



# Exploring the Implications of the Articulation Gap on Grade 6 EFAL Learners' Essay Writing Skills



Ezekiel Chauke<sup>1</sup>  & Khashane Stephen Malatji<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> School of Teacher Education, College of Education (CEDU), Language Education, Arts and Culture Department, University of South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies, College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the implications of the articulation gap on Grade 6 EFAL learners' essay writing skills. A qualitative approach was followed with a Case study research design. The research paradigm used in this study was the interpretive paradigm. Purposive sampling was used to select 18 English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers in 3 primary schools at Malamulele Central Circuit. Document analysis, focus group interviews and lesson observation were used to collect data. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the Garrison theory of teaching essay writing and the strength-based approach were aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. The study found that EFAL learners are unable to write essays that are academically acceptable in terms of the stipulated standard in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document. Such an articulation gap results in a difficult transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase which has contributed to the high failure rate in Grade 6. The study concluded and recommended that the curriculum during transitioning from the foundation to the intermediate phase (Grade 6) should be revised and the Teaching and Learning Language (TLL) in the Foundation Phase should be English in order to build a strong foundation. This research study is of practical importance to various sectors of the South African education system and abroad as it contributes invaluable information to curriculum developers and implementers within the education department and to the entire stakeholders in the schooling system.

## Correspondence

Ezekiel Chauke  
Email:  
Chauke@unisa.ac.za

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## INTRODUCTION

The Council on Higher Education has described the articulation gap as a discontinuity in the transition from one educational phase to the next educational phase.<sup>1</sup> In the context of the current study, articulation gap refers to a discontinuity or misalignment of learning requirements that are prescribed for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in essay writing, which should prepare them to cope with the required competencies of the Intermediate Phase. According to DoE, the South African Department of Higher Education has identified the articulation gap as a critical systemic fault affecting the educational progression to and through higher education.<sup>2</sup> The Foundation Phase in this study is the phase from which the learners were transferred to the Intermediate Phase. The learners in this phase are taught in Xitsonga and when they exit the Foundation Phase and transition to Intermediate Phase, they are expected to use English as a language of teaching and learning, hence this could be a contributing factor to the Grade 6 learners to fail to write EFAL essays that are

<sup>1</sup> Council on Higher Education, *A Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education* (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Glen Fisher and I. Scott, "Closing the Skills and Technology Gap in South Africa Background Paper 3: The Role of Higher Education in Closing the Skills Gap in South Africa" (Cape Town, 2011), 13.

academically accepted as stipulated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This study therefore focused on both Foundation and Intermediate Phases, specifically grade 3 and 6. The reason for choosing the mentioned grades is that they are exit grades for each phase. The learners in grade 3 exit the grade under-prepared to cope with the competencies that are required in the Intermediate Phase. Hence, they struggle to compose essays in English.

According to Bulgivah, ArifMahubub and Nugraheni, essay writing is still challenging for language learners globally.<sup>3</sup> Moses and Mohamad noted that the teachers also have difficulties teaching essay writing skills to the learners.<sup>4</sup> Some of the challenges that are experienced by the learners according to Moses and Mohamad include lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor spelling, students' readiness and lack of exposure to books and reading materials.<sup>5</sup> To improve learners' writing skills, teachers should engage the learners in more writing activities that guide learners on how to write the essays and feedback should be provided after every activity. Accordingly, to enable learners to produce essays that are academically accepted, they need to be taught essay writing skills in their early grades. This challenge has necessitated more studies to be conducted to come up with teaching methodologies and approaches, which could enhance the learning of writing in English.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Onozawa reveals that regarding English first as an additional language, several methods and procedures have been provided with little or no success.<sup>7</sup> Many studies have shown that the source of students' failure to write a comprehensible essay in English is the articulation gap that exists between secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, such as colleges and universities. While no studies have been conducted on the same challenge at a school level.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the purpose of undertaking this research study was to explore the teaching approaches that can be used to bridge the gap between Grades 3 and 6 during the foundation phase transition to the Intermediate phase. The research question to be answered is: What are the implications of the articulation gap on Grade 6 EFAL learners' essay writing skills?

According to DoE, the South African Department of Higher Education has identified the articulation gap as a critical systemic fault affecting the educational progression to and through higher education.<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this study, an articulation gap means a lack of essential knowledge or preparation and skill (aligned with the content that should be taught in the next phase), that a learner should have learned in the previous phase. Preparation enables learners to cope with the demands of the content or subject matter that is taught in the next phase. In this research study, the Grade 6 EFAL learners should be able to effectively write essays in English using the standards or competencies as stipulated in the Intermediate Phase CAPS document.

The Foundation Phase in this study is the phase from which the learners were transferred to the Intermediate Phase. The learners in this phase are taught in Xitsonga and when they exit the Foundation Phase and transition to Intermediate Phase, they are expected to use English as a language of teaching and learning. Hence this could be a contributing factor to the Grade 6 learners to fail to write EFAL essays that are academically accepted as stipulated in the CAPS. This study therefore focused on both Foundation and Intermediate Phases, specifically grade 3 and 6. The reason for choosing the mentioned grades is that they are exit grades for each phase. The learners in grade 3 exit the grade under-prepared to cope with the competencies that are required in the Intermediate Phase. Hence, they struggle to compose essays in English

In the subsequent sections, the paper reviews literature on the subject, discusses the theoretical framework that underpins this study, discusses the research methodology, presents results and this research study concludes by discussing and providing an analysis of the implication of the articulation gap on Grade 6 essay writing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Bulgivah et al. mention that globally, essay writing is still a challenging task for language learners.<sup>10</sup> Moses and Mohamad noted that the challenges that the students experience in learning writing skills have also made it difficult

<sup>3</sup> Suhaimah Bulqiyah, Moh Mahubub, and Dyah Ayu Nugraheni, "Investigating Writing Difficulties in Essay Writing: Tertiary Students' Perspectives," *English Language Teaching Educational Journal* 4, no. 1 (2021): 61–73; Chieko Onozawa, "A Study of the Process Writing Approach," *Research Note* 10 (2010): 153–63.

<sup>4</sup> Rachel Nyanamoney Moses and Maslawati Mohamad, "Challenges Faced by Students and Teachers on Writing Skills in ESL Contexts: A Literature Review," *Creative Education* 10, no. 13 (2019): 3385–91.

<sup>5</sup> Moses and Mohamad, "Challenges Faced by Students and Teachers on Writing Skills in ESL Contexts: A Literature Review."

<sup>6</sup> Elif Demirel, "Take It Step by Step: Following a Process Approach to Academic Writing to Overcome Student Anxiety," *Journal of Academic Writing* 1, no. 1 (2011): 222.

<sup>7</sup> Onozawa, "A Study of the Process Writing Approach," 153.

<sup>8</sup> Becky Burkhalter, "Pathways to Success: Bridging the Gap between High School and College Composition," *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education* 16, no. 2 (2000): 113; Jordan Y Blackstone, "Ready or Not: Addressing the Preparation Gap between High School and College-Level Writers" (Bowling Green State University, 2014), 1; Khashane Stephen Malatji and Rachael Jesika Singh, "Implications of the Articulation Gap between Geography Learners in Secondary Schools and University," 2018, 91.

