requirement. In this context, students did not necessarily intentionally take a gap year because they want some time off, seek to travel or employment, but due to the fact that they have to improve their English grades in that particular year to match it with their universities of choice to gain admission. According to Jones (2004), this kind of gap year is called 'the higher education route', which is a gap between finishing matric and the start of tertiary education.

Milne *et al.* (2009) state that taking a gap year differs depending on one's location and one's academic achievement. They further emphasise that students with low academic achievement in certain subjects are more likely to take gap years (Milne *et al.*, 2009). Concurring with the latter, students under consideration in this study took a gap year due to low academic achievement in ESL. Moreover, learners who take a gap year are found to be mostly low-achieving students (Birch and Miller, 2007).

Finally, it is important to emphasise that, even though research has indicated that teachers and learners' language proficiency in Namibia are not up to standard, the current language policy in Namibia does not make any provision for the use of any other language apart from English in giving classroom instructions as from senior primary to tertiary level. As a result, students continue to perform poorly in ESL which will consequently lead to yearly gap year taking for the betterment of their ESL grades.

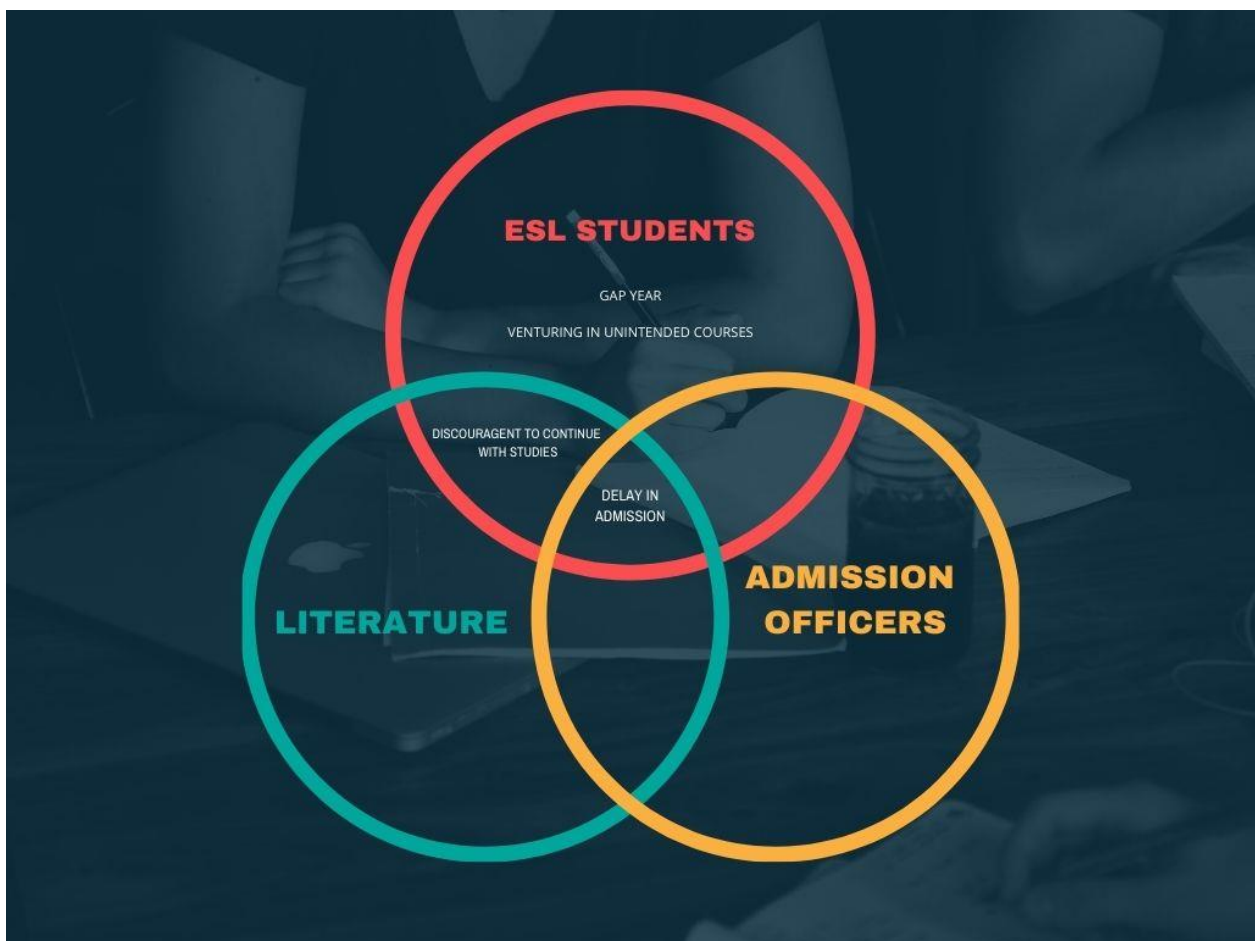
- **Taking undesired courses of study, feeling discouraged and joining the labour market**

Through online interviews, students expressed that poor ESL performance caused them to enrol for other courses than what they are actually interested in. Muskat (1979) opines that academic failure can be attributed to indecisiveness in programs selection, as students with no personal commitment towards academic programs they enrolled in are at risk of not completing those programs in comparison with those who do.

In addition, venturing on an undesired course of study at a later stage can be concerning. Hoover (2011) describes students who enrol for new courses rather than the initially desired courses as undecided and lacking direction. Schnall (2013) urges students to plan well in advance for programs they would like to pursue prior to registration. Similarly, Sobec (2013) suggests that students struggling to decide on programs to pursue post-matric should seek

assistance from professional academic advisors. “Without fully understanding and without being fully prepared to meet the demands of a newly selected academic major, successful completion of the academic program is less likely” (Conklin *et al.*, 2013).

In summary, students should take note of the consequences of changing courses after enrolment, which include possible additional time and costs. Figure 4-11 below summaries the main effects of compulsory ESL admission requirements identified by student participants, admission officers as well as from literature.



**Figure 5-1: Effects of ESL admission requirements on prospective students**

### **5.2.2 Secondary research questions 1**

- **What factors influence Namibian matric learners' performance in ESL?**

This question's aim was to discover the main reasons why learners are not performing to the required level in ESL that will accord them admission to tertiary institutions. It is worth mentioning that despite the fact that many scholars have done research on this issue, the researcher wanted to know if the students involved in the study still experienced the same problems so as to determine the gap between the past and the present despite the many recommendations on the persisting issue. The following factors emerged from this study:

- **Grammar, vocabulary and language usage problems**

A number of respondents indicated that poor grammar, vocabulary and language usage were some of the factors that contributed to the underperformance in ESL in comparison to other subjects. Admitting students into higher education institutions with poor English language skills would pose a challenge to the nation. Ithindi (2021) argues that the problem of poorly written English did not stop in the education sector but it was widespread in offices as well as in business where correspondence was poor.

- **Poor English language foundation and exposure**

Students also indicated that their exposure to English language was insufficient and that their English language foundation was poor. In Namibia, English is only introduced as a medium of instruction from grade 4 and majority of the learners communicate in their vernacular languages, especially outside the school setting. "Language exposure can directly improve a target language so that language proficiency may be a result of social interaction with speakers of the target language" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). In support of this, a study conducted among Malay ESL learners concluded that there is a strong relationship between the amount of exposure to English and the extent of the proficiency when acquiring the language (Chandrasegaran, 1979).

- **Underqualified and incompetent ESL teachers**

Through online questionnaires and interviews the students and admission officers also indicated that some English teachers struggled with the English language, which means they were unable to teach learners in English to the required standard. Other scholars in the field concur with this sentiment. Adedokun (2011) posits that underqualified and poorly trained English teachers are still employed to teach learners due to the shortage of trained teachers. Shortage of qualified teachers of the English language which results in poor delivery of lesson content is a challenge (Ganaprakasam & Karunaharan, 2020). This situation could contribute greatly to poor performance in English among matric students as Dimmock (2012) indicates that "academic

qualifications, knowledge of the subject matter, competence and teaching skills, as well as the commitment of the teacher, have an impact on the ESL teaching and learning process”.

