



**CHALLENGES WHEN WRITING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF GRADE 8  
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN A RURAL SCHOOL IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

**A dissertation submitted to the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education by Coursework**

by

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30 April 2019

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## DECLARATION

I, **Prince Excellent Ndlovu**, declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
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As the candidate's Supervisor I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Signed: *APillay*

Signed: *BCampbell*

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to Jesus Christ, for the power and resilience HE gave me to finish this project.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the challenges facing grade 8 English Second Language (ESL) speakers in a rural school of Siyazimelela District in KwaZulu-Natal when writing in English. This study was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm. The intention of interpretive paradigm is to comprehend and clarify the world of the participants using their own perceptions. Hence, I used it to discover from participants' point of view what challenges they faced when writing in English, why they face such challenges and how they cope with the challenges when writing in English. Data was generated through questionnaires, dialogues and informal letter writings. Total population sampling, a type of purposive sampling where the total population or all participants are included in data generation was used. This study was also shaped by three research objectives: To explore the writing challenges faced by Grade 8 English second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal, to understand why Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face writing challenges and to explore how Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal coped with the challenges when writing English. The findings revealed the challenges faced by ESL learners when writing, the reasons for such challenges and how they dealt with them were interwoven. Participants lacked comprehension skills, had mother-tongue deficiency which transferred itself to the ESL, lacked understanding of grammatical rules, punctuation skills and spelling, and there were inadequacies of teacher methodology which affected learners' abilities to write in English. The reasons for ESL learners facing these challenges were linked to the fact that most of them did not attend early childhood development (ECD) centres, low self-esteem/ motivation, did not read English at home and lacked the resources needed to enhance writing. Lastly, the findings revealed that participants coped by seeking assistance from family members and fellow classmates, and sometimes, in frustration at their perceived lack of skills, they would just not write anything. The study proposes that Department of Basic Education (DBE) turns its attention on rural education particularly ECD programmes so that strong foundations for our learners are laid.

**Key words:** Krashen Monitor Model, English Second Language (ESL), Writing, Challenges, Rural, Thematic analysis

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ESL	English Second Language
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ANA	The Annual National Assessment
DBE	Department of Basic Education
MoI	Medium of Instruction
ECD	Early Childhood Development
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
EFL	English as a Foreign
CLA	Communicative Language Approach
SVO	Subject, Verb Object
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction:

I introduce this chapter, by explaining the importance of English as mode of communication in South Africa and globally. I also present the motivation, purpose and context of the study. I have also outlined the background to the learning of English in South Africa, overview of key studies dealing with the topic, research objectives and questions, overview of the research process, researcher's stance, de-limitations, and organisation of the dissertation.

English is generally understood to be an important language of communication in South Africa and around many parts of the world chiefly because it is the most spoken language universally. It is also one of the most learnt language throughout the world, and most nations teach it as a second language from elementary schooling (Dearden, 2014). This is the case in South Africa as well. It is also a medium of instruction in most schools and institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Therefore, knowing how to write in English becomes a very important aspect of South African learners' lives if they want to succeed in the job market, academics and in business.

My study explores writing challenges facing a selected group of grade 8 English Second Language (ESL) learners in KwaZulu-Natal. The study focuses specifically on the writing challenges when learners write in English. Like other languages, English First Additional Language which is known in international circles as English Second Language (ESL) has four modes of communication: speaking, writing, listening and writing. My study focuses on writing, one of the production skills. Lexical and syntactic knowledge is essential for mastering the writing skill (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

Assessment of learners in South Africa is mostly based on written work (DoBE, 2011). Thus if assessors of written work cannot comprehend what is written because of the way in which the content is presented, it means learners may fail to be promoted to the next grade. According to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), First Additional Language (FAL) Grades 7-9, 70% of assessment is based on writing. Only 30% is orally assessed. This requirement places writing at the forefront of all other skills.

## **1.2. Motivation for the Study**

For the past 20 years, I have been teaching ESL in the secondary phase. I have noticed that many Grade 8 learners have challenges when writing in English. The difficulties with writing are evident when the learners write transactional writing and answer comprehension questions.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has over the years, subjected Grades 3, 6 and 9 to a national assessment. The Report on the Annual National Assessment (ANA) of 2014 notes that learner performance in the First Additional Language in all grades has remained low in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (Motshekga, 2014).

The ANA results indicated that learners had poor comprehension and creative writing skills, among others. Overall, ANA revealed that most learners failed to achieve even an elementary achievement in the language. The CAPS document requires that by the time learners start secondary school they are reasonably proficient in their First Additional Language with regard to both interpersonal and cognitive academic skills. CAPS further states that writing is a powerful instrument of communication that allows learners to construct and communicate thoughts and ideas (DoBE, 2011).

Based on this premise, I decided to explore the writing challenges faced by grade 8 learners as these challenges impede their ability to be good writers of English. As an example, the diagnostic report of 2016 on the National Senior Certificate, prepared by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), revealed that learners struggle to write longer transactional pieces such as letters to parents or to formal audiences (Motshekga, 2016).

After reading that report I realised that the writing problems may not be limited to grade 12 but possibly start at the lower classes, where the learners might have failed to learn how to write in English. This thought led me to embark on a journey of exploring the writing challenges that these learners face in grade 8 and why they think they face such challenges.

## **1.3. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges facing grade 8 ESL speakers in a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal when writing in English.

## **1.4 Context and Background**

### **1.4.1 Context**

This study was conducted in South Africa in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in Siyazimelela District in Siyabulela Circuit. The school is situated in a deep rural area of the amaNgwane Tribal Authority under the chieftaincy of Ngilози. The school is in a very poor area and is categorized as quintile 1 which indicates its extreme poverty level.

### **1.4.2 Background to the Learning of English in South Africa**

English was introduced to the Southern African region when Britain arrived in South Africa (Lanham, 1996). All British colonies were made to learn English because it had to be used in all forms of communication. It became part of KwaZulu-Natal (old Natal) from 1848 to 1862. English was considered as the language of the elites by black South Africans and its introduction to black communities at the start of the 19th century yielded positive results. Such that many black linguists and mathematicians were produced, such as Sol Plaatje (Evans, 1997).

However, Afrikaners welcomed it with resentment. When the Nationalist government came to power in 1948, it implemented a funding model that seriously disadvantaged black schools financially and otherwise and Afrikaans began to replace English as a medium of instruction (Silva, 1997). The actions of the Nationalist government led to the closure of many black schools (Christie & Collins, 1982).

Hence, Black schools could no longer get well-qualified or mother-tongue English teachers. As a result, African teachers who were not the product of English mother-tongue teachers began to teach inferior English language to their learners, which in return produced poor English and has been perpetuated since (Spaull, 2013)

While English is regarded as a powerful language because of its dominance in institutions of higher learning and trade (Fang, 2010), black learners have many challenges when writing in English. South Africa has nine indigenous languages (IsiNdebele, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, SiSwati, SeSotho sa lebowa, SeSotho, SeTswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga). All these languages are

mother-tongues to black rural learners. These languages have an influence in the acquisition of English (Manganye & Mabila, 2014).

### **1.5 Overview of key studies dealing with the topic:**

This study draws and builds on various research studies and the following studies have been identified and examined as key to my study. Learning a second language formally is not the best method of learning a language (Krashen, 1981). It is therefore difficult for ESL learners to learn a second language because they lack comprehensible input which facilitates understanding. Reading as a receptive skill assists learners to accumulate vocabulary, however, lack of it has made ESL learners fail to infer meaning from texts (Cakiroglu, 2019). Similarly, Rose et al. (2006) observed that learners can only be successful in their tests or examinations if they read with understanding. Therefore, they concluded that if learners fail to learn to read with understanding, they will not be able to read to learn.

Poorly trained English language teachers, displayed by their inability to interpret and mediate metalanguage, produced learners who are unable to write with understanding (Sack 2010). This was confirmed by Spaul (2013) and Emery (2012) who discovered that incompetent teachers were found in deep rural areas, most of whom were unqualified and teaching wrong grades. Their incompetencies produced learners who could not spell words and punctuate sentences correctly (Farooq et al., 2012, Nahari & Alfadda, 2016, Abdul-Baki et al., 2016). A reflection of teachers' incompetencies on learners was also observed by Ngulube (2015) who discovered that learners do acquire language structures of a target language but find it hard to put them into an understandable text.

Furthermore, research reveals that lack of well-resourced ECD centres intensifies the challenges faced by ESL learners. Atmore, van Niekerk, and Ashley-Cooper (2012) found that even though rural learners do attend ECD centres, such ECD centres lack resources to prepare learners for schooling. Therefore, rural learners may struggle to cope academically not because they are incapable. Instead, they may have not found good foundation for language learning (Young and Mustard (2008). Ndebele (2015) mentions that even if parents could assist their children with school work in order to be competent in English, poverty and illiteracy limits them. Most of these parents may always be away from home looking for job opportunities in the cities. In addition, English language becomes a barrier because most of them are unlearned. (Xu & Corno (2003).

The findings of Nash and Snowling (2006), and Shokouhi and Askari (2010) concluded that sometimes learners use context to understand difficult words. However, Webb (2016) is of the opinion that guessing may only be useful in certain contexts. He further mentions that contextual guessing may be challenging because for the learner to guess successfully he /she must know for example 19 out of 20 words of the text. Therefore, guessing used by ESL learners to infer may be found to be unreliable. Based on the arguments I have provided above, these studies informed the analysis of my study.

## **1.6. Research objectives and questions:**

### **1.6.1 Objectives**

The objectives of this dissertation are to understand the writing challenges faced by Grade 8 English second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal, why Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face writing challenges and how Grade 8 learners at a rural school on KwaZulu-Natal cope with the challenges faced when writing English.

### **1.6.2 Research questions**

The questions that guided this dissertation were:

1. What writing challenges do grade 8 second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face?
2. Why do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face such writing challenges?
3. How do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with their writing challenges?

## **1.7. Overview of the research process**

This study used a qualitative approach. Creswell and Clark (2017) argue that a qualitative approach is loaded in meaning because people's experiences are captured through words. Hence, I used questionnaires, dialogues and letter writing as data generating instruments as opposed to statistical inferring of people's views. The nature of a qualitative approach is exploratory and through its exploratory nature, I was able to access the gist of all the participants' experiences (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006) argue that qualitative studies are a means of discovering what is occurring in participants' lives by interrogating them about their experiences. My research design was a case study. The case

study was suitable because learners were given an opportunity to say subjectively, what their challenges in writing were, why they faced such challenges and what coping mechanisms they employed to mitigate their circumstances. Case study research was effective in making me comprehend the phenomenon under investigation (Baskarada, 2014).

### **1.8 Researcher's stance**

Scholars who adopt the qualitative approach state that it is crucial for the researcher to state their position before they embark on the investigation because it helps the reader to know how the conclusion of the research was reached (Fairclough, 2013, Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Bourke (2014) claims that when a researcher declares his or her stance upfront, he or she is adopting a cautious attitude towards his or her own biases as well as any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon and the participants of the study. This empowers him or her to purge preconceptions in the study being conducted. Articulating my stance assisted me to be conscious of my own partiality so that I would continually reflect on my own stance, to ensure that my subjectivity did not spoil my study. I was able to draw from my experiences, first as a rural learner, and now as a teacher in a rural context. This partiality allowed me to comprehend the writing challenges learners faced when writing in English (Whitley, 2015). Hence, I took a stance of an interpretivist that is aligned to the ontology of the interpretivism. Searle and Willis (1995) argue that interpretivists are convinced that there are many truths, those truths are subjective, and such truths can be understood in-depth from participants' views.

### **1.9 De-limitations**

The delimitation of this study is that it is focussed on one class of grade eight learners in a deep rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. Hence, the finding of this study cannot be generalised.

### **1.10 Organisation of the dissertation:**

My thesis has five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. In this chapter I explained the rationale as well as the purpose, context and background of the study. What followed is an overview of key studies dealing with the topic, the research objectives and questions, an overview of the research process, the researcher's stance, de-limitations and organisation of the dissertation.

**In chapter two** I discussed the theoretical framework and literature review. The theory underpinning this study is Krashen's Monitor Model. All literature that was reviewed is discussed in detail in this chapter.

**Chapter three** provides details about the process of research and reports on the research paradigm, the research design, and data generation methods.

**In chapter four**, all data generated is discussed and analysed in detail. Data is organised according to themes, guided by the three research questions.

**In chapter five**, the thesis summarises the main findings of the study, theoretical implications, policy implications, methodological implications, professional practice implications, limitations of the study as well as areas for future research.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter I presented the introduction, motivation, purpose and context of the study. I have also outlined the background to the learning of English in South Africa, overview of key studies dealing with the topic, research objectives and questions, overview of the research process, researcher's stance, de-limitations, and organisation of the dissertation. In the next chapter I discuss the theoretical framework for this study which is the Krashen Monitor Model and the literature I reviewed.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I presented the introduction, motivation, purpose and context of the study. I also outlined the background to the learning of English in South Africa, overview of key studies dealing with the topic, research objectives and questions, overview of the research process, researcher's stance, de-limitations, and organisation of the dissertation. In this chapter I discuss the theoretical framework and the literature review that shaped this study. The literature review is discussed under the following themes: What is writing, writing challenges faced by English Second Language (ESL) learners at high school, and coping strategies used by ESL learners when dealing with writing challenges.

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

This study is underpinned by Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen, 1981, 1982). Krashen's Monitor Model consists of five different hypotheses: The acquisition learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Each of these hypotheses are discussed below respectively.

##### **2.2.1 The Acquisition Learning Hypothesis**

The Acquisition Learning Hypothesis notes that there are two well-defined techniques by which people acquire competence in any language: the acquired system and the learned system.

##### **The acquired system**

Krashen (1982) considers the acquired system as a natural means of acquiring the language. He argues that the acquired system can only succeed because of meaningful interaction in the target language, natural communication, and conveying and understanding the message. He likens this idea of acquiring the language as a way a child acquires proficiency in his/her mother tongue. He further mentions that children acquire their first language with ease when the setting is conducive for them to acquire the language. This happens through play and when children interact with their peers, parents and baby-sitters.

In these conducive environments, the emphasis of language interaction is on passing the message to the next person in a meaningful way, and children intuitively mature in accuracy,

eloquence and language expertise. This is evident in children speaking their mother tongue to their parents and peers, and I have witnessed this with my learners (Krashen, 1982).

Acquirers of language at this stage are not cognisant of grammatical rules of a target language. Language acquisition is automatic (Krashen, 1982). In other words, no one puts a toddler in a formal classroom and teaches him/her grammar rules, but the environment facilitates learning naturally.

Similarly, mother-tongue speakers are not mindful of the fact that they are acquiring a new language. Their primary concern is communication. They only rely on their gut feelings to ascertain the inaccuracies of the sentence even if they do not know which grammatical rules have been breached (Krashen, 1982). In other words, if the pronunciation is incorrect they feel wrong, and if it is correct, they feel right. Additional methods of defining acquisition entail hidden learning, relaxed learning, and spontaneous learning.

However, English Second Language (ESL) is not the mother tongue, therefore, the environment for acquiring the language is non-existent. In this study there is an understanding of how the acquired system works. For the ESL learners in this study, English is not acquired. Rather, English is learned.

### **The learned system**

Cummins (2014) argues that if a learner learns a certain skill in a mother tongue that skill is transferred to the second language. This suggests that my ESL learners transfer IsiZulu skills to English Second Language, without knowing that the skills are often dissimilar. This linguistic incongruence of isiZulu and English languages, is epitomised by the UNESCO statements that says the best medium of instruction is mother-tongue (Cummins 2014). However, the above statement is not applicable to my ESL learners because English is the medium of instruction in our schools. Since they will not be taught in their mother-tongue which is isiZulu, my assumption is that my learners will always struggle to write well.

In contrast to the acquired system, Krashen (1981) argues that the learned system is a unique process. Language learning occurs when learners are taught precise language rules. They become aware of grammatical rules because these are taught to them by teachers from a prescribed textbook and in a classroom environment.