<sup>9</sup> Fisher and Scott, "Closing the Skills and Technology Gap in South Africa Background Paper 3: The Role of Higher Education in Closing the Skills Gap in South Africa," 13.

<sup>10</sup> Bulqiyah, Mahubub, and Nugraheni, "Investigating Writing Difficulties in Essay Writing: Tertiary Students' Perspectives."

for teachers to teach them essay-writing skills.<sup>11</sup> Some of the challenges that are faced by English Second Language students include lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor spelling, students' readiness and lack of exposure to books and reading materials.<sup>12</sup> To improve a student's writing ability, more attention must be given by a teacher to teach writing such as giving guidance and feedback. Writing activities need to be conducted among students since elementary school so that the students can generate good pieces of writing in the future. This challenge has necessitated more studies to be conducted to come up with teaching methodologies and approaches, which will enhance the learning of writing in English.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Onozawa reveals that several approaches and techniques have been provided regarding English Second Language or L2 writing during the last decade, though with little or no success.<sup>14</sup> Many studies have shown that the source of students' failure to write a comprehensible essay in English is the articulation gap that exists between secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, such as colleges and universities while no studies have been conducted on the same challenge at a school level.<sup>15</sup>

International researchers argue that several students are admitted to institutions of higher learning, such as Universities and Colleges, while they are not ready to meet the demands of college writing courses.<sup>16</sup> This view is supported by Bulgivah, Mahbub and Nugraheni, who recorded that "writing also becomes the most difficult skill, particularly in English Education, which through complex processes that engages several competencies.<sup>17</sup> Also, students at the tertiary level experienced various obstacles in their processes of writing". Mukhari and Mathipa after marking over a thousand assignments from first-year university students, established the following articulation gap in students' English essay writing:<sup>18</sup>

- The writing of question in the words in which it was given; students should do this to avoid misreading the question and losing marks because each aspect of the answer is allocated a specific mark;
- An introduction; the introduction should be written because it provides a preview of the content that is to be addressed in the body of the essay and there is a specific mark allocated to it;
- Headings and sub-headings should be written because ideas are discussed under them and have specific marks allocated to them as well;
- A conclusion; the role of the conclusion is to sum up salient matters that are deemed to be the core of the subject matter and it has its own mark allocated to it;
- References/bibliography; The role of references/bibliography is to present proof to the reader that the learner has consulted a variety of sources before constructing the essay and it has a mark allocation to it. This approach trains learners to make use of literature or the right way to become future scholars, and
- Table of contents; the table of contents gives reference to the reader where to find different sections of the work and has a mark allocation as well. A table of contents is also one way of introducing learners to the skill of becoming future scholars.<sup>19</sup>

The concern for the articulation gap between secondary schools and universities necessitated studies to be conducted in this field by scholars such as Burkhalter et al.<sup>20</sup> In Georgia, the study by Burkhalter aimed to investigate the pathways of bridging the gap between high school and college composition and to improve communication between high school teachers and university teachers.<sup>21</sup> The findings of the study revealed the following:

- There is a need for the teaching of writing as a process, rather than as a one-time effort, and as a product having distinct parts.
- Terms, such as "introduction," "thesis," "conclusion," and "transition," were mentioned, as was the need for timed, in-class essay assignments.

<sup>11</sup> Moses and Mohamad, "Challenges Faced by Students and Teachers on Writing Skills in ESL Contexts: A Literature Review."

<sup>12</sup> Moses and Mohamad, "Challenges Faced by Students and Teachers on Writing Skills in ESL Contexts: A Literature Review."

<sup>13</sup> Demirel, "Take It Step by Step: Following a Process Approach to Academic Writing to Overcome Student Anxiety," 222.

<sup>14</sup> Onozawa, "A Study of the Process Writing Approach," 153.

<sup>15</sup> Burkhalter, "Pathways to Success: Bridging the Gap between High School and College Composition"; Blackstone, "Ready or Not: Addressing the Preparation Gap between High School and College-Level Writers," 1; Malatji and Singh, "Implications of the Articulation Gap between Geography Learners in Secondary Schools and University," 91.

<sup>16</sup> Philip G Altbach, *Tradition and Transition: The International Imperative in Higher Education*, vol. 7 (Brill, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Bulqiyah, Mahbub, and Nugraheni, "Investigating Writing Difficulties in Essay Writing: Tertiary Students' Perspectives," 62.

<sup>18</sup> S. S. Mukhari and E. R. Mathipa, "The Fault Is Not in Students: But in the Programmes and the Teaching Open Distance Learning Institutions Provide: A Case of Adult Basic Education and Training Students," *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 17, no. 1-3 (2017): 215-23, 219.

<sup>19</sup> S.S. Mukhari and E.R. Mathipa, *The Fault Is Not in Students: But in the Programmes the Teaching Open Distance Learning Institutions Provide: A Case of Adult Basic Education and Training Students*. (Pretoria: Government Publication, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Burkhalter, "Pathways to Success: Bridging the Gap between High School and College Composition"; Blackstone, "Ready or Not: Addressing the Preparation Gap between High School and College-Level Writers"; Malatji and Singh, "Implications of the Articulation Gap between Geography Learners in Secondary Schools and University."

<sup>21</sup> Burkhalter, "Pathways to Success: Bridging the Gap between High School and College Composition."

- In addition, a need for in-depth questions, which deal with higher-level thinking skills, such as analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, was identified.
- Lastly, the teaching of literature and writing together, rather than as separate entities was identified as a need.<sup>22</sup>

In a similar study in the United States, Blackstone examined the effectiveness of the current instructional strategies and their ability to bridge the preparation gap between high school and college-level writing.<sup>23</sup> The findings of this study revealed that, while certain instructional strategies were found to support teachers' efforts to develop high school students, college preparatory writing abilities, further exploration of the peripheral factors, such as teachers' educational philosophies and pedagogical decisions, should be explored as they relate to addressing particular areas of the preparation gap between high school and college level writing.<sup>24</sup>

In South Africa, Malatji and Singh conducted a study on the implications of the articulation gap between Geography learners in Secondary Schools and Universities.<sup>25</sup> The study aimed to investigate the challenges experienced by Geography students in their first year of study. The results of the study revealed that:

- Geography students entered university without proper preparation. As a result, they were unable to cope with their first year of study; and
- Teachers who taught Geography in secondary school were not sufficiently trained to teach Geography, and this resulted in them engaging in surface learning as opposed to deep learning.