- **Lack of ESL teaching and learning materials**

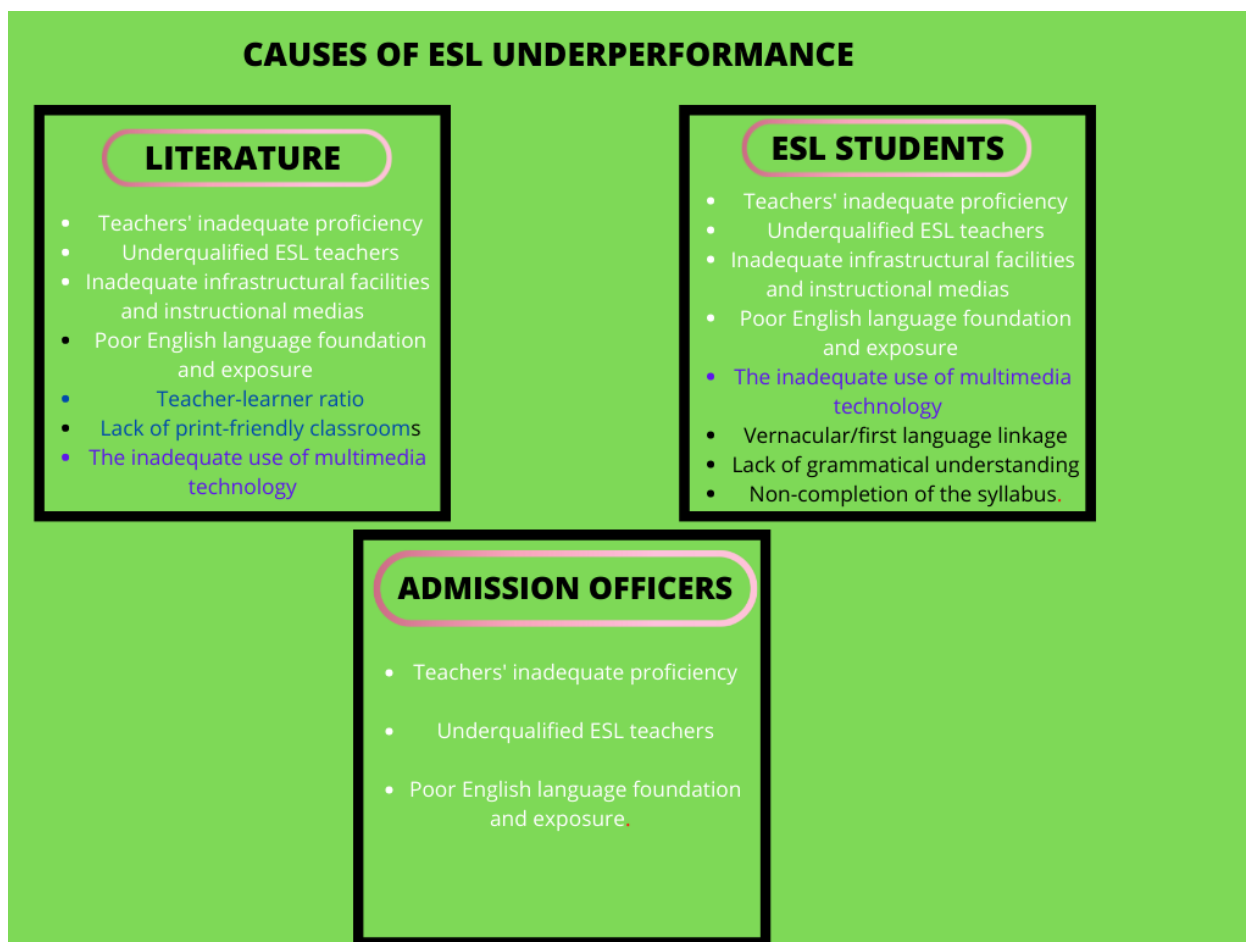
Another notable factor identified by students as well as existing literature which emerged from this study that may lead to underperformance in ESL, is inadequate infrastructure and instructional medias.

In a study conducted by Fernandez (2014), learners who used adequate infrastructure and instructional medias obtained a higher level of achievement than those without it. “The quality of learning materials such as textbooks is an ingredient of education” (Fernandez, 2014). In support of this, Sawchuck (2011) says that providing learners with their own textbooks and other learning materials could improve their performance.

- **Vernacular/first language linkage**

The study indicated that another possible factor that may lead to learners’ underperformance in ESL is the link to vernacular/first languages. This challenge flows from first language interference as teachers speak to learners in local languages in the classroom settings at some times. Dearden (2015), asserts that codeswitching is a contested area in the English Medium of Instruction content classroom, meaning that this is a widespread issue of concern in ESL teaching and learning. This kind of practices also deprive learners from an opportunity to be well exposed to the English language. Hence, the teaching or delivery methods used by some teachers need to be revisited as they may be a contributing factor to learners’ poor performance.

Figure 4-11 below presents some causes of ESL underperformance that emerged from literature and data collected from ESL students and admission officers.



**Figure 5-2: Causes of ESL underperformance**

### 5.2.3 Secondary research question 2

- **How could the Namibian ESL school curriculum be adapted to enhance indigenous students' admission to universities?**

This question aimed to examine the current curriculum and to make suggestions on how the current ESL curriculum in Namibian schools should be adapted to improve learners' ESL performance. To answer this question, the researcher used data from students' questionnaires, admission officers' interviews and the analysis of the gap that exists between the grade 12 syllabus and the universities' English course outlines documents. The data from the study suggested the following:

- **Making ESL a medium of instruction across all the phases**

Having ESL as a medium of instruction from primary school will afford an opportunity to learners to obtain exposure to English at an early age and to strengthen their English foundation. This may help learners to strengthen their proficiency in language skills at a later stage. In accordance with this, scholars such as Liping (2013) are of the view that the compulsory teaching and learning of ESL across grades as opposed to grade 4 to tertiary would generally improve learners' proficiency

- **Supplementing the curriculum with adequate and relevant teaching and learning resources and revising the syllabus in terms of structure and assessment.**

After analysing the documents, it was found that there was a gap between the content of the documents analysed, especially between the matric syllabus and the two English preparatory course outlines. This gap is evident in terms of instructional and learning materials, pedagogical strategies, language skills/knowledge and assessment methods. Thus, Supplementing the curriculum with adequate and relevant teaching and learning resources and revising the syllabus in terms of structure and assessment will be beneficial.

Figure 4-13 below presents a summary of students and admission officers' input on the language skills, teaching and learning resources, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment, number of lessons and language policy recommended by matric syllabus/curriculum.

GRADE 12 SYLLABUS/CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS	STUDENTS' VIEWS	ADMISSION OFFICERS' VIEWS
<b>LANGUAGE SKILLS</b> Listening, writing, speaking and reading		Give more priority to speaking and writing skills
<b>TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES</b> Textbook catalogue/viable resource	Uniformity in teaching and learning materials should be introduced	
<b>APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING</b> Teacher centered & learner centered approaches	Increase technology based in instructions	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b> Formative and summative assessment	Do away with core and extended examination and benchmark for ordinarily level for all students	
<b>NUMBER OF LESSONS</b> 7 lessons per week	Increase the number of lessons per week to give teachers ample time to complete the syllabus	
<b>LANGUAGE POLICY</b> English as medium of instruction from senior primary to tertiary	Make English the language of instructions from junior primary to tertiary	Make English the language of instructions from junior primary to tertiary

**Figure 5-3: Students and admission officers' views on the language skills, teaching and learning resources, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment, number of lessons and language policy recommended by matric syllabus/curriculum**

### 5.3 Recommendations

With reference to the findings from the literature and empirical study, the following suggestions may be useful:

#### Ministry of Education

- Qualified teachers should be allocated in schools as from junior primary grades so that a better English language foundation can be laid and consequently equip learners to perform better in matric. Ololube (2006) corroborated that qualified and committed teachers are more effective than unqualified and not committed teachers. Qualified and committed

teachers play an important role in improving students' performance. These teachers motivate students to study hard and more intimately than before (Ololube, 2006).

- Regional and national conferences about education should be held regularly to discuss ways of mitigating poor English performance. The MoE must consider initiating meaningful teacher professional development programmes, academic improvement plans and strategies for practicing English teachers, aimed at improving learners' poor English results.
- The ministry of education should appoint active English advisory teachers and specialists to support English teachers with the challenges they face in specific subject areas, such as ESL. After training is rendered, the advisory teachers should assess if the training they offered was effective and evaluate if what the teachers gained from the training was implemented or not. "Subject advisors provide a supportive environment for improving performance where the required standards are not met and enhance the capacity of teachers to apply the curriculum leadership and curriculum management competencies required in their positions" (Zepeda, 2008). Moreover, Bush (2003) acknowledges that the academic performance of a school is directly linked to the influence of its subject advisors.
- It is clear from the study that some ESL classes are overcrowded. This is worrisome as teachers find it difficult to pay the necessary attention to the needs of individual learners. To solve this problem, the number of learners in ESL classes should be reduced, as this number currently exceeds 35. It is recommended that more classes should be built and more teachers should be recruited to abide to the recommended 1:35 teacher-learner ratio. Smaller classes would be beneficial to all learners and teachers, as individual attention can be given to specific learner needs (Bayo, 2005). "Low-attaining students are most affected" by a lack of individual attention (Bayo, 2005).

### **ESL learners**

- With the intention of alleviating the challenges faced by learners, it is recommended that adequate learning materials such as textbooks, magazines and newspapers on the English language be provided for schools and ESL learners to deliver quality teaching that might improve learners' ESL results. Instructional materials stimulate learners' imagination and helps them make sense of difficult and abstract ideas, thus increasing their active engagement with the content and making the lesson more learner-centred (Esu *et al.*, 2004).
- Furthermore, learners should be encouraged to use various multimedia technologies to improve their English proficiency, as these could have a significant impact on the

improvement of learners' language skills (Jose & Raya, 2011:2). Examples of such software include grammar and spell checkers.

### **Non-ESL teachers**

- Teachers of other subjects other than English should where possible maximise opportunities for learners of ESL to improve their use of the English language. Hence, instilling the correct command of the English language in learners is not an undertaking that should solely rest on the shoulders of the English teachers, it should be a collective responsibility for all the teachers. Therefore, it is highly recommended that content teachers of other subjects should encourage learners to use proper English when presenting their lessons and during assessments.
- Institutions of higher learning in Namibia should consider implementing courses such Content Based Instruction (CBI). This will enable students who performed well in other subjects and poorly in English to continue with their studies while improving their English proficiency through this course. Monsalve *et al.* (2005) conducted a study that proved that content and language learning could be implemented positively in ESL classrooms with the use of CBI.