Since schools are formal environments, the inference is that learners learn to read and write in English in an environment that is formal, unlike the informal settings, such as in the home and

with peers. In such informal environments, learners do not speak or write in English, they only do so in classrooms under compulsion (Rababah, 2002; Ramnarain, 2004). English Second Language (ESL) learners develop their mother-tongue expertise in a natural way from their close relatives, contrary to the second language learning which is taught to them in a formal way. My learners are exposed to the formal teaching and learning of English which is not necessarily the best method to learn a language.

The poor environment for language acquisition taught under compulsion stifles learners' ability to write in English (Ramnarain, 2004). Ramnarain's (2004) study, underpinned by Krashen's (1982) theory, worked with both teachers and learners within a mixed methods approach. This study, located in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, found that even though learners are aware that English is important in their lives and for the examination, they continued to speak to their peers in their mother-tongue, ignoring the call made by the teacher to speak in English. This finding resonates with my learners' insistence on speaking isiZulu whenever they can.

The situation of using the mother-tongue is further exacerbated by what Lovelace and Wheeler (2006) refer to as discontinuity. According to this theory the minute learners depart from the school premises where they are taught a language formally their vernacular language is used. Therefore, it is a hurdle for learners to learn to use English if they only do so when they are at school.

Fluency and proficiency in any language can only be realised if learners can intermingle with people who speak the target language beyond the formal classroom environment (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; Tyler, 2006). The dynamics of the acquisition learning hypothesis might go some way in explaining why ESL learners find English difficult to understand and hard to infuse into their writing. It might also explain the challenges they face when writing in English.

### **2.2.2 The Monitor Hypothesis**

Krashen (1982) argues that the monitor hypothesis plays an important role in language acquisition. It acts as an editor of language that has been acquired through natural means and not through the learned system. To learn to communicate for communication purposes in real contexts is to acquire language through natural means. Therefore, the emphasis of language teaching must be for communication purposes in real contexts. It is at this stage that the monitor hypothesis will function to edit the language that has been acquired. However, for my grade 8

ESL learners the monitor hypothesis becomes difficult because they do not learn the language for communication purposes in a real context and as a result, they cannot edit their mistakes when writing.

Even though the monitor hypothesis is largely concerned with spoken language, I believe that the hypothesis might prove useful for my study. Many of the Grade 8 ESL learners in my study appear to be introverts as regards the use of English. They excessively monitor their English speech and this lack of use and practice of the language, might be a factor in the challenges they face when writing in English.

### **2.2.3. The Natural Order Hypothesis**

Krashen (1982) argues that acquirers of language assimilate features of language predictably. In some languages, grammatical rules are assimilated fast whereas in other languages, assimilation occurs at a later stage. Children learn the grammar structures of their first language in a pre-determined, 'natural' order, and some grammar structures are acquired earlier than others. This indicates that teaching language through a formal language syllabus may not necessarily assist learners to acquire the language. Learners need to be ready to learn a new language and forcing them to use language structures before they are ready could cause them to fail (Krashen, 1982). I have noticed that my learners are failing to grasp language structures and conventions. I suspect that the reason is that they are not ready to learn English. In my study, I explored, through learners' written tasks, how learners are assimilating the taught grammatical rules to understand the challenges they face when writing in English.

### **2.2.4 The Input Hypothesis**

Krashen (1982) argues that the input hypothesis allows second language learners to acquire language by being exposed to many target language resources, which he calls comprehensible input. In addition to the comprehensible input, learners need to understand what they read or hear for acquisition to take place. However, the moment the learners fail to comprehend what is uttered, acquisition will fail. One of the hurdles of second language acquisition is that ESL learners put much effort in learning the rules of the language, in this way obstructing acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Therefore, teachers need to reflect on the way in which they are teaching language. If they are concentrating on language rules, rather than on exposing learners to many language resources in the target language, it is possible that they are obstructing acquisition.

According to Krashen (1982) input hypothesis stresses that acquirers of language who are at 'level i' must obtain language input above their present understanding which is (i+1). Krashen calls it comprehensible input. Krashen (1982) claims that the abundance of input will fast-track the second language acquisition. He further argues that the language that learners need to acquire must be neither too easy nor too difficult, because if it is too difficult, acquisition will not happen, and if too easy, vocabulary will not be acquired.

The proof of the importance of the input hypothesis is seen when a babysitter talks to a child. The input of a babysitter is definitely above the child's understanding; however, the babysitter allows the child the period of grace to gain competency in language. Grace period is the "initial silent period", where learners are afforded a space to build up competence of a language before they put it to use. Because of the grace period, the child moves towards mastering the language (Ramnarain, 2004).

However, the grade 8 ESL learners in this study are not afforded a grace period because of time constraints. Teachers are expected to teach for assessment and learners have to master English as quickly as possible (Khoza, 2015). At grade 8, teachers expect learners to arrive at high school having experienced the period of grace at primary school. Teachers expect a measure of English language competency. Generally, this is not evident in the grade 8 ESL learners in this study who do not have input at home and very little input from their previous schools.

However, Sacks (2010) and Sacks (2010) argue that challenges experienced by ESL learners are aggravated by failure of teachers to interpret and mediate metalanguage because of their poor training.

The implication for my study is that if English is not available to learners at home, the school has to provide an environment conducive for language acquisition, and the school has to provide input to compensate for the lack at home. The lack of input at home might prove to explain possible challenges that emerged from the findings. It is also possible that the school is not providing the appropriate environment and/or the appropriate input.

### **2.2.5 Affective Filter Hypothesis**

The affective filter played a vital role in my study because it explained a number of factors that influence language acquisition negatively or positively. Affective filter explained what role is played by emotions and attitudes of learners in acquiring the language. MacFadden (2005) in his study (Incorporating Emotion in Web-Based Education) discovered that feelings are an

inextricable part of learning and they must always be considered when learning and teaching take place. It is important to note that learners are emotional beings, therefore if their emotions and attitudes are negative towards learning, learning will not happen (MacFadden, 2005). For learning to take place, learners need to be responsive to what is taught.

Krashen (1982) argues that learners must be receptive towards messages they get; in that way, the received message will get in touch with the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). LAD is a term coined by a language theorist, Chomsky in the 1960s (Chomsky, 1969). From its inception LAD was known as Language Learning Device, which later got its baptismal name as Language Acquisition Device (Miller & Chomsky, 1957). The LAD is a sieve that controls the input that learners get. It is at this stage where learners' emotions play an important role, because their moods serve as that sieve that control the quantity of input that goes through the filter. The emotions and motivation will have a direct impact on the acquisition of English Second Language.

The affective filter identifies three personal contributing factors - motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Motivation is a psychological process which triggers a person's action to be goal directed (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002). Self-confidence is about believing in oneself, having faith in one's abilities, which forces one to try to do hard things against one's will power (Tafarodi & Swann Jr, 2001). There are two types of anxieties, facilitating and debilitating. Facilitating anxiety assists learners to perform better when facing problems. The anxiety that affects acquisition is debilitating anxiety (Kader, 2016). These variables have an impact on learners' succeeding or failing to acquire the language. If such factors shape second language acquisition, it might help to explain why learners struggle to write in English and it might serve as a lesson to teachers to be aware of such factors if they are to succeed in their teaching. On the other hand, being highly motivated, self-assured, and having a good self-esteem and a low level of apprehension will promote acquisition of language.

Krashen (1982) argues that the affective filter functions as a psychological hindrance. If it is down, the learner will receive input and if up it means the learner is demotivated and he /she does not associate with the target language therefore there is no acquisition. Considering the defiance of some learners in writing homework, my assumption is that they are demotivated and have low self-esteem. Therefore, the acquisition will be affected negatively because emotions play a significant role in learning the language and in general (Ramnarain, 2004). However, there may be many more factors that explain why learners do not write at home, including chores, among others.

### 2.2.6 Criticism of the Monitor Model

The criticism of the Monitor Model is that data is limited. Some of the claims the theory makes are unfounded (Gregg, 1984; Liu, 2015). When Krashen (1981) developed this theory, his chief aim was to clarify how second language learners learn to speak. Nonetheless, he changed and said that learning the language happens the same way.

The second criticism is that Krashen used many generalisations in his explanations (Wheeler, 2003). Zafar (2009) and Gregg (1984) argue that the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) should not be considered for adults because they have already acquired language and they have passed adolescence stage. However, there are second language learners who attain the proficiency of natives.

A third criticism pertains to Krashen's claims about acquisition failing to turn to learning. Zafar (2009) argues that learning is the process that must be strengthened by a learned system. However, putting a boundary between acquisition and learning weakens his theory because the learned system should enrich acquisition. Zobl (1980), Skehan (1991) and Wode (1977) argued that different learners experience learning second languages differently. The implication is that, Krashen ignored individual differences in learning a second language.

The ambiguity of the terminology Krashen used is also criticised. The terminology such as acquisition/learning, subconscious/conscious, implicit/explicit is sometimes difficult to determine precisely what is meant (Liu, 2015). Furthermore, the theory is criticised because it is hard to know how concepts such as acquisition and learning help second language learners. Furthermore, Lui (2015) disputes the claims by Krashen that children are outstanding in terms of second language acquisition because their Monitor Hypothesis is weak.

Another criticism lies with the Affective Filter Hypothesis. According to Krashen (1982) learners do not have a filter and this renders second language learners as unemotional beings. He behaves as if second language learners are not affected by variables such as lack of confidence, low-self-esteem and high levels of anxiety which normally hinders learning. Again, there is no explanation given for second language adults who attain native-like proficiency (Gregg, 1984). The question is how does the filter work? Krashen is quiet about the disadvantages and advantages of the filter (Zafar, 2009). When dealing with the Natural Hypothesis Krashen disregarded the significant impact of the first language on the second language and negative and positive exchanges they have on each other (Zafar, 2009).

With the Input Hypothesis, the term comprehensible input is not defined. It is difficult for English teachers to measure input in quantities, so that they would know how much input lacks, and on which learners. Therefore, testing this claim is impossible, and the theory may be rendered non-empirical (Krashen, 1985). The following paragraphs discuss the literature I reviewed.

### **2.3. Review of literature**

This literature review is arranged into the following themes: What is writing, writing challenges faced by English Second Language (ESL) learners at high school, and coping strategies used by ESL learners when dealing with writing challenges.

#### **2.3.1 What is writing?**

Hughes (2005) argues that writing has the power to transcend time and space, and it allows people to pass information on even in their absence. It is one of the communication skills among four (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

Writing refers to communicating ideas and meaning to the reader through texts (Cho & Brutt-Griffler, 2015). Khansir, Ahrami, and Hajivandi (2013) argue that writing is a necessity because it facilitates communication between the reader and the writer. It is used as a conveyor of messages, information and writing of examinations (Khansir, Ahrami & Hajivandi, 2013).

Cho and Brutt-Griffler (2015) argue that the overarching aim of writing is to communicate your ideas to the next person in the form of written text. If the ideas are not communicated effectively, the message will not reach the intended recipient. That means learners who write poorly might be unable to communicate their ideas in all subjects. Writing is deemed as an extremely challenging competence, because it involves spelling, parts of speech, tenses, word order, paragraphing, topic sentences, supporting sentences, and closing sentences, among others (Alsied, Ibrahim, & Pathan, 2018).

Alsied, Ibrahim, and Pathan (2018) emphasise that writing, using any language other than a mother-tongue puts the writer under immense pressure (Alsied et al., 2018). Writing is an extremely complex activity, and writing in the second language is more challenging because writing needs adequate mastery of the second language (Sarfraz, 2011). Similarly, in my study, the learners do not have mastery in English and experience many challenges when writing in the language.

### **2.3.2 Writing challenges faced by ESL learners at high school**

A challenge is anything that prevents one from accessing or achieving his/her goal. In my study, my focus was on my learners' challenges when writing. These challenges often prevent them from achieving their goal of success in their school lives.

In coping with writing challenges Leki (2017) argues that teachers should ask ESL learners about strategies they use to deal with writing challenges rather than lecture them about something they know already. Teachers are in a position to facilitate learners' ability to cope with challenges using relevant approaches to language teaching (Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia, & Paredes, 2019). My study provided the opportunity for grade 8 ESL learners to express their opinions about challenges they face when writing in English. I was provided the opportunity to ascertain what strategies, if any, learners use to deal with their writing challenges.

According to Kern (2000) knowing how to write a summary or analysis in your mother tongue does not mean that you will be able to write in English. Therefore, he proposes that instruction offered to learners must consider their scholastic background, societal background and indigenous knowledge, if it were to make a difference in learners' lives. Physical conditions in and around the home do seem to play a role in learners' language challenges. Navsaria, Pascoe, and Kathard (2011) conducted a study on intermediate phase teachers in Western Cape, South Africa, about why written language difficulties were experienced by learners and how those difficulties could be resolved. Using self-administered questionnaires and focus groups, the findings revealed that lack of support in their homes was one of the causes in learners' failure to write, and because many were living in overcrowded Wendy houses. This could also be the predicament of my grade 8 ESL learners, who lack support at home and who live lives of poverty, that might not be conducive to writing their homework.

In the study conducted by Sibanda and Baxen (2016) in Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces on the transition of grade 3 ESL learners to grade 4, revealed that the transition was replete with challenges. For example, the subjects and amount of work they are exposed to in grade 3 is far less as compared to grade 4 work in both quantity and in quality. One of those challenges which affected their transition was vocabulary. This is also the experience of my ESL learners because they go through the same transition.

In a study conducted by Chokwe (2013) on first year university students' writing skills in the University of South Africa (UNISA), discovered that they were many challenges besetting ESL learners for example, teachers were under-qualified, they were no enough reading resources and was ineffective teaching of writing at a school level.

In addition to the socio-cultural challenges faced by learners there are other challenges. Firstly, many English language errors pose the greatest challenges to second language learners when writing in English. A study by AbiSamra (2003) on challenges faced by grade 9 learners when writing, found in their written essays that, learners committed errors in vocabulary, semantics, spelling, syntax and grammar.

In their studies, Laufer and Waldman (2011) and Chan (2010) investigated errors made by Chinese learners when writing. Using, narrative essays to collect data, they found that most errors were committed in verb tense, word choice, punctuation, prepositions, omission and spelling. This was a confirmation of the study by Darus and Subramaniam (2009) on writing challenges on a sample of 72 Malay learners. They also found that learners committed errors on singular/plural form, verb tense, word choice, prepositions, subject-verb agreement and word order. This means that it is difficult to find meaning in their transactional writing, because of the collision of different word orders, and their writings are presented error-ridden (Muriungi & Mbui, 2013).

Along similar lines to other studies, Kohlmyr (2004) studied and explored errors made by Swedish learners when writing in English. The findings revealed that the leading errors committed by learners were verbs at 25%, followed by nouns and articles at 22%, concord at 18% and prepositions at 12%. The biggest chunk of the percentage went to over-generalisation which totalled 50%. An example of overgeneralisation is taking for granted that because past tense verbs normally take 'ed' at the end of each verb the past tense of GO is GOED. This may help to explain why my grade 8 learners commit the same mistakes repeatedly.

Word order and overgeneralisation are not the only errors that learners make and Rababah (2002) further argues that punctuation in writing is critical and ESL learners are badly affected by poor punctuation, which makes their writing worse. This is one of many problems I am faced with as I teach writing.

Another challenge facing ESL learners is mastering grammar. Grammar is not just a set of rules, but an ever-changing structure of language which is problematic to apply (Leki, 1995). I experience this problem every day where my learners fail to use language structures and

conventions correctly which affects their writing in English. Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan, and Wahid (2012) argue that grammar is considered the most challenging part to ESL writers because they have to construct sentences, develop paragraphs and ensure coherence in their text. Spelling is one of the crucial literacy skill and a very important language element which may determine success or failure of English First Additional Language acquisition (Nahari & Alfadda, 2016)

Farooq et al. (2012) argue that that the challenge about spelling is that there is a mismatch between sound and symbol which makes it difficult for ESL learners to master spelling. The conveyance of meaning does not rely on correct spelling alone; punctuation also plays a very significant role in ensuring meaning conveyed is the intended meaning. If commas, semi-colons, full stops and capital letters are placed incorrectly in any text, the wrong message could be delivered (Atashian & Al-Bahri, 2018; Cook, 2016).