Tewari and Ilesanmi postulate that the remedy of the misalignment in education can be addressed if the skills of the teachers are upgraded because "student success depends to a large extent on the quality of input."<sup>26</sup> Considering the above, the skills of the teachers need to be upgraded from time to time to keep them abreast with the current teaching approaches in order for them to teach students effectively

In South Africa, the Council on Higher Education and Kresge Foundation raised a concern about the articulation gap between secondary school learners and first-year university students. According to Fischer and Scott cited by Tewari and Ilesanmi, the articulation between school learners and university students "Leads to low graduation rates and high costs (in terms of high drop-out rates, extended completion times and other inefficiencies, such as the big burden of remedial teaching) to the institution."<sup>27</sup> The narratives of recurrent concerns in the higher education sector include maintaining access to and quality of higher education, achieving a better outcome and reducing the number of students dropping out of institutions.<sup>28</sup> The two researchers maintain that the remedy of the misalignment in education could be addressed if the skills of the teachers could be upgraded because "student success depends to a large extent on the quality of input."<sup>29</sup> As the situation is currently, teaching remains elusive, or cannot be said to be complete or effective, if it is not reflected in the rate and quality of graduates produced.<sup>30</sup>

The Kresge Foundation reports a concern about first-year students whose high school preparation presents challenges to them when they first enter university. The aspects of under-preparedness by the students according to Lewin and Mawoyo include students having issues communicating verbally and in writing using English because they were unable to speak fluently in English.<sup>31</sup>

The Council on Higher Education in South Africa is aware of the articulation gap between secondary school learners and universities. Hence, Moyo, released a report, in which it classified the factors that affect performance in higher education, which mostly are socioeconomic, psychosocial, as well as didactic and pedagogical.<sup>32</sup> The report argued that the academic influences in higher education are the source of under-preparedness and articulation gap. The CHE goes on to say that under-preparedness is caused by unsatisfactory learning outcomes and by the system design, which is problematic in that high school education does not start where higher education begins.

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<sup>22</sup> Burkhalter, "Pathways to Success: Bridging the Gap between High School and College Composition," 113-114.

<sup>23</sup> Blackstone, "Ready or Not: Addressing the Preparation Gap between High School and College-Level Writers."

<sup>24</sup> Blackstone, "Ready or Not: Addressing the Preparation Gap between High School and College-Level Writers," 69.

<sup>25</sup> Malatji and Singh, "Implications of the Articulation Gap between Geography Learners in Secondary Schools and University."

<sup>26</sup> Devi Datt Tewari and Kehinde Damilola Ilesanmi, "Teaching and Learning Interaction in South Africa's Higher Education: Some Weak Links," *Cogent Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1.

<sup>27</sup> Fisher and Scott, "Closing the Skills and Technology Gap in South Africa Background Paper 3: The Role of Higher Education in Closing the Skills Gap in South Africa"; Tewari and Ilesanmi, "Teaching and Learning Interaction in South Africa's Higher Education: Some Weak Links," 3.

<sup>28</sup> Tewari and Ilesanmi, "Teaching and Learning Interaction in South Africa's Higher Education: Some Weak Links," 1.

<sup>29</sup> Tewari and Ilesanmi, "Teaching and Learning Interaction in South Africa's Higher Education: Some Weak Links," 3.

<sup>30</sup> Tewari and Ilesanmi, "Teaching and Learning Interaction in South Africa's Higher Education: Some Weak Links," 3.

<sup>31</sup> P. Hooper, T. Lewin, and M. Mawoyo, *Students Access and Success: Issues and Interventions in South African Universities* (Pretoria: Inyathelo Publishers, 2014) 6.

<sup>32</sup> Nathan Moyo, "COVID-19 and the Future of Practicum in Teacher Education in Zimbabwe: Rethinking the 'New Normal' in Quality Assurance for Teacher Certification," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 46, no. 4 (2020): 536-45.

Therefore, instead of the higher education institution blaming the school system and the under-preparedness for poor higher education outcomes, the CHE allowed an opportunity for higher education institutions to redesign, or modify, their learning programmes for re-alignment.<sup>33</sup>

Based on the literature reviewed, many international, as well as national studies have focused on the effect of the articulation gap on university students. From above, there are no studies that have been conducted in a high school context that focus on the articulation gap in EFAL learners' essay writing. For example, the research study that was done by Malatji and Singh in section 1.2 above focused on the articulation gap between Geography learners in Secondary Schools and Universities, while the study conducted by Blackstone examined the effectiveness of the current instructional strategies and their ability to bridge the preparation gap between high school and college-level writing.<sup>34</sup>

The current study has been inspired by the fact that the researcher taught English First Additional Language for a year at a primary school and 21 years at a Secondary school in Malamulele West Circuit, in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. During this period, the researcher served in the English committee in Malamulele West Circuit, Vhembe District involved in developing English FAL question papers quarterly, which grade 10 and 11 learners wrote as a common task assessment. After marking the few scripts using the memorandum that the committee designed, the researcher discovered that in the creative writing section (essay writing), the learners faced challenges with organisation skills, home language interference, poor language usage, lack of own views and voice as well as lack of focus.

The researcher developed an interest in understanding the source of the above-mentioned challenges. Based on the researcher's teaching experience and familiarity with the stipulations of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) Grades R-12, the learners' challenges in essay writing were linked to the articulation gap between the Foundation and the Intermediate Phases. For example, according to the NCS Grades 1-3, i.e. Foundation Phase, learners learn the skills of letter formation and handwriting in their Home Language. The acquired knowledge of forming letters is applied in this grade later when they begin to write in their First Additional Language in the third term of Grade 1. In Grade 2, essay writing in the First Additional Language is guided. The learners write sentences using sentence frames such as 'I like \_\_\_\_\_. I don't like \_\_\_\_\_.' The learners must think of things they like and those that they do not like to complete the sentence. In Grade 3, the learners, with the support of the teacher learn to write a simple set of instructions and a personal recount. Many writing skills are transferred from the Home Language. The learners learn how to write a text, such as a recount in their Home Language and learn how to draft, write, edit, and publish their work (the writing process) in their Home Language, and they then apply these skills when writing in the First Additional Language.

NCS Grades 4-6, i.e. Intermediate Phase learners, like in Grade 3, the writing of English FAL essay is taught using frames as in the example above. In Grade 5, the learners write essays using the skills of writing that they acquired in the Foundation Phase, but the learners who struggle to write essays continue to use frames. In Grade 6, learners select appropriate information from visual text like charts, tables and diagrams and write two to three paragraphs.

Considering the above, the learning of English essay writing in the Foundation Phase using their Home Language to learn how to draft, write, edit, and publish their work in their Home Language might result in a lack of organization skills, home language interference, poor language usage, lack of own views and voice, as well as lack of focus. This, therefore, creates challenges in the Intermediate Phase wherein learners should start composing essays in the language in which they have not been well prepared. Therefore, the researchers decided to conduct a study that focuses on the influence of the articulation gap on the essay writing skills of the Foundation Phase (Grade 3) and the Intermediate Phase learners (Grade 6).

### **The Garrison Theory of Teaching Writing**

The Garrison Theory of Teaching Writing is perceived as occurring entirely through individual conferencing between the writer and the instructor on the writers' work, as it is in progress involving one-to-one tutoring in the classroom.<sup>35</sup> This approach is based on three principles, namely: individualisation, instant feedback, and induction learning. The theory considers five operational skills, namely: content, tone, organization, sentence construction, and diction.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Council on Higher Education, *A Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> Blackstone, "Ready or Not: Addressing the Preparation Gap between High School and College-Level Writers."

<sup>35</sup> Roger H Garrison, "One-to-one: Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition," *New Directions for Community Colleges* 1974, no. 5 (1974): 55-84.

<sup>36</sup> Tony Silva, "Second Language Composition Instruction: Developments, Issues, and Directions in ESL," *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom* 11 (1990): 15.