### **ESL teachers**

- Firstly, since English teachers play a pivotal role in developing learners' English skills, it is vital that they are adequately equipped to do so. Teachers should be knowledgeable and competent in all areas of English. Thus, appropriate training should be incorporated into teacher training both at educational institutions and through workshops for in-service teachers. Ganaprakasam and Karunaharan (2020) contend that a lack of qualified English language teachers results in poor delivery of lesson content.
- Poor performing ESL learners should be identified for remedial teaching and learning support. Remedial teaching can lead to a significant improvement in learners' academic performance (Selvarajan & Vasanthagumar, 2012).
- English teachers should be up to date with theoretical aspects of the English language that inform the selection and application of fitting pedagogy of the day. It is recommended that educators seriously revise their English language pedagogical methods during lesson presentations. Bushati *et al.*(2013) contend that English teachers should be lifelong and self-directed learners who continuously aim to develop professionally and personally. Continuous professional development enables teachers to influence their learners positively (Romeo *et al.*, 2012).

- This study also made it clear that a number of learners struggle with using grammar appropriately. ESL teachers should acquaint themselves with appropriate ways of teaching grammar and refrain from teaching grammar in a traditional way (Farooq *et al.*, 2012). Instead, ESL teachers should expect their learners to use the language for real-world, communicative purposes so as to see the value of using the language instead of mechanically reciting grammar rules.
- Classroom interaction plays an essential role in language skills development. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should ensure that learners are actively involved in classroom interaction so that they can see the value of using the language in communicative, meaning-focused situations (Ellis, 2002). In addition, interaction assists learners to construct their own identities through negotiation and collaboration in the classroom (Brown, 2015).

### **The language policy**

- In Namibia, the medium of instruction at junior primary is the learner's home language, after which they switch to English as a language of teaching and learning at senior primary and tertiary level. This switch has contributed to learners' inadequate proficiency in English (Iiping 2013). Therefore, there is a need for Namibian language policy in education to be adapted. It might be beneficial for learners to be exposed to English as a medium of instruction from junior primary already.

### **The ESL syllabus**

- In Namibia, the school syllabus does not specify the materials to be used in teaching and learning. Explicit instructions on which teaching and learning materials to use, such as exact textbooks, journals and articles, could provide more guidance and certainty to teachers.
- More teaching time should be allocated to ensure that all competencies are addressed. This can be done by adding an extra lesson to the current time constraint. Allowing more time for task completion could be beneficial for structured subjects such as languages (Block *et al.*, 1989).

### **Institutions of higher learning**

- Findings from this study and the literature reveal that teachers lack the necessary pedagogical content knowledge to teach ESL effectively. This could possibly be attributed to their training. ESL teachers need to have sufficient subject knowledge in order to improve learners' performance and English competence. Hence, it is recommended that institutions

of higher learning that offer teacher training should review and reflect on their teacher training curricula which might prove inadequate to address the poor English proficiency of learners.

- In addition, institutions of higher learning should consider regularly providing in-service teacher training to ensure that the teachers' knowledge and skills stay up to date with the requirements of successful ESL teaching in the twenty-first century.
- Institutions of higher learning that require a minimum of 60% in English for admission should consider lowering their English demand to at least a 50% or should make a provision whereby students can continue with their courses while taking extra English courses.

#### **5.4 Significance of the study**

Several studies have already been conducted on the language policy and teaching practices in ESL classrooms in Namibia. However, no study has ever been done to investigate the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students, which highlights the important contribution of the current study.

This study has shown how compulsory ESL pass grades affect indigenous ESL students' admission to university. Furthermore, in several studies conducted in Namibia, proponents of ESL studies have identified a number of causes of learners' underperformance in ESL. This study has also corroborated a number of possible causes of underperformance in ESL concurring with studies conducted by other scholars. Importantly, this study analysed the current language policy as well as the grade 12 syllabus and provides insight as to how the current Namibian English language policy as well as grade 12 English syllabus can be adapted to help students flourish in English.

#### **5.5 Limitations of the study**

The following list provides the limitations of this study:

- Confinement of the study: This study was confined to only three institutions of higher learning (University X, University Y and University Z) as well as 3 improving centres (Centre of open learning A, Centre of open learning B and Centre of open learning C).
- Another limitation is that respondents might have provided inaccurate information for the sake of appearances or merely to justify their stake on the subject matter.
- COVID 19 restrictions at the time of this study made accessing the participants challenging, which resulted in merely online methods of data collection.

- Some of the participants were not yet familiar with technology such as Google Forms and Google meet, which caused them to struggle to present their views and opinions. This was overcome by giving participants more time to respond and allowing participants to reach out for any assistance from the researcher and the independent third party.
- Some of the gatekeepers were not responsive to the researcher's request to conduct research, which prolonged the data collection process as the researcher had to make follow-ups several times to get gatekeepers' permission.

## **5.6 Suggestions for future research**

The following topics could be considered for future research studies:

- Research aimed at identifying ways in which ESL can be taught effectively to aspiring English teachers at higher education institutions to prepare them for the teaching demands.
- Research on how multilingual policy can be incorporated in the Namibian education system.
- A thorough investigation regarding the performance of students at tertiary level who improved their ESL marks before getting admitted and those who passed it in grade 12.
- Researchers in other African countries with English as a second language and as a sole medium of instruction could conduct a similar study.
- A participatory study involving English and non-English teachers to focus on the enactment of the curriculum.
- A study to observe students during the bridging courses/at centres of open learning.
- A study where different stakeholders (e.g. departmental, Higher Education, Basic Education officials) participate in critically evaluating the current policies and procedures.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This study investigated the effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students based on the fact that a good pass in the English language has become a passport to one's tertiary education programmes in Namibia, where English is a medium of instruction from grade four and an official language. The study's main purpose was to investigate the standards level to which learners are expected to perform in English, the learners' performance in ESL in comparison with other subjects and how this affects their admission to local universities. An explanatory case study design was employed in this qualitative research.

The study has shown that the compulsory ESL admission requirements causes a delay in students' enrolment to university as students have to take a gap year improving their ESL grades and some students have to venture in unintended courses of study, because of poor ESL grades. Possible causes of learners' underperformance in matric ESL were also identified. Furthermore, the study found that there was a gap between the content of the documents analysed, especially between the matric syllabus and the two English preparatory course outlines. This gap was evident in terms of instructional materials, teaching and learning strategies, language skills/knowledge and assessment methods.

Considering that the problem of poor pass rates in the English examinations has been consistent over the years, it is of utmost importance for stakeholders in education to make a concerted effort to find a lasting solution to this problem. It is thus high time that the curriculum be reviewed and address the challenges associated with learners' underperformance in ESL.

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# ANNEXURE A ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 086 016 9698  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za/>

North-West University Education, Management  
and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology,  
Engineering and Natural Sciences Research  
Ethics Office (NWU-EMELTEN-REC)

Tel: +2718 299 4707  
Email: [lukas.meyer@nwu.ac.za](mailto:lukas.meyer@nwu.ac.za)

14 June 2021

Dear Dr Kaiser

## ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-NWU-EMELTEN-REC) on 14 June 2021, the NWU-EMELTEN-REC hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-EMELTEN-REC grants its permission that, provided the general and specific conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Study title:</b> The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students															
<b>Principal Investigator/Study Supervisor/Researcher:</b> Dr Kotie Kaiser															
<b>Student:</b> PK Nghuulikwa															
<b>Ethics number:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>2</b>
	Institution		Study Number				Year		Status						
	<b>Status:</b> S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation														
<b>Application Type:</b> Single study															
<b>Commencement date:</b> 01/06/2021				<b>Risk:</b>				<b>Minimal</b>							
<b>Expiry date:</b> 31/05/2022															
<b>Approval of the study is provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on the receipt and review of a twelve-monthly monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.</b>															

<b>General conditions:</b> <i>While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-EMELTEN-REC:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- twelve-monthly on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided annually, and upon completion of the study; and</li><li>- without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.</li></ul></li><li>• The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-EMELTEN-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.</li></ul>
--

- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for active monitoring.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-EMELTEN-REC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-EMELTEN-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
    - *submission of the twelve-monthly monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and/or*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *NWU-EMELTEN-REC can be contacted for further information via [Ethics-EMELTEN-apply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-EMELTEN-apply@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 4707*

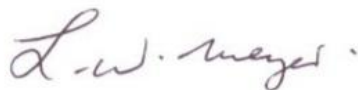
**Specific conditions:**

1. The commencement and execution of the study are subject to COVID-19 restrictions and regulations and strict adherence to the prevailing COVID-19 research protocols and procedures.

The NWU-EMELTEN-REC would like to remain at your service and wishes you well with your study.

Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-EMELTEN-REC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



---

Prof Lukas Meyer  
Chairperson NWU-EMELTEN-REC

Current details:(23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.4 Templates\9.1.5.4.2\_NWU-HREC\_EAL.docm  
20 August 2019

File Reference: 9.1.5.4.2

## ANNEXURE B ADVERTISEMENT FLYER

### Has English as a second language affected your admission to university?

If you are a student improving your English results with UNAM, IUM, NAMCOL, TUCSIN or ELITE college, this study may be for you.



#### STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF LANGUAGE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS OF NAMIBIAN UNIVERSITIES ON INDIGENOUS ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS

##### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We are looking for Namibian students who are improving their English second language matric results so that they can qualify for admission to university.



A substantial number of learners in Namibia do not perform in English at a level that would allow them university entrance. This has prompted widespread debate, with a call for a review of the current university admission requirements.

##### LOCATION



No physical contact will be made with participants. Virtual methods of data collection will be used.