In the study conducted by Farooq et al. (2012.p187) in Pakistan, the conclusion was reached that:

lack of vocabulary, a poor grasp of grammatical structures, the incorrect use of punctuation marks, incorrect spelling, poor paragraph and sentence structure, and illogical sequence are some of the writing difficulties faced by the students.

These challenges are not only a challenge in school but may follow the learners into their futures. The challenges of the Pakistan students appear to be the same challenges faced by ESL learners of my school, which are word order, vocabulary and poor paragraphing, among others. This is consistent with a study by Al-Khasawneh and Maher (2010) which revealed, through interviews, that students had challenges with regard to spelling, organization of ideas, grammar and vocabulary register.

Other scholars, writing about challenges faced by ESL learners, mention that the writings of ESL learners usually lack coherence (Ahmed, 2010; Klimova, 2015; Rababah, 2002). Rababah (2002) argues that coherence is a logical relationship between ideas and information and lack of it may be a result of mother-tongue interruption and lack of vocabulary.

Secondly, the lack of vocabulary hampers effective writing in English (Adas & Bakir, 2013). Adas and Bakir (2013) argue that many students do understand English language, however the challenge is effectively communicating their ideas in writing. The challenge includes lack of vocabulary and absence of creativity. The lack of vocabulary forces learners to use the same

words repeatedly, which suffocates the writing process (Al-Nasser, 2015; Rababah, 2002). It is very clear that writing is a challenge. That is why I am exploring the challenges faced by grade 8 English second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal when writing in English.

Alsamadani (2010) argues that writing is a problematic skill because learners are expected to write coherent and logical passages that demand knowledge of vocabulary, target audience, punctuation and language structures and conventions. The findings by these scholars may help explain why my ESL learners have challenges when writing in English.

Mother-tongue interference is another challenge faced by ESL learners, which is caused by the fact that, when they think, they think in their own language but they write in English (Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2016). The results may be disastrous because mother-tongue word order and target language word order may be incompatible. I am in agreement with Huwari and Al-Shboul's claim, because I am always confronted by similar challenges when marking my grade 8 ESL learners' work.

Their mother tongue which is isiZulu, is evident in the way they order their words. In the study conducted by Iqbal (2016) on five different nationals (Bahrain National, Philippine National, Pakistan National, Palestine National, Syrian National) using questionnaires and interviews found that mother-tongue interference in learning the language has power to influence acquisition of a target language negatively. Among others, Farooq et al. (2012) argue that Pakistan students face a challenge of thinking in their mother-tongue Urdu and decoding it in English. The challenge is that Urdu syntax, idiom and imagery are different to English. Warsi (2004) argues that while it is beneficial to use the mother tongue when teaching ESL learners, the disadvantages of this practice outweigh the benefits.

Thirdly, the use of the vernacular and mother-tongue interference appears to work against writing effectively in English. Muriungi and Mbui (2013) argue that vernacular may influence learners' acquisition of the second language negatively and they suggest total removal of vernacular language usage on school premises. However, total removal of isiZulu from the school premises is not possible in our school, because isiZulu is taught at school as a subject. In addition, despite English being the medium of instruction, many teachers use isiZulu when teaching.

Mariung and Mbui (2013) argue that many inadequacies in English acquisition by ESL learners are due to the poor foundation laid in their first year of schooling, While I do not have proof

for this, I suspect that my learners had poor foundations in their first, and subsequent years. According to Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), ESL learners are supposed to learn English First Additional Language from grade 3, by the time they reach grade 8 they should display mastery of English First Additional Language (DoBE 2011).

The findings by Muriungi and Mbui (2013) may explain why many learners enter secondary schooling with very poor foundations in English. They further suggest that the environment surrounding the learners may have a negative impact in their efforts, of trying to acquire a second language as suggested earlier. I concur with such comments because the lack of libraries, lack of networks to access internet and the effects of the rurality of the place influences the learners' outlook of life in general.

### **2.3.3 Coping strategies used by ESL learners when dealing with writing challenges**

Second language learners may use various strategies to cope in an English classroom. Monyai (2013) further argues that introverts cope by just sitting quietly and acting as if they understand, because they are afraid of being looked at as stupid and laughed at by their peers (Corno, 2000).

Wang and Young, (2014) contended that problems of English can only be resolved if learners could be exposed to a lot of English material to facilitate writing.

The challenge with my school is that it is poor, as per quintile one category. Quintile one schools do not have adequate resources, for example libraries. Quintile one schools are the poorest schools, these schools do not charge school fees because they are no-fee paying schools and the government subsidises them financially. Quintile one system is based on the unemployment rate of the area where the school is situated and illiteracy levels within the school community (Klasen, 2000). Therefore, what above researchers suggest as a solution for acquiring language is very difficult to achieve in my school. The only resource they have is me, as their teacher, and thus I have to try to expose them to as much spoken English as possible.

Hautemo and Julius (2016) argue that language acquisition as well as writing acquisition cannot be imparted to learners in a formal way but must be acquired in implicit ways of grammar internalisation, facilitated by vast exposure to real life experiences. For my grade 8 ESL learners, the language that they are exposed to within the community is isiZulu which puts them in a difficult position to acquire English language. They do not have vast exposure to real life experiences using English.

According to VanPatten and Williams (2014) there is a similarity between acquiring first language and second language. Consequently, it is logical to think that because a child learns mother-tongue through vast exposure to comprehensible input (Krashen (1982), second language learners will also improve their proficiency in both writing and speaking through exposure to English language. However, resource-lacking rural learners lack such exposure and as a result they remain poor writers and poor readers and most of all have difficulties achieving professionally (Haider, 2012).

To cope with writing challenges, ESL learners might ask for help from their fellow classmates to complete their assignments or written tasks (Leki, 1995). The resultant problems only become evident when it is examination time, where learners are supposed to write by themselves without the help of other learners. Learners who may have asked for help are sometimes required to pay or do favours for their helpers or be made fun of (Tarnanen & Aalto, 2013). I witness this by seeing young learners buying sweets for other learners and if you enquire you discover it is payment for the services rendered. Leki (1995) further mentions that learners also seek the services of other teachers who are not necessarily language teachers. This practise becomes evident when a colleague asks me about the homework I have given to my learners. This leads me to conclude that learners were asking the colleague to explain the homework to them. Lai (2016) noted that some students consulted with others to help them understand English.

Yet another challenge relates to teachers' attitudes to learners' work and the time made available to practice the language. Criticism by English language teachers, when marking learners' work can demotivate, and consequently second language (L2) learners lose self-esteem and hope of ever becoming good writers (Ellis, 2009; Hyland & Hyland, 2006

The findings could help explain why grade 8 ESL learners of Siyazimelela District face writing challenges. Jarvis (2005) further argues that learners with low self-esteem find it difficult to master writing and wonder if they will ever grasp language writing skills in the manner in which their teachers demand. It is here where the affective filter might explain challenges faced by ESL learners, because teachers make demands on learners whose writing ability is below par.

The findings by You (2004) in the study on Chinese students at Purdue University revealed that ESL learners do not have enough time to practice writing in English because they have other subjects to study. You (2004) urges teachers to consistently involve learners in writing

and re-writing of transactional text, because practising writing will enhance their ability to write (Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan, & Wahid, 2012). Hyland (2016) argues that writing should be considered as a means for developing learners' thinking skills rather than as a technical expertise meant to be mastered by learners, thus promoting writing from an end-product to a process approach where learners learn to collaborate with other learners to improve their writing. A process is defined by Joyner, Rouse, and Glatthorn (2018) as a set of unique sophisticated procedures which writers follow when writing. Writing process is where learners are given a chance to do pre-writing, edit their work and do final writing of their text.

Adas and Bakir (2013) argue that many learners do not practise writing unless they are compelled to do so by teachers in the classroom. The negative attitude displayed by learners towards writing may affect their ability to write.

Another factor affecting their ability to write came to the fore in a study conducted by Al-Gharabally (2015) at an Arab University. The findings reveal that learners use a translation method by taking words from their mother-tongue and using them in the second language. This kind of practice is very common with my learners. Baniabdelrahman and Al-shumaimeri (2014) conducted a study on Saudi EFL students to determine the meaning of English words and they used a survey to collect data. The findings of this study indicate that students guessed meanings of words and that such a strategy did not work.

Finally, the motivation and attitudes of learners play a role in their ability to use the target language within all communication skills, including writing. The challenges faced by English second language learners (ESL) may be due to a lack of motivation and the negative attitudes learners display towards writing (Myles, 2002). One of the crippling factors, is that learning of English happens far away from the community of target language speakers, and learners only learn English because they have to write essays and pass examinations (Myles, 2002). In the study conducted by Myles (2002) in Queen's University he found that students hate writing even in their mother-tongue. They prefer talking rather than writing.

Motivation is an inspiration to do difficult tasks in one's life (Stone, Deci, & Ryan, 2009). If learners lack motivation to write they could become lethargic writers, and perform poorly academically (Glenn, 2007). However, research on positive thinking reveals that ESL learners with positive mind sets succeed beyond their teachers' expectations (McGroarty, 1996). Kannan (2009) argues that learners' mind-set plays a significant role in learning the language, because if the learner adopts a positive mind-set language acquisition becomes easy. In a study

conducted by Al-Gharabally (2015) it was found that learning to write in English was very difficult for them because they had to be determined, committed and resolute to master writing in English.

Monyai (2013) conducted a study at an ex-Model C school in Pretoria, South Africa, using a mixed method approach. The data gathering instruments used were document analysis and questionnaires as well as classroom visits and observations. The findings revealed that some parents organise tutors to assist their children with homework and assignments. The unfortunate scenario about deep rural children is that, it is often the case that their parents cannot afford to put food on the table, and thus hiring tutors is impossible. Another problem could be that tutors are not available in the area.

A coping strategy used by learners is that they just do not write the work assigned to them (Leki,1995). This behaviour of non-compliance is viewed by learners as a way of indicating to the teacher that they cannot write in English.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

From the discussed literature review, it is clear that ESL learners are experiencing challenges when writing in English locally and globally. However, I have found none that specifically conducted such a study in KwaZulu Natal in Siyazimelela District in Siyabulela Circuit. The scarcity of research in writing challenges in the aforementioned District paved a way for my study in which I have explored challenges faced by grade 8 learners when writing in English.

Although Leki (2017) conducted a similar study titled: *Challenges and complexities of academic literacy development*, it was conducted in New York, and in a Higher Education Institution. On the contrary, my study was conducted in South Africa, in a deep rural school. Furthermore, Leki used the case study as the strategy for qualitative approach. This informed me to also adopt the case study as a strategy to substantiate findings in a different context.

Furthermore, Al-Khairy (2013) investigated academic writing problems in English in Saudi Arabia using a quantitative approach and questionnaires as instruments for data generation. I also used questionnaires to generate data, however, I focussed on the qualitative approach because I wanted to get participants' views first hand.

Using Krashen's Monitor Model as a theoretical framework, empowered me to examine each hypothesis and explained how they worked within my study. Many studies investigating

writing challenges faced by ESL learners were reviewed and they shed light on the possible challenges that my grade 8 ESL learners might be facing. In the next chapter, I present methodology that informed this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented the theoretical framework and the literature review on writing challenges faced by ESL learners when writing in English. In this chapter I elucidate the methodology that was followed in data generation and analysis. This chapter gives details of the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data generation instruments, ethics, gatekeeper approval, recruitment of participants, storage of data, rigour, trustworthiness and credibility as well as limitations.

#### 3.2 Research paradigm

My study explored the challenges facing grade 8 English second language speakers in a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal when writing in English. My intention in this study was to discover, from participants, the challenges they face when writing in English, why they face such challenges and how they cope with the challenges they face when writing in English.

The most appropriate paradigm for this study is interpretive because the intention within this study is to comprehend and clarify the world of the participants (Caldeira, 2016). One of the ways in which I understood the challenges was to ask the participants to complete questionnaires and writing tasks in which they told of their challenges. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain interpretive paradigm as a paradigm where participants tell their stories from their perspectives.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2002) confirm that the intention within the interpretive paradigm is to comprehend the subjective world of the participants which is what I was hoping to achieve. Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004) further argue that the interpretive paradigm is not about formulae. However, it considers what participants could give as their own conclusion, about what they experience in their own environment (Carroll & Swatman, 2000; Wang & Zhu, 2016).

##### 3.2.1 Ontology of interpretive paradigm

Searle and Willis (1995) argue that interpretivists are convinced that there are many truths, those truths are subjective, and such truths must be understood in-depth from participants'

views. McInnes, Peters, Bonney, and Halcomb (2017) argue that truth is subjective. People in their natural environment are thus the best candidates to tell exactly what is like to live there and to get to the bottom of their challenges, my ESL learners were allowed to use isiZulu to express themselves.

### **3.2.2 Epistemology of the interpretive paradigm**

Interpretivists reject the view that human behaviour is controlled by general universal laws and symbolised by underlying procedures (Scotland, 2012). Since epistemology is about describing how knowledge will be created, acquired, and communicated or what techniques will be used to know the truth (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Scotland, 2012), I used multiples ways of knowing including the questionnaire, dialogue and letter writing. Using these multiple strategies enabled me to avoid rigid structural frameworks as in positivism.

### **3.3 Research approach**

This study used a qualitative approach. Creswell and Clark (2017) argue that a qualitative approach is loaded in meaning because people's experiences are captured through words which was my intention as I used questionnaires, dialogues and letter writing as data generating instruments as opposed to statistical inferring of people's views. The nature of a qualitative approach is exploratory and through its exploratory nature, helps the researchers to access the gist of all the experiences of the participants (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006) argue that qualitative studies are a means of discovering what is occurring in participants' lives' by interrogating them about their experiences.

The qualitative approach suited my paradigm (interpretive) which sought to use words to explore the challenges facing grade 8 ESL learners in a rural school when writing in English. Morgan and Henning (2012) argue that qualitative research is planned to assist the researchers to comprehend participants in their socio-cultural environments which was my intention in the study.

### **3.4 Research design**

I adopted the case study as the strategy for this study. Lewis (2015) argues that a case study is a type of qualitative research. It is distinguished by its close attention to a case being explored with the intention of producing data that can be utilised to reach conclusions (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). In this study I explored a single case, which is one grade 8 class and

the writing challenges facing them; the context of the case was a deep rural area in Siyazimelela District. The case study was suitable because learners were given an opportunity to say subjectively, what their challenges in writing were, why they faced such challenges and what coping mechanisms they employed to mitigate their circumstances. Case study research stands out at making the researchers comprehend the phenomenon under investigation (Baskarada, 2014). Yin, Zhang, Peng and Li (2009) further argues that a case study is a realistic probe that looks closely at a phenomenon under investigation. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that a case study is a thorough exploration of people by considering their growth in the environment. I explored a group of students in one classroom

and the research design for this research is thus a case study. Rule and John (2011) give credence to what Denzin and Lincoln (2011) claim, by stating that a case study is a systematic and a thorough study of a specific case in its environment. The case study gave me an opportunity to understand the challenges faced by ESL learners when writing in English in a school in the Siyazimelela District, why they face such challenges and how they cope with such challenges.

### **3.5 Ethics, Gatekeeper approval**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) argue that ethics are rules to ensure that people are treated with dignity when research is conducted. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) take this further with the contention that ethics is about what is wrong or right based on morality. Struwig, Struwig, and Stead (2001) emphasise that ethics regulates how researchers should behave when conducting their studies. In my endeavours to be ethical, I wrote a letter to the school principal explaining the nature of my study and requesting permission to conduct the study in his school. A letter of permission was given to me by the principal. Secondly, a letter was written to the University of KwaZulu-Natal seeking permission to conduct the study and I received ethical clearance (appendix G, page 89).