Babin and Harrison add that in this approach, learners write many papers while meeting one-on-one with the teacher.<sup>37</sup> Students spend most of the time writing exercises and reviewing their peers' essays. According to Hyland, the learner during essay writing meets with the teacher for a short time to get guidance on their writing.<sup>38</sup> Once the learners have mastered the writing skills, the instructor moves to writing style and edits the draft by looking at sentence structure and diction, advising the student to focus on correctness.<sup>39</sup> The number of drafts a student writes depends on how long it takes an individual student to master the operational skill. This is because "children learn in different ways and at different rates and all students have their own interests and preferences."<sup>40</sup> To this end, the teachers should "devote enough time to writing and writing instruction."<sup>41</sup> The teacher and learner work cooperatively; the learner is asked to produce several drafts based on the teacher's comments and the teacher focuses on one aspect of the student's writing at a time, beginning with having concrete information, then moving on to the aspects of organisation, because "academic writing follows a standard organizational pattern."<sup>42</sup>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Researchers such as Adom, Joe and Hussein argue that the nerve centre of the research study is the theoretical framework and the research problem under study are linked to it.<sup>43</sup> In this research study, the theoretical framework serves as the guide through which the study is built and supported or a road map for defining the research problem, choice of methodological techniques, and the selection of the literature that is to be reviewed, presented and the analysis of data, as well as discussing the recommendations.

This research study is located within the theoretical framework proposed by Vygotsky and is popularly known as Socio-Cultural Theory.<sup>44</sup> The learners in this theory are provided with an opportunity to have experiences with what they are learning. Meaningful learning can be made meaningful to the learners if their sociocultural environment is considered.<sup>45</sup> This is because no individual can exist outside it and learning itself occurs better and effectively in an environment where both the teacher and the learner mutually and actively create that, as they negotiate meaning and understanding of the reality they are confronted with. As seen from this context, learning programmes should cater for the holistic unfolding of the learners' potential by engaging their pace of learning, level of mental development and interests.

Based on the above, the theory of Vygotsky is relevant for this study because it allows individuals (like learners and teachers) and their peers to influence each other in terms of learning, and their cultural beliefs and attitudes do influence teaching and learning.<sup>46</sup> Besides, Social Constructivism theory is based on learning that seeks participation in the construction of a world that is meaningful to the participants.<sup>47</sup> In a Grade 6 English classroom, the educator as the knowledgeable person is expected according to Vygotsky, to allow learners to actively participate in learning activities by being actively involved, because their understanding is enhanced for practice makes perfect.<sup>48</sup> This has an important bearing on creative writing as a basis for the construction of an acceptable academic standard essay.

<sup>37</sup> Edith Babin and Kimberly Harrison, *Contemporary Composition Studies: A Guide to Theorists and Terms* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Ken Hyland, *Second Language Writing* (Cambridge university press, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> Imroatus Solikhah, "Corrections on Grammar, Sentence Variety and Developing Detail to Qualify Academic Essay of Indonesian Learners.," *Dinamika Ilmu* 17, no. 1 (2017): 115–29.

<sup>40</sup> Michael David Camp, *The Power of Teacher-Student Relationships in Determining Student Success* (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2011), 20.

<sup>41</sup> Steve Graham, "Changing How Writing Is Taught," *Review of Research in Education* 43, no. 1 (2019): 281.

<sup>42</sup> Myles Munroe, *The Spirit of Leadership* (Whitaker House, 2005), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Dickson Adom, Emad Kamil Hussain, and Adu-Agyem Joe, "Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Mandatory Ingredients Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Mandatory Ingredients Engineering," *International Journal of Scientific Research* 7, no.1(2018): 93–98.

<sup>44</sup> Lev S Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1962).

<sup>45</sup> John Drew, "Developing Child First Youth Justice Policy in England and Wales—A View from Inside the YJB and Westminster," in *Child First: Developing a New Youth Justice System* (Springer, 2023), 137–67.

<sup>46</sup> Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani and Narjes Banou Sabouri, "Teachers' Beliefs in English Language Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Literature.," *English Language Teaching* 10, no. 4 (2017): 78–86; Kendra Cherry, "The Origins of Psychology From Philosophical Beginnings to the Modern Day," *Verywell Mind*, 2022, <https://www.verywellmind.com/a-brief-history-of-psychology-through-the-years-2795245>.

<sup>47</sup> Jane Agee, "“Winks upon Winks”: Multiple Lenses on Settings in Qualitative Educational Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 15, no. 5 (2002): 569–85; Daniel Rodriguez, "Seeking Common Ground. In-Service.," *American School Board Journal* 185, no. 1 (1998): 38–39; J. Lave and E. Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach and case study were used for this study. The qualitative approach was used to acquire a detailed understanding of the articulation gap that exists between the Grade 3 and 6. Creswell describes qualitative research as an enquiry process which seeks an understanding of a social or human problem that is “based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.”<sup>49</sup> As a result, data was qualitatively collected in a natural environment. The researcher selected the case study as a research design because it focuses on a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study.<sup>50</sup> Besides, “it can be adopted with real-life events that show numerous sources of evidence through replication rather than sampling logic.”<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, purposive sampling was utilized to select three primary schools in the Malamulele Central circuit. From the three primary schools, eighteen (18) teachers were selected. Furthermore, one Foundation Phase class of learners and another class of learners in the Intermediate Phase were selected for observations in each school. In this case, the observation was based on teachers’ teaching approaches and how learners receive such a lesson. The reason for opting for this type of sample was that the researcher intended to review the Grade 6 EFAL learners’ essay writing after lesson observations. To perform this task effectively, the researcher needed a manageable sample, hence the sample of 18 participants was manageable.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion and analysis of the implication of the articulation gap on Grade 6 essay writing are based on the following sub-themes which the study highlighted and these themes will guide the discussion: Writing of essays in frames; using pictures to write EFAL essays; word formation by Grade 1 learners; using mind-map to divide the paragraphs; use of visual text/pictures to write an essay; using Translanguaging to teach Foundation Phase learners essay writing skills; English as teaching and learning language (TLL) in the Foundation Phase; lack of English vocabulary; lack of proper preparation to write EFAL essay in the previous Phases; and lack of writing skills. These themes are discussed in subsequent sections.

### a. Writing of essays in frames

The study found that learners are taught essay writing through frames. This type of approach is prescribed by the Department of Basic Education in the NCS. The learners learn to write simple sets of instructions and a personal recount with the support of the teachers. Numerous skills of writing are transferred from the Home Language. The home language is used to teach learners to write a text such as a recount and to draft, write, edit, and publish their work (the writing process) in their Home Language, and they then apply these skills when writing in the First Additional Language.

The teaching of an essay in frames could be likened to writing by mimicking the model essay, “usually presented and analysed at an early stage.”<sup>52</sup> This type of teaching approach treats learners as empty objects that need to be filled in with information because it fails to recognize that writing requires thinking and that a writer produces a final written product after going through the thinking process.<sup>53</sup> This teaching approach is mainly concerned with correctness and the final product form. Its emphasis according to Robert (1985) is on mechanical aspects of writing, such as grammatical and syntactical structures which are attained by imitating models, by allowing the learners to “copy sentence structures that are provided by the teacher”, which the learners practice until they acquire them.<sup>54</sup>

From the reviewed literature, the approach disregards that learners write for the audience, as a result, ideas should be created and formulated during the process of writing transformation. The style of approach by CAPS is not acceptable because Mukhari and Mathipa argue that, in essay writing learners should be taught the importance of task orientation.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> John W Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (Pearson Education, Inc, 2012), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Shiva Ebneyamini and Mohammad Reza Sadeghi Moghadam, “Toward Developing a Framework for Conducting Case Study Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17, no. 1 (December 1, 2018): 1609406918817954, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918817954>.