##### ELEGIBILITY

You should be enrolled for a course at a Centre for Open Learning or an English Access course at one of the Namibian universities with the purpose of improving your results obtained in English Second language in matric in order to qualify for admission to the university.

##### Participants will receive

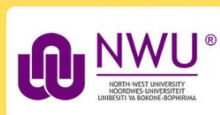


- \*A very small gift to thank you for your participation (such as a small stationery item)
- \*A condensed copy of the research results will be made available to you at your request.

If you are unsure if you meet the requirements, call or email :



Mrs Erika Venter  
Sfaventer@gmail.com



Mr Pat Nghuulikwa  
29958563@student.g.nwu.ac.za  
+264 81 4993280

# ANNEXURE C GATEKEEPER PERMISSION

## CENTRE FOR RESEARCH SERVICES

Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research Innovation and Development  
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA, Private Bag, 13301 Windhoek, Namibia

340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park, Office 10090 ☎ +264-61-2054624 ✉ [kmbulu@unam.na](mailto:kmbulu@unam.na) Fax+264-61-206 4624



14 September 2021

Dear Mr. PK Nghuulikwa,

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (UNAM)

Your application to conduct research at UNAM entitled: **"The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous English Second Language students"** was considered based on ethica approval from your institution. Hence, permission is hereby granted with the following conditions:

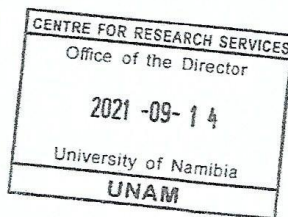
1. During the course of your research activities at UNAM, you will observe the required procedures, norms and ethical conduct in accordance with the relevant Research Policies and Guidelines. If unsure, please consult the *Centre for Research Services* at UNAM for guidance. Any deviations and amendments to the original documents submitted (i.e. methodology, interview guide, consent forms, etc.) must be submitted again for approval, before the research activities can commence.
2. The results of the findings will be shared with the PVC: Research, Innovation and Development, and the Centre for Research Services, before they are disseminated or published in the public domain.
3. Upon completion, a copy of the Research Report must be lodged with the UNAM Library for our records.
4. Proper, full acknowledgements of the University of Namibia and all participants /respondents shall be done in the Research Report and any subsequent publications arising from this research.
5. Although permission is granted, provision of information is to the consent of respondents.

If you are agreeable to the above conditions, please sign and date a copy of this letter and return it the Centre for Research Services (Email: [nkanime@unam.na](mailto:nkanime@unam.na)). If you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the Centre for Research Services.

Wishing you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely

Prof Nelago Indongo  
Director: Centre for Research Services



I accept and agree to all the conditions

P.K. NGHULIKWA

[Signature]

16 SEPTEMBER 2021

Full Name and Surname

Signature

Date

# ANNEXURE D GATEKEEPER PERMISSION



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

13 Jackson Kaujeua Street  
Private Bag 13388  
Windhoek  
NAMIBIA

T: +264 61 207 2118  
F: +264 61 207 9118  
E: registrar@nust.na  
W: www.nust.na

## Office of the Registrar

11 October 2021

Mr. Pat Nghuulikwa  
Email: 29958563@student.g.nwu.ac.za  
Windhoek  
NAMIBIA

Dear Mr. Nghuulikwa

**RE: CONSENT TO CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH WITH THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STAFF AND STUDENT**

Approval is hereby granted for you to conduct the research on *"An investigation on how the language admission requirements of three Namibian Universities affect indigenous English Second Language students"* at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

Any information gathered during the research is to be used for the purpose of the study only and must be treated as confidential. The results of the study should be shared with the University. Individual information of staff and students will not be made available, nor will biographical information of students be made available in such a way that individual students can be identified.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely,

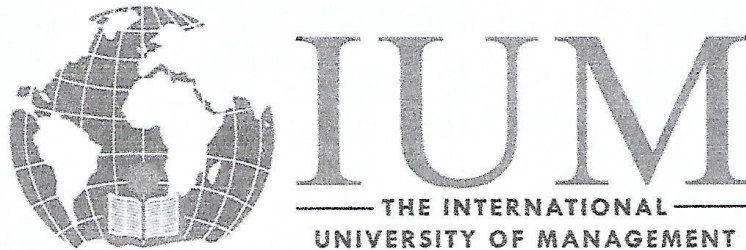
Ms. Selma Heelu  
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

CC:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation  
Assistant Registrar



# ANNEXURE E GATEKEEPER PERMISSION



Dear Dr Kaiser

Date 30.9.2021

**RE: Research Permission**

This letter confirms the approval of your proposal by the IUM Research Ethics Committee. The proposal demonstrates an awareness of ethical responsibilities and a commitment to ethical research processes. The approval of the proposal by the committee thus constitutes ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study.

In order to acquire the information from different sources that you have requested the following Offices of the International University of Management needed to be contacted;

Prof O. Arowolo ( Acting Vice Chancellor) for any policies or documents of the university.

Email address; [o.arowolo@ium.edu.na](mailto:o.arowolo@ium.edu.na)

Mr. S Naruseb (Human Resource Director) data or interviews/questionnaires from staff members.

Email address: [s.naruseb@ium.edu.na](mailto:s.naruseb@ium.edu.na)

Mr. A Nashilundo (Registrar) for entering the data base and information from students interviews/questionnaires.

Email address: [a.nashilundo@ium.edu.na](mailto:a.nashilundo@ium.edu.na)

All information released is subjected to policies of the International University of Management.

However, because of our own interest in research we expect you to share your findings with us on completion of your research study.

Yours faithfully,  
Oladele O Arowolo (Prof)  
Vice-Chancellor  
International University of Management  
P.O. Box 5582  
Windhoek  
Tel: +264 61 245150 / 84  
Fax: +264 61 248112  
E-Mail: [pvc@ium.edu.na](mailto:pvc@ium.edu.na)  
Office of the PVC  
Academic & Research

PP

## ANNEXURE F GATEKEEPER PERMISSION



Jetu Jama Centre, Independence Avenue, Windhoek  
Private Bag 15008, Katutura, Windhoek  
Tel: + 264 61 320 5111, Fax: + 264 61 216 987, www.namcol.edu.na

6 October 2021

Dr Kotie Kaiser  
University of North-West University  
Faculty of Education  
Private Bag X6001  
**Potchefstroom**  
**SOUTH AFRICA**  
**2520**

### RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH AT NAMCOL

Your communique received on 4 October 2021 concerning the above subject matter is hereby acknowledged with gratitude.

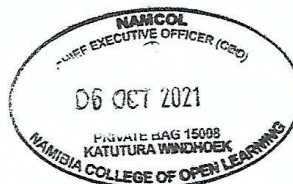
I have the pleasure to inform you that your request for Mr Pat Nghuulikwa to conduct research on: *“The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian universities on indigenous English Second Language students”* is considered positively.

You are requested to submit a copy of your research report to NAMCOL upon completion of your study.

I wish you all the best with your academic career.

Yours sincerely,

  
Dr H.V. Murangi  
DIRECTOR



All official correspondence must be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer.

## ANNEXURE G GATEKEEPER PERMISSION



**GRAND TUTORIALS**  
Walvis Bay, Namibia

+264813889977 ✉ grandtutorials@iway.com

**North-West University  
Faculty of Education  
Private Bag X6001  
Potchefstroom, South Africa**

**March 18, 2022**

**Dear Mr Nghuulikwa**

**Subject: Permission to conduct research with English students at Grand Tutorials**

This letter serves to inform you that permission has been granted to conduct research at Grand Tutorials on **The effects of English admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous English Second language students**. Please be informed that the research to be conducted should by no means whatsoever disrupt the teaching and learning process at Grand Tutorials. Upon the completion of your study ,please do share your findings with the institution.

We hope and trust that your study will enhance the quality of education in Erongo region and Namibia at large, all the best with your research.

**Sincerely,**

**Mr Samson Makaza  
(Principal)**

# ANNEXURE H GATEKEEPER PERMISSION



**Number One Training Institute**  
P O Box 1342  
Walvis Bay  
Cell: 0813769366 / 0813318007

23 March 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam

Re: CONSENT TO CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH WITH NUMBER ONE TRAINING INSTITUTE

Approval has hereby been granted for you to conduct the research on “an investing on how the language admission requirements of Namibian Universities affect indigenous English Second language student” at the Number One Training Institute.

Any information gathered during the research is to be used for the purpose of the study only and must be treated as confidential. The results of the study should be shared with the Institute. Individual information of staff and students will not be made available, nor will biographical information of students be made available in such a way that individual students can be identified.

I wish you all the best with your research.

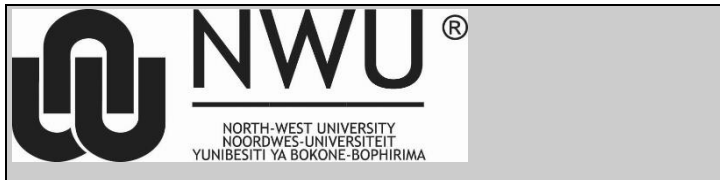
Yours faithfully  
Gordon Chirambo

Gordon Chirambo  
Dean of Student



**NUMBER ONE TRAINING INSTITUTE**  
PO Box 1342  
WALVIS BAY  
Cell: 0813769366 / 0813318007

## ANNEXURE I INFORMED CONSENT (STUDENTS)



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222  
Fax: +2718 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

The Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office of the North-West University is acknowledged for the use of their document with minor adjustments made by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-EMELTEN-REC).