Participants agreed to partake in this study by signing consent forms that were written in English and isiZulu. Participants were informed that they were under no obligation to participate in the study, and if they wished to withdraw, they could do so freely. Anonymity was ensured by using letters of the alphabet to identify each of them, for example, Learner A. The learners were assured that their marks would not be compromised in any way as a result of participation or non-participation. Any fears they might have had were alleviated through sessions where questions were answered and learners were given space to raise any concerns.

The inclusion of isiZulu questions in the questionnaires afforded participants opportunities to explain in writing about their challenges and coping mechanisms using their mother-tongue. I ensured and verified that the information captured was a true reflection of their experiences by reading and re-reading the data to check if there were any discrepancies in capturing the data. I designed the consent forms in English and isiZulu and sent them to parents/guardians as the learners were minors.

Non-maleficence is a custom of averting causing harm to the participants (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001) and I ensured this by working within the boundaries of my research questions and by assuring participants of their rights. Another principle of morality that I observed was beneficence. Beneficence is a group of norms that are about alleviating, lowering, or avoiding harm to befall participants. It also ensures that benefits, risks and cost are considered (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). Therefore, I used the pseudonyms for the District and circuit and the school name was not mentioned.

### **3. 6 Participants and Sampling**

In recruiting participants for this study, I approached all 26 learners in my class, and invited them to participate. I used total population sampling, a type of purposive sampling where the total population or all participants are included in data generation (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In this study, I generated data from all learners in my Grade 8 class in my school.

### **3.7 The Participants**

The information presented is information provided by the participants in the questionnaire. It is presented to enable understanding of the participants and to aid data analysis in the following chapter. Only background information to the participants is presented here. The questionnaires revealed that there are four males and six females aged 13 years, four males and six females aged 14 years, three males aged 15 years, and two males aged 16 years and one male did not indicate his age

While 26 learners participated and I used 26 questionnaires, I was forced to use only 19 dialogues and 19 informal letters. This was because the boot of my car was broken into and my laptop bag, which contained seven dialogues and seven informal letters, was stolen.

In the questionnaires, participants were asked if they attended preschool before grade 1. 17 participants (13 boys and 4 girls) indicated that they did not attend Crèche or preschool because

it was either too far or not where they lived. Only nine attended preschools before entering Grade 1.

When participants were asked what they liked and still remembered from their preschool activities, Participant N said: *“Sasidlala futhi sibhale othisha bami ababengifundisa bebesilalisa uma sesiqedile ukufunda eKreshi”*. Translated: *We ate, played and my teachers would cause us to sleep after we had finished learning at Creche*. Participant E’s response was: *“Counting and writing e.g. 1,2,3,4,5”*

Participant P responded: *I like to count, read and play the toys*. Participant R said: *count from one to one hundred*. Participant S stated: *read, because I want to read I read that now*. Participant T said: *colourish people in your colour and speak mother tongue and English*. Participant W said: *leaning in English, English is not our mother tongue*. Participant V’s response was: *I was writing, and how to write in capital letters*. Participant Y stated: *Engayithanda ukudweba abantu ngibahlobise*. Translated, *what I liked was drawing people and decorate them*.

When asked about the language their teachers used when teaching them, out of nine who attended preschool, seven indicated that teachers used isiZulu to teach them. Only two were taught in English and isiZulu. When asked if they had power to choose a language they would like to be taught in, 12 participants preferred to be taught in isiZulu because it is their mother tongue and is easy. One participant said arts and culture because it is easy, obviously misunderstanding the question. Six girls and five boys chose English. One chose both English and isiZulu but no reason was given. One did not answer this question and no explanation was given.

Ten participants chose to be taught in isiZulu because it is their mother tongue, they did not attend preschool/ crèche and they noted that isiZulu is easy to understand. Eleven participants chose to be taught in English because it is a powerful language, all subjects are in English and they would like to be able to interact with different people. Three did not answer this question. One pointed to Creative Arts as a language. When they were asked if they use English at home, 23 participants said that they do read out of school when they do homework and three said no.

When they were asked if they speak in English anywhere outside school, nineteen participants said they do speak in English when they play with friends. Seven said that they do not speak English anywhere outside school because they stay with people who do not know English and it is difficult.

When asked if they read anywhere outside school, 23 participants said that they do read out of school, citing newspapers and pictures, and when they prepare for oral tasks or doing homework. When they were asked about writing anywhere outside school, eight said they do write at home and eighteen said they do not because they do not know how to write in English.

### **3.8 Data generation strategies**

Data was generated using questionnaires and two short written tasks. The motivation behind using questionnaires is their ability to provide openness and honesty to participants (Dörnyei, 2003; Wernicke & Talmy, 2018). Dörnyei (2003) postulates that questionnaires have the ability to produce data that is accurate, behavioural-related and attitudinal-related.

The questionnaires explored lives of grade 8 ESL learners both inside and outside of school. Learners were afforded the opportunity to explain the challenges they face and the coping mechanisms they use when writing in English (Leki, 2017). I allowed them to use IsiZulu to answer questionnaires to understand their problems.

The two short written tasks were a dialogue and an informal letter. The instruction for the dialogue was: *You and your friend are struggling to write in English. Write a dialogue where the two of you discuss the challenges you face when writing in English, the possible reasons for your challenges, and how you try to cope with these challenges.*

The instruction for the informal letter was: *Write a letter to your English teacher where you explain the challenges you face when writing in English, the possible reasons for your challenges, and how you try to cope with these challenges.*

The letter writing and dialogue provided unbiased, convincing and dependable data about writing challenges facing grade 8 English Second Language (ESL) learners, because their challenges were evident in their writing (Mahabeer, 2009) and in the content they shared in the written tasks.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyse the data. TA is a method for classifying and examining patterns or themes in qualitative data (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014). TA was useful as a basic method of understanding people's experiences. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are six stages of TA and it must be understood as a process.

Firstly, familiarisation with the data occurred when I read and re-read data, with the aim of capturing and understanding data.

Secondly, coding took place when I put codes on the data for easy identification. After labelling data, themes were formed.

Thirdly, searching for themes using identified codes, themes were created.

Fourthly, I reviewed themes and checked for the relevance of each theme to data. It was at this stage where certain themes were disposed of or clustered into one theme.

Fifthly, defining and naming themes was where I outlined in detail what each theme constituted in terms of data generation.

Sixthly, writing up involved the merging of themes to produce a comprehensible narrative about the data and to put it into the context of the study.

When I analysed I started with one written task - the dialogues. I read and re-read them to familiarise myself with the answers. During this first stage, I tried to find an answer to research question 1: *What writing challenges do grade 8 second language learners face?* Through coding I noted down if the learners answered the questions the dialogue asked.

During the second stage, I tried to answer research question 2: *Why do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face such writing challenges?* Challenges that the learners encountered in writing were recorded as I continued with reading. All similar challenges were given the same labels for identification. I re-read and repeated the process for further identification of codes, until I was satisfied that I had exhausted all possible codes.

In stage three, I formed themes wherein I grouped similar codes and then I re-examined themes to check their relevance to data and research questions.

It was in the fourth stage that I tried answering research question 3: *How do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with their writing challenges?* In this stage some themes were discarded or clustered into one theme. The step that followed was naming and defining. During this stage, I wrote in detail what I had found in the dialogue about the writing challenges facing grade 8 ESL learners. Lastly, I merged all themes and produced a logical narrative about data which had been generated from the dialogues. I followed the same procedure with the informal letter.

When I analysed the questionnaires, I read and re-read all to familiarise myself with the participants' answers. Where I noticed the same information reflected in their written tasks I

used the same codes to code information in the questionnaires. Themes were matched against each other to check similarity, and all those with the same information were grouped together to form one theme. Themes from the written tasks - dialogue and informal letter - and questionnaires were checked for their relevance to the research questions. Lastly, themes from questionnaires, letter writing, and dialogue were merged to produce a logical narrative about the data generated.

### **3.10 Storage of Data**

All my data is stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office where it will stay for 5 years. Thereafter, it will be destroyed by shredding.

### **3.11 Credibility, transferability, dependability and trustworthiness**

Verschuren, Doorewaard, and Mellion (2010) argue that the most powerful instrument to enhance the quality of any research is to triangulate as this produces credibility. Triangulation is described as using more than one instrument of data generation with the aim of reaching greater understanding on the matter under investigation (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017). My study used two short written tasks and questionnaires to enable triangulation of data.

The information generated using questionnaires and short written tasks was used to enhance the accuracy of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017)

According to Gasson (2004) credibility speaks to the idea of internal uniformity, where the fundamental matter is how the researcher will ensure that the research is rigorous and how the next person will learn about how thoroughly the work was done. I attained credibility through lengthy engagement with grade 8 learners and through continually observing them, while I was generating data. I also enhanced credibility by thorough description of data sources (Geertz, 2008; Mabry, 2008).

Parallel to credibility is transferability, which is about how the reader can generalise the research findings to his/her own context (Gasson, 2004). This was achieved when I gave sufficient details of where the study was conducted, procedures followed, type of participants and the relationship that I have with the participants. These details will empower the reader to decide how transferable the findings of the study are.

Cope (2014) argues that trustworthiness is when participants or researchers will not abuse participants' weaknesses. As a teacher of English in my school I did not exploit the vulnerability of my learners. I assured them and the school of total confidentiality and anonymity. As a result, I used a pseudonym for the school and letters of the alphabet to identify learners.

### **3.12 Limitations**

The first limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one school in Siyazimelela District in KwaZulu-Natal with 26 participants. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised, because 26 participants cannot be a representation of all grade eights in Siyazimelela District. However, the sole purpose was not to generalise, but to get the gist of the challenges faced by ESL learners in a deep rural area. This will allow for my teaching strategies to be adjusted to suit their needs (Creswell, et al, 2007).

Secondly, there might be some errors or misunderstandings on the part of the learners in terms of understanding the questionnaire. To alleviate this limitation, I ensured that the questionnaire was easy to understand by compiling it in both isiZulu and English and I discussed the questionnaire with the participant learners and invited them to ask any questions that might arise.

Thirdly, I was concerned that learners might feel fearful about being honest. I encouraged learners to be honest with their answers and I assured them that they will not face any negative consequences because of their opinions. I assured them that I want to know their challenges and coping mechanisms so that I may help them improve.

Fourthly, as a teacher at school I also know that some learners are naturally introverts and often refrain from participating. I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity, and reminded them that they may withdraw from the study with no consequences.

Fifthly, the study explored one communication mode – writing. The other modes of communication - speaking, reading, and listening - were not explored. In addition, the parents of the learners were not part of the study to offer their opinions about the challenges faced by their children when writing. Perhaps my next study will include parents of the learners as participants.

### **3.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter I explained the methodology that I followed in generating and analysing the data. I gave details of the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data generation instruments, ethics, gatekeeper approval, recruitment of participants, storage of data, credibility, transferability, dependability, trustworthiness and the limitations of the study. In the next chapter I discuss the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction:

In the previous chapter I discussed the methodology that informed this study. I indicated that learners were given written tasks that included questionnaires, informal letter and dialogue which were used to generate data. In this chapter, I present the findings that emerged when I analysed data generated by means of the questionnaires and two written tasks – the informal letter and the dialogue. The purpose was to answer the three research questions: What writing challenges do grade 8 Second Language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face? Why do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face such writing challenges? and how do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with their writing challenges? The analysis started with the questionnaire. The reason for starting with the questionnaire was to get background information about participants' upbringing and school life in general. The background information enabled me to see their truths, whether implicit or explicit from their perspective.

Age plays a very significant role in the acquisition of language as pointed out by Affective Filter Hypothesis of Krashen (1981), which regards learners' filters as very low. According to Krashen low affective filter promotes language acquisition.

Data drawn from the dialogues, informal letters and questionnaires were analysed thematically. The following themes surfaced from the data generation instruments:

### **Theme 1: Challenges facing grade 8 ESL learners in a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal**

#### **4.1.1 Lack of comprehension skills**

The data that surfaced from the dialogue showed that thirteen out of nineteen participants indicated that they lack understanding when writing in English. For example, "*My me is promblem is not andastanding English*" (Participant S – dialogue). This participant says he does not understand English. What the learner fails to identify as problematic, is that his lack of understanding English is not his only problem. His grammar and spelling are also very problematic. It is clear that Participant S lacks the competence to produce basic sentence construction, which is Subject Verb Object. Parts of speech and basic sentence construction are taught as early as the intermediate phase. Thus Participant S's use of the pronoun, "*Me*"

and possessive pronoun “*My*” indicate to me that his challenges probably stem from poor English teaching and learning practices from previous years. These basic skills were in all probability, not mastered in the earlier grades and are manifesting themselves in grade 8. His errors indicate that Participant S left primary school having not been taught these basic skills. The individual teachers and, by extension, his previous school and the Department of Education might have failed to ensure that learners who leave primary school are taught these skills.

Krashen (1981) argues that in the learned system, learners are taught a language in a formal classroom and that this is not necessarily the best method of learning a language.

Another problem that came to light is that of reading as noted in the statement: “*My problem I don’t understand the question and anywords I don’t pronounce*” (Participant Q - dialogue). Participant Q mentions that she does not understand questions and cannot pronounce words. She is implying that she cannot read. Reading is regarded as an accessory to understanding (Çakıroğlu, 2019). According to Krashen (1982), reading is a receptive skill therefore, lack of reading means the learners will not be able to infer any meaning from the words they read. According to Rose et al. (2006), learners can only be successful in their tests or examinations if they are able to read with understanding. Therefore, if learners fail to learn to read with understanding, they will obviously not be able to read to learn.

Not being able to read impacts on skills such as dictionary use. “*You what my friend to me it is difficult to understand questions and use a dictionary*” (Participant F- dialogue). The learner is indicating that he is unable to understand questions and use the dictionary. In fact, the dictionary should assist with understanding of English words. The inability to use the dictionary affects the learner negatively. The possibility is that Participant F has not been taught how to use a dictionary. The duty of the teacher is to ensure that dictionary skills are taught to learners. It is also possible that Participant F does not have a dictionary, which could explain why he is unable to use it. There are times when a dictionary is needed at home which is where in many cases a dictionary is needed when learners are doing independent work at home.

Krashen (1981) argues that for acquisition to happen learners must be exposed to a lot of comprehensible input. According to Krashen (1982) input hypothesis stresses that acquirers of language who are at ‘level *i*’ must obtain language input above their present understanding which is (*i*+1). It is clear that Participant F does not receive information above his present information because he cannot even use a dictionary. The Zone of Proximal Development

(ZDP) is non-existent to this Participant. If he does not have a dictionary it means he lacks a structure that would support him to achieve what an individual could not achieve on his/her own (Vygotsky, 1987). Krashen (1982) further argues that for acquisition to take place learners must understand what they read or hear. Gleaning from Participant F it is clear that if the scaffolding had been comprehensible, learning could have happened. Scaffolding is the support given to learners at an initial stage of learning and as learners succeed, such support is withdrawn (Bruner, 1983).

Participants X and R say their problem is that they do not understand the teacher. For example, *“I have are problem with with Anderstanding the teacher in a classroom”* (Participant E-dialogue); *“It me I am not understanding your test English and answer”* (Participant R-dialogue).