<sup>51</sup> Zaidah Zainal, “Case Study as a Research Method,” *Jurnal Kemusiaan* 9 (2007), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Costas Gabrielatos, “The Shape of the Language Teacher,” 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Onozawa, “A Study of the Process Writing Approach,” 154.

<sup>54</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985); Onozawa, “A Study of the Process Writing Approach,” 156.

<sup>55</sup> Mukhari and Mathipa, “The Fault Is Not in Students: But in the Programmes and the Teaching Open Distance Learning Institutions Provide: A Case of Adult Basic Education and Training Students,” 23.

### b. Using pictures to write EFAL Essays

The study found that using pictures to write EFAL essays could improve the learners' understanding and generate relevant ideas that learners need to write essays when used in conjunction with the strength-based approach. The strength-based approach to teaching essay writing considers the following underlying elements as stated by Pulla: *Children have strengths and abilities, they can change, they grow and develop from their strength abilities and the problem is not a child who fails to perform a task.*<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, the teachers should use the above underlying elements as a base for planning the teaching and learning of essay writing activities. The strength-based approach could be helpful to teachers as it prompts them to understand that children's learning is self-motivated, multifaceted, and all-inclusive; and that children as individuals demonstrate their ability to learn in diverse ways. Vygotsky is of the view that learners should be given a chance to construct their own learning.<sup>57</sup> The teachers then should use the diversified method of teaching writing by attending to the individual needs of the learners, taking into consideration the learners' native language and their experiences. Questioning strategies could be used to identify what works for the child and how it works so that those strategies could be continued and developed to match the child's learning abilities. To do this, the learners can be given a picture to analyse before writing an essay.

Carless and Boud claim that providing feedback to the learners "denotes the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies."<sup>58</sup> Other researchers advanced the benefit of receiving feedback from their teachers and peers in various stages of writing, which they use to correct their mistakes.<sup>59</sup> Teachers should provide instant feedback to guide learners on what steps to take to improve and develop their capability in line with Schultz, who asserts that learners should not only respond to the expectations that teachers set as this can limit their learning capabilities.<sup>60</sup> This means for learners to benefit from feedback, it should be clear and not misleading to avoid unintended results. As seen from this context, teachers should give instant feedback on each stage of the writing process because "feedback that is swift, specific and positively stated results in higher achievement than feedback that is general, negative, or delayed."<sup>61</sup>

Considering the above, Garrison's theory of teaching essay writing, particularly teacher-learner conferences, can help learners write essays. Teacher-learner conferences are one-to-one conferences, which are one-on-one conversations between teachers and learners about learners' writing process.<sup>62</sup> The use of teacher-learner writing conferences has been accepted as an effective strategy for teaching writing.<sup>63</sup> The Garrison theory of teaching writing is perceived as occurring entirely through individual conferencing between the writer and the instructor on the writers' work, as it is in progress involving one-to-one tutoring. The one-to-one approach to teaching is based on three principles, namely: individualisation, instant feedback, and induction learning. The theory considers five operational skills, namely content, tone, organization, sentence construction, and diction.<sup>64</sup>

Babin and Harrison add that in this writing conference approach, learners write many papers while meeting one-on-one with the teacher.<sup>65</sup> Learners spend most of their time writing exercises and reviewing peers' essays. As writing conferences generally last about 3-5 minutes, the learner during essay writing meets with the teacher for a short time to get guidance on their writing.<sup>66</sup> After the learners have mastered the writing skills, the instructor moves to the writing style and edits the draft by looking at sentence structure and diction, advising the learner to focus on correctness.<sup>67</sup> The number of drafts a learner writes depends on how long it takes an individual learner to master the operational skill. This is because children as unique individuals learn in diversified ways and at different rates and have their own learning preferences. To this end, the teachers should "devote enough time to writing and writing instruction."<sup>68</sup> The teacher and learner work cooperatively; the learner as a writer is asked to produce several drafts based on the teacher's comments and the teacher focuses on one aspect of the learner's writing at a time, beginning

<sup>56</sup> Venkat Pulla, "Strengths-Based Approach in Social Work: A Distinct Ethical Advantage," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 3, no. 2 (2017): 99.

<sup>57</sup> Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*.

<sup>58</sup> David Carless and David Boud, "The Development of Student Feedback Literacy: Enabling Uptake of Feedback," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 8 (November 17, 2018): 1315, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>.

<sup>59</sup> Onozawa, "A Study of the Process Writing Approach," 54.

<sup>60</sup> M Mmako and C Schultz, "An Employee Engagement Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges in South Africa," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 2 (June 2016), <https://doi.org/10.20853/30-2-606>.

<sup>61</sup> Paige D Ware and Mark Warschauer, "Electronic Feedback and Second Language Writing," *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues* 2 (2006): 105–22.

<sup>62</sup> Aysegul Bayraktar, "Teaching Writing through Teacher-Student Writing Conferences," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 51 (2012): 719.

<sup>63</sup> Bayraktar, "Teaching Writing through Teacher-Student Writing Conferences," 65.

<sup>64</sup> Silva, "Second Language Composition Instruction: Developments, Issues, and Directions in ESL," 15.

<sup>65</sup> Babin and Harrison, *Contemporary Composition Studies: A Guide to Theorists and Terms*.

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Schaffer, "The Ground between the Gaps," *Philosophers' Imprint* 17, no. 11 (2017): 2.

<sup>67</sup> Solikhah, "Corrections on Grammar, Sentence Variety and Developing Detail to Qualify Academic Essay of Indonesian Learners," 115.

<sup>68</sup> Graham, "Changing How Writing Is Taught," 281.

with having concrete information, then moving on to the aspects of organization because “academic writing follows a standard organizational pattern.”<sup>69</sup>

### c. Using mind-map to divide the paragraphs

The study revealed that using mind maps to write a paragraph was an effective approach, which helped learners to divide them logically. It was recommended that the learners use ideas generated through brainstorming. From the mind map, the learners should move counterclockwise, taking the first point on the mind map as an introduction and the last on the mind map is used to write a conclusion. Talking about essay writing, Johnes and Taylor state that, there would be little need for the adaptive search, rhetorical planning, linguistic manipulation and problem diagnosis that are observed if writing was a straightforward, expressive rather than strategic, process.<sup>70</sup> The learners' orientation to the topics they must write about is crucial for the learners to begin writing their essays with less difficulty. The learners at this stage should be orientated to the essay, considering the learners' background because the skill of writing well is not naturally acquired, but is learned or culturally transmitted.<sup>71</sup>

Depending on an individual teacher, the orientation of the learners to essay writing can be in the form of brainstorming or word chain activities. Vygotsky encourages this in his theory.<sup>72</sup> The activities assist in providing the learners with the opportunity to think of the words that are related to what they have chosen to write. Al-Khatib has defined brainstorming as a group activity forum for general ideas.<sup>73</sup> In this teaching activity, the teacher encourages learners to brainstorm ideas that they will use to write an essay. These ideas should be scrutinized and arranged in related categories. The learners then use the arranged ideas to write an essay.<sup>74</sup>