### **INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE BRIDGING OR ACCESS COURSES AT NAMIBIAN UNIVERSITIES OR CENTRES FOR OPEN LEARNING**

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: Exploring the effects of ESL language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous students.

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER: NWU-00008-21-S2**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof Kotie Kaiser**

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Mr PK Nghuulikwa**

**ADDRESS: 69 Klerk Street, Potchefstroom 2531**

**CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4747**

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-EMELTEN-REC) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**6. What is this research study all about?**

- We plan to investigate the standards level on which learners are expected to perform in English, the learners' performance in ESL in comparison with other subjects and how this affects their admission to local universities in Namibia.
- This study will be conducted online with participants in Namibia in 2021 and will be done by experienced researchers trained in conducting educational research. Eighteen students (who are either enrolled for an English Language bridging course at a Namibian university, or who are currently enrolled for an access course at a centre for open learning in Namibia) will be included in this study.

**7. Why have you been invited to participate?**

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a student whose non-admission to university was directly affected by your matric English results.
- You will unfortunately not be able to take part in this research if you have been unconditionally admitted to a Namibian university.

**8. What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to complete an online questionnaire on Google Forms about the challenges you experienced with regard to your performance in English when applying

for admission to a Namibian university. The form will take you about 20-30 minutes to complete and your answers to the questionnaire will be analysed and used as data in the study. We will share the findings with you in the form of an infographic after the study has been completed.

**9. Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There will be no direct gains for you for participating in the study.
- The indirect gains of the study involve the discovery of new insights about the challenges that learners experience with English Second Language (ESL) as a school subject and possible intervention strategies that can be implemented to improve the performance of matric students in EFAL.

**10. Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- A possible challenge of participating in this study is that accessing and submitting an online questionnaire will require internet data but this challenge will be limited by providing you with a low-data option (Google Forms) and you will be able to complete the questionnaire at a time which is convenient for you and when you have data available.

**11. How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your data?**

- Anonymity of your data will be protected by allocating a case number to you and this case number will be used when the questionnaire data is analysed. Your privacy will be respected by providing pseudonyms for the universities and centres for open learning involved when reporting on the results of study. Your data will be kept confidential by storing it on a password encrypted USB drive. Only the researchers will be able to look at your data. Data will be stored for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

**What will happen with the data?**

- The data will be used for the purposes of study and for publication in academic journals.

**How will you know about the results of this research?**

- We will share the results of this research with you after the study has been completed by means of an infographic that will be sent to you electronically by email.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- Apart from the data required to access and submit the online questionnaires, there will be no costs involved for you, if you do take part in this study. We will provide you with a small gift as a token of appreciation for your participation.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact Prof Kotie Kaiser at [kotie.kaiser@nwu.ac.za](mailto:kotie.kaiser@nwu.ac.za) if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Villera le Roux at 018 299 4707 or [villera.leroux@nwu.ac.za](mailto:villera.leroux@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled: The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous English Second Language students.

**I declare that:**

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....

.....

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

12. Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to  
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....

Signature of person obtaining consent

**Declaration by researcher**

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

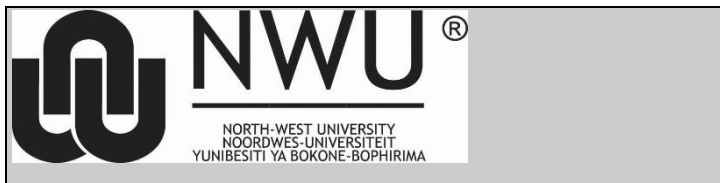
- I had it explained by a research assistant who I trained for this purpose.
- I did not use an interpreter
- I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....

Signature of researcher

## ANNEXURE J INFORMED CONSENT (ADMISSION OFFICERS)



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222

Fax: +2718 299-  
4910

Web:

<http://www.nwu.ac.za>

The Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office of the North-West University is acknowledged for the use of their document with minor adjustments made by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-EMELTEN-REC).

**NWU-EMELTEN-REC**  
**Stamp**

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR ADMISSION ADMINISTRATORS AT NAMIBIAN UNIVERSITIES

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: Exploring the effects of ESL language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous students

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER: NWU-00008-21-S2**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof Kotie Kaiser**

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Mr PK Nghuulikwa**

**ADDRESS: 69 Klerk Street, Potchefstroom 2531**

**CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4747**

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-EMELTEN-REC) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

**13. What is this research study all about?**

- We plan to investigate the standards level on which learners are expected to perform in English, the learners' performance in English Second Language in comparison with other subjects and how this affects their admission to local universities in Namibia.
- This study will be conducted online with participants in Namibia in 2021 and will be done by experienced researchers trained in educational research. Six university administrators will be included in this study.

**14. Why have you been invited to participate?**

- You have been invited to be part of this research because you are part of the admission team at a Namibian university and you are aware of the context and challenges associated with the admission of first year students who are underperforming in English Second Language.
- You will unfortunately not be able to take part in this research if you are not involved in the admission process of first year students at a Namibian university.

**15. What will be expected of you?**

- You will be expected to take part in an electronic interview. The interview will last about 15-20 minutes. You can indicate your choice of mode for the interview, which can be via Skype, Zoom or Google. You will have access to the interview questions a week before the interview is scheduled and you can indicate if you don't feel comfortable answering any of the interview questions. The interviews will be transcribed afterwards and the transcriptions will be used for data analysis. We will share the findings with you in the form of an infographic after the study has been completed.

**16. Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- There will be no direct gains for you by participating in the study.
- The indirect gains of the study involve the discovery of new insights about the challenges that Namibian learners experience with English Second Language (ESL) as a school subject and possible intervention strategies that can be implemented to improve the performance of matric students in EFAL.

**17. Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- The online interview of 15-20 minutes will require internet data but this challenge will be limited by providing you with a choice of low-data options for the mode of conducting the interviews (Whatsapp/Google/Zoom/Skype). You will be able to select any of these options and the camera functions of Google/Zoom/Skype will be disabled during the interviews should it be necessary to save data. You might also not feel comfortable sharing information that may negatively reflect on your university, but this risk will be limited by the fact that interview questions will be shared with you a week before the interview and you may opt not to answer certain questions. 1 Gigabyte of data will also be provided to participants who would like to make use of the offer.

**18. How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your data?**

- Anonymity of your data will be protected by allocating a case number to you and this case number will be used when the interview is transcribed. Your privacy will be respected by providing pseudonyms for the universities involved when reporting on the results of study. Your data will be kept confidential by storing it on a password encrypted USB drive. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the recordings of the interviews. Only the researchers will be able to look at your data. Data will be stored for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

**What will happen with the data?**

- The data will be used for the purposes of this study and for future publications in academic journals.

**How will you know about the results of this research?**

- We will share the results of this research with you after the study has been completed by means of an infographic that will be sent to you electronically via email.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

Apart from the data required to access the interview questions and to conduct the online interview, there will be no costs involved for you, if you do take part in this study. We will provide you with a small gift as a token of appreciation for your participation which will be delivered to a pickup point close to your physical address.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact Prof Kotie Kaiser at [kotie.kaiser@nwu.ac.za](mailto:kotie.kaiser@nwu.ac.za) if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Villera le Roux at 018 299 4707 or [villera.leroux@nwu.ac.za](mailto:villera.leroux@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled: The effects of language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous English Second Language students.

**I declare that:**

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

19. Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to  
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....

Signature of person obtaining consent

20. Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

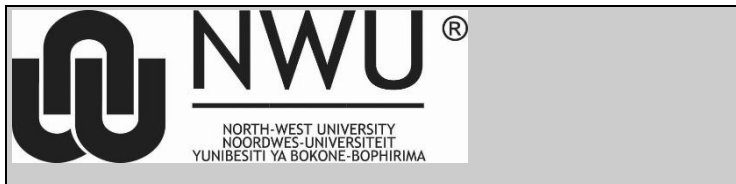
- I had it explained by a research assistant who I trained for this purpose.
- I did not use an interpreter
- I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....

Signature of researcher

## ANNEXURE K QUESTIONNAIRES PROTOCOL (STUDENTS)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: 018299-1111/2222  
Web:  
<http://www.nwu.ac.za>

### STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Dear respondent

My name is Pat Nghuulikwa, a postgraduate student from the North-West University (Potchefstroom campus) studying for Masters of Education specializing in Curriculum Studies. As part of my study I am required by the university to carry out a research project, my research topic is “*Exploring the effects of ESL language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous students*”. Through this brief survey, your answers will be helpful for me to carry out an effective research. Your responses will only be used for survey purposes and all the information will be kept confidential.

#### Instructions

- This questionnaire will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- Answer the questions according to your best knowledge.
- Please add any information that will help to make this research a success.

### Warm up question

Referring to your final matric certificate, indicate the number of subjects that you performed better than English? (please tick in the appropriate box)

0  1  2  3  4  5  6

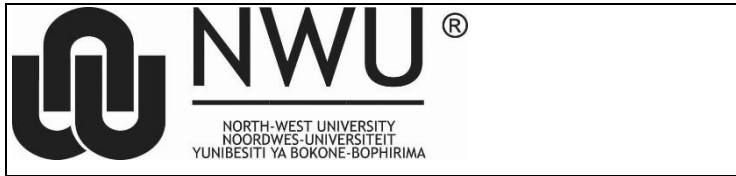
1. What are the effects of ESL matric results to your immediate university admission?
2. What should be done differently to our current school curriculum to help more students flourish in English second language?
3. Why are matric students underperforming in ESL?
4. What do you think local universities should do collectively to help students in your situation in the future? Please provide detailed descriptions.
5. Do you think English results should be taken into consideration for university admission? Why do you say so?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share with me on this topic?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. I am sincerely grateful for your time and effort. If you have any suggestions or comments about the questionnaire, please write them in the space provided below.