It is possible that the teachers lacked proficiency in English. It is also possible that the teachers are second language speakers of English and find it difficult to express themselves clearly to learners. It could also be that the teachers have not received the necessary training, as Sacks (2010) found that even though teachers are aware of the new curriculum (CAPS) at play, they have challenges in terms of interpretation and mediation of metalanguage because of poor training. It could be that the incompetencies of rural teachers are as a result of the apartheid education system as indicated by (Jane-Francis & Mpiti, 2014; Spaul, 2013)

Another explanation of Participant R’s not understanding an English test could be that grade 8 is their first year at high school and at primary school, they were not exposed to being spoken to in English for most of the lesson. If this is true, it will be in line with the findings of Emery (2012) who discovered that a number of teachers were not qualified specifically to teach English, or were qualified but not teaching at a level matching their qualifications. She further argued that such actions had bad repercussions for both learners and teachers. For teachers, it led to them being demotivated and for learners, it led to poor academic achievement.

According to Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the teacher is supposed to use the communicative and text-based approaches to teach the English language. (DoBE, 2011). The communicative approach advocates that when learners learn the language, they must be exposed to a great deal of target language and be allowed to practice or use it in real-world situations. The Communicative Language Approach (CLA) helps in improving the communicative aspects of learners. But the writing skill is neglected because the aim is the transmission of messages rather than correct usage of language. Another negative aspect of

CLA is that learners do not identify errors that occur when writing (Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia, & Paredes, 2019). The aim of the text-based approach is to empower learners to achieve competence, confidence, and be analytical readers, writers, and designers of any writings. The text-based approach compliments the communicative approach because learners learn tasks they will need to use out of the classroom. For example, writing a letter to the editor. If teachers are not well-qualified in English, it could explain why Participant R fails to understand the test and the teacher.

By the teacher speaking English, it is hoped that learners will find themselves in a conducive environment for the acquisition of the English language. Krashen (1982) speaks about the importance of an abundance of input to fast-track the learning of a second language. However, Krashen (1982) argues that comprehensible input must not be too difficult or too easy because acquisition will not happen. This could be the reason why ESL learners find it difficult to acquire English.

Participant R appears to be focussing on me as an English teacher. For example, *“It me I am not understanding your test English and answer”* The usage of the word “your” makes it sound as if it is only me who uses English as the medium of instruction. It might be that other teachers are code-switching between two languages. Code-switching is the alternation between two languages with the aim of assisting learners who are less proficient in a target language (Ferguson, 2003). The teachers could also be translating the information or are teaching in a language other than English, even though English is the medium of instruction.

The same opinions about the lack understanding emerged from some participants in their informal letters (A B, C, E, F, H, N, O, Q, R, S X, Y, Z). For example, *“I’m not understand English...”* Participant-A, *“Because I am not undurstand this world because it is very hard”* Participant-B, *“I want you to help undurstand English”* Participant H, *“i don’t understand English subject”* Participant O *“my problem I don’t understand the question in a test”* Participant-Q, *“ the challenge is not understand the question of”* Participant-Y, *“ It me I am not understand English”* Participant R, *“ I am writing a letter I am not anderstanding English”* Participant S, *“Please my help english to understand please of the english subject”* Participant-X.

Of particular interest to me was Participant O who wrote the informal letter both in English and isiZulu. What was clear in his letter written in isiZulu, was that his home literacy was very poor. For example, *“Uma ngithi ngiyabhala ngizwa iquestions ukuthi ithini”*. Translated as, *If*

*I write I hear questions what they mean.* In correct isiZulu Participant O was supposed to write, *Uma ngithi ngiyabhala angizwa imibuzo ukuthi ithini.* Translated as, *If I try to write I do not understand what questions mean.* It becomes clear that Participant O's home language competence allows him to speak in his mother tongue (Krashen, 1982) but he is not able to write in it. He therefore appears to lack competence in his first language. Poor mother-tongue literacy might provide possible reasons why learners have challenges when writing in the second language, which is English. If this finding is true, it is in line with the findings of Swan (1997) who found that mother-tongue competence plays a significant role in learning the second language.

What is very evident in the data gathered is that most participants do not understand and cannot write competently in both English and isiZulu. The likelihood is that in the previous grades their vocabulary, punctuation marks, parts of speech, and tenses, in both mother-tongue and second language was not developed (Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan, & Wahid, 2012; Reed, Petscher, & Foorman, 2016).

#### **4.1.2 Spelling Errors**

The data from dialogues revealed that all participants have spelling challenges. Some did not indicate that they have spelling challenges but their texts are full of such errors. For example, *“Thirth term is not big problem can hepen pass english”* (Participant H- letter). The spelling errors in the above quotes are: *“Thirth”* instead of third, *“hepen”* instead of happen, *“english”* instead of English. Even though Participant H has these spelling errors, in the statement above there is a voice of optimism about the current challenge that he is faced with as he is hopeful that by term three he might pass English. It is not clear why Participant H believes he will pass English. His writing at present does not indicate a positive outcome. It is possible that he has a plan to enable a positive outcome. According to Krashen (1981), the affective filter identifies self-confidence as one of the contributing factors to language acquisition. Therefore, the positive attitude and self-confidence Participant H has might enable him to achieve his positive outcome in term three.

*“I am are promblem. ... start in the primary challenges”* (Participant C- dialogue). Perhaps Participant C, wanted to say I have a problem and that problem started at primary school. The text is error-ridden. As a result, I must try to ascertain what exactly he wanted to say. If my assumption is correct, it will be in line with findings of Lunsford (2008) who discovered that

errors impede meaning. Participant C seems to know where his problems started. Even though he is not referring to the spelling per se, he recognises that his problem stems from primary school.

Another challenge that is evident in their writings, is that most of these participants seem to have a problem identifying the sound of words and their spelling (rhyme).

For example, participant C is confusing- **a** and **are**. It is possible that they were not taught about homophones/homonyms in the previous grades. Nahari & Alfadda, (2016) state that spelling is an important skill because it facilitates an understanding of written text. What could also explain why the participants lack basic spelling rules or why they have given up on knowing how to write in English is that their teachers were not qualified to teach English. This line of thought is reinforced by Elmas et al. (2015) who found that learners who were taught by well-qualified teachers, (those are teachers with B.Ed. degrees to PhD) achieved better grades than learners who were taught by teachers who had fewer qualifications.

Participant H has other problems, like spelling and concord. However, here I want to highlight the issue of sound (homophones/homonyms) like one of many Participant H's challenges. Participant H wrote: *"Sea please help me my problem do not undurstand English"* (Participant - H letter). The failure to identify the homophones is further emphasised by Participant's H failure to differentiate "Sea" from "Sir", and Participant Y wrote: *"You can gas and not trust sometime we can take in the comprehension"*. Participant Y failed to see the difference between "gas" and "guess". If my assumption about what the participant wanted to say is correct, it is line with the findings of Farooq et al. (2012) who found that spelling errors are one of the challenges facing ESL learners. According to CAPS English First Additional Language Grade 7 to 9, learners should have been taught in grades 4 to 7 basic spelling rules (DoE, 2011 p.57). It is important to note that Participant H is crying out for help. He says Sir please help me I want to understand English. This is a call that all teachers should answer and save these learners from their misery. Reading can be one strategy to assist learners like Participant H. Reading of English newspapers and magazines can be a scaffold to assist in the improvement of vocabulary. When his vocabulary has improved the student will be better placed to think and write in English.

### **4.1.3 Lack of punctuation**

In the following participants' texts, numerous mistakes are evident. However, in this section, I am concentrating on punctuation.

All participants' texts showed that they lacked punctuation skills. The following flaws surfaced from dialogues and letters: capitalisation, commas, apostrophe errors, question marks, periods, and semi-colons.

*"What can make to know English and understand words."* (Participant A- dialogue). Participant A puts a period instead of a question mark in the sentence above. In the following sentence (Participant I- letter), wrote: *"Please sir you can I help me to reading and understanding English"*. Participant I should have placed a comma after sir, capitalised S for Sir and put a period at the end of the sentence. While this section considers the punctuation errors in learners' writing, the plea for help is very clear. In addition, there is a strong intention by the learner to improve English competence. This cry for help is possibly an important step in moving forward for this learner, and others. Learners like Participant I are easy to help because they are determined to change their present circumstance, which is the lack of reading and understanding. One example of assisting is to give homework like diary entries, where they will write about things they were doing at home before they sleep.

In the next sentences, Participant F should have put a comma after the interjection 'Hey', and question mark at the end of the sentence, because he is asking the question. But she wrote: *"Hey my friend why it difficult to understand English because we learn everyday... we play with wrong time"* (Participant F-dialogue). Participant F needs to be exposed to how question words function. For example, why asks about the reason, who asks about the people, whose asks about the possessor, when ask about the time, where about the place and how about the condition of something.

*"If the question not understand i cope anything in the comprehension."* (Participant N- letter). Participant N was supposed to capitalise "I" because it refers to the first person. In the next sentence, the apostrophe is not necessary. For example, *"Your's learner"* (Participant I- letter). The sentence should read *Your learner*. It is possible that Participant I wanted to indicate that he belongs to the teacher because the letter was written to the teacher. Perhaps he does not know the function of the apostrophe which is used to show possession and to show contraction.

From this evidence, it is clear that these learners have very little idea about punctuation marks, and as such, the meaning they are trying to convey is flawed. If these findings are true, this will be in line with what was found by Spaul (2013) that in rural schools there is often a poor

culture of teaching and learning. Abdul-Baki et al. (2016) also found that the correct use of punctuation mark is important in writing because their absence leads to loss of meaning. The possibility is that the learners were not taught punctuation in the previous grades. Or perhaps they were taught but did not grasp it well enough to be able to apply it.

#### **4.1.4 Lack of understanding of grammar rules**

Ummah (2018) argues that grammar is the ability to use appropriate rules to precisely communicate the messages to your audience. According to the CAPS document, the best way to teach grammar and increase the learners' vocabulary is to expose them to a lot of reading in and out of school. Furthermore, both grammar and vocabulary need to be taught in and out of context (DoBE, 2011). Cowan (2008) defines grammar as rules that explain how words can be organised to formulate coherent sentences in any language. Considering what is in the learners' texts, it is evident that my learners lack grammar rules.

All participants' texts revealed that participants do not understand language structure and the conventions of language.

In the following sentence, Participant B dialogue confuses present continuous tense with past continuous tense. He should have written: *I understand we are writing a letter*. But he wrote: *"I am understanding were are writing a letter"*. I think he meant 'we' not I. Participant-B also in the letter used two auxiliary verbs. For example, *"were and are"*. Are is the present tense of were and were is past tense of are. They are both in the plural. In the same sentence Participant-B failed to separate an article "a" from noun letter.

In the sentence below, the learner confuses plural verb with a singular verb: 'go' instead of 'goes'. He confuses possessive plural pronoun with singular possessive pronoun: *"Their"* instead of *"his"*. He should have written: *Ayanda goes to his home* or *Ayanda goes into their home*, but wrote: *"Ayanda go in their home"* (Participant H-dialogue).

*"If we are writing wind of me is slow because are not undursand English"* (Participant H-Dialogue). Participant H should have written: *If we are writing my mind is slow because I do not understand English*. Participant H wrote *are* instead of *"I"*, the spelling of *"undursand"* is wrong, it should be *understand*, H wrote *"wind"* instead of *mind*.

Participant J – in the letter wrote: “*The thing that worry me the most is the spelling*”, “*The thing that help to cope with these challenges is the dictionary*”. Participant J was supposed to use the form *worries* instead of *worry* and should use *helps to cope* instead of *help to cope*.

The evidence above indicates that tenses are a real challenge for my learners. These findings are in line with those of Ngulube (2015) who found that second language learners do acquire language structures of a target language but find it hard to put them into an understandable text.

#### **4.1.5 Home language interference**

“Interference is defined as errors in the learner’s use of a foreign language that can be traced back to mother-tongue” (Lott, 1983, p. 256). The best way of learning a second language is to ensure that there is no cross interference between mother-tongue and target language (Iqbal, 2016).

Thirteen participants (questionnaires) preferred to be taught in their mother-tongue only because isiZulu is easy. For example, “*IsiZulu ingoba silula noma usikhuluma*” (Participant K- questionnaire). Translated as, *IsiZulu because it is easy to speak it*. Participant C in the questionnaire chose to be taught both in English and isiZulu. For example, “*Ulimi engithanda ukufundiswa ngazo esikoleni isiNgisi kunye nesiZulu*” (Participant C- questionnaire). Translated as: *the language I prefer to be taught in at school are isiZulu and English*. You will notice that at the start of the sentence it sounds as if Participant C prefers one language. However, at end of the sentence he changes and mentions two languages.

Thirteen participants are contradicting the findings of Nazary (2008) who conducted a study on Iranian university students and found that learners were hesitant to use their mother-tongue, citing that their exposure to their mother-tongue would lessen their chances of getting more use of the target language.

Participant C wants to be taught in both isiZulu and English. The possibility is that he is aware of his identity as a black South African who is a Zulu and is also aware of multi-culturalism that exists in South Africa, therefore, he wants to know both languages.

These thirteen participants who preferred to be taught in their mother-tongue mentioned that isiZulu is easy for them to understand. However, there are other possibilities for their preference. For example, “*IsiZulu ngoba uMama wami ungumuntu omnyama nami ngingumuntu omnyama futhi sikhuluma isiZulu.*” (Participant-S questionnaire). Translated as:

*isiZulu because my mother is a black person and I am a black person and we speak isiZulu.* Whorf and Chase (1956) argue that language has a great impact on how people understand reality. Participant S's reality is that she is a black person and should speak a black person's language. Therefore, the reality she possesses about her identity may be the reason why she is not able to write competently in English.

What is clear is that Participant S is relinquishing any responsibility towards learning English because she is a black person and must thus speak a black person's language, which may explain why she performs so poorly when writing in English. If this is true, this will be in contrast with the findings of Ahmed (2015) who conducted a study on attitudes on learning English in a Malaysian University and found that students were very positive towards learning the English Language. They went as far as to attend extra classes.

Ten participants preferred to be taught in English. However, it must be noted that Participant U gave the answer in isiZulu. For example, "*Yingoba uma ungasazi isingisi ufunda e-Unersity ihlazo noma ufunda nomlungu*" (Participant U- questionnaire). Translated as: *because not knowing English while you are in the university is a shame, particularly when you are learning with white people.* It is clear from Participant U's comments that to him English is white people's language. Therefore, his attitude may have a negative impact or positive impact depending on Participant U's feelings toward white people.

Participant U sounds as if she knows that English is a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2004). Lingua Franca means any language of communication used by people of different home languages and that language is their second language. Therefore, all people need to know English, if they want to succeed either in business or education.

This statement made by Participant U indicates that U regards English as an important language. In the above statement, the English language is also portrayed as a language of superiority and pride, which makes one who does not know English described as shameful. Perhaps the attitude he has about English as a powerful language is from his parents because belief systems are influenced by the people with whom we live. If this is true, it is in line with the findings of Kajee (2011) who discovered that parents of minor languages are forced to embrace the practices of the target language to facilitate their children's education.

In contrast to Participant U is Participant W, who wrote: "*White people want everything to be done in English*". This statement above carries a negative attitude, which identifies white people as oppressors. The connotation is, if white people never wanted everything to be done

in English, he might have chosen to be taught in isiZulu. This kind of attitude could also explain why Participant W faces challenges when writing in English.

Participant Q in the questionnaire said: “*Yingoba e-primary bebengasitsheli isingisi bebe sitshela ngesiZulu, bekumele besikhulumise isingisi ayi isiZulu, ngesikhathi sesingisi sikhulume isingisi*”. This translates as: *At primary school they were teaching us in isiZulu, they were supposed to teach us in English if it's an English period, and teach us isiZulu during isiZulu period.* Actions by primary school teachers might have had a negative impact on Participant Q's ability to write in English, because he is complaining that his primary school teachers should have taught him in English but they did not do so and now he is faced with a problem that could have been avoided. This finding is in line with the findings of Spaul (2013) who discovered that the damage done by apartheid in our Education System (South Africa) is in display by incompetent teachers who are normally found in rural schools.