### d. Use of visual text/pictures to write an essay

As indicated earlier, visual texts such as posters, picture books and pictures are used as a starting point for teaching essay writing. According to Cordell, visually literate learners use images to create meaning, and this helps learners' critical thinking skills and improves their proficiency in writing.<sup>75</sup> Creating own meaning is regarded as a critical cornerstone for learning.<sup>76</sup> Integrating visual literacy into the classrooms could help learners learn to collaborate and discuss a wide range of ideas while expressing their own. The study further found that the misalignment of the curriculum between the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase in essay writing lessons is the source of Grade 6 learners' failure to write essays in English. Solati-Dehkordi and Salehi, record that for native speakers generating and organizing ideas and translating them into readable text consumes time and is also difficult to achieve.<sup>77</sup> As a result, teachers fail to engage the learners in the essay process, such as planning/per-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education consider revising the teaching time allocated for teaching writing to allow sufficient time to teach essay writing given that teachers must assist learners by engaging them in activities that generate ideas to use in writing EFAL essays. In addition, to assist learners effectively, the teachers teach essay writing in an integrated way, wherein certain aspects of language, such as reported speech and active and passive voice or language structure and conventions are incorporated.

In addition, the emphasis of the process-writing approach is on the developmental process that creates self-discovery and meaning. In line with this, Vygotsky argues that teachers should be patient with learners to discover issues by themselves.<sup>78</sup> The self-discovery is evident that the teachers allow the learners to do numerous revisions on their essays, which results in improved quality of writing. Because the process of composing requires extensive re-writing of essay drafts and revision.<sup>79</sup> Unlike the product approach where the teachers engage the learners in

<sup>69</sup> Anne Whitaker, “Academic Writing Guide: A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing Academic Papers,” *Slovakia: City University of Seattle*, 2009, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Jill Johnes and Jim Taylor, “The 1989 Research Selectivity Exercise: A Statistical Analysis of Differences in Research Rating between Universities at the Cost Centre Level,” *Higher Education Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1992): 67–87.

<sup>71</sup> Johanne Myles, “Second Language Writing and Research: The Writing Process and Error Analysis in Student Texts,” *Tesl-Ej* 6, no. 2 (2002): 1–20.

<sup>72</sup> Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*.

<sup>73</sup> Bilal Adel Al-Khatib, “The Effect of Using Brainstorming Strategy in Developing Creative Problem Solving Skills among Female Students in Princess Alia University College,” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 2, no. 10 (2012): 29–38.

<sup>74</sup> M. M. Nieman, J. I. Swanepoel, and E. Venter, *Teaching Languages (HL, FAL) in SP* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Diane M Cordell, *Using Images to Teach Critical Thinking Skills: Visual Literacy and Digital Photography* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*.

<sup>77</sup> Seyed Amir Solati-Dehkordi and Hadi Salehi, “Impact of Explicit Vocabulary Instruction on Writing Achievement of Upper-Intermediate EFL Learners,” *International Education Studies* 9, no. 4 (2016): 141.

<sup>78</sup> Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*.

<sup>79</sup> Shamshad Begham Othman and Faizah Mohamad, *The Effects of Teacher Feedback on Multiple-Draft Compositions in ESL Classrooms* (Malaysia: Universiti Teknologi MARA, 2009).

controlled writing activities, in which they “copy the provided sentences, and change them where necessary, or fill in the blanks”, the teacher in the process approach guides students during the composing process.<sup>80</sup>

The essay writing activities that teachers engage the learners in include among others planning that makes use of idea maps. The learners are encouraged and guided to make rough drafts before producing the final drafts so that they can improve on the final drafts. The teachers provide the learners with a checklist so that they can use it to check whether everything that should be included in the essays was covered. The process of writing allows the learners to write essays by comparing and sharing ideas with other peer groups and exchanging and reading each other’s work.<sup>81</sup>

Before the learners embark on their essay writing, the teachers stimulate the learners’ interest to write by creating an environment in which the learners “will want to write and can learn about writing.”<sup>82</sup> The interest of the learners to write essays is stimulated in the prewriting stage, wherein the learners are engaged in prewriting activities that include discussion about the chosen topic. The learners are introduced to different ways of dealing with topics. Based on the above, inadequate teaching limits teachers and learners in further discussions that allow the learners an opportunity to clarify their thinking and accordingly, learners discover what they know and what they still need to learn.<sup>83</sup> For example, in the stage of revising, editing, and proofreading, the learners read and evaluate their own essays and those of other learners for improvement. They also work on sentences and the structure of paragraphs, refining the choice of words and eliminating ambiguity, verbosity, and any offensive language.<sup>84</sup>

The teachers in this teaching approach provide feedback to the learners, which assists learners in writing an improved final essay draft. For example, when the learners are provided with an opportunity to revise their work, expert feedback would serve as a guideline to the learners for discovering their mistakes and clarifying their ideas as “the learners move around these steps, sometimes going forward and retracing their steps.”<sup>85</sup>

#### e. Using Translanguaging to teach essay writing skills

This study found that the method that was used to teach essay-writing skills was Translanguaging. This is because “in reality teaching and learning do not take place in a single language.”<sup>86</sup> Garcia refers to Translanguaging as the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, to maximize communicative potential.<sup>87</sup> Garcia and Wei posit that linguistic and cognitive resources are used to make sense of the academic content being delivered in a language you are just starting to learn.<sup>88</sup> As one learns a new language, one does not forget what he/she already learned in their home language; one somewhat, leverages it to learn the target language. If learners’ home language and the new language are related, they might even recognize some words.<sup>89</sup> In this context, Nunan and Lamb argue that the home language of the learner can significantly facilitate the management of the learning of L2 production when the relevant units or structures of L1 and L2 are the same.<sup>90</sup> In this case, Translanguaging results in correct language production as aspects of the L2 that are the same in the L1 will be learned more easily because they do not have to be learned from scratch.<sup>91</sup>

Translanguaging facilitates the language on a positive level and a negative level.<sup>92</sup> L2 production can be facilitated positively by L1 when the relevant unit or structure of both languages is the same. In this case, linguistic interference results in correct language production, as aspects of the L2 that are the same in the L1 are learned more easily because they do not have to be learned from scratch.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, when speakers and writers transfer items and structures that are not the same in both languages, the negative facilitation of L2 occurs. Sanderson advances this view by providing an example of Afrikaans language

<sup>80</sup> Onozawa, “A Study of the Process Writing Approach,” 156.

<sup>81</sup> May Al-Gharabally, “The Writing Difficulties Faced by L2 Learners and How to Minimize Them,” *International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research* 3, no. 5 (2015): 43.

<sup>82</sup> G.K.A. Singh, “Use of Process Writing to Enhance Students’ Abilities among Year 5 Pupils.” (Universiti Teknologi Malasia, 2014), 3.

<sup>83</sup> Singh, “Use of Process Writing to Enhance Students’ Abilities among Year 5 Pupils.”

<sup>84</sup> Nieman, Swanepoel, and Venter, *Teaching Languages (HL, FAL) in SP*.

<sup>85</sup> Othman and Mohamad, *The Effects of Teacher Feedback on Multiple-Draft Compositions in ESL Classrooms*.