If any questions or concerns arise pertaining this study, please contact me at +264814932011, my supervisor (Prof Kotie Kaiser) on her email address [Kotie.Kaiser@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Kotie.Kaiser@nwu.ac.za) or my co-supervisor (Mrs Marike Annandale) on her email address [24116297@g.nwu.ac.za](mailto:24116297@g.nwu.ac.za).

*Thank you*

## ANNEXURE L INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (ADMISSION OFFICERS)



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: 018299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

### Dear respondent

My name is Pat Nghuulikwa, a postgraduate student from the North-West University (South Africa) studying for Masters of Education specializing in Curriculum Studies. As part of my study I am required by the university to carry out a research project, my research topic is *“Exploring the effects of ESL language admission requirements of Namibian Universities on indigenous students”*. Through this brief survey, your answers will be helpful for me to carry out an effective research. Your responses will only be used for survey purposes and all the information will be kept confidential.

### Instructions

- The interview will take approximately 15- 20 minutes of your time.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- Answer the questions according to your best knowledge.
- Please add any information that will help to make this research a success.

### Warm up question

What is your role as an administrator at your institution?

## Interview questions

1. What is your opinion about the use of English as a sole medium of instruction in your institution?
2. In your opinion, do you think the university need to reconsider the English admission requirements? Please justify your answer.
3. In your view, how important is matric ESL marks for indigenous students to gain admission to university? Give a reason for your answer.
4. In your view, which English language knowledge and skills should matric learners work on in order to gain admission to university? Why do you say so?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me on this topic?

If any questions or concerns arise pertaining this study, please contact me at +264814993280, my supervisor (Prof Kotie Kaiser) on her email address [Kotie.Kaiser@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Kotie.Kaiser@nwu.ac.za) or my co-supervisor (Mrs Marike Annandale) on her email address [24116297@g.nwu.ac.za](mailto:24116297@g.nwu.ac.za).

# ANNEXURE M REFLECTIVE NOTES AND COMMENTS FORM

## REFLECTIVE NOTES AND COMMENTS

Note : After each interview, the researcher will take some minutes to indicate his reflections and comments about the interview.

Interviewee (e.g UA1) : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Duration: \_\_\_\_\_(minutes)      Method of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the interviewee attitude towards you and the interview

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State any unusual circumstances experienced e.g network problems, disruptions, language barriers etc

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If you were to interview the same interviewee again, what will you do different?

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Any additional comment

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## ANNEXURE N STUDENTS' ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES TRANSCRIPTS

**NB:** *Student participants were not accorded pseudonyms because it was not possible to trace which student participant answered which question as their responses popped in randomly through online google form surveys.*

1. What are the effects of ESL matric results to your immediate university admission?

**Student 1:** *"My admission into university was delayed because of E symbol I got in English, I have to take a gap year improving my English grades"*

**Student 2:** *"Discouragement to continue with my varsity, because I performed better than English in all my other subjects, but unfortunately I have to take a gap year improving my English grades to match my preferred university's English requirements"*

**Student 3:** *"They ask for a C symbol in English and it's hard getting a C especially if you are from the northern part of Namibia".*

**Student 4:** *"Delay in enrolment".*

**Student 5:** *"Have to take a gap year improving my ESL results"*

**Student 6:** *"It delayed my admission. I have to improve my English while my mate went straight to the university".*

**Student 7:** *"E and lower symbols never get admitted"*

**Student 8:** *"if you have a C and above in English you don't do English for communication, you do it for academics".*

**Student 9:** *"It has no much effects because I performed well than I thought".  
"You will not be admitted"*

**Student 10:** *“English Second Language is an instrument of communication at university, therefore they admit learners with D or better symbols in English. The university admit only a few students who reach the university requirements because not all students perform better in English to reach university requirements and this leads to shortage of students at universities”.*

**Student 11:** *“It plays a big role. I need to pass it in order to be accepted. Whether I pass all my other subjects, if I fail English, I won't be accepted”.*

**Student 12:** *“If you do not reach a C in English, admission to university becomes a challenge which forces one to spend other year improving on English as a subject”.*

**Student 13:** *“Admission requirements too high”.*

**Student 14:** *“It prevented me from continuing with my tertiary education”.*

**Student 15:** *“That you can only qualify if you have a C grade or better”.*

**Student 16:** *“It affected me badly, staying home knowing that I have passed my other subjects well and not doing the course I wanted to study because of English”.*

**Student 17:** *“I could not be admitted because I failed English but I passed other language and four subjects with very good grades”.*

**Student 18:** *“I ended up changing my dream course of study just to settle for courses of study that are not much demanding in terms of English admission, my intention was to study at the university but now considering to apply to a technical university since their admission requirements are a bit low compared to other universities”*

**Student 19:** *“Of course in a bad way, I am now discouraged despite my good marks in other subjects, at this point I am indecisive in terms of career choice, if I did not improve this results I will take whatever course or job opportunity that comes my way “*

**Student 20:** *“I feel like a failure despite reaching more than my target points, I know a lot of people that are admitted in university with less points than mine but proceeded with*

*university because of a pass in English, my admission is delayed and my dream course might not come a reality because of this English”.*

2. What should be done differently to our current school curriculum to help more students flourish in English second language?

**Student 1:** *“The current curriculum should let learners have English as a medium of instructions from grade one, or let other languages be medium of instructions”*

**Student 2:** *“The teachers should use the same materials in the whole country, it does not make sense using the same syllabus but the teaching materials differ”*

**Student 3:** *“Teach English as a medium of instructions in all grades”.*

**Student 4:** *“English should be taught more in a sense of a first language”*

**Student 5:** *“The curriculum should consider the fact that most of the students are not English first language speakers, so the curriculum should consider the average proficiency of the nation”.*

**Student 6:** *“Make English as the medium of instructions from primary level. English should not be taught by the teacher who speak the same mother tongue as the learners”.*

**Student 7:** *“Change the way the questions are structured”.*

**Student 8:** *“Practice more of the dialogue sessions at schools as most people do not feel comfortable communicating in English as they have low literacy. High schools should promote literature as most learners fail English due to poor grammar”.*

**Student 9:** *“Introduce remedial classes and recruit qualified teachers”.*

**Student 10:** *“Form English clubs for learners to acquire the 4 skills”.*

**Student 11:** *“Curriculum need to address the usage of English second language as a medium of instruction from junior primary schools to secondary schools whether in public*

*schools or private schools. This will help learners to become competent at communicating in English and become native speakers. Curriculum should develop a new policy to retrain English teachers all over the country, so that they can be well equipped with the subject content, as well as being able to use the right teaching methods, and regular more training to learners, so that they can be able to read, write and speak English and introduce weekly English debating classes as well as giving more activities, this leads to better performance in English. The curriculum should recommend more English periods per week per grade, this will allow teachers to finish their syllabus and have more time to make revisions”.*

**Student 12:** *“More time and attention should be given to them. The same effort that is put in English as First language, should also be put in English as a Second language”.*

**Student 13:** *“Devices should be developed that can be able to translate English to Namibian indigenous languages. This will help learners and students to understand better what they are learning and studying”.*

**Student 14:** *“The curriculum must have a system whereby teachers teach language in terms of their respective subjects. This will assist in the development of learners’ ability to comprehend a diversity of unfamiliar words and terms”.*

**Student 15:** *“Grammar usage and qualified English teachers”*

**Student 16:** *“Provide more English learning resources, increase technology based learning and teach skills that change mind-set”.*

**Student 17:** *“To revisit the admission requirements when it comes to English, English can perhaps be more part of an aptitude test or something, I mean why is basic English not good enough”.*

**Student 18:** *“Teachers should not be strict when marking as it’s a second language. They must also do more practice in the teaching and learning process as that way learners will learn better. English second language teachers must share with learners how they mark final exams so that learners will know how they must answer the questions”.*

**Student 19:**“The authority must do away with English on Extended mode, opt only for ordinary. Also English must be taught as a subject, not a medium of instructions to determine the pupils’ failing or passing”.

**Student 20:** “I think they should consider making English a language of instruction from early primary, this will expose learners to English language at a very age which will ultimately better their chances of passing English with better grades at secondary level”.

3. Why are matric students underperforming in ESL?

**Student 1:**“Some students were taught in mother tongue”

**Student 2:**“Lack of English grammatical understanding”.

**Student 3:**“I think it’s because they are not exposed to more ENGLISH, especially outside the classroom environment as they mostly communicate in their home languages”.

**Student 4:**“It could be because of teachers’ approaches to teaching English and irrelevant teaching materials”.

**Student 5:**“Students are not exposed to English at an early age and some English teachers are not proficient in English language”.

**Student 6:**“Because of poor English Language foundation. Learners’ beliefs, they believe that one can not study or prepare for English examinations so most of them sit for examinations unprepared”.