## **4.2 Theme 2: Learners' reasons for challenges when writing in English**

### **4.2.1 Lack of Early Childhood Development (ECD)**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is defined as an all-inclusive strategy meant for children between zero to nine years of age (DoE, 2001). The sole purpose of ECD is to ensure that children are developed holistically. Arnold (2004) states that the World Bank has invested over \$1.2 billion to assist a number of countries in the world to deal with ECD issues. However, 65% of my grade 8 ESL learners of Siyazimelela District in KwaZulu-Natal have not received this important basic human right. From the evidence they have given, it is clear that when they started school they were unprepared. Unpreparedness could be the reason why they have challenges when writing in English (Spaul, 2013).

ECD creates a solid foundation for children upon which to build their lives and studies have publicised ECD as a weapon to fight a high drop-out rate in our societies. ECD attendees do not repeat grades (Young, 2002). Bukaliya and Mubika (2012) argue that ECD has a powerful effect on the children's lives even in later years and Young (2002) writes that ECD creates a solid foundation for children upon which to build their lives. According to UNICEF (2005), 95% of Africa's children between the ages of five and six do not attend crèches or preschools. Such a staggering number explains why African countries are behind in economics, education, health and technology.

Young and Mustard, 2008 argue that if children are exposed to two language sounds at infant stages they ultimately become proficient in those languages later in life. They further argue that seven to eight months is a significant period in children's lives because it is the time when differentiation of neurons for hearing occurs in human beings. The literature above is evidence that my grade 8 ESL class is struggling with writing in English because a big number of them did not attend crèche. Language competence and adulthood literacy are greatly influenced by the milieu of a child's life. Therefore, if my grade ESL's did not attend preschool in their early lives the likelihood is that they will struggle to master ESL (Young & Mustard, 2008).

Sixteen out of twenty-six participants indicated that they did not attend Crèche or Preschool. I use Crèche and Preschool interchangeably because in this area Crèche and preschool are understood to mean the same thing. For example, "*No, because I was leave in farm they is no crèche*" (Participant B-questionnaire). translated as: *No because I lived in the farm.* "No, because there has no crèche in my area" (Participant D-questionnaire); "*No, because no crèche to there time;*" (Participant A-questionnaire).

Participant B noted that she did not attend preschool because she lived on a farm. A farm is understood to mean a deep rural area. Participant D says she did not attend crèche because it was not in her area.

The nine participants who indicated that they attended crèche/preschool before grade one, indicate having similar challenges to the other participants. This indicates that even though they attended preschool before grade one but they were probably not prepared for grade one. What I glean from this evidence, is that lack of ECD has a negative effect on the education of rural learners. Secondly, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) must look closely at the education of rural learners and put monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure that learners' futures are not jeopardised by either incapacity of ECD practitioners or poverty.

Atmore, van Niekerk, and Ashley-Cooper (2012) found that because of poverty, lack of electricity, unemployment in deep rural communities, ECD facilities are not in the position to provide quality ECD to learners before they enter grade one The biggest challenge of these rural ECD centres is that of finance. As a result of lack of funds, children in these ECD centres suffer malnutrition and unqualified ECD practitioners are not paid well (Lundberg, 1993).

#### **4.2.2 Low self-esteem/ motivation**

Ryan and Deci (2000) mention two types of motivation: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as inward propulsion to do something. Intrinsically motivated learners do not need reasons to do something but they do it to satisfy their inquisitiveness. Extrinsic motivation is a concept that is about doing something because you want to get a reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It seems that my ESL learners lack both types of motivation.

Participants (S, E, J) indicated in their texts that they do not love school, which could reveal that these participants are demotivated. For example, “*My is not my me small mide*” (Participant S- dialogue), translated as *My mind is small*.

The statement possibly indicates a crushed spirit, which calls for immediate intervention from those in authority. Or perhaps, she is belittling herself because of her inability to write in English. The same desperation was also indicated by Participant E: “*And love of school is finish with me*” (Participant E- dialogue), which means *I do not have the love for school*. The question is what finished his love for school? The possibility is that participant E has an illiterate family, and is not encouraged in his school work. Or perhaps it means they have lost all enthusiasm for school. This could indicate a possible drop out before completing high school. Such hopelessness has to be addressed by teachers and the Department of Education.

It is clear that some of the participants’ challenges are not personal but also caused by their families. For example, one participant is quoted as saying: “*I have a problem in home someone say I have my father talent who fails in school*” (Participant E- dialogue), which means *I have a problem at home someone says I am like my father who used to fail at school*. I notice that participant E is not confident to name that person. Probably that someone might be an adult whom Participant E is scared of. If learners are being told that they are bound to fail because of their DNA, perhaps schools and teachers need to convince them otherwise.

Participant J mentions in both letter and dialogue that he is lazy: “*When I am writing English I got lazy and when you teach us English I don’t concentrate*” (Participant J- Letter), “*I got lizzy and feel like I want to sleep*” (Participant J- dialogue).

There are a number of possibilities as to what Participant J says. This could mean that a teacher’s teachings methods are demotivating, there are not enough facilities to learn (school is poorly resourced), the demands made by teacher on learners to use grammatically correct sentences in speech and writing can demotivate the struggling learner and long reading texts can be a great burden (Meshkat & Hassani 2012). This means participants are deeply demotivated, which may explain why they are having challenges when writing in English.

These findings are in line with findings of Glenn (2007) who found that if learners lack motivation they will perform poorly academically.

The affective filter of Krashen (1982) identifies motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as major players in language acquisition. What I glean from participants' texts is that they are demotivated, lack self-confidence and they have debilitating anxiety.

#### **4.2.3 Lack of reading**

“Reading is considered an important source of language input” (DoE, 2011p. 36). Reading further assists learners to reproduce language they have been exposed to through reading. However, the writings of these participants appear not to be positively influenced by their reading. The evidence is in their texts which are error-ridden and lack correct vocabulary. Heys (1962) conducted a study on writing and the findings revealed that the learners writing was positively influenced by reading.

Twenty-three participants from the questionnaires said that they do read out of school. For example, “*Yebo ngoba suke ngilungiselela ukufunda okulungiselelwe*” (Participant G-questionnaire). Translated: *Yes, when I am preparing for a prepared reading*. Prepared reading is one of the oral tasks they do in English. Participant E said: *Yebo, ngiyafunda uma ngizifundela iphephandaba, kanye no-Bona noma uma ngizifundela izincwadi ezibhalwe ngesiNgisi*” translated as: *Yes, I do read newspapers and Bona-Magazine and other English books*. Even though Participant E reads Bona magazine, English newspapers and books, there is no evidence of such in her writings. It is possible that even though, Participant E makes an effort to read Bona Magazine and English books but he does not understand what he reads.

Three participants (A, H, X) said that they do not read when they are out of school. Probably, participants (A, H, X) are the ones who are not doing their homework, thus making teachers work even more difficult, and in the process lessening their chances of learning to write in English. All learners are expected to do some reading at home. If a learner says that he does not read at home, it could mean that the learner does not take school seriously. Another possible reason for not doing homework might be poverty related. Many times, if I ask learners why homework was not done, they say they did not have stick-candles for lights. If this situation is correct it will be in line with the findings of Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) who found that poverty affects the education of learners negatively.

Even though twenty-three said they read when they are at home their writing shows a negative variance, which is poor vocabulary, poor spelling, poor sentence construction, poor punctuation and poor tenses among others. Perhaps participants said they do read at home to impress me as their teacher because I always encourage them to read.

#### **4.2.4 Non-usage of English at home**

When learners were asked in the questionnaires if they use English out of school, eighteen participants said that they do not use English out of school. For example, “*Cha ngoba ekhaya ngeke ngikwazi ukuthi ngikhulumise ogo ngesingisi ngoba abafundile*” (Participant J-questionnaire). Translated as: *No, I stay with grandmother, and she does not know English, therefore, speaking English is not possible, “And don’t talk English me I understand Zulu language”* (Participant O- letter). Participant J says, he cannot speak English at home because he stays with his grandmother. It is clear from what Participant J says that, his grandmother is illiterate. Menheere and Hooge (2010) conducted a study on parental involvement in children’s education and discovered that parents are faced with many challenges when trying to assist their children with homework because of their inability to read and write.

Many participants did not give details as to why they were not using English at home. Probably, because they do not know why they are not using English. In fact, they should be using it because most subjects are in English, except isiZulu. Eleven participants said that they use English out of school sometimes, but for a short time. The time they refer to could be during homework or when they study for tests and when they are interacting with friends in their societies.

What I glean from the evidence above is that there is cultural discontinuity (Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006). Cultural discontinuity suggests that there is inconsistency among cultures (Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; Taggart, 2017). According to Widdowson (1990) societal acquired knowledge is schematic systematic knowledge (background knowledge/ socio-cultural knowledge) which is opposed to systematic knowledge that is formally acquired (phonology, morphology, syntax and semantic). Writing functions in terms of schematic knowledge shaped by the social environment where the learner is living (Clyne, 1981, Alptekin, 1993).

Hence, second language learners are socialised differently from mother-tongue learners and as a result, they come to school with divergent discourse to that of their teachers. They are

expected to switch over to a target language discourse at school and when they leave school they switch back to their mother-tongue discourse. The location of the school is deep rural; learners are not exposed to television as there is no electricity in their homes. Many of the families survive on government grants because they do not work. Such cultural incongruences have a negative bearing on language acquisition. Taggart (2017) conducted a study on cultural discontinuity on high school students in Texas, USA and found that cultural discontinuity has a negative impact on school achievement which is evident in my learners' writings.

#### **4.2.5 Lack of support/ resources needed in teaching and learning English Second language (ESL)**

Nine participants said that no one helps them with homework, they do it by themselves. For example, "*Akekho ngoba bonke abafundile ngihlala nomama*" (Participant –F questionnaire), translated as: *No one helps me, all are illiterate I stay with my mother.* Participant H questionnaire said: "*Ngiya bhalela ngoba akhekho ozongisiza*" Translated as: *I write for myself because there is no one that can help me.*

Participant F says, no one helps him and all are illiterate. All probably refers to the extended family members with whom he lives in a compound. In the deep rural African village, extended family stay together but in different houses. Participant F says all are illiterate which means that they cannot read and write in English.

It is possible that her extended family is illiterate, and she is afraid to seek help from her neighbours who can help her. What I glean from his statement is that Participant F has a low regard of those with whom she lives. The situation must be frustrating for her and this frustration is compounded by her lack of regard for significant others in her life. Participant H says she writes by herself. I sense loneliness. The loneliness could be because she stays alone at home because some of the learners at school are heading families. A child-headed family is defined as a household where there is no adult person and children are living alone fending for themselves (Mturi, 2012).

Seven participants indicated that they do not have resources like dictionaries. For example, '*I need to go buy a dictionary because it help me to know what I need to write in English*' (Participant A- letter); "*Me I don't have a dictionary*" (Participant N –letter); "*My friend you need to buy a dictionary to know English and understand*"; (Participant A- dialogue); "*If they reading at home in English they needed a dictionary*" (Participant B-letter); "*If I have no*

*dictionary, My friend if you discuss at home. Please my sister to buy a dictionary”* (Participant B- dialogue); *“I want a dictionary to correct all my mistakes”* (Participant K- letter).

What I glean from the seven participants is that they are aware of the importance of having a resource like a dictionary, which they think might help them solve their challenges. However, their challenge could be related to the fact that many of their parents are not working and they survive on grants. Therefore, buying a dictionary is difficult for them. They are aware of what will assist them, but they will probably not be assisted because they will not be able to access the help that is needed. This implies that learners who do not have the means to improve have little chance for advancement. The cycle of poverty will be replicated unless interventions are introduced by persons or groups of authority or means. If this situation is true, it will be in line with the findings of Ndebele (2015) who found that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are not likely to be involved in their children’s school work because they work long hours with minimum pay, travel long hours to work and back home and reach their homes late and very tired.

### **4.3 Theme: 3 Coping strategies used by ESL learners when faced with challenges when writing in English**

#### **4.3.1 Assistance from family members**

Fifteen participants said that they do have someone who helps with homework, those people are their sisters and mothers. Their answers were given in isiZulu. For example, *“udade”* (Participant –A questionnaire), translated *my sister*, *“Udadewethu ngoba mina angisazi isiNgisi”* (Participant- S questionnaire), translated: *my sister because I do not know English*.

Participant Z gave two contradictory responses. Participant Z said: *“Akekho ngiyazibhalelanye ngizame lapho engazi khona, khona uke engibhalele usisi uma ngikulethile noma ethanda”* (Participant-Z questionnaire) translated as: *“No one helps me... my sister helps me if I took my homework to her and when she likes”*, There are two interpretations of what Participant- Z said. This could mean, she does not have a person who is willing to help her. The sister only helps if she likes. The possibility is that his sister assists him in some subjects and in others, she cannot. As a result, Participant Z is not enthusiastic to ask her for assistance because she helps only when she is able to or when she feels like assisting. Perhaps behaviour such as the sisters is the reason why some learners come to school with unfinished homework.

Byington and Kim (2017) conducted a study on writing and discovered that learners regard what they learn at school as important if they realise that even their parents partake in the same kinds of activities in their homes. However, Participant Z's situation is contrary to the findings of Byington and Kim (2017). The possibility is that Participant Z stays with his sister and the sister has a burden of taking care of all other parental roles like cooking. Hence, helping him with homework is not always possible. That is why she helps if she likes. In a study conducted by Xu and Corno (2003) about homework challenges, it was found that one Spanish family wanted to assist their children with homework but the challenge was that of a language barrier. Thus, the family only motivated the child to do homework. This could be the same challenge facing the sister of Participant Z.

#### 4.3.2 Guessing

Fourteen participants indicated that their coping strategy is to guess answers and sometimes they copy from the text. For example, *“But I write the thing that I think in my mind”* (Participant A- letter). Participants A and G never went to crèche and missing that important educational foundation puts them at a disadvantage. If attending ECD classes has an important effect on learners' educational life. It is possible that Participants A and G's isiZulu literacy and English are both poor. Therefore, when he is writing, he writes what comes into his mind, which could be wrong.

*“You can gas and not trust sometime we can take in the comprehension”* (Participant Y-letter); *“We can answer ring a wrong question”* (Participant Y- dialogue). Participant Y says sometimes he guesses by taking what is in the comprehension passage. It sounds as if Participant Y is aware that guessing involves risks of choosing the wrong answer. He says *“we can answer and ring a wrong answer”*. I am not sure who he is referring to by using *“We”*, the possibility is that he is referring to his classmates. If my thoughts are correct, it means it is their common practice to guess or take from the comprehension passage. Sometimes they guess correctly and sometimes the guesses are incorrect. Such thoughts are emphasised by Participant G's letter: *“Sometimes I write a word and think wrong that its wrong but when the papers come back I see that Oh I was right”* Translated: *sometimes I write thinking it is a wrong answer, when my script comes back, I discover that I was correct.*

If this is the situation, it will be in line with those of Nash and Snowling (2006) who found that context does help learners to find meaning. This was also confirmed by Shokouhi and Askari

(2010) who argue that learners can draw meaning of new words by using the context. However, the reliance on contextual clues to find the meaning of new words has its own challenges.

Webb (2016) is of the opinion that guessing is important in certain contexts. He further argues that contextual guessing is challenging because for the learner to guess successfully he /she must know 19 out of 20 words of the text. Krashen (1981) argues that the language that learners need to acquire must be neither too easy nor too difficult, because if it is too difficult, the acquisition will not happen, and if too easy, vocabulary will not be acquired.

### **4.3.3 Seeking help from other learners**

Four participants (R, S, V, Z) indicated that they seek help from other people. For example, “*Ngiyafunda lokho akubhalile ngibuze kuye noma uma ebhala ngiba seduze*” (Participant Z-questionnaire). Translated as: *I read what my sister has written and asked her or when she is writing I sit next to her.*

“*I ask someone to help I can’t know*” (Participant R-questionnaire); “*I ask because I can help*” (Participant S-questionnaire); “*I ask my sister to correct me all things that is wrong*” (Participant V-questionnaire).