<sup>86</sup> Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)* (Pretoria: DBE, 2010), 12.

<sup>87</sup> Ofelia García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 140.

<sup>88</sup> Ofelia García et al., *Language, Bilingualism and Education* (Springer, 2014).

<sup>89</sup> García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*; P. Sanderson, *Multilingualism: The Role of Language in South Africa*, (Pretoria: UNISA Study Guide, University of South Africa, 2005); David Nunan, “Teaching Grammar in Context,” *ELT Journal* 52, no. 2 (April 1998): 101–9, <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/52.2.101>; Debra A Poole and Michael E Lamb, *Investigative Interviews of Children: A Guide for Helping Professionals*. (American Psychological Association, 1998).

<sup>90</sup> Nunan, “Teaching Grammar in Context”; Poole and Lamb, *Investigative Interviews of Children: A Guide for Helping Professionals*.

<sup>91</sup> Sanderson, *Multilingualism: The Role of Language in South Africa*.

<sup>92</sup> Sanderson, *Multilingualism: The Role of Language in South Africa*.

<sup>93</sup> Sanderson, *Multilingualism: The Role of Language in South Africa*, 45.

as follows: Afrikaans is a “language with SOV word order.”<sup>94</sup> The subject of the sentence “S” is typically followed by the object “O”, with the verb “V” at the end of the sentence. Conversely, English has an SVO word order, with the verb usually placed between the subject and the object, rather than at the end of the sentence.<sup>95</sup> Similar to English, Xitsonga has the SVO word order. For example, the *English I kicked the ball* translated in Xitsonga as *Ni rahile bolo*, both sentences are in the past tense and have an SVO word order.

At the schools where this research was undertaken, the LoTL is Xitsonga. LoTL refers to the language that is used for teaching and learning.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, all subjects except English are taught in Xitsonga. This poses a challenge for Foundation Phase learners when it comes to EFAL essay writing, as learners are expected to write in English. Consequently, learners’ lack of vocabulary forces teachers to use Translanguaging to teach essay writing. Garcia, explains Translanguaging as the act that is performed by bilinguals in accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, to maximize communicative potential.<sup>97</sup> Although in Translanguaging the negative facilitation of L2 occurs when speakers and writers make use of items and structures that are not the same in both languages, this interference can be explained to the learners and corrected as negative facilitation occurs.

#### **f. English as the LoTL in the Foundation Phase**

The study found that the LoTL in the Foundation Phase was the learners’ home language, Xitsonga. The NCS Grade R-12 prescribes that the learners’ LoTL in the Foundation Phase should be the home language of the learner. The reason the home language is used as LoTL is that learners learn better when they use their home language.<sup>98</sup> The learners use their home language to write a text, such as a recount and learn how to draft, write, edit, and publish their work (the writing process), and they then apply these skills when writing in the First Additional Language. Since from Intermediate Phase, learners have switched from Xitsonga to English as LoTL. It was recommended that English be used as LoTL in the Foundation Phase so that the learners are exposed to the English language. The exposure to English could allow learners to acquire vocabulary to use in writing essays in the Intermediate Phase.

#### **g. Lack of English vocabulary**

In this research students’ lack of English vocabulary was found to be a barrier to teaching and learning. In the schools where the study was conducted, the English language is introduced as a LoTL in grade 4, which has a negative impact on learning.<sup>99</sup> In this case, learners are taught in the language they do not speak, resulting in learners not understanding what they are being taught due to a lack of vocabulary. This also poses a challenge for writing EFAL essays, as learners are expected to write an essay in the language for which they lack the vocabulary. Before the learners embark on their essay writing, teachers stimulate the learners’ interest to write by creating a stimulating environment that makes learners “want to write and can learn about writing.”<sup>100</sup> The interest of the learners to write essays is stimulated in the pre-writing stage, wherein the learners are engaged in pre-writing activities that include discussion about the chosen topic. The learners should be introduced to different ways of dealing with topics. The introduction assists the learners in familiarizing them with ways of approaching their chosen topics with less difficulty, as the learners will have been aware of how to approach different types of essays, such as discursive, expository, narrative, argumentative, reflective, and descriptive methods.

During the writing process, the learners have an opportunity to clarify their thinking and thus, learners notice what they already know and what they still need to learn.<sup>101</sup> For example, in the stage of revising, editing, and proofreading, the learners read and evaluate their own essays and those of the other learners for improvement. They also work on sentences and the structure of paragraphs, and refining the choice of words and eliminating ambiguity, verbosity, and any offensive language.<sup>102</sup> The teachers in this teaching approach provide feedback to the learners, which assists the learners in writing an improved final essay draft. For example, if the learners are provided with an opportunity to revise their work, which is followed by feedback as a guideline the learners will be able to discover their mistakes and clarify their ideas as they learn around the steps of the writing process “going forward and retracing their steps.”<sup>103</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Sanderson, *Multilingualism: The Role of Language in South Africa*, .

<sup>95</sup> Sanderson, *Multilingualism: The Role of Language in South Africa*, 46 .

<sup>96</sup> Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*, 13.

<sup>97</sup> García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*, 140.

<sup>98</sup> Sandra Dixon, “My Teaching Journey: A Reflective, Reflexive, and Collaborative Practice,” 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Margie Probyn, “Pedagogical Translanguaging and the Construction of Science Knowledge in a Multilingual South African Classroom: Challenging Monoglossic/Post-Colonial Orthodoxies,” *Classroom Discourse* 10, no. 3–4 (2019): 216–36.

<sup>100</sup> Singh, “Use of Process Writing to Enhance Students’ Abilities among Year 5 Pupils,” 3.

<sup>101</sup> Singh, “Use of Process Writing to Enhance Students’ Abilities among Year 5 Pupils.”

<sup>102</sup> Nieman, Swanepoel, and Venter, *Teaching Languages (HL, FAL) in SP*.

<sup>103</sup> Othman and Mohamad, *The Effects of Teacher Feedback on Multiple-Draft Compositions in ESL Classrooms*.

#### **h. Lack of proper preparation to write EFAL essay in the previous Phase**

The study found that learners were not properly prepared to write essays in the previous phase. The learners in the Foundation Phase are taught essay writing using frames, which do not prepare them adequately to write an essay in the Intermediate Phase. This type of preparation does not encourage creativity hence it limits learners from expressing themselves in EFAL verbally and in writing. Selwyn and Renaud-Assemat and Walsh argue that learners who fail to express themselves in writing will not be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or anyone else, as a considerable of professional communication is done in writing proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate.<sup>104</sup>

Additionally, Hussain asserts that future studies and future jobs are the primary reasons to learn English.<sup>105</sup> To crown it all, Knapp maintains that English as a professional lingua franca covers more official forms of communication which serve the purposes of international communication.<sup>106</sup> Considering the assertion above, Grade 6 EFAL learners need the skill of essay writing to be able to express themselves on a variety of topics. Thus, essay writing can be used to assess whether the learners have mastered the skill of communicating in writing. Based on the above, The LoTL in the Foundation phase should be English. Considering that English is used for future jobs, Grade 6 learners will at some point in their lives have to write research papers, articles, book chapters, course works, dissertations, and thesis. Moreover, in the education field where learners are taught to become literate, writing is one of the most important aspects to be accomplished in the teaching and learning occurrence. This is precisely so because as learners progress with their studies in tertiary institutions, they are expected to write academically and scholarly.<sup>107</sup>