**Student 7:**“Some teachers do not finish their syllabus, therefore learners do not master all the competencies”.

**Student 8:**“Focus more on grammar than English in general”

**Student 9:**“Might be because most of them are not taught by English professionals and the fact that some learners are having other languages as their first languages ,I guess they do not necessarily put more effort to obtain good grades in English”

**Student 10:** *“Their foundation in the previous grades is the cause of this. Some learners are taught by underqualified teachers”.*

**Student 11:** *“Due to language usage, grammar and vocabulary”.*

**Student 12:** *“Lack of teaching and learning materials for English second language. Poor learners’ English language proficiency. Lack of teaching experience in English second language and lack of appropriate teaching methods. Lastly learners fail because they do not know how to read, write and speak English, some have difficulties in expressing themselves in English.”*

**Student 13:** *“They aren’t given much attention. They are underestimated due to the fact that English is second language isn’t taken as much as big deal”.*

**Student 14:** *“Matric students that are based in rural areas mostly communicate in their vernaculars which has an effect on acquiring English language skills. Meanwhile, the students from town can speak fluently, however they lack proper grammar and English proficiency”.*

**Student 15:** *“Some students have poor vocabulary knowledge that leads to wider language weaknesses and reading comprehension difficulties”.*

**Student 16:** *“Underqualified teachers”*

**Student 17:** *“Learners’ underperformances are due to a lack of resources, ineffective teaching strategies, negative teachers and learners’ attitudes and low socio-economic status of learners”.*

**Student 18:** *“I believe it has more to do with the misspelling of word and just comprehending”.*

**Student 19:** *“Teachers are strict when marking final exams. Learners have little knowledge on how they are expected to answer the questions as they are going to be marked by a different teacher. Some teachers don’t teach the language well”.*

**Student 20:** *“English is very foreign. Pupils are taught by people who are underqualified, incompetent and also struggling very much with the subject concepts”.*

4. What do you think local universities should do collectively to help students in your situation in the future? Please provide detailed descriptions

**Student 1:** *“Change their admission requirements, especially in English”.*

**Student 2:** *“They should all introduce a compulsory introduction to English foundation awareness around secondary schools”.*

**Student 3:** *“They should not make English a compulsory requirement, perhaps have aptitude tests or let students register their courses and have additional English modules”*

**Student 4:** *“Local universities should stick to the same admission requirements. You will find some requiring 60%, some 50% and some 40%, it is not fair”*

**Student 5:** *“Students with good points in other subjects can start with their courses while improving their English marks with those universities, to avoid gap years”.*

**Student 6:** *“They should only consider English results in courses that requires it e.g. teaching profession ”.*

**Student 7:** *“Career fair awareness to schools”.*

**Student 8:** *“Firstly they should check how a specific student has performed, some learners are A+ candidates the fact lays that English might be the problem. I guess the best way is to admit matric learners to local universities provided that they have reached the admission requirements whether they have good grades in English or not. English should not be a barrier for students to enter tertiary education”.*

**Student 9:** *“At least they should just admit all the students with the required points and let students improve their English grades at the university while doing their courses”.*

**Student 10:** *“Have school visits on regular basis”.*

**Student 11:** *“Universities should change their admission requirements, they should also consider learners who pass other subjects but perform poorly in English, and they should introduce English short course for those who do not have better symbols in English”.*

**Student 12:** *“Give them an opportunity. They could have oral interviews conducted before entering the university, some people that do English second language struggle with writing but better when oral”.*

**Student 13:** *“Devices should be developed that can translate to indigenous languages. In addition, more courses should be put in place where students can enrol for free to enhance their English language skills”.*

**Student 14:** *“Matric students require ESL support that is personalised to their proficiency levels and addresses any gaps in their language or content knowledge. Hence, local universities should introduce English courses that are aligned to the students’ needs and interests in order to achieve career and academic goals”.*

**Student 15:** *“Bridge year to improve”*

**Student 16:** *“They should lower their required passing grades for English, for example if you are required to obtain a D symbol or better in order English to be admitted into a university, I suggest they lower the marks and change it to an E.”*

**Student 17:** *“I think a basic aptitude test on whether or not the applicant understands English. I mean don’t get me wrong, English is important and our second language but how well should you be graded to study what it is you want to pursue that would probably involve you talking basic English”.*

**Student 18:** *“Universities must stop focusing on English as an entry subject, especially if the course I am going to study has nothing to do with English. English must not stop a learner to proceed to universities, but universities must have additional English modules to be studied by students that perform poorly in English as they are studying their courses”.*

**Student 19:** *“Look, firstly the ministry of education should change that promotion policy that dictates English as a determiner. Other languages must play a role as well. For*

*example if a learner has passed all 4 subjects and a language, that child must progress to varieties of their choice. The problem is not varieties, the problem is the government that is hesitating to drop the foreign language as a key determiner in the progress of students. For me, English is a colonial language, thus necessary alterations has to be made drastically.*

**Student 20:** *"I think the collective universities should reconsider this compulsory English admission requirements, they should lessen it to a benchmark of at least E symbol or just evaluate English just like other subjects"*

5. Do you think English results should be taken into consideration for university admission? Why do you say so?

**Student 1:** *"No, it's not our mother tongue"*

**Student 2:** *"No, because it is not the first language thus to me devaluating it to be a compulsory admission requirement".*

**Student 3:** *"I don't think so, what should be taken into consideration is the overall performance in all subjects, if a learner can pass other subjects that are taught in English as medium of instructions, then that learner possess basic English skills".*

**Student 4:** *"No, English is just a language not a measure of intelligence, students with good points in other subjects should be admitted".*

**Student 5:** *"No, because not all courses require English. Some need Mathematics guru other need science and in most cases these learners are not good with languages".*

**Student 6:** *"Not at all, if I can get a 70% in Biology which is taught in English, that means my English is not bad, maybe I only have a problem with English as a subject".*

**Student 7:** *"Yes, Standardised mean of communication".*

**Student 8:** *"Yes, because English is an official language worldwide".*

**Student 9:** *"I don't think so, because sometimes the courses students choose has nothing to do with English language, unless mybe they choose to study about English".*

**Student 10:** *“Yes, its of most importance because it’s the medium of instructions”*

**Student 11:** *“Yes, at least they should admit learners with F and E symbols in English because they also want to further their studies”.*

**Student 12:** *“Yes, at least each student should have basic English understanding in order to ensure that they cope at university as it is the language they will be taught in”.*

**Student 13:** *“Yes, a student can perform poor in English and flourish in other subjects. This simply means that the student is good at the content of the subjects rather than the skills of a language. Therefore, I believe such students can be given an opportunity for enrolment on a condition that they complete an English course as an addition to the course modules”.*

**Student 14:** *“Yes, because most universities use English as the medium of instruction. Therefore it must be considered to ensure proof of language proficiency of students”.*

**Student 15:** *“No, it’s not our mother tongue”.*

**Student 16:** *“Yes, I think it should be considered because English is the main medium of instruction”.*

**Student 17:** *“Probably for certain admissions but not for all. I mean don’t my other results matter and is it not enough evidence to see that I do understand English and can read and write it”.*

**Student 18:** *“No, English should not be taken into consideration, especially if the course I am studying has nothing to do with English e.g. Nursing and Engineering courses if I did very well in my science subjects the university must allow me to study my course and rather add for me English modules to study as part of my study course because I performed poorly in English”.*

**Student 19:** *“Yes, but not to that extend of denying many students’ university admission... I mean their admission requirements should be reasonable and attainable to a majority of grade 12 learners”.*

**Student 20:** *“Not at all, English is just a language like other many languages we have in Namibia, it should just be treated like all other languages”.*

6. Is there anything else you would like to share with me on this topic?

*“Yes, to validated findings in Namibia, most matriculates would already be at different universities of their choices if English wouldn't be compulsory admission requirement”.*

*“Namibian universities should follow suit of some African universities such as South African universities, whereby students can be taught in other vernacular languages other than English”.*

*“It will be great if multiple medium of instructions can be considered, especially indigenous languages, I feel like they will extinct in the future and foreign languages will take over”.*

*“Yes, it is really unfair for a learner who have obtained 30+ points in their matric results just to be rejected at the university due to low grades in English, while they are admitting learners with fair points and good grades in English. It seems like English is the key to go into a university”.*

*“Yes ,I would like just to say English shouldn't be a limit to students' dreams. As long as they met the required points to university, they should get admitted and do what they prefer to study for”.*

*“That admission requirement should at least be benchmarked to D”.*

*“Poor performance in English does not mean that the learner does not know anything. Its rather a matter of skills. Moreover, the government should put into consideration that all languages offered in Namibia should be represented by people who are qualified in them and can speak them fluently. An odd example is having an Afrikaans and Khoekhoegowab speaking person as an advisor in Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama languages”.*

*“Subject policy must be changed. Namibian pupils must not get disadvantaged by the foreign language which many teacher do not know how to teach it. Children must progress to varsities if they have acquired minimum of 25/27 points in five*

*subjects, whether inclusive of English foreign language or not. However, if the ministry want to selfishly continue with their ill-fated foreign language, they must provide English first language speakers to teach our children, especially in the northern part of the country that only attracts teachers with minimal knowledge in English foreign language or the curriculum must follow suit of existentialism concepts so that children could choose from a provision of many second languages e.g. Kiswahili, Arabia and other outspoken African languages rather than letting our learners to be continuously getting intimidated and harassed by a mere foreign language which was forced on people as a package of the apparent independence. Priorities of local languages before European languages. In fact the curriculum should be translated into local and vernacular languages so our children can learn better”.*

*“Yes, that English should only be taken into considerations by those that want to become language teachers as they are going to teach learners. They have to perform well in English so that they can deliver”.*

*“Yes, English is not our mother tongue, therefore learners need to take it serious in order for them to perform better. Introduction of an appropriate method of learning English is needed in Namibian schools”.*

## ANNEXURE O INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPTS

### Conventions used for voice recording transcriptions

Q=question	AO3=University administrator 3
(...) short pause	AO4=University administrator 4
AO1= University administer 1	AO5=University administrator 5
AO2=University administrator 2	AO6=University administrator 6

Q: What is your opinion about the use of English as a sole medium of instruction in your institution?