The coping mechanism used by Participants R, S, V and Z in seeking help from their siblings indicates that they are worried about their situation. Their attitudes reveal inquisitiveness expected from learners of their age. Children behave differently in the face of difficult situations because of their socialisation (Newman, 2002). What I glean from the R, S, and V, is that perhaps attending crèche assisted them to be inquisitive. However, Participant Z did not attend crèche but he possesses the same attitude as the other three participants. Perhaps Participant Z is influenced by the three other participants, even though we are not sure how close they are. It could also be that Z is self-motivated (Stone, Deci, & Ryan, 2009). If this situation is true, it is in line with what Gall, (1981) and Newman (1994) call “adaptive help-seeking”. Adaptive help-seeking is where learners look for help so that they will be able to do things by themselves (Gall & Jones 1990).

### **4.3.4 Giving up**

When five participants (B, C, F, G, H) were asked what they do when they do not know what to write, they indicated that they leave blank spaces. For example, “*I leave it*” (Participant B-

questionnaire); “*Ngivele ngiyekele ukubhala uba angazi lutho lento engiyibhalayo esikoleni*”), (Participant C- questionnaire), translated as: “*I just stop writing and leave blank spaces, if do not know what is being written at school*”. It is possible that Participant C has been leaving blank spaces when writing for a long time because she says she “*just stops*”. This kind of attitude reveals that she does not take the exam or the test seriously. Secondly, it is possible that her teachers might not have emphasised the importance of finishing the exam or the tests. A third possibility is that she has not been trained to manage time during an exam, which leads her to just leave blank spaces because the exam time has lapsed. If this situation is true, it is in line with Crocker (2011) who found that coaching of learners before the exams increase chances for them to get good grades.

Participant G gave different responses. In English, she said: “*No writing*”; in isiZulu, she said: “*Ngivele ngiqobelenje sengenzela ukuthi kuphelele*” translated as: *I just write anything so that I finish*. The reason why she does not answer in English could be the fear of making mistakes when writing in English. If this situation is true, it will be in line with the findings of Worde von (2003) who conducted a study on Students’ Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety and found that anxiety manifests itself in many ways and one of its manifestations is avoiding doing something. However, when it is isiZulu she just writes anything to fill up the gaps. The attitude of filling the gaps could be because teachers told her that leaving spaces puts her at risk of being described as a lazy learner. Therefore, she does not want to be seen as a lazy learner even in her own language. Her approach to writing something in isiZulu and leaving empty spaces in English probably indicates a lack of understanding and inability to write in English.

“*Ngiyayeka ngingabhali ngoba ngisuke ngingazi ukuthi ngizothini*” (Participant F-questionnaire). Meaning: *I just do not write because, I normally do not know what to say*. “*Mina angazi ukuthi uma ngibhalile ngisuke ngibhaleni*” (Participant H-questionnaire). Translated as: *I do not know if it happens that I write, I end up not knowing what did I write?*

Participant F sounds as if she is used to not writing when she does not know what to do. If this is what Participant F has been doing for a period of time, it identifies a lack of teacher’s ability to motivate the learners to write. It could be that he/she lacks proficiency in English and is not noticing that the learners have problems that need urgent attention. **Jane-Francis and Mpiti, 2014**) conducted a study on the teachers’ and learners’ experiences of learners’ writing in English First Additional Language and discovered that teachers could not finish a conversation

with the researcher without code-switching or code-mixing. If this situation is true, the biggest question to be asked is how can teachers teach ESL to learners if they are not well- conversant with the language themselves. Secondly, if this what Participant F is habitually doing when writing in English, she is not getting the much needed practise (Myles, 2002) which could explain her lack of improvement.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the findings that surfaced from data analysis. The findings were presented in themes that emerged from data generation instruments. The answers given by participants when responding to the research questions disclosed some challenges faced by learners when writing in English, why they face such challenges and how they cope with these challenges. The findings revealed that all participants faced challenges in respect of comprehension skills, spelling errors, punctuation skills, lack of understanding of tenses/subject verb object (SVO) as well as home language interference. On the reasons why they faced such challenges, they indicated that lack of Early Childhood Development (ECD), lack of reading, non-usage of English at home, lack of support/ resources needed in teaching and learning English as a Second Language. To cope with these challenges, they said they guess answers and seek help from other learners. In the next chapter, I present the summary, implications (theoretical, policy, methodological, professional practice implications), limitations areas for future research recommendations and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction:**

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings that surfaced from analysing data. The findings were presented in themes that emerged from data generation instruments. In this chapter, I present the summary, implications (theoretical, policy, methodological, professional practice implications), limitations, areas for future research recommendations and conclusion.

I conducted a qualitative case study on the challenges facing ESL learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal. The intention of the study was answering the research questions:

1. What writing challenges do grade 8 second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face?
2. Why do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face such writing challenges?
3. How do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with their writing challenges?

In answering the research questions, questionnaires and two written tasks were used to generate data. My theoretical framework, Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen 1981; Krashen 1982) thematic analysis and relevant literature helped me in analysing my data.

In the subsequent paragraphs, I present a summary of the main findings of the study, in line with the three research questions. I also present the Theoretical implications, Policy implications, Methodological implications, Professional practice implications, Limitations of the study, areas for future research/Recommendations.

#### **5.2 Main findings of the study**

##### **5.2.1 What writing challenges do grade 8 second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face?**

The findings revealed that participants lacked comprehension skill which negatively impacted their writing. What I discovered is that participants would try to mention their challenges when writing in English, and in the process, deeper challenges would be revealed. For example, a participant would say that he/she lacks understanding. However, the text revealed spelling, tenses and punctuation as additional challenges. Another challenge noted by participants is that of difficulty when reading. Reading is considered a receptive skill and if it is not mastered no

new language can be acquired because there is no comprehensible input, resulting in a lack of understanding.

Spelling is one of the big challenges faced by ESL learners. Their texts were error-ridden, making it difficult to deduce what were they stating as their challenges because texts lacked meaning. What comforted me is that participants were hopeful that their circumstances will change before the end of the year.

The findings suggest that participants are aware of punctuation marks but they fail to use them correctly. Even though punctuation marks are non-lexical their poor application causes the loss of meaning. As a result, many of the challenges faced by ESL learners when writing had to be translated and deduced.

The findings suggest that grammar was not grasped by ESL learners from their previous grades. This was evident when their texts revealed that they lack basic sentence construction. Home language interference was identified as another challenge. Many participants preferred to be taught in their mother-tongue, obviously, frustrated by the lack of understanding of the target language. Some participants who preferred to be taught in English answered in isiZulu. It is evident that mother-tongue influence is greatly affecting the acquisition of English as a Second Language.

### **5.2.2 Why do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face such writing challenges?**

Evidence points to the fact that many of my ESL learners lack solid educational backgrounds because they did not attend Early Childhood Development Centres before starting grade one. Even those who attended pre-schools before entering grade one had nothing to show for their attendance because they had similar challenges as those of the non-attendees. Evidence also suggests that participants lacked self-esteem. They believed the worst about themselves, and felt that their minds were small. In other words, they felt that their minds cannot cope with the challenges the English Second Language places on them.

Poor reading is a further reason ESL have challenges when writing. The findings revealed that participants read only for homework or in preparation for an oral presentation. The findings further revealed that participants do not use English in their homes. The reasons cited by participants is that they stay with grandmothers who are illiterate in English therefore, speaking English with a grandmother is not possible because she does not understand. The participants indicated they lacked human and material support at home. The older siblings help when they

choose to, making support of any kind unstable. The parents promise to buy dictionaries but such promises are not fulfilled because they cannot afford them.

### **5.2.3 How do learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with their writing challenges?**

The findings suggest that participants try to use the services of their family members or school friends to alleviate their challenges. However, even in their attempts to find assistance from their homes they are met with resistance or lack of expertise from family members. Some participants take the route of guessing if they do not know what to write. Some participants note that sometimes guessing works and sometimes it does not work. The findings further suggest that learners' means of "coping" is to give up. When they give up, they simply do not write. This coping mechanism is dangerous because it might lead to dropping out of school.

### **5.3 Theoretical implications**

Monitor Model as a theoretical framework assisted me in understanding the participants' writing challenges, reasons for such challenges and how they coped with those writing challenges.

The Krashen Monitor Model has two well-defined techniques by which people acquire competence in any language: the acquired system and the learned system. These two techniques with which language is acquired gave me an understanding of the position of my ESL learners. Their position is that they are black learners in a deep rural area and their mother-tongue is isiZulu, not English. Therefore, it does not matter how much effort they (my learners) expend in learning the Second Language, they will not be able to reach the level of mother-tongue speakers, who are assisted by their environment in acquiring their language.

It is clear from the evidence presented, that many of the writing challenges faced by ESL learners are as a result of lack of comprehensible input, non-conducive environments and poor educational backgrounds. The acquired system which is the best way of acquiring any language, could not be used on my ESL learners because English Second language is not their mother-tongue.

Using Krashen's Monitor Model as a lens in my study made me realise the flaws in my teaching English Second language. For example, I was not aware of the acquired and learned systems and how each functioned. Being part of the research assisted me to interpret the participants'

challenges even though their discourse lacked correct grammar. The affective (Krashen, 1982) filter notes that emotions and attitudes play an important role in language acquisition. Learners are emotional beings. Thus, if their emotions and attitudes are negative, no language acquisition will take place.

#### **5.4 Policy implications**

Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) spells out what teachers should do when it comes to teaching writing in English. However, the findings reveal that though teachers believe they have done their jobs the learners have not grasped the skill of writing adequately.

It implies that despite sound policies in place, teachers need to be developed and monitored so that learners are able to learn from their teachers. It appears that the policies in place do not guarantee that learners will learn to write in English. The policies, despite being clear, do not show teachers how to ensure that learners enter high school being able to write in English.

In 2001 the government passed Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education. This Paper was meant to address the needs of all children from zero to nine years of age. However, the findings reveal that rural learners are still marginalised because they still do not attend crèche or preschool before grade one which affects their schooling and career prospects. Great work has been done by our government, however, policy imperatives have not been realised in deep rural areas (Atmore, van Niekerk, & Ashley-Cooper, 2012).

#### **5.5 Methodological implications**

The methods of data generation used were questionnaires and two written tasks, which were to write a dialogue and an informal letter. These three instruments ensured that triangulation was achieved both in data collection and data analysis. A case study which is distinguished by its close attention to a case being explored assisted me to reach data-driven conclusions about the challenges faced by ESL learners in deep rural areas.

Utilising questionnaires, dialogues and informal letters assisted me to get to the gist of the participants' writing challenges. The findings from different instruments were analysed, matched up against each other to check for discrepancies. The findings revealed that learners were able to give details of the challenges they face when writing in English. The questionnaires helped in validating evidence found in dialogues and informal letters.

## **5.6. Professional practice implications**

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for my present and future practice. When I began with this study I had many preconceived ideas about the writing challenges facing ESL learners, including my perception that many of their challenge resulted from laziness on their part. The negative attitudes I had made me act in a certain way towards them. In addition, my approaches to teaching English were not fully utilised because of my negative attitude toward the learners. The findings of this study assisted me to realise that ESL learners are more disadvantaged than I realised. They have challenges at home which are not school related but which affect schooling badly. Henceforth, I know that I will need to listen to them and use their ideas to come up with approaches that will meet them half-way.

The findings revealed that ESL learners regard writing as one of the important skills. This was revealed when they went all out seeking help from siblings and fellow classmates and they even had the courage to proclaim that by the third term they will pass English. Such hopefulness talks to me personally, saying these learners have not given up. All they need is just help from their teachers, classmates and parents/siblings.

Henceforth, I will make every effort, including the use of questionnaires, to find out more about new grade eight learners. These questionnaires will assist me to learn about their educational backgrounds, socio-economic conditions existing at home, the challenges they face and what it is that they do to survive.

I also learnt that this degree is very different from and more difficult than other degrees I have pursued. It is not about memorising facts and regurgitating them, but about processing ideas and writing a cohesive text. In addition, I learnt that time is a valuable commodity, and wasting it could cost one dearly.

## **5.7 Limitations of the study**

The limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one school in Siyazimelela District in KwaZulu-Natal with 26 participants. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised, because 26 participants cannot be a representation of all grade eights in Siyazimelela District or any other rural area in South Africa.

My study used the qualitative approach only, and a quantitative approach might have revealed additional or other findings. The study explored one communication mode, writing. Other modes of communication - speaking, reading, and listening - were not explored. Parents or guardians of the learners were not part of the study to give their opinions about the challenges faced by their children when writing.

### **5.8 Areas for future research**

I recommend that future research be conducted by using mixed methods approach to strengthen triangulation and open up further aspects to the study I recommend that teachers and parents/guardians be included as participants of future studies on this topic. This will enable both teachers and parents/guardians to give their own reasons why they think their children have these writing challenges. This will enable a forum where challenges facing deep rural learners are discussed. As part of data generation instruments, I believe interviews be included to enable greater clarification of issues raised in written data sources.

### **5.9 Conclusion:**

This coursework dissertation opened my eyes to the sometimes very difficult and stressful experiences of the participants of this study, the learners in my classroom. I certainly had a change of heart, when I realised that my preconceived attitudes about my learners being lazy and not caring about their education, were not true. I realised that socio-economic conditions under which they survive and the demands of the school are unbearable for many of them. What I realised is that the pressure put on us as teachers to finish syllabi clouds our judgement about the challenges facing these learners.

In addition, I recognised the disservice the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is doing in the deep rural areas by failing to ensure that Early Child Development (ECD) centres in rural areas are functional and well-resourced.

I made unfair assumptions about the learners' lives and was made to face the reality that learners did not go to crèche because it was either too far or not available in their area. Despite all these challenges I need to be appreciative of the tenacity they have to attend school every day with smiling faces. That fact has humbled me as a teacher of English who has taught English for many years. I am not sure how they manage to survive such difficult circumstances, but I know that I will need to re-think what I teach when teaching writing and how I teach it.

My learners have opened my eyes to their challenges and I need to step up and address these challenges.

I also discussed, the implications (theoretical, policy, methodological, professional practice implications), limitations areas for future research recommendations and conclusion.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT (QUESTIONNAIRES)

The questionnaire is designed to generate data about challenges when writing in English facing grade 8 ESL learners in a rural school in Siyazimelela District. Questionnaire will be both in English and isiZulu and this will provide learners with liberty to express themselves freely. For example, questions 1 is in English and question 1 is in isiZulu, they both want the same answer, this is done to enable learners' level of understanding of questions in both languages.

The questionnaire consists of (15) questions, learners will use English and isiZulu to answer questions.

1. Fill in the following information about you in the relevant box. (use an X)

Male	
Female	
Age	

1. Gcwalisa imininingwane yakho kulamabokisi alandelayo. (Sebenzisa u-X)

Owesilisa	
Owesifazane	
Iminyaka yakho	

2. Did you attend preschool /Creche before grade 1? Explain in detail.

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2. Waya yini eKreshi noma enkulisa ngaphambi kukuya ebangeni lokuqala? Chaza ka banzi.

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3. If you attended crèche, what did you do that you liked and still remember? Explain in detail.

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3. Uma waya eKreshi yini owayenza wayithanda futhi usayikhumbula eKreshi? Chaza kabanzi.

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4. Which language did your Preschool teachers use to teach you? Explain in detail.

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4. Iluphi ulimi othisha bakho ababelusebenzisa ukukufundisa eKreshi? Chaza kabanzi.

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5. If you have power to choose, which language would you choose to be taught in grade 8? Explain in detail.

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5. Ukuba unamandla okukhetha, iluphi ulimi ongathanda ukufundiswa ngalo esikoleni ebangeni lesishagalombili? Chaza kabanzi.

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6. Explain in detail why is that so?

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6. Chaza kabanzi kungani kunjalo?

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7. Do you use English at home? Explain in detail.

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7. Ngabe uyalusebenzisa yin ulimi lwesi-Ngisi ekhaya? Chaza kabanzi.