As shown by Malatji and Singh “Geography students also struggled with English.” Grade 6 EFAL learners also study other subjects like Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technology, Life Skills and Mathematics.<sup>108</sup> To avoid similar experiences to Geography students, essay writing in the Intermediate phase should be given sufficient teaching time as the academic writing skills are accumulative and accrue with time and develop through the assistance received from the teachers to practice writing essays in the English language.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, throughout individual tutoring, teachers should check for the following operational skills: content, tone, organisation, sentence construction and diction in the learners’ essays and assist them further where they are lacking. The mastery of the above-mentioned operational skills can ensure readiness to write an essay worth reading, as the learners will know in advance how to approach a subject, from which they dig, pull, infer, create, and accumulate a mass of specifics.<sup>110</sup>

#### **i. Lack of writing skills**

The study revealed that the learners lack writing skills. Since learners have a unique manner of constructing their own knowledge or reality, Garrison’s approach of one-to-one tutoring can be an effective method of teaching essay writing because it requires that each learner’s effort receive instant in-class feedback.<sup>111</sup> This means that the teachers have to provide the learners with direct feedback as it affords understandings, capacities and dispositions that they need to make sense of information and use it to develop work or learning strategies.<sup>112</sup> To this end, the learners benefit from receiving feedback from their teachers and peers in various stages of writing, which they use to correct their mistakes.<sup>113</sup> According to Hattie, instant feedback assists learners in several areas ranging from justifying to the learners how their marks were derived, identifying and rewarding specific qualities in the learners’ written work, guides learners on what steps to take to improve and develop their capability.<sup>114</sup> As seen from this context, the

<sup>104</sup> Rebecca Selwyn and Irene Renaud-Assemat, “Developing Technical Report Writing Skills in First and Second Year Engineering Students: A Case Study Using Self-Reflection,” *Higher Education Pedagogies* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 19–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2019.1710550>; Maureen Walsh, “Multimodal Literacy: What Does It Mean for Classroom Practice?,” *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 33, no. 3 (October 1, 2010): 211–39, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03651836>.

<sup>105</sup> Muhammad Sabboor Hussain, “Motivating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Adult Learners: Challenges to Prepare Them for Future and Job Market,” *International Research Journal of Arts & Humanities (IRJAH)* 46, no. 46 (2018).

<sup>106</sup> Karlfried Knapp, “English as an International Lingua Franca and the Teaching of Intercultural Communication,” *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 4, no. 1 (2015): 173–89.

<sup>107</sup> Theresa Lillis and Mary Jane Curry, “The Politics of English, Language and Uptake: The Case of International Academic Journal Article Reviews,” *Aila Review* 28, no. 1 (2015): 127–50.

<sup>108</sup> Malatji and Singh, “Implications of the Articulation Gap between Geography Learners in Secondary Schools and University,” 105.

<sup>109</sup> Hyland, *Second Language Writing*.

<sup>110</sup> Garrison, “One-to-one: Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition.”

<sup>111</sup> Garrison, “One-to-one: Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition.”

<sup>112</sup> Carless and Boud, “The Development of Student Feedback Literacy: Enabling Uptake of Feedback,” 1315.

<sup>113</sup> Onozawa, “A Study of the Process Writing Approach,” 54.

<sup>114</sup> John Hattie, “Influences on Student Learning,” *Inaugural Lecture given on August 2*, no. 1999 (1999): 21.

teachers should give instant feedback on each stage of the writing process because it helps in regulating their own learning.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, the approach recognises that the learners learn by writing and not by analysing and copying, someone else's writing. During individual tutoring, teachers can check for the following five operational skills, namely: content, tone, organisation, sentence construction and diction in the learners' essays. The mastery of the above-mentioned operational skills can ensure readiness to write an essay worth reading, as the learners will know in advance how to approach a subject, from which they dig, pull, infer, create, and accumulate a mass of specifics.<sup>116</sup> In this way, the method caters for the learners who grapple with writing. In other words, the teacher can meet with each learner as the need arises to discuss the efficacy of the learners' writing in each stage. The conference will not only help the learners to produce an acceptable essay but will also help the teacher plan for future instruction. The learner's difficulties in writing will guide the teacher as to which intervention strategies they will come up with and implement.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion involved the implications of the articulation gap on grade 6 EFAL learners' essay writing skills. The responses from participants established and showed the extent to which the articulation gap failed learners to write an academically acceptable essay in the future. Several suggestions have been given regarding the teaching of essay writing to bridge the articulation gap between Foundation and Intermediate Phases. Such suggestions included (but were not limited to) pedagogical approaches that activate learners' prior knowledge, brainstorming, planning using mind maps, etc. However, the strategies that the teachers employed worked better for learners who did not lack baseline knowledge. Lack of baseline knowledge contributed immensely to the learners' failure to write an academically acceptable essay. Baseline knowledge is important because it connects the learners' knowledge acquired in the previous phase with that of the next phase, making it easier for the learners to understand the content of the subject that is taught in the next phase. Conversely, a learner who lacked baseline knowledge could not see a connection between knowledge acquired in the previous phase with that of the new phase. In this case, the learners who did not see the connection could not cope with the competencies that are required as laid down in the CAPS document.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Foundation and Intermediate Phase Curriculum be revised to close the gap between the two phases. Teachers, as implementers of the Curriculum should be involved in designing the Curriculum, as they know what content is needed in a specific grade that will match the content in the next grade.

## CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the articulation gap between the Foundation and the Intermediate phases was the source of Grade 6 EFAL learners' failure to write essays that are academically acceptable in terms of the standard that is stipulated in the CAPS document. The teaching of essay writing through frames and learning to write and edit in learners' home language do not adequately prepare learners for the competencies as indicated in the CAPS document as such, pose a challenge to Intermediate phase learners, as they are expected to write essay creatively, which they did not do in the previous grade.

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## **ABOUT AUTHORS**

Dr. Ezekiel Chauke holds a DEd degree in Language Education from Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. Dr. Chauke is a senior lecturer at the University of South Africa in the School of Teacher Education - College of Education in the Department of Language Education, Arts and Culture. He has delivered papers at national and international conferences. His research interest is mainly in teaching and learning, evaluation of teaching, assessment, and development of Primary and secondary school teachers.

Prof. Khashane Stephen Malatji holds a PhD in Education: Curriculum and Instructional Studies from the University of Fort Hare. He also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education for Academic Developers from Rhodes University. Prof. Malatji is currently an Associate Professor at the University of South Africa, in the College of Graduate Studies. He is the author of 82 articles in accredited journals. Prof Malatji has successfully supervised 27 Masters' (7 with cum laude) and 22 Doctoral students. In 2018, he was awarded Young Researcher of the Year by Tshwane University of Technology. In the 2020 academic year, he received an award as Emerging Researcher of the Year awarded by EASA. In 2021, he received an award as Senior Researcher of the Year by TUT. Prof. Malatji has delivered papers and chaired sessions at many national and international conferences. His research interest covers teaching and learning; evaluation of teaching, curriculum development; assessment; and teacher development in higher education.