AO1: *"It matches the Namibian official language policy"*

AO2: *"Ahh, in my opinion, using English as medium of instructions I think it have different opinions , so my understanding. First of all, English is one of the most geographically widely spoken language in the world, and it is also used as an official language in most of the African countries. Let me come to the African context ,there are many outspoken indigenous languages, so it will be costly and challenging to develop a curriculum that integrates all the African languages to Using English widen chances of communication, this improve communication skills as I have alluded earlier that English language is an official language to many African countries and also in addition Using English as medium of instructions leads to better accessibility of English materials, there are a lot of materials that are written in English for example textbooks ,journals, newspapers, articles. In contrary to English as medium of instruction, most of these materials are inadequate for the expected reading level of students as they are developed for English native speakers, so most of these materials in English language are at an advanced level, because they are not developed only for these African countries, English is a colonial language, most of the African languages are forced to use this as an official language or medium of instructions".*

AO3: *“Well, it is very nice, it does not really affect that much, since we have students from different language fraternity so it develop the communication for students for meaningful interaction in multilingual society. It also enable learners to express their thoughts, their ideas and experience with other students from different society”.*

AO4: *“Well... this debate has been going on, even though nothing has been done... but in actual fact, this has to change, because we need to introduce our indigenous languages even though we know is a very long process, you need to do the printing of materials and so on, but we need to move from English as a sole medium of instructions in our institutions ,however we need to start from somewhere with curriculum planning, developing materials and also training people in indigenous languages that are going to be offered as a medium of instructions in our institutions “.*

AO5: *“Well, it cannot be correct to have English as the sole medium of instruction in our institution simply because we have various fields of studies that does not require English application of knowledge, many students are not conversant with English language but possess brilliant ideas and courses like engineering is more reliant on numeracy skills as opposed to do anything with language. It must not be compulsory that English be a medium of instructions, students must be given privilege to learn English during their time at the institution”*

AO6: *“Yah..mhhh..English is the medium of instructions, it is used to give instructions to students, as well as for main communication purposes among the university staff, my intake is that, it is a universal language that is being chosen to be used as a mean of communication in the university but the other point is, now that we are moving towards the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution ,I think the university need to take more than language as a mean of communication, simply because students from various aspect need to express themselves in different languages of their choice, not necessarily English, but in the meantime or at the moment English is the language that we have as a mean of communication”.*

Q: In your opinion, do you think the university need to reconsider the English admission requirements? Please justify your answer.

AO1: *"I would say it's not strict, because my university still allows students to improve their English grades through special courses, I don't think it's unfair"*

AO2: *"According to my opinion, I don't think it is necessary for universities to reconsider the admission requirements because English is already taught as a subject from grade 1 -12 and as a medium of instructions from grade 4-12, these English skills are enough for somebody to do a certain course at the university because somebody has already English skills from school (primary-secondary).When you go to university they ask certain requirement (from primary-secondary), it really hurt when a learner who get for example 50 points in grade 12 and E or F in English and wants to study engineering for example, this learner does not qualify for a course because of English. Just a scenario, like in European countries, like when you get admitted at the university in China, what they do they will give you 6 months to learn Chinese language, then after 6 months you can do the full course in Chinese language, why can't our learners do the course they want since they already have English from grade 1-12, English is a foreign language therefore it should not obstruct somebody to study further at the university.*

AO3: *"Ok, with our university, it requires a C in English, and other universities have different minimum requirements, in my opinion, symbol C is a bit high, I think the university need to reduce/minimise the requirements, at least to a D, because when we are searching out for students to be admitted during the verification process, most learner's application are turned down because they did not meet the requirements, I think the university need to minimise from a C to a D".*

AO4: *"That is very obvious, because we only need to set the criteria that is specific for the course, the subject that a person is going to focus on, so we don't need to be specific like now we put a benchmark like a C or a D and so on, as long as the person has met the requirement for that specific course or department".*

AO5: *"For the mere fact that most subjects are written and taught in English, when a learner passed with flying colours and perform poorly in English, English will be ironed as times goes, after a duration of 4 years, the university should serve students to be able to communicate proficiently, English proficiency is not a measure of intelligence, so I hold the view".*

AO6:” Yah...they need to reconsider that, it is actually used as a tool that is used to belittle the number of students entering the university, the capacity of the university cannot take all the students, otherwise it will be under pressure, that is one of the criteria that we are using at the moment, so that we can consider only those that meet certain percentage in English for admission... but in the near future if the university can expand its capacity to accept as many students, I think there will be a look to at other languages aspects e.g. first language, because most of the students can pass the first language... If we now say we consider first language, the students cannot fit in the university”.

Q: In your view, how important is matric ESL marks for indigenous students to gain admission to university? Give a reason for your answer.

AO1: “English is important, because it’s a language of communication at the university and also for students who wishes to further their studies abroad at postgraduate level, English is the universal language”.

AO2:” English second language marks is important but it should not be too strict or requiring high marks in English. As part of admission requirement, it is important if students have basic English communication skills since English is medium of instructions at universities. Some universities even require different level of English proficiency as an entrance to the university, just to check if students are able to communicate, learn or take examinations in English”.

AO3: “it is very important, because it give them a high chance to be admitted in the university. Most of the learners we get from high schools, their performance is very good but some of them they are very weak in English... I think it is very important for them to really do well in English, if they want to be admitted at the university”.

AO4: “Well... I don’t really see the importance of it, we understand that all the courses are offered in English as such, but as I mentioned in the previous question, let’s be specific that we only set the requirements for that specific course or subject, it doesn’t mean that for example a person with F in English cannot do well in Engineering courses and stuff like that... therefore I see it is not as important as such”.

AO5: *“Well, less important. As long as learner demonstrated intelligence in the other subjects, English language can be polished at the university when a learner will be more exposed to reading, interaction, as customary narrated, English is not our mother tongue... perhaps Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga”.*

AO6: *“The second language play a role in the university, the student need to do well so that they can cope up with various assignments and also a medium of instructions in courses they are going to undertake, if students don’t understand English it will be difficult to complete an assignment, difficult to get access to information which is mainly communicated in English language and put the university standard down because many students will fail because they do not understand English. For a university they need to be competent in English”.*

Q: In your view, which English language knowledge and skills should matric learners work on in order to gain admission to university? Why do you say so?

AO1: *“Focus in reading and writing, it seems like they can speak”.*

AO2: *“When you look at all these skills in English, it is of my opinion that all these skills are needed, for somebody to develop a complete communication and for students to take their examinations in English, they all go together, they are all needed for somebody to completely be able to communicate in English”.*

AO3: *“In my opinion, all these 4 language skills are very important., since they work hand in hand with each other, they ought to be integrated... but I think the most important ones are writing and speaking, writing because most of the examinations, tests and assignments are done in writing... and I am also choosing speaking because there are a lot of presentations and discussions that are done in class through speaking”.*

AO4: *“Well, thank you for the question. Writing and speaking are the most important, because we communicate through writing and speaking, and our students do presentations and they will be required to speak, also they will be required to write like reports and research, therefore they need to gain good skills in writing and speaking for effective communication, however listening is also very important because without proper listening one may not do well in other skills”.*

AO5: "Well...mhhh...Writing and Reading skills must be a priority, a matric learner should be able to write and read because most of the activities at the university require reading and writing. Speaking skills can come in at a later stage. Most of the activities are shared in writing that requires reading for understanding, hence imperative".

AO6: "I think for university entry, all skills are important, but to single out, I would say they need to be competent in writing and speaking. While I am saying that is simply because...mhhh in writing is where they are going to complete assignments, examination assessment. For speaking, students are required to go through presentations to attest if they are ready for the job market, or present a certain phenomenon if they are to become community agent".

Q: Is there anything else you would like to share with me on this topic?

AO1: "I think at this level, it is very difficult to switch back to mother tongue as medium of instructions, we need to appreciate mother tongues and individual cultures, it is just a little hard to use them as medium of instructions due to many indigenous languages and cultures in Namibia and small population in the country."

AO2: "I would like to emphasise that maybe all the universities (not only our university) should reconsider or revise the English admission requirements, English minimum requirements should not hinder certain students to take certain courses at the universities".

AO3: "Well, this is a very nice topic, the only thing I would like to add is that all universities in the country should have an agreement to have a uniform requirement, because most of the universities have different requirements, I think it will be good if they come together and have one minimum requirement".

AO4: "It was nice catching up with me, however we should advocate that English should not be a requirement... people should not be denied entry to university just because of English as a requirement, we should just put a minimum pass mark in English and people should go ahead with their courses as long as they have qualified or met the requirements for that specific course".

*AO5: "As we are concluding the interview and in essence, I will be pleased if in the near future as a researcher of this nature, advocate for indigenous languages to play a role in the admission requirements".*

*AO6: "I would like to comment that it is a very good thing that you guys are undertaking, we need a lot more of this constructive researchers, so you can help us as a university to improve where we can improve, and also ,so that people can be aware that the new things are coming in the picture , let say the need of local languages to be considered for university entry or bridging courses so that students can be left out during university admission, because they have already done in their first language. and mind you these students, let say they, failed English but they have passed all other subjects with flying colours, that simply mean they have basic English skills because they passed those subjects through English medium and therefore they are eligible, they can be taken for university entry, so these are things the university need to improve in the future".*

## ANNEXURE P LANGUAGE EDITING

### Language Editor's Declaration



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