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8. Do you write in English anywhere outside school? Explain in detail.

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8. Ngabe uyabhala yini ngolwimi lwesi-Ngisi uma ungekho esikoleni? Chaza kabanzi.

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9. Do you read in English anywhere outside school? Explain in detail.

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9. Ngabe kuyenzeka yini ufunde ngesi-Ngisi uma ungekho esikoleni? Chaz kabanzi.

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10. Do you speak in English anywhere outside school? Explain in detail.

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10. Ngabe kuyenzeka yini ukhulume ngesi-Ngisi uma ungekho esikoleni? Chaza kabanzi.

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11. if you write English homework do you have anyone who helps you? Explain in detail.

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11. Uma ubhala umsebenzi wasekhaya wesiNgisi unaye yini umuntu okusizayo? Chaza kabanzi.

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12. If you do not know what to write what do you do? Explain in detail.

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12. Uma ungazi ukuthi ubhaleni wenzanjani? Chaza kabanzi.

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13. What challenges do you face when writing in English? Explain in detail.

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13. Iziphi inkinga ohlangabezana nazo uma ubhala ngesiNgisi? Chaza kabanzi.

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14. Why do you think you face challenges when writing in English? Explain in detail.

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14. Uchabanga ukuthi yini edala ukuba ube nezinkinga uma ubhala ngesi- Ngisi Chaza kabanzi.

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15. What do you think will help you to improve your writing in English? Explain in detail.

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15. Uchabanga ukuthi yini engakusiza ukuthi uthuthukise ukubhala kwakho ngesi-Ngisi Chaza kabanzi.

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**APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT (DIALOGUE)  
DIALOGUE**

You and your friend are struggling to write in English. Write a dialogue where the two of you discuss the challenges you face when writing in English, the possible reasons for your challenges, and how you try to cope with these challenges.

## **APPENDIX C: INFORMAL LETTER)**

### **INFORMAL LETTER**

Write a letter to your English teacher where you explain the challenges you face when writing in English, possible reasons for your challenges and how you try to cope with these challenges.

## **APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT**

### **Informed Consent**

Dear Grade ... Student

This study will be undertaken by Prince E. Ndlovu who is currently working on a dissertation to obtain a Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You may contact him on 0632442545. For more information regarding the study, you may contact Prince's supervisor Dr. A. Pillay on 0312603613 or email on [PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za). The contact details for the HSSREC Research Office: Ms. P. Ximba, Email: [Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za). Below is a brief description of my intended study.

### **Title of research: Challenges when Writing in English: A Case Study of Grade 8 Second Language Learners in a Rural School in KwaZulu-Natal**

The study aims to:

- 1) To explore the writing challenges faced by Grade 8 English second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal.
- 2) To understand why Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face writing challenges.
- 3) To explore how Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with the challenges faced when writing English.

The grade 8 class was chosen to be part of the research since the researcher is also the students' English educator.

As a participant in this study you will be asked to produce three tasks (Questionnaire, informal letter and a dialogue). Two of the tasks will be done during our English lesson. The questionnaire consists of **15** questions and it will take you about **30** minutes to complete whilst the dialogue and informal letter should take you 60 minutes. The dialogue and informal letter must be completed in class.

This study will benefit you because you will acquire English writing skills. Tasks will also be taken as assessments for English and therefore feedback will be given to you. Using your responses, I will hold a session informing you about the findings.

You are not forced to participate in this study. It is completely fine if you wish to not participate in this study. Your choice to not participate will not have negative consequences for you.

However, when the rest of the class is busy doing the assigned tasks you will also complete them, but your tasks will not be used in the study. If who wish to withdraw from the study during the process, you are free to do so.

All tasks will be kept in a locked cupboard. After using the tasks, it will be kept in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office. After a period of five years, the tasks will be shredded and disposed off.

Note that in this study, your names will not be used. Instead pseudonyms (false names) will be used. This will be done to protect your identity. The name of the school will also be protected and a made up name will be used instead. All your responses in the tasks will not be disclosed to any person.

I..... (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

## **ISILEKO D: IFOMU LOCWANINGO ELINEMVUME YOMNTWANA**

### Sawubona Mfundi

Lolucwaningo luholwa u Prince E. Ndlovu ofunda iziqu ze-masters e- university of KwaZulu-Natal. Umngathinta kulenombolo elandelayo 0632442545. Uma ufuna ulwazi uluthe xaxa ngalolu cwaningo ungathintana nomqeqeshi ka Mnu Prince E. Ndlovu u-Dokotela u-A. Pillay kulenombolo ethi: 0312603613 noma ku-email: [pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za). Ungathintana neHhovisi lwezocwaningo (HSSREC) ngokubhalela uMn. Ximba ku email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za). Ngezansi kunenzazelo mayelana nocwaningo.

**Isihloko socwaningo:** Izinknga uma kubhalwa ngesisngesi: ucwaningo lwebanga lwesishagalombili ngolwemi lwesingesi esikoleni sasemakhaya kwaZulu-Natal.

Ucwaningo luqonde lokhu okulandelayo:

1. Ukuthola ukuthi iziphi izinkinga ezibhekene nabafundi bebanga lesishagalombili uma bebhala ngesiNgesi.
2. Ukuqonda ukuthi kungani bebhakana nalezi zinkinga uma bebhala ngesiNgesi.
3. Ukuthola ukuthi abantwana bebanga lesishagalombili babhekana kanjani nalezi zinkinga uma bebhala ngesiNgesi.

Ibanga lesishagalombili likhethwe ukuba libe inxenye yoncwano ngoba umncwaningi unguThisha wabafundi.

Njengoba ubambe iqaza kuloluncwaningo uzocelwa ukuba wenze izinhlobo ezintathu zomsebemzi (ukuphendula imibuzo, nokubhala incwadi yobungani kanye nenkulumo mpendulwana)

Incwadi yobungani kanye nenkulumo mpendulwana uzokwenza ngesiskhathi sokufunda. Uhla lwemibuzo ishumi nanhlanu. Izokutha imizuzu angamashimi amathathu ukuyiphendula. Kanti Incwadi yobungani kanye nenkulumo mpendulwana izokuthatha ihora elilodwa.

Ucwaningo luzokusiza ngoba uzofunda ukubhala. Uzothola ukubuyekeza ngoba vele ayafunda ngokubhala.

Awuphoqelekile ukuba ube yinxenye yalulo cwaningo, futhi ngeke kube nemiphumela emibi ukungazibandakanyi nalolu cwaningo. Kodwa lokhu kuyafundwa nawe uzokwenza, kodwa-

ke owakho umbhalo ngeke usetshenziswelwe ucwaningo. Ungayeka noma inini uma uzwa ungasathandi.

Wonke umsebenzi owubhalile uzokhiyelwa ekhabetheni. Emva kwalokho uyobekwa ekhabethini lomQeqeshi bese kuthi emva kweminyaka emihlanu ushiswe.

Qonda ukuthi amagama enu angeke asetshenziswe ukuze nivikeleke, negama lesikole ngeke silisebenzise. Nenikushilo ngeke kwendlalelwe izwe.

Imina ..... (amagama agcwele obambe iqaza) niyavuma futhi ngiyaqonda konke okubhalwe kulencwadi kanye nocwaningo. Ngiyavuma ukuzibandakanya nalolucwaningo. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngingayeka noma yinini uma ngingasafuni ukuba yingxenye yocwaningo.

Ukusayina: \_\_\_\_\_

Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN**

### **Informed Consent**

Dear Grade 8 Parent/Guardian

I, Prince E. Ndlovu am currently your child/ward's English educator. I am currently studying towards a Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu- Natal. You may contact me on 0632442545 for further information. For more information regarding the study, you may contact my supervisor Dr. A. Pillay on 0312603613 or email her on [PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za). The contact details for the HSSREC Research Office: Ms. P. Ximba, Email: [Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za).

For my research, I wish for your child/ward to participate by completing three tasks. Below is a brief description of my research.

**Title of research: Challenges when Writing in English: A Case Study of Grade 8 Second Language Learners in a Rural School in KwaZulu-Natal**

The study aims to:

- 1) To explore the writing challenges faced by Grade 8 English second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal.
- 2) To understand why Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face writing challenges.
- 3) To explore how Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with the challenges faced when writing English.

The grade 8 class was chosen to be part of the research since the researcher is also the students' English educator.

As a participant in this study your child/ward will be asked to produce three tasks (Questionnaire, informal letter and a dialogue). The tasks will be done during our English lesson. This study will benefit your child/ward because they will acquire English writing skills. Tasks will also be taken as

assessments for English and therefore feedback will be given to the children. Using their responses, I will hold a session informing your child/ward about the findings obtained from the tasks.

Your child/ward's identity will be protected by not using their real names. Instead pseudonyms (False names) will be used.

I..... (full name of parent/guardian) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to allow/ not allow my child/ward \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name) from grade 8 to participate/ not participate in the research project.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/ GUARDIAN

DATE

.....

## **ISELEKO E: IFOMU LOCWANINGO ELINEMVUME YOMZALI/ NOMA UMBHEKILI WENGANE**

Sawubona Mzali womfundi noma ummbheki wengane

Yimina Prince E. Ndlovu uthisha wengane yakho. Ofunda iziqu ze-Masters e- university of KwaZulu-Natal. Ungangithinta kulenombolo elandelayo 0632442545. Uma ufuna ulwazi uluthe xaxa ngalolu cwaningo ungathintana noMqeqeshi ka-Mnu Prince E.Ndlovu u-Dokotela u-A. Pillay kulenombolo ethi: 0312603613 noma ku-email: [pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za). Ungathintana neHhovisi lwezocwaningo (HSSREC) ngokubhalelea uMnu. Ximba ku email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za).

Bengifisa ukuthi umntwana wakho abe yingxenywe yocwaningo lwami ngokuba agcwalise imisebenzi emithathu.

**Isihloko socwaningo:** Izinkinga uma kubhalwa ngesiNgisi: ucwaningo lwebanga lwesishagalombili ngolimi lwesiNgisi esikoleni sasemakhaya kwaZulu-Natal.

Ucwaningo luqonde lokhu okulandelayo:

1. Ukuthola ukuthi iziphi izinkinga ezibhekene nabafundi bebanga lesishagalombili uma bebhala ngesiNgisi.
2. Ukuqonda ukuthi kungani bebhakana nalezi zinkinga uma bebhala ngesiNgisi.
3. Ukuthola ukuthi abantwana be babanga lesishagalombili babhekana kanjani nalezi zinkinga uma bebhala ngesiNgisi.

Ibanga lesishagalombili likhethwe ukuba libe inxenye yocwaningo ngoba umncwaningi unguThisha wabafundi.

Ibanga lesishagalombili likhethwe ukuba libe inxenye yocwaningo ngoba umncwaningi unguThisha wabafundi.

Njengoba umntwana wakho ebambe iqaza kuloluncwaningo uzocelwa ukuba abhale izinhlobo ezintathu zomsebenzi (ukuphendula imibuzo, ukukubhala incwadi yobungani kanye nenkulumo mpendulwana)

Umsebenzi uzobhalwa uzokwenziwa ngesikhathi sokufunda isiNgisi. Lolucwaningo luzosiza umntwana wakho, ngoba uzothola amakhono ukubhala ngesiNgisi. Umsenenzi uzobhalwa

uzosetshenziswa njengenhlokhono, ngakho-ke umntwana wakho uyonikezwa izilungiso. Ngiyobuye ngibazise ngemiphumela yocwaningo etholakale emibhalweni yabo.

Umntwana wakho uzovikelwa ngokusebenzisa igama okungelona elakhe.

Imina u- ..... (amagama agcwele omzali noma ugadi wengane) ngiyaqinisekisa futhi ngiyaqonda konke okubhalwe kulencwadi kanye nocwaningo oluzokwenziwa. Ngiyavuma / angivumi ukuthi umntwana wami abe yinxenye yocwaningo

Ukusayina komzali Noma Gadi: \_\_\_\_\_

Usuku: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F: GATEKEEPER'S CONSENT

### Dear Gatekeeper (Principal)

I, Prince E Ndlovu am currently undertaking research for the purpose of completing a Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. For more information regarding the study, you may contact my supervisor Dr. A. Pillay on 03 12603613 or email her on [PillavA3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:PillavA3@ukzn.ac.za). The contact details for the HSSREC Research Office: Ms. P. Ximba, Email: [Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za). For my intended research, I wish to use the grade 8 students at your school. They will need to complete three tasks. Below is a brief description of my research.

**Title of research: : Challenges when Writing in English: A Case Study of Grade 8 Second Language Learners in a Rural School in KwaZulu-Natal**

The study aims to:

- 1) To explore the writing challenges faced by Grade 8 English second language learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal.
- 2) To understand why Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal face writing challenges.
- 3) To explore how Grade 8 learners at a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal cope with the challenges faced when writing English.

The grade 8 class was chosen to be part of the research since the researcher is also the students' English educator.

As a participant in this study the students will be asked to produce three tasks (Questionnaire, informal letter and a dialogue). The tasks will be done during our English lesson. This study will benefit the students because they will learn about possible challenges they face when writing. Tasks will also be taken as assessments for English and therefore feedback will be given to the children. Using the responses, I will hold a session informing the students about the findings.

The students are not forced to participate in this study. It is completely fine if they chose to not participate in the study. Their choice to not participate will not have negative consequences for them. However, when the rest of the class is busy doing the assigned tasks the student will also complete them, but their tasks will not be used in the study. Those who wish to withdraw from the study during the process are free to do so.

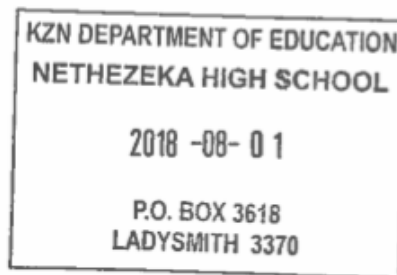
All tasks will be kept in a locked cupboard and after analysis it will be kept in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office. After a period of five years, the tasks will be shredded and disposed off.

Note that in this study, the name of the students and the name of the school will be protected. This will be achieved by using pseudonyms (false names). All students' responses in the tasks will not be disclosed to any person and therefore the researcher will practice participant confidentiality.


I, BEAUTY JABU MABASO (full name of Gatekeeper)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project,  
and I consent to grant P.E. NDLOVU permission to undertake research at this institution.

B. Mabaso  
SIGNATURE OF GATEKEEPER

01-08-2018  
DATE



## APPENDIX G: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
INYUYESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

20 November 2018

Mr Prince Sicefent Ndlovu 211509091  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Ndlovu

Protocol Reference Number : HSS/1756/018M  
Project title: Challenges when writing in English : A Case study of Grade 8 Second language learners in a rural School in KwaZulu-Natal

**Full Approval – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 1 October 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.


Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 3 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



Dr Shamsia Ndlovu (Deputy Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/gm

CC Supervisor: Dr Ansurin Pillay & Dr Bridget Campbell  
CC Academic Leader Research: Dr Sisi Khuzo  
CC School Administrator: Ms Sheryl Jwanani

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Shamsia Ndlovu (Chair)  
Westville Campus, Green Ntshali Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag 554001, Durban 4001  
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 261 3587/3533/4/5/7 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 261 4630 Email: [ethics@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ethics@ukzn.ac.za) [ethics@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ethics@ukzn.ac.za)  
Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

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APPENDIX H: PROOFREADER'S LETTER

*Mntungwa proofreading services*

30 April 2019

Email: [mandlah.khumalo@gmail.com](mailto:mandlah.khumalo@gmail.com)

Cell: 0814801785

## To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I have proofread the dissertation by Prince Excellent Ndlovu entitled: "Challenges When Writing English: A Case Study of Grade 8 Second Language Learners in a Rural School in Kwazulu-Natal" I have made any corrections to grammar and spelling which I felt necessary.

Regards,

Signature:



Date: 29 April 2019

## APPENDIX: TURNITIN REPORT

### Turnitin Originality Report

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